

## Human Resources Career Path Explanation

Vince Orlando  
Ball State University  
Vaorlando@bsu.edu

Edward J. Lazaros  
Ball State University  
ejlazaros@bsu.edu

Allen D. Truell  
Ball State University  
atruell@bsu.edu

Christopher B. Davison  
Ball State University  
cbdavison@bsu.edu

Eric S. Green  
Ball State University  
esgreen2@bsu.edu

### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to provide information for individuals interested in pursuing a career in Human Resources (HR). This article contains information on how to pursue a career in human resources, the types of human resource jobs, the responsibilities of this position, along with the average yearly salary. Included in this article is an interview with Human Resources Business Partner Maggie Orlando who shares her journey and experience with this profession.

### Responsibility of a Human Resource positions

HR professionals are essential to an organization's success, overseeing a range of responsibilities that ensure a well-functioning workforce. HR contains many different titles and positions that include specialists, managers, business partners, and directors. These positions vary based on the organizations but contain similar tasks and share the same overall goals. According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), "human resources specialists recruit, screen, and interview job applicants and place newly hired workers in jobs." HR professionals are tasked with developing training programs, conducting performance evaluations, and strategizing for long-term workforce planning. Additionally, Human Resource Managers "lead and direct the routine functions of the Human Resources (HR) department including hiring and interviewing staff, administering pay, benefits, and leave, and enforcing company policies and practices" (Human Resource Manager). This position is essential in nurturing a productive, diverse, and inclusive workforce aligned with the organization's goals.

### How to get a job in HR

The path to pursuing a job in HR typically starts with pursuing a college education and obtaining a bachelor's degree. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), to enter the

occupation, human resources specialists typically need a bachelor's degree in human resources, business, or a related field." Although a human resources degree is often the route some individuals take it is not mandatory. "While there are a number of undergraduate HR programs available at U.S. colleges and universities, a bachelor's degree in a related subject – such as communications, business, industrial/organizational psychology, sociology and the social sciences – could also be applied to a career in human resources (UCPath Center). Additionally, throughout your professional journey it's important to develop strong interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills, these skills are needed to be effective in your future HR role. It is common for current college students to gain practical experience through internships in the summer and be as involved with networking with HR professionals as much as possible. Ultimately, becoming an HR specialist requires a combination of education, skills, practical experience, and a commitment to ongoing learning in the dynamic field of human resources.

### **Pay**

"The median annual wage for human resources specialists was \$64,240 in May 2022. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$39,340, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$116,060" (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). It's also important to note that there are many different types of human resource positions and each offer various different salaries. Additionally, the average starting salary will increase if an individual contains a graduate degree.

### **Job Outlook**

The job outlook for careers in Human resources are looking promising. The U.S. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the "employment of human resources specialists is projected to grow 6 percent from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations." As organizations recognize the importance of talent management, diversity and inclusion, and compliance with evolving labor laws, the need for HR specialists will keep rising. This is a very positive sign for anyone looking into a future career in Human resources.

### **Interview with Human Resources Business Partner at International Paper Maggie Orlando**



1. What previous experience prepared you for this position?

I've had two major HR internships during undergrad and grad school. My education has played a major role in my preparation for this job. I have a bachelor's in Psychology paired with a minor in Law, Justice, and Public Policy and a Master's in Human Resources and Labor Relations. When looking for my first full-time role out of grad school, I wanted a company and position that had an HR development program for employees hired directly from Grad school. Development programs provide you access to network top company leadership and provide consistent industry training, resources, and support that normal role does not.

2. What does a typical workday look like for you?

As a business partner, my role is to directly support salaried and hourly employees at our union-free facility. Every day is different. I'm involved in strategic workforce planning, recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining. I ensure consistent policy enforcement across managers. If there is an employee issue – I will help lead the investigation. I run engagement initiatives and events for all employees. I work on a team of 3 to support a workforce of about 250 employees.

I also travel about 20% of the year to conferences, meetings, or trainings.

3. What is your favorite part about working in Human Resources?

I enjoy helping people and developing positive working relationships with all employees. How people feel in an organization matters. Do they feel heard, supported, and empowered? It's up to HR to lead leaders and set the standard for the workforce. I enjoy having that impact and being able to see how impacts culture.

4. What are the main challenges you encounter in Human Resources?

People can be challenging to work with. There is a lot of gray area in HR. You have to balance compassion with consistent policy enforcement. Additionally, as a business partner, there are a lot of moving pieces and you have to be able to organize priorities effectively.

5. What advice would you give someone who would like to get into this career?

For a high school student who is thinking about this as a career, job shadowing would be a good idea. Learn more about the career by job shadowing someone who is currently in HR. This will help you decide if this is what you are looking for. Pursuing an internship and getting on-the-job learning may also be helpful. Companies look for people with job-related experience. You learn so much through on-the-job learning. I would recommend everyone start in a generalist or business partner role because you have your hands in every HR actively – talent acquisition &

recruitment, management, training, pay and benefits, and so on. It can help you decide what direction in HR you want to move to next.

A graduate degree is not necessary but does provide you with more career opportunities and a higher starting wage.

6. What qualifications and experience do you bring to your role in HR?

My masters in Human Resources and Labor Relations has been vital – it has set me up for success. My education and HR internships have enhanced my ability to deal with ambiguity, think on my feet, and handle leading tough conversations. I have worked hard to gain the trust and respect of our employees. Without that, you cannot be an effective business partner. I also was a career advisor in Grad School for other grad students. I have been able to use that experience to develop new college recruitment incentives and strategies that we use on campuses across the country.

7. How much impact do you feel like you can have on the company or organization?

People are a company's competitive advantage – attracting and retaining top talent is vital for a company to develop a path-dependent and strategic industry advantage. I know I have a large responsibility for the success of our facility and I take great pride in that.

## Conclusion

A career in human resources is a very valuable profession that plays a critical role in every organization. Overall it involves a fast area of

## References

- Getting into human resources without an HR degree. (2018, Jan, 24). *UCPath Center*.  
<https://ucpathjobs.org/human-resources/getting-human-resources-without-hr-degree/>
- Human Resources (HR) Manager Job Description. Resources for employers.  
<https://resources.workable.com/hr-manager-job-description>
- Human Resource Manager. (2022, December 2). *Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)*. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/job-descriptions/pages/human-resource-manager.aspx>
- Human Resource Specialists:Occupational Outlook Handbook. (2023, Sep 6). *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*.<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/human-resources-specialists.htm#tab-1>