

# Human Resource Competencies as Perceived by Executives

M. Srimannarayana

---

*The competitive business environment generates a wide variety of issues and challenges to Human Resource Management (HRM). HR professionals need to demonstrate required competences to address the issues and challenges. The purpose of this study is to find out the extent of demonstration of HR competencies by HR professionals while discharging their roles and responsibilities. The data collected from 594 executives representing different organisations in India, using a questionnaire, forms the basis for the study. The study finds that HR professionals often demonstrate credible activist competency. However, business ally and strategy architect are the development needs of HR professionals.*

*M. Srimannarayana* is Professor (HRM), XLRI, Jamshedpur. E-mail: [sriman@xlri.ac.in](mailto:sriman@xlri.ac.in)

## Introduction

Human resource (HR) is moving away from the transactional, paper-pushing, hiring/firing support function it has been and is becoming a bottom-line business decision maker (Caudron, 1994). Subsequent to this transformation, HRM is facing a wide variety of issues and challenges from both internal and external environment. HR professionals have to address these issues and challenges. This makes HR professionals play different roles such as strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion and change agent (Ulrich, 1997). To sustain the transformation of HR function, HR professionals must develop and demonstrate a new set of competencies to fulfill their changing roles and responsibilities (Yeung, Woolcock & Sullivan, 1996). These competencies are: knowledge, skills, abilities or personality characteristics that directly influence one's performance (Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, 2001). With growing emphasis being placed on HR competencies, significant research is carried out on this area. The present study makes an attempt to assess HR competencies demonstrated by HR professionals in India based on the

perceptions of executives working in HR and non-HR areas in various organizations.

### **HRM in India**

**Government legislation has played a vital role in the evolution of personnel management/HRM in India.**

In India, HRM has been of comparatively late growth and has only developed on a wide scale since Independence. Government legislation has played a vital role in the evolution of personnel management/HRM in India. The other reasons would be business acumen, economic conditions, social set up that have also contributed in shaping personnel practices (Balasubramanian, 1995). Evolution of HRM in India may be traced in to five phases. The beginning is from 1920s to 1930s. During this period the status of the department was predominantly clerical and the activities were confined to statutory welfare, and paternalistic welfare programs. During the second stage (1940s-1960s), the personnel profession struggled for recognition by emphasizing on introducing techniques. In the third stage, from 1970s to 1980s, the profession has made attempts to impress with sophistication by emphasizing on regularity conformance, and imposing standards on other functions. The period of 1990s was the promising phase of personnel profession in India with a philosophical outlook by emphasizing on human values, and productivity through people. The year 2000 and

onwards is a period of rationalisation in which the outlook has become strategic with emphasis on organizational performance. Over a period of time the role of HR has elevated from clerical to administrative, administrative to managerial, managerial to executive, and executive to strategic partner (Venkata Ratnam & Srivastava, 1991; Budhwar, 2009a). The challenges of HRM in India include the need to change the traditional role played by Indian HRM to a more strategic and proactive role, and HR challenges relating to strategic alliances. Despite such challenges, the present business context in India provides ample opportunities for HR function to make a mark (Budhwar, 2009b). If the HR function has to make a mark, the HR professionals need to possess the competencies required to perform their responsibilities.

### **The HR Competency Studies**

Competencies for HR professionals may be defined either by the insights of senior managers and other internal customers or by an empirically tested conceptual framework (Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung & Lake, 1995). They generally focus on the knowledge and abilities of HR professionals and the extent to which he or she could use HR practices to build business success (Ulrich et al, 2008). Over the last twenty five years, several HR competencies studies are conducted aiming at identifying appropriate HR competencies that influence firm performance. Ulrich, the pioneer of HR competency studies, has conducted several studies, over a period of time, with the help of his associates. The origi-

nal HR competency study (HRCS) conducted in 1987 indicates that HR professionals needed business knowledge, HR delivery, and change management competencies regardless of position, industry, or geography. Ulrich, Brockbank & Yeung (1989) argue that if HR professionals are to add value to their firms, they must have knowledge of business, world class delivery of human resource practices in their specialty which include staffing, development, appraisal, rewards, organizational design and communication, and management of change process. In 1992, Ulrich, Brockbank & Yeung have conducted the second round of HRCS. Personal credibility has emerged as the fourth HR competency in this study. The third round of their studies conducted in 1997 identified that ability to manage culture is an important competency for HR professionals. Culture and change competencies are rolled into a new domain called strategic contribution in the fourth round of HRCS conducted in 2002. During this round of the study, another new competency called 'HR technology' has emerged. Ulrich et al (2007) have conducted their fifth round of HRCS at the global level that classifies HR competencies into six clusters such as credible activist, culture and change steward, talent manager/organisational designer, strategy architect, operational executor, and business ally. The sixth

round of HRCS identifies credible activist, strategic positioner, capability builder, change champion, HR innovator and integrator, and technology proponent (Ulrich et al, 2013).

