

STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SHRM) PRACTICES OF INDIAN FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS (FMCG) INDUSTRY WITH REFERENCE TO ADVANCED ANALYTICS APPROACHES

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Abstract:

The economic activity of firms in the modern economic environment is becoming more complex due to the increasing globalization and liberalization of markets, changing customer requirements, and ever increasing market competition; therefore, organizations constantly looking for ways to increase performance and competitiveness. Generally, human resources, as workforce and also as business function, are treated as the highest operating cost that should be minimized and at the same time as a source of higher efficiency. Along with this situation in practice, the researchers developed a new interest in human resources as a strategic driver of value creation that can have significant economic effects of the overall organizational results. The modern field of strategic human resource management (SHRM) is attracting a great deal of attention owing to its potential impact on the functioning of organizations. There is now an evolving belief that, if organizations wish to survive and compete in the present-day knowledge-based global economy, they have to acquire, develop, and accordingly manage world-class human resource competencies and practices. This belief has led to research focusing on the impact of HRM/SHRM. The next generation of HR leadership is not about completing transactions—it's about helping drive the CEO to great decisions and using technology to connect the dots throughout the entire organization.

Key Words: Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Business Workforce Analytics, Talent Management, High Performance Work Systems (HPWSs), Performance Evaluation Ratings and Advanced Analytic Approaches.

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Introduction

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) is systematically linked to the strategic needs of an organization and aims to provide it with an effective workforce while meeting the needs of its members and other constituents in the society. In contrast to strategies, human resource departments also employ varying tactics periodically. Tactics are methods, procedures, or systems employed by human resource professionals to achieve specific strategies. It is important that human resource strategies and tactics are mutually consistent. Even the best-laid strategies may fail if they are not accompanied by sound programs or procedures. Strategic human resource management necessitates an exhaustive evaluation of an organization's internal and external environments. Factors that should be reviewed before formulating human resource strategies were discussed. These include economic, technological, demographic, and cultural challenges. Continuous evaluation of strategy and proactive management were pointed out as critical to ensure successful management of human resources. Today's economic climate is forcing organizations to make difficult decisions about how best to maximize the productivity and effectiveness of various assets. Issues such as access to financial capital, buildings, equipment, technology, and employees are being placed on the table for discussion. Unfortunately, many organizations have not invested in defining, capturing, and analyzing workforce data to the same extent as in other critical business areas, such as procurement and finance.

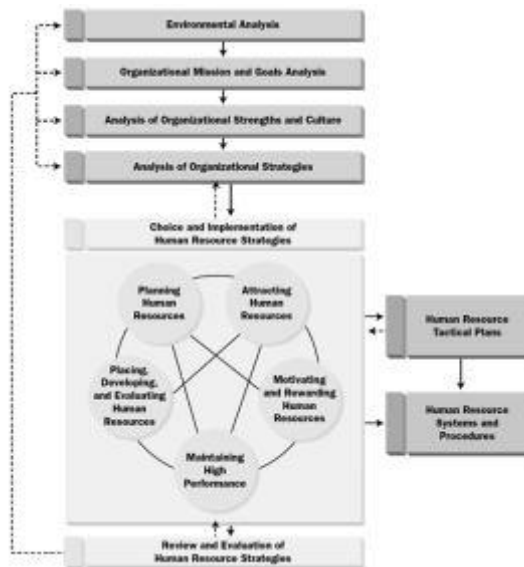


Figure-1: Shrm Model (Source: Tamkin et al., SSDA, 2004.)

Review of Literature: For decades HR practitioners have been tagged as administrators; however, organizations are now looking to the HR function to go beyond the delivery of cost effective administrative services and provide expertise on how to leverage human capital (Jamrog & Overholt, 2004). Simultaneously the role of HR practitioners as strategic business partners and leaders of change has also received considerable attention (Rennie, 2003; Walker & Stopper, 2000). Ultimately, the competitive forces that organizations face today create a new mandate for HR and this necessitates changes to the structure and role of the HR function. The HR profession has been continuously evolving and changing over the past hundred years, adding more and different roles and responsibilities. When one traces the HR profession one finds that out of the Industrial Revolution, labor unions and the industrial welfare movement arose as well as groundbreaking research in scientific management and industrial psychology. In the 1980's climate of anxiety over prospects for economic growth, it became apparent that there was a need for the HR function to become more 'proactive' and human resource problems needed to be anticipated and prevented or at least minimized (Gilbertson, 1984). This decade also saw the HR profession faced with criticism and questions regarding its validity, which subsequently resulted in a significant body of research that linked HR practices to organizational performance (Stewart, 1996).

