STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN COMMANDERS AND CIVILIAN HUMAN RESOURCE LEADERS IN DEPARTMENT OF ARMY

BY

MS. JEANNIE A. DAVIS
Department of Army

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by

Ms. Jeannie A. Davis
Department of the Army
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civilian Personnel Policy)
Civilian Personnel Operations Center Management Agency

Dr. Gregory Baxter
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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Leading human resource (HR) professionals in private industry have recently recognized the advantage that HR leaders bring when they become Strategic Partners with business executives. They believe this Strategic Partner role is necessary because of the speed and extent of change challenging business today. Studies published by several government review offices assert that it is also time for government HR leaders to become strategic partners with commanders.

The current Army civilian HR (CHR) community is emerging from ten years of turbulence caused by downsizing and restructuring. CHR leaders are exploring new roles and learning new skills. The current CHR system is held hostage in outdated rules and guidance, limiting the range of options available for an HR leader to use in designing strategies that fit mission strategies. In spite of these obstacles, partnerships between commanders and CHR leaders can exist.

Army can and should take specific actions soon, to ensure that Army's CHR professionals become skilled in strategic thinking, credible, technically sound, and committed – in order to design and execute strategies supporting the commander and enhancing mission accomplishment.

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THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN COMMANDERS AND CIVILIAN HUMAN RESOURCE LEADERS IN DEPARTMENT OF ARMY

The greatest changes ever seen in Army civilian personnel management occurred in the 1990s, consequences of the nation's search for a peace dividend through service downsizing after the end of the Cold War, as well as National Performance Review and the resulting regionalization of civilian personnel operations. Changes occurred in structure, strength, functions, personnel, skills, and priorities within the civilian personnel community, paralleling those in the private business human resource (HR) community. To quote one HR professional:

> HRM units are evolving from their more traditional and limited roles as processors and custodians of personnel information to expanded, more sophisticated, and more strategic roles. This evolution places both invigorating and sobering demands on human resources managers and their staffs. For the human resources manager it is perhaps – to invoke Dickens – "the best of times" and "the worst of times."[1]

For Department of Army, Dickens holds true; it is now time, even if painful, for civilian personnel administrators to become true HR professionals in partnership with commanders to enhance mission accomplishment.

This strategy research project will examine strategic partnerships between leaders and HR professionals. How are for-profit companies defining these partnerships and what are their characteristics? Why are strategic partnerships with HR important? How are they created? Then it will explore the application of these answers to the Department of Army, considering the changes that have taken place in Army civilian personnel, as well as its systems and missions within the context of the federal government and Department of Defense (DoD). Finally, it will draw conclusions about the needed relationships between commanders and their civilian personnel supporting staff, and the actions and environment needed for those relationships to prosper.

STRATEGIC HR PARTNERSHIPS IN FOR-PROFIT COMPANIES

The term "strategic HR" has been the subject of many articles that attempt to provide a definition and conditions for its existence. One expert defines strategic HR as bringing "HR initiatives into greater alignment with overall business objectives."[2] Several authors use the term "business partner" to describe this strategic role for HR professionals; and two take *partner* a step further, claiming that HR must become a strategic *player* – recognizing that a player is on

the field, in the game, and positioned to score – not on the sidelines coaching, in the training room prepping, or outside the stadium taking head count.[3]

David Ulrich summarizes the partnership between managers and HR professionals:

> Partnerships ensure that, while both parties bring unique competencies to their joint task, their combined skills are more than the sum of their parts. Partnerships imply mutual respect, with partners working together toward common goals in a process enriched by varied perspectives. Partnerships encourage debate and differences, but ultimately find common ground on which conflict is replaced by commitment. A true partnership exists where observers at a staff meeting cannot readily tell the HR executive from the line manager, because both clearly focus on business results.[4]

Ulrich also provides a detailed discussion of Strategic HR – the heart of which focuses on aligning HR strategies and practices with business strategy. He defines four primary HR roles by their deliverables, metaphors, and activities.[5]