In addition to Ulrich and his associates, several other scholars have carried out studies on HR competencies. Echniger & Lombardo (1990) suggest leadership areas for HR competencies, which include cognitive complexity and agility, achievement directed assertiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, personal management, business savvy, and job skills. Lawson (1990) identifies five competency clusters for HR executives such as business knowledge, influence management, functional and organizational leadership, goal and action management, and HR technical proficiency. Schoonver (1997) establishes a set of core HR competencies consisting of leadership style, management intuition, functional abilities and personal attributes. Huselid, Jackson & Schuler (1997) identify two broad competencies that help HR professionals to develop effective HRM system, namely, professional HRM capabilities and business-related capabilities. Professional HRM capabilities are related to delivery of traditional HRM activities such as recruiting, selection and compensation. In contrast, business-related capabilities reflect an understanding of the business and the implementation of competitive strategy. Both contribute to HRM effectiveness, which in turn have a substantial positive effect on several measures of firm financial performance. Bell, Sae-Won and Yeung (2006) examine the linkage between

**Ability to manage culture is an important competency for HR professionals.**

electronic human resources and the re-shaping of professional competence in HRM. Ramlall (2006) suggests that HR competencies may vary by type of position within HR. Graham & Tarbell (2006) examine the importance of the employee perspective in the creditability competency of human resource professionals.

It is evident from literature that most of the research is carried out on HR competencies in the USA. However, there are some country-specific studies that are available in the HR competencies research. In their Singapore study, Khatri & Budhwar (2002) find that top management enlightenment and level of HR competencies together determine the role and status of the HR function in organizations. Selmer & Chiu (2004) establish an empirical basis for a framework guiding the direction and content of the future development of HR practitioners in Hong Kong. Based on the study conducted on European companies, Boselie & Paauwe (2005) suggest that personal credibility and HR delivery have a positive effect on the relative ranking of HR function and its professionals. Pietersen & Engelbrecht (2005), in the study on strategic partnership role of HR Managers in South Africa organisations, find that there is a positive relationship between businesses related competencies and strategic partnership role among the HR managers. Han, Chou, Chao & Wright (2006) suggest that in the Taiwanese high-tech context, HR competencies of field expertise and change management are strongly related to HR effectiveness as perceived by line managers and employees, while business knowledge is not.

Haroon et al (2010) find that, in Pakistan, top management support and level of HR competencies together decide the role and status of the HR function in organizations. Abdullahi et al (2011) suggest the HR practitioner competency model with significant competencies in the domains of generic/behavioral, business, and technical HR for Malaysian cultural setting. In another study in Malaysia, Long & Ismail (2011) examines the competencies of human resource professionals in the domains of business knowledge, strategic contribution, HR delivery, personal credibility, HR technology and internal consultation. Premarajan (2011) describes a national-level certification drive for HR professionals in India based on a competency model that captures the technical as well as behavioural competencies required for HR professionals in the country.

### **Present Study**

The objective of the present study is to assess the extent of HR competencies demonstrated by HR professionals in India based on the perceptions of executives working in different types of organisations. This study also makes an attempt to find out the differences, if any, in the perception of executives on HR competencies based on the type and size of organisations they work, gender, educational background, work experience, level of management and functional area (HR and non-HR) of the executives. The six-domain HR competency framework that consists of: credible activist, culture and change steward, talent manager/organisational designer, strategy archi-

tect, operational executor and business ally, developed by Ulrich et al (2008), is replicated in this study. The human resource competency model developed by Ulrich et al (2008) consists of 121 items dealing with six domains of HR competencies covering six domains and 21 sub-domains of the six domains. A questionnaire incorporating all these items is administered among executives working in different type of organisations in India with the request to answer the items on a four-point scale, one being 'never' demonstrated the competency by HR professionals and four being 'always' demonstrated. To respond to these questions, the respondent needs to have enough exposure to HR department and HR professionals in their respective organisations. Therefore, the questionnaire is distributed to the executives of the organisations, which have a separate HR/personnel department manned with at least one HR professional. It is also ensured that the respondent executives have a minimum of two years of work experience so that they have enough exposure with HR department and HR professionals. 594 usable filled-in questionnaires are received from the executives representing 54 different organisations in India.

Table 1 presents the background information of the respondents. Based on the nature of business, 36.87% of respondents represent manufacturing organisations (e.g., companies making agro products, automobiles, electronics, fast moving consumer products, pharmaceuticals, and steel). 43.60% respondents work in service organisations (e.g., bank-

ing, consulting, facilities management, financial services, food services, health care, hospitality, and retail services). 19.53% of them belong to information technology (IT) and IT enabled services (ITES). Based on the number of employees in organisations, they are classified as small (below 500 employees), medium (500 to 1000), and large organisations (above 1000). A majority (59.76%) works in large organisations. 12.96% works in medium organisations; and 27.27% of the respondents are from small organisations. Gender-wise, 29.46% of the respondents are women and 66.77% are men. Out of the total respondents, 33.33% are graduates, and 66.77% are postgraduates. Based on the work experience of respondents, they are divided into three categories. A majority (69.19%) has two to five years of experience; 21.72% of them have put up five years to ten years of experience; and 9.09% have 11 and above years of work experience. Functional area-wise, non-HR respondents constitute three-fourth (74.92%) of the sample, and the remaining are HR professionals. As far as level of management of the respondents is concerned, 22.73% of them are holding senior positions; 60.10% are in the middle level; and the remaining belong to junior level management.