Authors have taken different stances when referring to HR practices, but there was a consistent focus on the contribution of HR practices to enhancing human capital. Shared assumptions of a number of authors result in the definition that 'HR practices are a set of activities that actively contribute to achieving organizational objectives' (Macky, 2008) and 'have the ability to gain competitive advantage over other firms' (Barney & Hesterly, 2006). HR practices, i.e. the programs, processes and techniques that direct the management of an organization's human resources can complement, substitute for, or even conflict with other organizational practices and at times arise from reactive and ad hoc choices made by HR practitioners in response to circumstances (Wright & Boswell, 2002, Macky, 2008). HR practitioners are an active element in the implementation of HR practices because of their command of professional and business acumen. Their quality, extent of knowledge and experience, level of training and education, combined with a belief in their ability to achieve set objectives has a significant impact on the successful implementation of HR practices (Murphy & Southey, 2003). Over the last couple of decades, significant contributions have been well documented in the literature, dealing with issues related to the management of people. HRM has received

much attention as a distinct approach to managing employees effectively and efficiently. However, Delery and Doty (1996) criticize the initial research in the field of HRM as 'micro analytic' as it focused on specific issues and effects on organizations. During the last decade, researchers have produced a new generation of theoretical and empirical work linking human resource management with business and corporate strategies and have measured its impact on the overall organizational performance level, rather than simply on employees' performance level. As a result, the current interest in SHRM has been developed by researchers in the field.

Statement of the Problem: Many researchers have criticized the foundation of SHRM theory and have accordingly called for a new formulation of the theory. There are two main reasons for this criticism: firstly, as stated earlier, HRM is continuing to face criticisms surrounding its theoretical foundation, and it is therefore unsurprising that SHRM has a poor theoretical basis as it has been building on the HRM theory; secondly, as recognized by Delery and Doty (1996), the SHRM field has been approached from the perspective of numerous theories, such as resource-based view of the firm, contingency theory, human capital theory, resource-dependence theory, and behavioral theory, and there is thus a lack of emphasis on the differences within such theories. Regardless of the absence of a precise and clear definition of SHRM, its essential core idea is to link and integrate the HR function with the overall strategic direction of the organization to improve organizational performance and thus gain a sustainable competitive advantage. From the research problem, taking into account the broader focus on key HR activities and functions, one realizes that there is a need to consider to what extent SHRM practitioners in FMCG organizations are equipped with the capabilities that can fulfill the expectations, challenges and trends in HR effectiveness with reference to Business Analytics, Talent Management and High Performance Work Systems.

Objective of the Study: The main objective of the current study is to analyze the SHRM practices of Indian FMCG sector with reference to Business Analytics, Talent Management & High Performance Work Systems and how they are giving good yields to keep the FMCG sector in being forefront in relation to business perspective on par with the global economy.

Methodology of the Study: The data collection procedure involved surveying managers and employees at each establishment. All the survey responses, from both managers and white-collar, full-time, permanent employees, were returned to the

author's E-mail address by using prepaid and self-addressed envelopes. In the cover letter to the survey, we described the purpose of the project and the voluntary nature of participation. Respondents were assured of the anonymity of their responses and the opportunity to receive feedback, if they so desired. Given that participation was voluntary and anonymous, participants were not asked to sign an informed consent form. To maximize the response rate, we contacted the managers in charge by phone or e-mail 2 weeks after the initial distribution of the survey. A second round of follow-up was conducted by mail, enclosing another set of surveys. This was reinforced again by phone calls or e-mails to all potential respondents. A final round of contact or communication was conducted by mail, again enclosing a survey packet. There was no incentive (cash or otherwise) for participating in this project. The quantitative methodology adopted throughout the study.

