What makes the best in HR really the best? Human resources is a complex, multi-faceted field that requires professionals to have the ability to juggle priorities and excel at a number of tasks—from the sometimes tedious to the often strategic. It takes knowing what to hone in on and what to delegate, staying on top of the latest trends in compensation and always having a finger on the pulse of employee relations. And, often, with so many misconceptions about HR, it involves staying ahead of the curve through education in an attempt to drive what the role will entail for the company.

Being in HR requires having a number of talents and is not for the faint of heart. The role brings with it the potential to make a big impact on the lives of individuals working for the company—their most important asset—and, simultaneously, can leave managers feeling less than appreciated, when contributions to the bottom line are questioned. Perceptions of HR as a cost center and others, explained below, are just a few of the myths that often surround HR and can prevent practitioners and companies from getting the most from this important role.

HR as a cost center

The view of HR as a cost center may be one of the hardest to overcome. How executives view the HR department and its role often plays a huge part in its perception and function, including whether the job is managed in-house to begin with. Frequently HR must take every opportunity to be its own proponent in providing greater education on the value of its offerings.

Other companies realize that HR managers contribute more directly in taking care of their most valuable assets, handling a range of responsibilities, including: recruiting; interviewing; providing, presenting, and delivering medical, dental, vision, life, and other ancillary benefits; job training; instituting programs for retention and growth of employees; establishing tools and guidance for management reviews; and reviewing and selecting technology to support HR functions, to name a few.

Each of these, in fact, contributes greatly to the bottom line when all hard and soft costs of doing business are considered.