With regard to methods of data analysis, item wise analysis is carried out using mean scores and standard deviations for all 121 items covering six HR competency domains. One-way ANOVA test is used to find out significant differences in the perception of the respondents on the HR competency domains

**Table 1 Background Information of the Respondents**

Background information	No. of respondents and percentage
1. <i>Nature of business</i>	
a) Manufacturing	219 (36.87)
b) Service	259 (43.60)
c) IT/ITES	116 (19.53)
2. <i>Organisational size</i>	
a) Small organisations	162 (27.27)
b) Medium organisations	77 (12.96)
c) Large organisations	355 (59.76)
3. <i>Gender</i>	
a) Female	175 (29.46)
b) Male	419 (70.53)
4. <i>Education</i>	
a) Graduates	198 (33.33)
b) Postgraduates	396 (66.67)
5. <i>Experience</i>	
a) 2 -5 years	411 (69.19)
b) 6 – 10 years	129 (21.92)
c) 11 years and above	54 (9.09)
6. <i>Functional areas</i>	
a) Non-HR	445 (74.92)
b) HR	149 (25.08)
7. <i>Level of management</i>	
a) Senior	135 (22.73)
b) Middle	357 (60.10)
c) Junior	102 (17.17)

and sub-domains based on the organisational characteristics (nature of business and organisational size), and the personal factors (gender, education, work experience, functional area and level of management). Tukey's HSD tests are used for multiple comparisons among the items.

### HR Competencies

Ulrich et.al (2008) identifies the domain of credible activist competency as the top competency required of HR professionals, if they are to add value to their key stakeholders. As shown in Table 2,

**The present study identifies credible activist as the top competency demonstrated by HR professionals.**

the present study identifies credible activist as the top competency demonstrated by HR professionals. There is no significant difference in the domains of talent manager/organizational designer, operational executor, and cultural and change steward. These three are placed in second position. The domain of strategy architect has been placed in the fifth position. The domain of business ally has received the lowest rank among all six competency domains. In the study of Ulrich et.al (2008) on HR competencies in India, based on the mean scores, it can be stated that the competency domain of talent manager/organizational designer is in second position; cultural and change steward is in third position; business ally in fourth position; strategy architect in fifth position; and operational executor in the sixth position. It is significant to note that the differences in the mean scores are very low. Thus, the findings of the present study are similar to the earlier study (Ulrich et al, 2008) except the position of operational executor competency. It can be stated that, by and large, HR professionals have often demonstrated required levels of proficiencies in the competency domains: credible activist, talent manager/organizational designer, operational executor and cultural and change steward. The domains of business ally and strategy architect are areas of development for HR professionals in India.

**Table 2 Overall HR Competencies**

Domains of HR Competencies			Tukey 's HSD Subset for alpha = .05				
	Mean	S.D	Domains	1	2	3	4
Credible activist	3.01	0.63	Business ally	2.61			
Culture & change steward	2.86	0.66	Strategic architect		2.77		
Talent manager/organisation designer	2.85	0.68	Talent manager/organisation designer			2.85	
Strategic architect	2.77	0.70	Operational executor			2.85	
Operational executor	2.86	0.70	Culture & change steward			2.86	
Business ally	2.61	0.76	Credible activist				3.01
			Sig.	1	1	1	1

**Respondents’ Factors**

As shown in Table 3, gender, work experience, education, organisational size and functional area of the respondents have influenced the perception of credible activist. The female respondents, the respondents with an experience of 11 years and above, those from large organizations, those with postgraduate qualifications and the HR respondents have perceived this competency more positively when compared to their counterparts. With respect to culture and change steward competency, the respondents with an experience of 11 years and above, respondents in senior management positions, and the HR respondents have given more scores than their counterparts. As far as talent manager/organisational designer competency is concerned, postgraduates, manufacturing and service sector executives, and HR respondents have more positive perception. It is significant to note that with respect to strategy architect, no factor has made a significant difference in the perception except functional area. The respondents with an experience of 11 years and above, respondents of manu-

facturing and large companies have more positive perception of operational executor competency than the others. The respondents of manufacturing units, female respondents and HR respondents have more favorable views on business ally competency than their counterparts. Although the association between nature of business and overall HR competencies is not established, based on overall mean scores, it may be observed that the respondents of manufacturing organisations have given better scores than their counterparts. Overall, it may be stated that higher the experience, the higher the perception of HR competencies. HR respondents have rated the demonstration of HR competencies higher than the line respondents. It might be natural as they are asked to rate themselves on the competencies they demonstrate. This is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Payne (2010) in United States.