Data collection: Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained from the Indian FMCG companies through the administration of self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through “drop and pick later” method. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended questions. The data was obtained from head of human resource department in each FMCG company because they deal with issues of human resource management in the organizations.

Data Analysis: Before analysis, the collected data was checked for completeness and consistency. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentages. Pearson Correlation statistical tool was used to establish the strength and significance of the relationship between strategic human resource management practices and firm performance. Presentation of data was done using pie-charts, percentages and tables.

Statistical Analysis: As was explicitly discussed in the research objective of this study, it was imperative to first ascertain the number of sub-dimensions underlying the HPWS construct. Once this number is ascertained, each HPWS sub-dimension was then regressed on organizational innovation (OI) and then tested for its statistical significance as a predictor of OI, as called by Werner (2011: 920). Therefore, a principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted to determine how many sub-dimensions or components were underlying the High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) practices data set. However, prior to the PCA, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling

adequacy (0.814) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2=3585.2/78, p<0.000$), suggested that the HPWS data set was not an identity matrix, and should then be subjected to PCA.

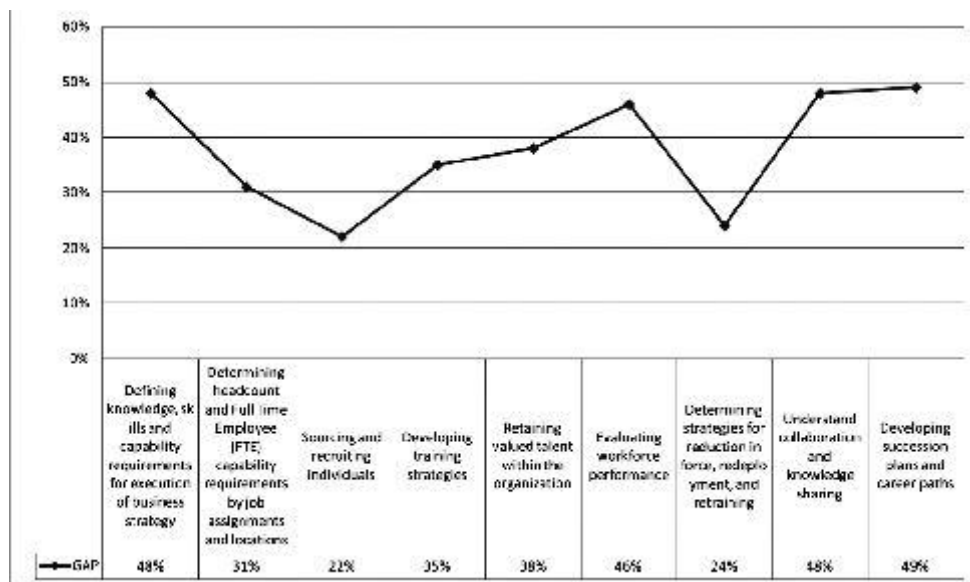
Research Design: The original population consisted of a convenience sample of Indian FMCG companies and FMCG business emphasizes a high-context communication style in which “most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person.” Thus, because of response rate considerations, we considered it necessary to use personal contacts. To minimize any potential bias this might introduce, we took care to select companies that were representative of FMCG industry sectors. Of the 120 companies approached, 56 agreed to participate (46.67%). Once the consent of the top management of each participating company had been secured, we asked the HR managers to arrange site visits.

Sample Selection: The final sample for this study consisted of 76 business establishments from 56 different FMCG companies located in India, covering a range of geographical regions. These 76 establishments each provided at least the minimum level of response (at least 1 managerial and 2 employee responses) necessary to ensure multiple data sources for each establishment. The managerial sample consisted of 324 managers with supervisory responsibilities in the 76 establishments. The average number of managerial responses for each establishment was 4.26 (range = 1–26). There were 23 units from which only 1 managerial response was obtained. The managers, on an average, had 19.02 years of work experience at the establishment ($SD = 11.63$), had 10.16 years of job tenure ($SD = 10.44$), were 47.73 years old ($SD = 7.91$), were predominantly male (95.80%), and were at least at the level of supervisor (36.50%) or middle management (36.80%). The total number of non-managerial employee respondents was 525, with an average of 6.89 responses per unit (range = 2–48). The employees averaged 35.90 years of age ($SD = 8.43$), were predominantly male (80.50%), and, on an average, had 8.05 years of work experience at the establishment ($SD = 8.12$) and 6.14 years of job tenure ($SD = 6.46$).