Role/Cell	Deliverable/Outcome	Metaphor	Activity
Management of Strategic Human Resources	Executing strategy	Strategic Partner	Aligning HR and business strategy: "Organizational Diagnosis"
Management of Firm Infrastructure	Building an efficient infrastructure	Administrative Expert	Reengineering Organization Processes: "Shared services"
Management of Employee Contribution	Increasing employee commitment and capability	Employee Champion	Listening and responding to Employees: "Providing resources to employees"
Management of Transformation and Change	Creating a renewed organization	Change Agent	Managing transformation and change: "Ensuring capacity for change"

TABLE 1. ULRICH'S FOUR ROLES OF HR PROFESSIONALS

The four roles incorporate multiple requirements in that HR must be both operational and strategic, both police and partners. It is the first role described, the Strategic Partner, which will provide a foundation for further discussion. The metaphor can be applied, according to Ulrich, when HR professionals participate in the process of defining business strategy, ask questions that move strategy to action, and design HR practices that align with business strategy. The activity of "organizational diagnosis" is a process by which HR audits the organization to

determine its strengths and weaknesses in order to align HR with the business strategy. Finally, Ulrich proposes that the deliverable of strategy execution helps businesses in three ways. Businesses can, with Strategic HR—

- Adapt to change because the time from strategy conception to execution is shortened.
- Better meet customer demands because its customer service strategies have been translated into specific policies and practices.
- Achieve financial performance though more effective strategy execution.[6]

WHY ARE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH HR IMPORTANT?

The business environment is changing rapidly. Increased competition, globalization, and continuous change in organizations, markets and technology are the norm. As a result, the HR environment is changing. Fewer managers with broader responsibilities manage work in new ways. Lifetime employment is rare and people increasingly have multiple careers. Cost concerns are driving organizations to take a hard look at support functions (paralleling National Performance Review in the federal government) and many times those organizations view the bureaucracy of HR as dispensable. A major way that HR can become more relevant is to become a strategic partner. But can this partnership mean a real value for the company? Studies show the answer to be "yes."

Ulrich noted three benefits of strategic partnerships – operations become more adaptable, customer oriented, and financially sound. Other experts make such statements as:

- "The future of the human resources function involves being an integral part of the management team – helping to build strategy, improve organizational performance, and develop such organizational capabilities as the ability to get new products to markets quickly and the ability to build quality into products and processes."[7]
- "To be full fledged strategic partners with senior management ... HR executives should impel and guide serious discussion of how the company should be organized to carry out its strategy."[8]
- "HR must now be judged on whether it enhances the firm's competitive value by adding *real*, measurable economic value..."[9]

The concept of aligning HR strategy with business strategy has been labeled "fit" with company policies, processes, and goals. "The importance of fit among functional policies is one of the oldest ideas in strategy. ... Fit is important because discrete activities often affect one another."[10] Fit provides unique competitiveness in the market, since it is harder for a competitor

to match an array of interlocked activities than single good ideas.[11] HR leaders acting in strategic partnerships are more able to create this "fit".

Several recent studies have confirmed the potential for businesses' improved financial standing when an HR executive works closely with the CEO to align HR strategy with the business. Ulrich noted that one study demonstrated a "good fit between a firm's HR practices and its business strategy enhanced chances of success, proving that internal alignment of business strategy HR practices, and management philosophy contribute to business results.[12] Findings in a study published in 1999 suggested "smaller and fast-growing firms can benefit from having senior HRM executives as part of their top management team."[13] Other studies found that a one standard deviation improvement in a firm's HR strategy was associated with gains in cash flow and a firm market value of $15,000-$17,000 per employee,[14] and "The significant relationships between strategic HRM effectiveness and employee productivity, cash flow, and market value we found are consistent with institutional theory and the resource-based view of the firm."[15]

HOW ARE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS CREATED?

Several experts have identified prerequisites for HR professionals to become business partners.

First and foremost is credibility. Senior management "has to perceive that HR has "earned a place at the table." ... knowing the strategy, culture, vocabulary, and operating issues of the business; having passion for issues which add greatest value to external customers and shareholders; and focusing on financial results."[16]

Second, managers must know HR professionals are technical experts in all the roles they play. While each HR professional does not need expertise in all roles, the HR function as a whole must provide such expertise. Technical expertise also requires balance among the paradoxes inherent in the roles – for instance, the close partnership between management and HR in strategic thinking and planning may alienate employees, causing difficulty in carrying out the Employee Champion role.