**Higher the experience, higher is the perception of HR competencies.**

**Table 3 Overall HR Competencies & Respondents' Factors: One-way ANOVA Test Results**

Gender	Credible Activist		Culture and Change Steward /Organisation Designer		Talent Manager		Strategy Architect		Operational Executor		Business Ally		Overall	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Male	3.09	0.51	2.86	0.61	2.89	0.6	2.7	0.7	2.8	0.69	2.61	0.78	2.83	0.65
Female	3.15*	0.52	2.9	0.62	2.96	0.65	2.81	0.68	2.76	0.75	2.75**	0.75	2.86	0.66
<i>Experience (Years )</i>														
2 – 5	3.09	0.53	2.86	0.62	2.89	0.61	2.7	0.71	2.72	0.71	2.66	0.78	2.82	0.66
6 to 10	3.09	0.49	2.82	0.61	2.94	0.65	2.71	0.67	2.86	0.71	2.6	0.75	2.84	0.65
11 & above	3.29**	0.49	3.06**	0.52	3.04	0.52	2.97	0.58	3.13**	0.51	2.7	0.75	2.90*	0.56
<i>Education</i>														
Graduate	3	0.53	2.75	0.59	2.75	0.59	2.59	0.65	2.84	0.67	2.57	0.71	2.75	0.62
Postgraduate	3.16*	0.5	2.93	0.62	3.00**	0.61	2.8	0.71	2.77	0.73	2.68	0.8	2.89	0.66
<i>Nature of Business</i>														
Manufacturing	3.15	0.54	2.96	0.57	2.99***	0.54	2.75	0.72	2.95*	0.65	2.71*	0.79	2.92	0.64
Service	3.08	0.51	2.84	0.67	2.92*	0.65	2.76	0.69	2.74	0.72	2.61	0.75	2.83	0.67
IT/ITES	3.11	0.48	2.78	0.56	2.76	0.63	2.64	0.65	2.61	0.71	2.6	0.78	2.75	0.64
<i>Organisation size</i>														
Small	3.08	0.51	2.92	0.53	2.94	0.59	2.77	0.63	2.68	0.74	2.66	0.73	2.84	0.62
medium	3.19	0.49	2.84	0.67	2.86	0.75	2.7	0.79	2.77	0.8	2.69	0.83	2.84	0.72
Large	3.10*	0.52	2.86	0.64	2.92	0.59	2.72	0.7	2.85**	0.67	2.63	0.78	2.85	0.65
<i>Level of Management</i>														
Lower	3.07	0.5	2.85	0.65	2.81	0.65	2.65	0.71	2.74	0.773	2.64	0.77	2.79	0.68
Middle	3.12	0.5	2.85	0.61	2.92	0.6	2.73	0.69	2.8	0.706	2.63	0.77	2.84	0.65
Senior	3.1	0.56	2.93**	0.59	2.98	0.61	2.78	0.68	2.8	0.657	2.69	0.77	2.88	0.64
<i>Function</i>														
HR	3.47***	0.51	3.27***	0.48	3.22***	0.56	3.03**	0.69	2.91	0.81	2.95**	0.8	3.14**	0.64
Non HR	2.99	0.33	2.74	0.6	2.81	0.6	2.63	0.67	2.75	0.66	2.55	0.74	2.75	0.60

\* P value at .05, \*\* P value at .01 and \*\*\* P value at .001

### Credible Activist

Credible activists are respected and proactive. Credible persons who are not activists may be respected, but have little impact. Activists who are not credible may have good ideas, but no one listens to them (Ulrich et al, 2008). Therefore, HR professionals should be activists with credibility. Then only they can make an impact. Delivering results with integrity, sharing information, building relationship

with trust and delivering HR with an attitude (Ulrich & Eichinger, 1998) are the factors associated with this domain (Ulrich et al, 2008). As presented in Tables 4&5, HR professionals often share information by demonstrating their oral and written communication and their interpersonal skills. They often deliver results with integrity by meeting commitments and working well with management team. However, their area of improvement for becoming more effective

**Table 4 HR Competencies & Nature of Business, Organisational size & Level of Management of Respondents**

	Nature of Business						Organisational Size						Level of Management							
	Overall Mean	SD	Manu-facturing	SD	Ser-vice	SD	IT /ITES	SD	Small	SD	Med-ium	SD	Large	SD	Junior	SD	Mid-dle	SD	Senior	
Credible Activist	3.01	0.63	3.15	0.54	3.08	0.51	3.11	0.48	3.08	0.51	3.19	0.49	3.10	0.52	3.07	0.50	3.12	0.50	3.10	0.56
Delivering result with Integrity	3.11	0.52	3.15	0.54	3.08	0.51	3.11	0.48	3.08	0.51	3.19	0.49	3.10	0.52	3.07	0.50	3.12	0.50	3.10	0.56
Sharing Information	3.16	0.60	3.18	0.58	3.17	0.61	3.10	0.59	3.02	0.59	3.18	0.60	3.22**	0.59	3.11	0.66	3.17	0.59	3.18	0.57
Building Relationship of Trust	2.96	0.68	3.02	0.66	2.91	0.70	2.94	0.66	2.98	0.68	2.95	0.76	2.95	0.66	2.82	0.70	2.99	0.66	2.97	0.69
Doing HR with an Attitude	2.81	0.65	2.91**	0.67	2.78	0.65	2.70	0.62	2.82	0.59	2.74	0.64	2.82	0.69	2.78	0.63	2.84	0.67	2.77	0.64
Culture & change	2.86	0.66	2.96	0.57	2.84	0.67	2.78	0.56	2.92	0.53	2.84	0.67	2.86	0.64	2.85	0.65	2.85	0.61	2.93	0.59
Steward Facilitating Change	2.87	0.62	2.96*	0.57	2.84	0.67	2.78	0.56	2.92	0.53	2.84	0.67	2.86	0.64	2.85	0.65	2.85	0.61	2.93*	0.59
Crafting Culture	2.91	0.61	2.99	0.56	2.86	0.64	2.84	0.59	2.89	0.53	2.90	0.70	2.92	0.62	2.82	0.65	2.92	0.60	2.93*	0.59
Valuing Culture	2.76	0.69	2.86*	0.68	2.71	0.71	2.70	0.65	2.74	0.65	2.72	0.81	2.78	0.68	2.75	0.75	2.74	0.69	2.83	0.64
Personalizing Culture	2.89	0.72	3.01**	0.67	2.84	0.75	2.77	0.73	2.94	0.58	2.88	0.86	2.87	0.75	2.88	0.71	2.89	0.72	2.91	0.75
Talent Manager/organisational designer	2.85	0.68	2.99	0.54	2.92	0.65	2.76	0.63	2.94	0.59	2.86	0.75	2.92	0.59	2.81	0.65	2.92	0.60	2.98	0.61
Ensuring Talent	2.92	0.61	2.99**	0.54	2.92	0.65	2.76	0.63	2.94	0.59	2.86	0.75	2.92	0.59	2.81	0.65	2.92	0.60	2.98	0.61
Developing Talent	2.89	0.66	3.04**	0.61	2.87	0.66	2.64	0.71	2.82	0.67	2.93	0.79	2.91	0.63	2.77	0.75	2.89	0.63	2.96	0.67
Talent Shaping Organisation	2.86	0.71	2.97	0.71	2.85	0.71	2.70	0.67	2.91	0.69	2.84	0.77	2.85	0.70	2.83	0.74	2.86	0.70	2.89	0.70