Results and Discussion: From these results, we can see that many organizations are struggling to address a host of strategic human capital issues. Further, these issues are being magnified in an economic maelstrom that is forcing companies to make hard choices about every aspect of their operations. Companies that are hampered by an inability to translate their current and future business models into knowledge, skills, and

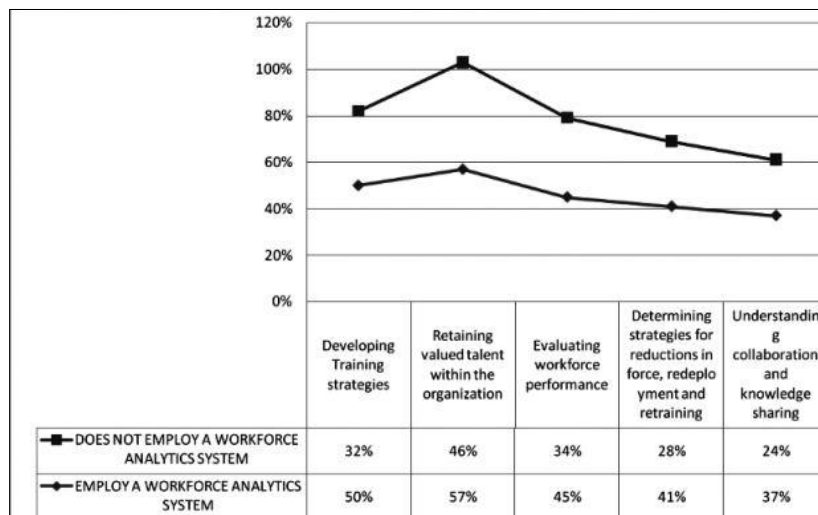
capabilities will find it difficult to make decisions about which resources they need to keep versus which can be more easily added when the economy recovers. Those without succession plans and career paths will find it difficult to reassign individuals and reorganize when there are fewer people to do the same or a greater amount of work. An inability to collaborate and share knowledge can result in critical knowledge being lost and productivity being hampered by a loss of social relationships. An inability to evaluate workforce performance may result in higher performers being swept up in downsizing efforts that don't take into consideration the value these individuals generate for their organizations. In each of these areas, an organization's ability to make well-informed decisions will play a key role in how it adjusts to the new economic realities of today's marketplace. Similarly, organizations, where HR makes a more proactive contribution to strategy, are more likely to apply advanced analytics to key human capital challenges. Advanced analytics capabilities allow organizations to identify historical trends and patterns and to develop scenarios and predict future outcomes, leading HR and its business partners to make better strategic decisions about key workforce challenges.

Figure-2: REPORTED IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL CHALLENGES



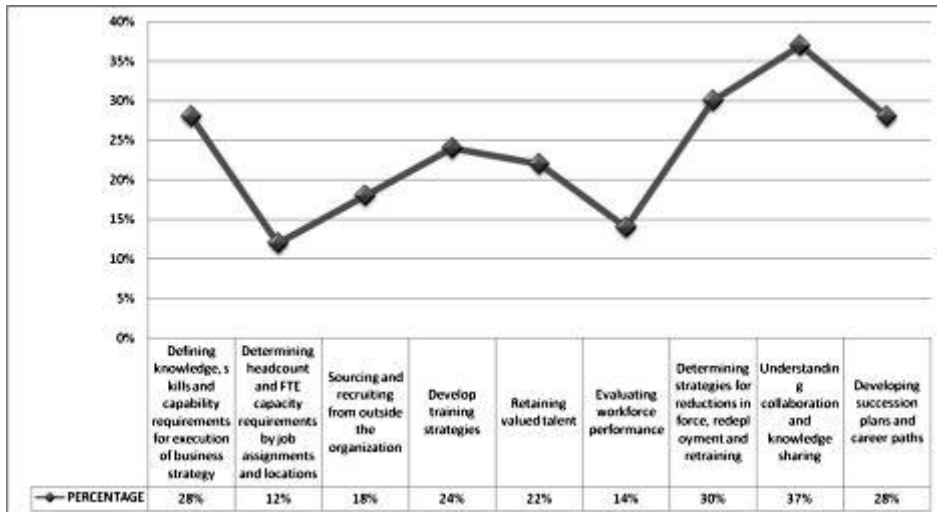
Work Force Analytics: Despite the promise of greater efficiency and reduced departmental operational costs, the adoption of workforce analytic applications remains elusive. Only 33 percent of respondents indicated that they have such a solution in place. Among organizations that have implemented such applications, there was a 50:50 split between those using commercially available, packaged software and those relying on custom-built solutions. According to the survey results, companies that have invested in analytics have the upper hand in addressing workforce challenges. In five human capital areas, we can see a statistically significant difference in the level of effectiveness in addressing human capital challenges between organizations that employ workforce analytic applications and those that do not.