Third, HR must clean its own house. HR must champion HR principles, build a strategic intent for HR, and create an HR organization to deliver the strategy.[17]

Finally, HR must stop identifying itself as an internal function and concentrate on customers and results.[18]

ARE THERE OBSTACLES TO PARTNERING?

Today's HR thought leaders have recognized a number of obstacles to the formation of these strategic partnerships. Qualities and skills opposite from those listed above are clearly among those barriers, but there are four that bear specific discussion.

The first impediment is the lack of credibility of the HR staff. It is the exception rather than the rule to find an organization that views HR as focused on partnerships, even in the private sector. HR is viewed instead as an organization of police who take away, not contribute to, management flexibility.[19] This situation is magnified for the federal HR professional – the federal system limits flexibility even further and increases the "police" view of HR.

Another impediment that is found repeatedly in the literature is "an inherent tension between the outlook required for a strategic human resource role and the outlook of human resource specialists in a traditional HR role. These roles attract and require people with very different professional outlooks, skills, and identity."[20] In addition, one expert notes, there is typically not enough time for one person or function to do both – the urgency of the services eats up the time needed for the more important task of strategic thought. A great deal of skill by the HR leader is required to balance this tension.

A third obstacle to HR partnering with management is the capability of most human resource professionals. "To play a strategic role they will have to have analytic and interpersonal skills equal to the best consultants corporations now use... Many HR professionals lack these professional skills."[21]

Finally, top managers can sometimes be obstacles, because they do not always understand what partnership with HR entails. They may continue to hold traditional expectations of HR and even expect HR professionals to act as their "agents" – pushing management decisions and actions to HR.[22]

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN ARMY

The current Army civilian HR (CHR) community is emerging from ten years of turbulence, and has changed considerably during this time. When military, and subsequently civilian, strength reduced throughout Army after the Cold War as the nation called for a peace dividend, the number of CHR staff reduced proportionately. National Performance Review caused additional reductions of administrative staff and was the impetus for the regional service model. As a result of both these actions, from 1989 to 1999, Army CHR staff was reduced by 50% while Army civilian manpower declined 36%. The next few paragraphs describe the changes over the past ten years, to form a backdrop important for discussion of command and HR partnerships.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF ARMY'S CIVILIAN PERSONNEL COMMUNITY?

One of the major changes during the past few years was the restructuring of the CHR community into a regionalized service delivery system. Prior to 1994, individual civilian personnel offices (CPO) were located at major installations or activities, reported to the senior commander, and provided the full range of CHR support to a serviced population defined by the activity and its tenants. Beginning in 1994, in accordance with a DoD mandate, CHR was reorganized into regions, each with one Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) and a number of Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers (CPAC) located where CPOs had formerly been. By 1999, Army had complied fully with the requirement to regionalize its personnel operations, having created 10 CPOCs and 117 CPACs. The concept assigned CPOCs the work of the CHR community that typically did not require direct customer contact and operations that could benefit from massing of personnel. These centers ranged from approximately 60 to 265 staff. CPACs were smaller offices (generally, three to 25 staff members) on the ground at the installation level, to provide customer advice and assistance. Table 2 provides a summary of the functions performed at the CPOC and CPAC.

CPAC	CPOC
Advising commanders and managers regarding recruitment strategy	Announcing positions, accepting applications, rating and ranking candidates, issuing referral lists (in coordination with managers as needed)
Advising commanders and managers regarding position structure	Performing or reviewing assignment of title, series, and grade to positions, and advising managers accordingly
Assisting managers with employee problems	Processing disciplinary actions into database
Providing for local training needs	Developing regional training program
Negotiating with labor partners on behalf of commander	Coordinating with CPAC and labor partners on region-wide issues
In processing new employees	Processing data into database
Assisting employees with workplace problems	

TABLE 2. FUNCTIONS OF CPAC AND CPOC IN ARMY

Regionalized CHR services resulted not only in structural, but cultural change, for a number of reasons.