Fostering Communication	2.85	0.70	2.93	0.69	2.86	0.72	2.67	0.67	2.87	0.61	2.79	0.78	2.85	0.73	2.73	0.71	2.88	0.70	2.85	0.71
Designing Reward system	2.75	0.68	2.80	0.69	2.77	0.70	2.59	0.59	2.71	0.68	2.65	0.68	2.79	0.68	2.69	0.75	2.74	0.67	2.82	0.65
Strategic Architect	2.77	0.70	2.75	0.72	2.76	0.69	2.64	0.65	2.77	0.63	2.70	0.79	2.72	0.70	2.65	0.71	2.73	0.69	2.78	0.68
Sustaining Strategic Agility	2.73	0.69	2.75	0.72	2.76	0.69	2.64	0.65	2.77	0.63	2.70	0.79	2.72	0.70	2.65	0.71	2.73	0.69	2.78	0.68
Engaging Customer	2.81	0.70	2.88	0.68	2.80	0.69	2.71	0.75	2.79	0.64	2.81	0.83	2.82	0.69	2.70	0.81	2.83	0.66	2.86	0.71
Operational Executor	2.86	0.70	2.95	0.65	2.74	0.72	2.61	0.71	2.68	0.74	2.77	0.80	2.85	0.67	2.74	0.773	2.80	0.706	2.80	0.657
Implementing Workplace Policies	2.79	0.71	2.95**	0.65	2.74	0.72	2.61	0.71	2.68	0.74	2.77	0.80	2.85**	0.67	2.74	0.77	2.80	0.71	2.80	0.66
Advancing HR Technology	2.92	0.69	3.02**	0.64	2.91	0.72	2.78	0.67	2.92	0.71	2.87	0.71	2.93	0.68	2.83	0.74	2.94	0.69	2.95	0.64
Business Ally	2.61	0.76	2.71	0.787	2.61	0.75	2.60	0.777	2.66	0.732	2.69	0.831	2.63	0.775	2.64	0.765	2.63	0.774	2.69	0.77
Serving the value chain	2.65	0.77	2.71	0.79	2.61	0.75	2.60	0.78	2.66	0.73	2.69	0.83	2.63	0.78	2.64	0.76	2.63	0.77	2.69	0.77
Interpreting Social Context	2.67	0.74	2.75	0.69	2.65	0.76	2.58	0.76	2.59	0.71	2.70	0.88	2.71	0.72	2.61	0.77	2.68	0.74	2.69	0.72
Articulating the value Proposition	2.58	0.75	2.73**	0.67	2.51	0.78	2.47	0.77	2.58	0.68	2.59	0.92	2.58	0.73	2.54	0.77	2.58	0.74	2.61	0.75
Leveraging business technology	2.52	0.78	2.70**	0.73	2.42	0.82	2.40	0.74	2.51	0.74	2.54	0.86	2.52	0.78	2.46	0.80	2.54	0.78	2.50	0.77