Figure-3: Level of Effectiveness in Addressing Human Capital Challenges



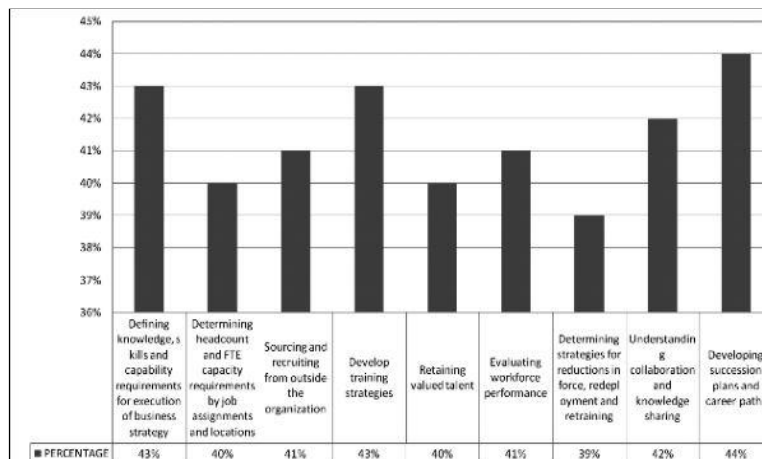
Notwithstanding the apparent advantages that an analytics capability can provide, a number of organizations are still making important human capital decisions without workforce analytics. Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed are not using a workforce analytics solution for understanding collaboration and knowledge sharing. Nearly a third of respondents are determining strategies for reduction in force, redeployment, and retraining without workforce analytics. And 28 percent indicated that they do not use workforce analytics for defining knowledge, skills, and capability requirements for the execution of business strategy or for developing succession plans and career paths.

Figure-4: Percentage of Organizations Not Using Workforce Analytics to Address Specific Human Capital Issues



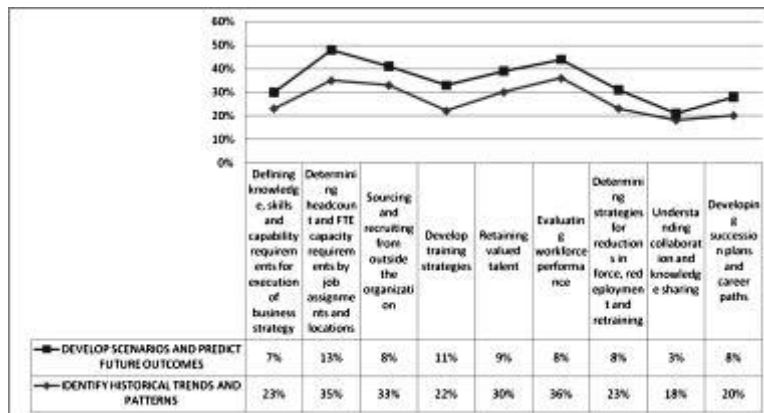
That said, many organizations indicated that they can obtain basic workforce data for specific human capital issues. As *Figure 5* illustrates, there is a fairly consistent ability to garner basic human capital data, ranging from 39 percent for determining strategies for reductions in force, redeployment, and retraining to 44 percent for developing succession plans and career paths.