- Prior to regionalization, civilian personnel offices were typically organized by functional specialties (personnel staffing, position classification, employee benefits, management-employee relations, etc.). CPAC staffs, on the other hand, are primarily generalists,

expected to perform most or all of the functional specialties previously performed by specialists in CPOs. This resulted in a steep technical learning curve for the CPAC staff.

- Local commanders previously evaluated CPOs by a subjective review of services received. CPOC staff members are now measured largely on production – how many actions completed, and how quickly. A new skill of "production management" was needed, again with a steep learning curve – this time, for CPOC staff.
- New automated tools were introduced in efforts to reduce the impact of geographic dispersion of the region and to provide force multipliers, requiring staff (and managers) to learn the new tools.
- Split operations meant split responsibility and authority; the CPOCs and CPACs had little authority and responsibility to complete actions alone – instead, they had to depend on the other. Animosity between the two sprung up, as they attempted to learn new ways of doing business, worked through the cultural shifts, and made mistakes.
- Some operations traditionally performed by CHR were "divested" to managers. Reluctance of managers to accept these functions and reluctance of CHR professionals to stop performing them meant less work reduction than expected for CHR.
- Billet savings from CHR strength were harvested prior to reductions in serviced population, loss of work, or implementation of automated tools. As a result, many CHR staff members continued to feel that they were doing at least the same amount of work with fewer resources.
- Many placements into the new structure were through reduction in force or viewed as a sole option for continued service. People moved away from communities they had lived in all their lives at the same time their work life was in turmoil. Some placements, further, were to positions not particularly well suited to individual skills or disposition in an effort to limit negative financial impact.

Changes in Army CHR Command Relationships. Structural change brought changes in command relationships. Prior to regionalization, as noted above, each CPO reported directly to the commander of the serviced activity, who reported through major command (MACOM) channels to Army. The CPOs received technical guidance from that same MACOM. Under the new structure, CPACs retain the same reporting chain. CPOCs, however, report through the CPOC Management Agency (CPOCMA) to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civilian Personnel Policy) (ODASA (CPP)). Figure 3 provides a view of the dual chains of command for Army CHR staff.

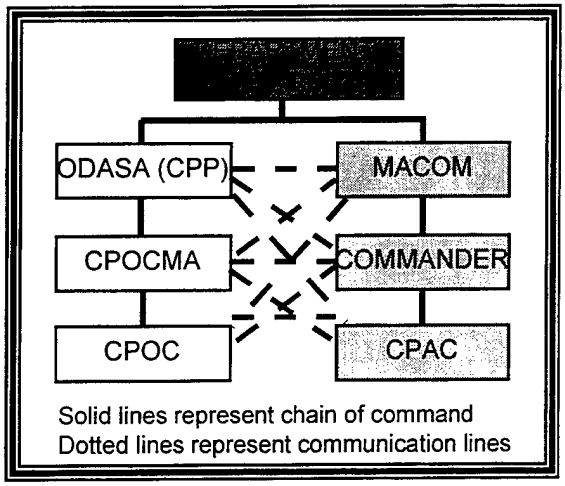

FIGURE 1. CHR CHAINS OF COMMAND

Impact of the federal system. As we begin to compare modern HR business practices with Army programs, we must not lose sight of a major disparity that exists between the two – the federal civilian personnel system. This system is founded in Title V of the United States Code and limits flexibility for the CHR professional in the federal service. Although some selective improvements have been introduced, there remain a large volume of complex and restrictive laws and rules. Some of the more exasperating to managers are those that apply to hiring and assigning pay. In a recent study, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) found that the frustration managers have with the system's inflexibility and control "colors their view of the human resource function that is charged with overseeing adherence to the rules."[23] Further, as noted in earlier discussion, current literature suggests that a major benefit of a strategic partnership is the HR professional's ability to "fit" the program to the organization's goals. While aspects of CHR embedded in law limit Army CHR professionals, fit can still occur. Individual examples can be found at all levels.