\*\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

\* The mean difference is significant at the .01 Level

**Table 5 HR Competencies and Respondents' Gender, Education, Experience and Functional Areas**

	Gender		Education			Experience			Functional Area						
	Male	SD	Female	SD	Grad-uate	SD	Post-grad-uate	SD	<5	5 to 10	SD	HR	SD	Non-HR	
Credible Activist	3.09	0.51	3.15	0.52	3.00	0.53	3.16	0.50	3.09	0.53	3.09	0.49	3.29	0.49	0.51
Delivering result with Integrity	3.09	0.52	3.15	0.51	3.00	0.53	3.16	0.50	3.09	0.53	3.09	0.49	3.29*	0.49	0.33
Sharing Information	3.17	0.57	3.15	0.66	3.08	0.63	3.20	0.57	3.12	0.61	3.17	0.57	3.41*	0.47	0.50
Building Relationship of Trust	2.95	0.66	2.97	0.71	2.86	0.65	3.01	0.69	2.95	0.70	2.93	0.65	3.04	0.53	0.66
Doing HR with Attitude	2.89	0.67	2.78	0.61	2.74	0.68	2.85*	0.64	2.82	0.65	2.75	0.68	2.88	0.64	0.48
Culture & change Steward	2.86	0.61	2.90	0.62	2.75	0.59	2.93	0.62	2.86	0.62	2.82	0.61	3.06	0.52	0.48
Facilitating Change	2.86	0.61	2.90	0.62	2.75	0.59	2.93	0.62	2.86	0.62	2.82	0.61	3.06**	0.52	0.48
Crafting Culture	2.89	0.61	2.94	0.60	2.79	0.59	2.96	0.60	2.87	0.62	2.93	0.59	3.13**	0.52	0.51
Valuing Culture	2.74	0.68	2.83	0.69	2.64	0.67	2.83	0.69	2.75	0.71	2.72	0.66	3.00**	0.54	0.66
Personalizing Culture	2.87	0.72	2.94	0.72	2.80	0.73	2.93	0.72	2.87	0.70	2.84	0.79	3.15**	0.74	0.54
Talent Manager/organisational designer	2.89	0.60	2.96	0.65	2.75	0.59	3.00	0.61	2.89	0.61	2.94	0.65	3.04	0.52	0.56
Ensuring Talent	2.89	0.60	2.96	0.65	2.75	0.59	3.00	0.61	2.89	0.61	2.94	0.65	3.04	0.52	0.56
Developing Talent	2.88	0.65	2.92	0.69	2.71	0.62	2.98	0.67	2.85	0.68	2.95	0.64	3.04	0.56	0.63
Shaping Organisation	2.87	0.68	2.85	0.77	2.72	0.66	2.93	0.72	2.84	0.73	2.86	0.69	3.03	0.58	0.73
Fostering Communication	2.82	0.70	2.91	0.72	2.69	0.71	2.93	0.69	2.81	0.71	2.87	0.70	3.06**	0.68	0.69
Designing Reward system	2.72	0.66	2.83	0.72	2.64	0.65	2.81	0.69	2.69	0.69	2.83	0.69	2.99**	0.56	0.70
Strategic Architect	2.70	0.70	2.81	0.68	2.59	0.65	2.80	0.71	2.70	0.71	2.71	0.67	2.97	0.58	0.69
Sustaining Strategic Agility	2.70	0.70	2.81	0.68	2.59	0.65	2.80	0.71	2.70	0.71	2.71	0.67	2.97**	0.58	0.69
Engaging Customer	2.78	0.69	2.88	0.71	2.71	0.67	2.86	0.71	2.79	0.70	2.78	0.65	3.05**	0.73	0.72
Operational Executor	2.80	0.69	2.76	0.75	2.84	0.67	2.77	0.73	2.72	0.71	2.86	0.71	3.13	0.51	0.81
Implementing Workplace Policies	2.80	0.69	2.76	0.75	2.84	0.67	2.77	0.73	2.72	0.71	2.86	0.71	3.13**	0.51	0.81
Advancing HR Technology	2.91	0.69	2.94	0.68	2.85	0.70	2.96	0.68	2.89	0.73	2.94	0.58	3.13**	0.52	0.68
Business Ally	2.61	0.78	2.75	0.75	2.57	0.71	2.68	0.8	2.66	0.78	2.60	0.75	2.70	0.75	0.8
Serving the value chain	2.61	0.78	<b>2.75**</b>	0.75	2.57	0.71	2.68	0.80	2.66	0.78	2.60	0.75	2.70	0.75	0.80
Interpreting Social Context	2.66	0.73	2.71	0.77	2.66	0.68	2.68	0.77	2.65	0.76	2.66	0.72	2.89	0.61	0.85
Articulating the value Proposition	2.57	0.72	2.62	0.80	2.55	0.67	2.60	0.78	2.56	0.75	2.56	0.77	2.80	0.67	0.85
Leveraging business technology	2.49	0.76	2.58	0.83	2.48	0.76	2.54	0.79	2.50	0.81	2.49	0.70	2.77**	0.72	0.82

\*\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

\* The mean difference is significant at the .01 Level

is found to be 'doing HR with an attitude', which they should demonstrate by taking appropriate risks, providing candid observations, and influencing others. Comparative data indicates that HR professionals in large organisations could demonstrate relatively higher levels of sharing information compared to those working in small and medium organisations. When compared to the HR professionals in service and IT sectors, those in manufacturing organizations are in better position with respect to 'doing HR with an attitude'. Experience-wise data indicates that higher the experience, the higher the perception on 'delivering results with integrity', and 'sharing information'. The HR respondents have given more score on these two factors when compared to non-HR respondents.

### Culture & Change Steward

This competency refers to appreciating, articulating and help shaping a company's culture. As stewards of culture, HR professionals respect those aspects of past culture, and at the same time, help shape a new culture that will facilitate organisational success. This domain is made up of four interrelated factors: crafting culture, facilitating change, personalizing culture and valuing culture (Ulrich et al, 2008). As shown in Tables 4&5, HR professionals often demonstrate their competency of 'crafting culture' by aligning individual and organisational goals, and by identifying the culture required to meet the business strategy. They often demonstrate 'personalizing culture'. They try to help employees find purpose and meaning in their work. They try to man-

age work-life balance within the organisation and encourage innovation in the business. HR professionals often demonstrate 'facilitating change' by encouraging others to make change happen fast, helping people understand why change is important, and identify and engage people who make change happen. Though they possess the competency of 'valuing culture' to some extent, this is an area of improvement as the score on this factor was relatively low. It is interesting to note that HR professionals belonging to manufacturing organisations could better demonstrate the competencies such as facilitating change, valuing culture and personalizing culture than their counterparts. The respondents in the senior management level have given better rating for facilitating change and crafting culture competencies than the junior and middle management level respondents. It is also observed that the respondents with 11 years and above experience have given better rating to all these four factors than the respondents with less than 11 years of experience.