Figure-5: Percentage of Organizations Able to Obtain Basic Workforce Data for Specific Human Capital Issues



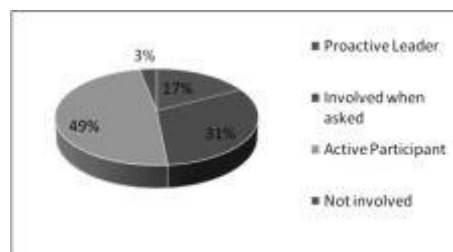
However, while organizations are able to obtain basic workforce data, relatively few are applying more advanced analytic techniques in their decision-making processes. *Figure 6* makes this clear. At most, only 36 percent of companies are using workforce analytics to identify historical trends and patterns, and 13 percent are developing future-based scenarios based on this data. In short, applying more advanced analytic techniques to understand the composition and capabilities of workforces is still very much in its infancy.

Figure-6: Percentage of Organizations Using More Advanced Analytic Approaches



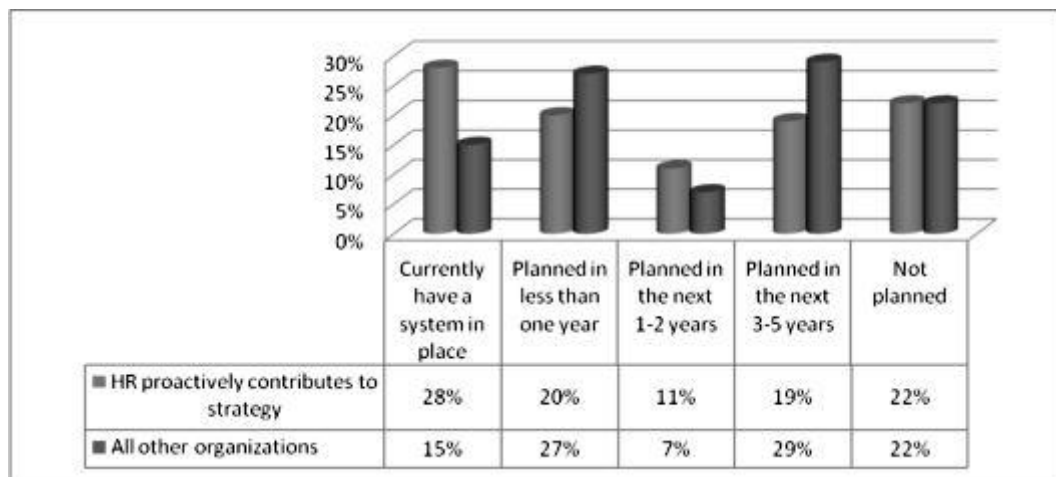
Driving A Strategic Hr Organization: As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of workforce and talent management, the HR function itself needs to play a greater role in the development and execution of business strategy. While almost one-half of the more than 400 respondents said they are active participants in developing corporate strategy, only 17 percent indicated that HR is a proactive leader in the strategy process.

Figure-7: HR's Involvement in Developing Corporate Strategy



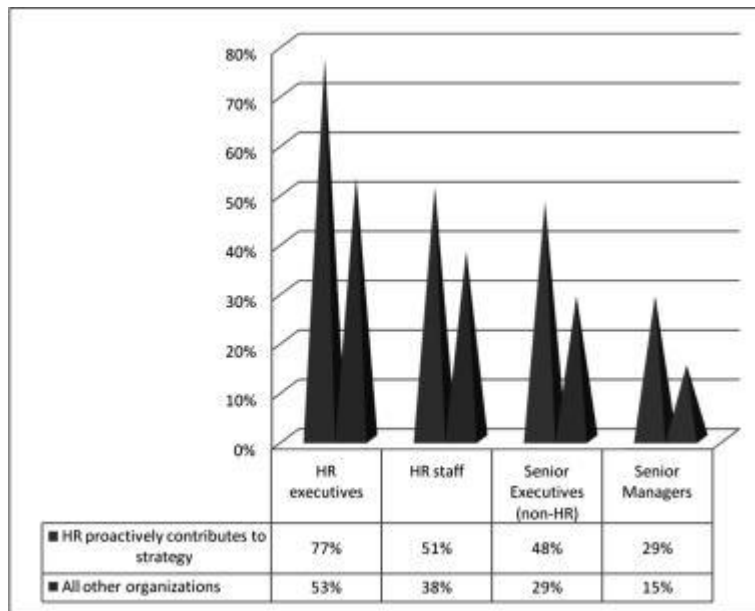
We can see from the survey that analytics play a critical role in enabling HR organizations to take a more proactive approach to corporate strategy. The researcher found that organizations where HR is a “proactive leader in driving corporate strategy” are almost two times more likely to have a workforce analytics capability. Analytics enable HR professionals to analyze, interpret, and make the best possible decisions and recommendations based on workforce data. This ability to inform and optimize workforce decisions can enable HR professionals to develop business cases and assess tradeoffs in much the same way as their colleagues in other functional areas.

