

RESEARCH BRIEF

Does having an HR background matter to CHRO success?

In Ram Charan's Harvard Business Review article "[It's Time to Split HR](#)", he calls for HR to be split into two parts with each part run by a finance or operations leader. His challenge raises an interesting question: "Is a CHRO without an HR background any more or less effective than one with an HR background?"

While we can't conclusively answer that question, we do have some possibly surprising insights from the recent New Talent Management Network (NTMN) research report "[Enablers and Blockers of Talent Management](#)." One item asked in the survey was whether their company's top HR Leader had or did not have a background in human resources. Of the 201 companies that responded, 19% said their HR leader didn't have an HR background, 75% said they did and 6% gave a neutral answer. There was no trend and little variance in those answers by company size.

Here's how the survey respondents rated those with and without HR backgrounds on some key talent management effectiveness indicators. All percentages indicate those responding Agree or Strongly Agree to each item.



The data shows that there's no meaningful difference on these key items between those with or without an HR background. While the absolute score on each of these items is less than impressive, based on this data it appears that the leader's functional background isn't the differentiating factor.