**HR professionals belonging to manufacturing organisations could better demonstrate the competencies such as facilitating change, valuing culture and personalizing culture than their counterparts.**

### Talent Manager/ Organisation Designer

The HR professional masters theory, research, and practice in both talent management and organisation design. Talent

management focuses on how individuals enter and move up, across, or out of the organisation. Organisation design focuses on how a company embeds capability into the structure, processes, and policies that shape how an organisation works. The factors associated with this domain include ensuring talent, developing talent, shaping organisation, fostering communication and designing reward systems (Ulrich et al, 2008). As presented in tables 4&5, HR professionals often demonstrate their competency of ensuring today's and tomorrow's talent by implementing best HR practices, and retention strategies. They often develop talent through learning and leadership development programmes, and feedback processes. They involve in shaping organisations through proper organisational design and foster communication by designing internal communication process and sending clear and consistent messages. However, designing reward systems such as performance-based compensation systems, non-financial reward systems, employee benefits and managing pension programmes is an area of improvement. It is observed that the respondents who have put up 11 years above experience have given better scores on the factors of fostering communication and designing reward systems than their counterparts. Interestingly, it is found that manufacturing sector has secured better score on all the five factors, particularly, ensuring talent and measuring talent than service and IT sector.

### **Strategy Architect**

This domain consists of such behaviors as helping in establishing the business

strategy, engaging in constructive problem solving with clients, facilitating dissemination of customer information, and contributing to building the brand of the company with customers, shareholders, and employees. The HR professional with this competency domain has a vision for the organization to win in the marketplace, now, and in the future. Sustaining strategic agility and engaging customers are the factors associated with this competency domain (Ulrich et al, 2008). As Tables 4&5 reveals, HR professionals have showed a moderate level of sustaining strategic agility and engaging customers. The entire domain is an area of improvement for HR professionals. However, it is significant to note that HR professionals could get better rating from the respondents with 11 years and above with respect to this competency, when compared to respondents with 10 and below years of experience.

### **Operational Executor**

This domain consists of operational aspects of managing people and organisation. It revolves around the HR professional's ability to execute operational aspects of HR. Implementing workplace policies and advancing HR technology constitute sub-domains of this competency (Ulrich et al, 2008). It could be seen from Tables 4&5, that HR professionals could often demonstrate their ability in implementation of workplace policies such as labor legislation, managing labor policies and procedures, and designing flexible work schedules. They could also often show their ability in advancing HR technology by leveraging information technology for HR

practices and HR information system to make better decisions. It is significant to note that the respondents from manufacturing units have given better score for both factors of operational executor competency than service and IT units. The respondents of large organisations have given relatively higher score to implementing workplace policies, compared to the respondents representing small and medium organisations. Here also, experience played a significant role as the respondents with 11 and above years of experience have given relatively higher score for both factors of operational executor.

### **Business Ally**

This domain refers to the competency that contributes to the success of a business by knowing the social context in which the business operates. The factors associated with this domain are: serving value chain, interpreting social context, articulating the value proposition and leveraging business technology (Ulrich et al, 2008). The entire domain is an area of improvement for HR professionals as this has secured the lowest scores when compared to all other domains of HR competencies. However, it may be noted that the respondents of manufacturing companies have given better score when compared to its counterparts. There is a statistically significant difference in the perception of men and women respondents on the factor of serving the value chain. Similar to earlier differences based on the experience, the respondents with 11 and more years of experience have given relatively high score to the factor of leveraging business technology.

### **Conclusion**

**It is imperative now for HR professionals to build the competencies that can be perceived by non-HR managers more positively.**

The present study leads to the conclusion that the major strength of HR professionals in India is credible activist. However, they have to perform HR with an attitude for further sharpening this strength by taking appropriate risks, influencing others, and providing candid observations to their key stakeholders. It may be observed that culture and change steward, talent manager/organisation designer and operational executor are near-strengths of HR professionals in India. It may be further observed that the domains of strategic architect and business ally are developmental needs of HR professionals in India. Nature of business wise, it may be concluded that the respondents of manufacturing sector have higher perception of HR competencies than service and IT/ITES organisations. Further, it may be concluded that higher the experience, higher the perception of HR competencies. Functional area wise data lead to the conclusion that the perception of HR executives on demonstration of HR competencies is higher than the non-HR executives. Having rated relatively higher demonstration of their competencies, it is imperative now for HR professionals to build the competencies that can be perceived by non-HR managers more positively. If the HR function has to contribute effectively to improve organisational performance, the HR professional need to demonstrate

their competencies, particularly, in the domains of strategic architect and business ally.

### Limitations

The findings of the study have limitations. First, the source of information is self-reports of HR professionals and line managers. Although respondents were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and anonymously, it remains questionable if results were affected by socially desirable response tendencies. Second, it is true that the attempt has been to collect data from the executives of various types of organisations, but the sample did not represent proportionately all types of organisations. In spite of these limitations, the study has attempted to identify HR competencies in India covering different sectors of organisations in different locations in India.