Figure-8: Current Plans for Developing and Deploying a Workforce Analytics Capability



Survey data also shows that workforce analytics are primarily being used by executives and staff within the HR community. However, it is interesting to note that, in organizations where HR contributes more proactively to overall organizational strategy, both HR and non-HR staff are more likely to access and apply workforce analytics to their decision-making processes. Overall, organizations that have analytics capabilities are not only more likely to use advanced analytics to generate better quality decisions, but are also operating in an environment where a wide range of stakeholders leverage analytics to make decisions.

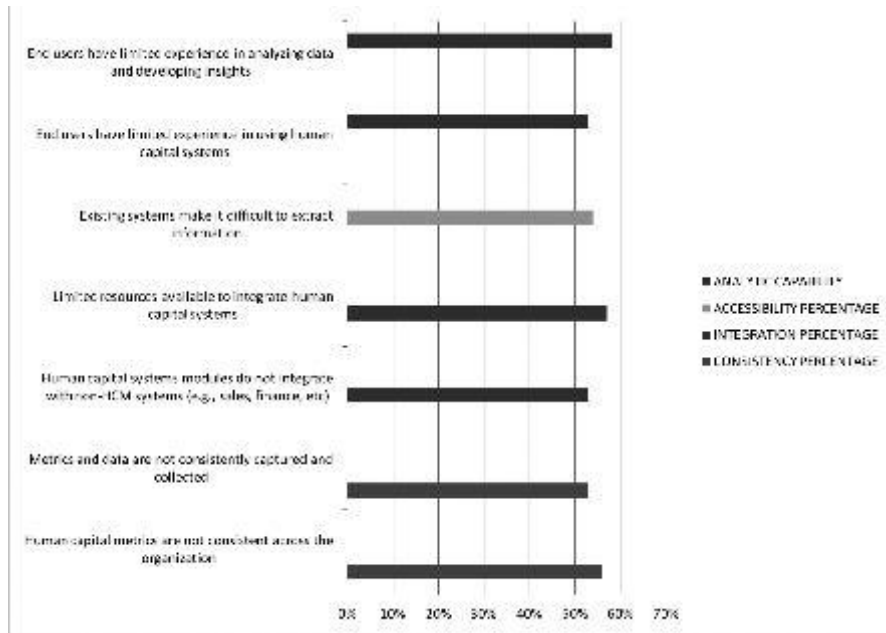
Figure-9: Stakeholder Groups Applying Workforce Analytics



Based on this data, workforce analytics play an important role in migrating HR from a more administrative to a more strategic discipline. Workforce analytics enable both HR organizations and the line executives who are the “owners” of various workforce segments to make more informed, fact-based decisions about the composition of their work forces and the performance of their employees. Without these insights, the HR function finds itself subject not only to further scrutiny, but also to criticism for failing to adhere to the decision-making standards practiced by other functional areas.

Yet, despite the promise of greater efficiencies and returns, workforce analytics continue to be mired in both technical and skill-related issues associated with its implementation. The researcher examined these issues across four areas: Data consistency, systems integration, information accessibility and analytic capabilities of end users. As *Figure 10* illustrates, 58 percent of respondents reported having limited experience in analyzing data and developing insights. Fifty-seven percent had limited resources to integrate different human capital systems, while 56 percent reported that human capital metrics were not consistent across their organization.

Figure-10: Primary Barriers to Implementing a Successful Workforce Analytics Capability



Findings of the Study: The survey data indicates that, of those organizations that do not currently have workforce analytics applications in place, 60 percent plan to develop and deploy such capabilities within the next one to five years. This is a testament to the perceived value of workforce analytics in helping HR manage and leverage employee data for decision support as well as analytics' potential to provide strategic benefit to the enterprise. For organizations looking to maximize their human capital investments and increase the strategic value of their SHRM functions through the use of workforce analytics, the researcher has identified five important areas of focus: The first thing an organization must do is determine what workforce-related problems it needs to solve and how addressing those workforce challenges will impact organizational effectiveness. Without clearly identifying problems that have a direct impact on business performance, organizations run the risk of investing time and energy in areas that are not a priority.

Once an organization understands what key workforce-related challenges it needs to solve, it must identify the relevant data requirements and develop consistent methods for collecting that data across organizational units, geographies, and systems. For example, definitions of basic data items such as “Who is a full-time employee?” and “Where is the employee located?” can differ from system to system, making it extremely difficult to develop “apples to apples” comparisons. Without agreement around fundamental metrics definitions and standards, analysis will be inaccurate and lead to incorrect conclusions. Next, an organization should define a consistent workforce analytics platform for integrating and analyzing data from multiple sources. This platform should be able to integrate data from different HR, ERP, learning management, finance, and sales systems into a common data warehouse where both standard and custom queries can be conducted.

Although some organizations have purchased best-of-breed point solutions, which highlight metrics within a specific human capital area, they do not provide a comprehensive picture of overall performance. This requires a single platform from which HR professionals and executive management can access and analyze data to make fact-based performance and strategic decisions. Once the organization has defined a place to bring the data together and perform the analysis, it needs to ensure that individuals both within and outside HR are able to conduct analyses and display results. For some user groups, packaged reports that rely on leading performance indicators and offer access to dynamic dashboards showing data about critical jobs may be sufficient, whereas other user groups may require the ability to drill down using trend analysis and cross tabs to segment data and diagnose underlying workforce issues. In many cases, organizations need both. What's important, however, is that workforce analytics address the needs of multiple audiences and be intuitive so that non-technical stakeholders can harness its capabilities. This can be achieved through, for example, self-serve reporting or point-and-click report generation. In addition, an easy-to-use platform should be capable of adapting to changing human capital and business requirements. This flexibility must allow the platform to scale and meet the future needs of the organization while minimizing the technical costs associated with reporting modifications.

Lastly, organizations need to enhance the analytic capabilities of their HR professionals and line managers. Although training is one way of helping to develop analytic capability, it is not the only one. A broader strategy might include recruiting people into HR who have analytic backgrounds, rotating employees into HR from functions such as

finance and customer service, incorporating analytics into professional goals and responsibilities, and providing a support system to make sure employees can ask questions and try out new practices in a safe environment. With a strong analytic foundation, HR departments and their personnel can more effectively manage workforce data and establish greater business context for human capital decisions. This helps HR professionals not only justify their decisions using rigorous analysis, but also contribute more effectively to the creation of business strategy. In today's difficult economic climate, organizations must rely on a combination of experience and data to make decisions that will affect their performance for years to come.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, of the study we can see three overarching themes:

1. In today's difficult economic environment, workforce analytics play an increasingly important role in addressing strategic human capital challenges.
2. Workforce analytics enable HR organizations to take a more proactive role in driving business strategy.
3. The implementation of workforce analytics continues to be hindered by both technical and skill-related issues. Unfortunately, at many companies, the ability to transform data about the workforce into meaningful insight has been neglected compared to other areas. From our study, we see that workforce analytics can play an important role in addressing many of the human capital challenges facing organizations today, as well as in enabling the HR function to play a larger role in influencing corporate strategy and direction. While we recognize the barriers that companies must overcome to truly build an analytic capability, these obstacles are surmountable with the proper level of focus and investment. What will be less easy to fix are the human capital decisions that many organizations are making in the absence of fact-based analyses needed for effective decision making. The researchers trust that SHRM practitioners will use the information gained in this study about the capabilities of HR professionals, and the recommendations to build on this knowledge base to create additional new knowledge on HR's current capabilities and the impact on Business Analytics, Talent Management and High Performance Work Systems. A new kind of HR practitioner as well as a business manager and employee can be expected in successful organizations in the future adding sustainable value.

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