### References

- Abdullah, A. H., Musa, Raja Mohamed Fauzi Raja., & Ali, J. H. (2011), "The Development of Human Resource Practitioner Competency Model Perceived by Malaysian Human Resource Practitioners and Consultants: A Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Approach", *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6 (11): 240-55.
- Balasubramanian, A. G. (1995). "Evolution of the Personnel Function in India - A Re-Examination – Part II". *Management and Labour Studies*, 20(1): 5-14.
- Bell, B. S., Sae-Won, L. & Yeung, S. K. (2006), "The Impact of e-HR on Professional Competence in HRM: Implications for the Development of HR Professionals", *Human Resource Management*, 45(3):295-08.
- Becker, B E., Huselid, M.A. & Ulrich, D. (2001), *The HR Scorecard: Linking People, Strategy and Performance*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Boselie, P. & Paauwe, J. (2005), "Human Resource Function and Competencies in European Companies", *Personnel Review*, 34 (5): 550-623.
- Budhwar, P. S. (2009a), "Human Resource Management in the Indian Context", in Budhwar, P. S. & Bhatnagar, J. (Ed.), *The Changing Face of People Management in India*, London: Routledge.
- Budhwar, P. S. (2009b), *Managing Human Resource in India*, in Storey, J., Wright, P.M., & Ulrich, D. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Strategic Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge.
- Caudron, S. (1994), "HR Leaders Brainstorm the Profession's Future", *Personnel Journal*, 74(7): 54-61.
- Eichinger, R. & Lombardo, M. (1990), *Twenty-two Ways to Develop Leadership in Staff Managers* (Report no. 144). Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Graham, M. E. & Tarbell, L. M. (2006), "The Importance of the Employee Perspective in the Competency Development of Human Resource Professionals", *Human Resource Management*, 45(3): 337-55.
- Han, J., Chou, P., Chao, M. & Wright, P. M. (2006), "The HR Competencies-HR Effectiveness Link: A Study in Taiwanese High-tech Companies", *Human Resource Management*, 45(3): 391-406.
- Haron, M., Rehman, M. Z., Kiyani, A. & Khattak, M. A. (2010). "Strategic Human Resource Management and Its Issues: A Study of Telecom Sector of Pakistan". *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 2 (5): 66-77.
- Huselid, M.A., Jackson, S.E. & Schuler, R.S. (1997), "Technical and Strategic Human Resource Management Effectiveness as

- Determinants of Firm Performance”, *Academy of Management Journal*, 40 (1): 171-88
- Khatri, N. & Budhwar, P. (2002), “A Study of Strategic HR Issues in an Asian Context”, *Personnel Review*, 31(2): 166-88.
- Lawson, T. (1990), *The Competency Initiatives: Standards of Excellence for Human Resource Executives*, Alexandria: SHRM.
- Long, C. S. & Ismail, K.V. (2011), An analysis of the relationship between HR professionals’ competencies and firms’ performance in Malaysia. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22, (5), 1054-1068.
- Payne, M. (2010), “A Comparative Study of HR Managers’ Competencies in Strategic Roles”, *International Management Review*, 6(2): 5-12.
- Pietersen, F.L. & Engelbrecht, A.S. (2005), “The Strategic Partnership Role of Senior Human Resource Managers in South African organizations”, *Management Dynamics*, 14(4): 47-58.
- Premarajan, R. K. (2011). “Certifying Competencies of HR Managers with the Assessment Centre Method: Quality Assurance that HR Contributes to Corporate Objectives”, in Povah, N. & Thornton III, G.C.(Eds.), *Assessment Centres and Global Talent Management*, Burlington: Gower.
- Schoonver, S. (1997), “New HR Skills Needed for a New Work Environment”, *Employment Relations Today*, autumn: 21-32.
- Selmer, J. & Chiu, R. (2004), “Required Human Resources Competencies in the Future: A Framework for Developing HR Executives in Hong Kong”, *Journal of World Business*, 39(4):324-36.
- Ramlall, S. J. (2006), “HR Competencies and Their Relationship to Organizational Practices”, *Performance Improvement*, 45(5): 32-43.
- Venkata Ratnam, C. S. & Srivastava, B. K. (1991), *Personnel Management and Human Resources*, Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill.
- Ulrich D. (1997), *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Business Press
- Ulrich, D., Brockbank, W., Johnson, D., Sandholtz, K. & Younger, J. (2008). *HR Competencies: Mastery at the Intersection of People and Business*, Alexandria: SHRM.
- Ulrich, D., Brockbank, W., Younger, J. & Ulrich, M. (2013), *Global HR Competencies: Mastering Competitive Value from the Outside In*, New Delhi Tata McGraw Hill.
- Ulrich, D., Brockbank, W., & Yeung, A. (1989), “HR Competencies in the 1990s”, *The Personnel Administrator*, 34 (11): 91-91.
- Ulrich, D., Brockbank, W., Yeung, A. & Lake, D. (1995), “Human Resource Competencies and Empirical Assessment”, *Human Resources Management*, 34 (4): 473-96.
- Ulrich, D. & Eichinger, R. W. (1998), “Delivering HR with an Attitude”, *HR Magazine*, 43(7): 154-60.
- Yeung, A., Woolcock, P. & Sullivan, J. (1996), “Identifying and Developing HR Competencies for the Future: Keys to Sustaining the Transformation of HR Functions”, *Human Resource Planning*, 19(4): 48-58