At the ODASA (CPP) level, a cell of planners has been working since 1998 to develop a program to align the civilian workforce with the transforming Army. This initiative, called Civilian Personnel Management System XXI, is an attempt to decide what the future Army civilian workforce should look like; and to find all available flexibilities the Army can use to attract and retain that workforce to support the transformation.

An operating level example of a situation where searching for flexibility paid off is in the hiring of scientists and engineers from outside the government. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the architect of rules for filling jobs, has delegated authority to Army

CPOCs to examine and certify lists of candidates to managers for specific positions. This Delegated Examining Authority (DEA) provides for the CPOC to announce positions, gather applications, rate and rank them according to guidelines provided by OPM, and issue referral lists to managers with names of qualified candidates. This process typically consumes several weeks from the time an applicant applies for an available position until a list can be generated for management to select. In many cases, because of the competitive labor market, private firms have already hired top candidates (with more flexible systems) before the federal job offer can be made. Faced with this situation, one CPOC worked with management to create a method of using the DEA at job fairs to receive applications and issue referrals to management within a few hours, allowing immediate job offers to top notch candidates. Without changes to the federal system, this type of flexibility is possible – but it requires committing to partnerships, understanding manager needs, and finding workable solutions within the constraints of the current system.

WHY ARE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH HR IMPORTANT IN ARMY?

Just as for-profit companies have been examining the need for strategic HR, several government organizations have recognized the importance of strategic partnerships between HR and government leaders. A report released in September 1999 by OPM, Strategic Human Resources Management – Aligning with the Mission stated "By integrating human resources management (HRM) into the agency planning process, emphasizing human resources (HR) activities that support broad agency mission goals, and building a strong relationship between HR and management, agencies are able to ensure that the management of human resources contributes to mission accomplishment..."[24] The study explored the strategic planning process, searching for involvement of HR in strategic planning and relationships between HR and management. Unfortunately, OPM findings were that "Few, if any, agency managers feel that their HR office is a true strategic partner...managers would like the office to have greater knowledge of the organizational mission; and get more involved and innovative in broad, organizational HR issues that impact most on the organization, such as recruitment and workforce and succession planning."[25] OPM finally states that in order for the HR office to be considered a strategic partner, HR needs to build its own internal competencies to be able to deal with organizational issues, change, and strategy; it must educate itself on agency and program missions to understand and be able to offer solutions to organizational issues; and it must continually assert the criticality of effective HRM to organizational success.[26]

A 1993 GAO report of activities in civilian personnel management within the Veteran's Administration (VA) highlighted the need for strategic HR in that agency. VA has long been faced with particularly difficult recruiting dilemmas in filling professional medical positions. GAO found that VA lacked an adequate HR planning system, and the lack of strategic HR hinders VA's ability to achieve its vision. One of the key final recommendations of the study was that VA's Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration "organize and develop human resource professionals throughout VA to become collaborative, future-oriented partners to line managers."[27]

The report of the 8th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation – Rewarding, Organizing and Managing People in the 21st Century: Time for a Strategic Approach – echoed the thoughts found in the GAO study of VA. While this review was directed to military personnel issues, its approach can readily be applied to management of all DoD personnel. The review team noted, "a strategic approach helps leaders align policies and practices to strategy. And horizontally, a strategic approach helps leaders coordinate various policies and practices so they work together as one system. Highly regarded organizations have found that a strategic approach improves the capability of the total enterprise."[28] The study found that Joint Vision 2010, Army Force XXI, and Air Force 2025 looked forward to a need for increasing innovation, agility, flexibility, and responsiveness in personnel and organizations – and suggested that current one-size-fits-all military personnel management systems do little to provide leaders with tools to meet that need. After describing four steps that leaders need to take to make organizations more effective (define a strategy, specify outcomes and behaviors, make strategic choices in design of the HR system, and develop policies and practices that align with the strategy), the report called for new roles for HR leaders in DoD (note that these parallel Ulrich's roles discussed earlier):

- Strategic partner.
- Change agent.
- Functional expert.
- Service member champion.[29]

Of course, the first role of strategic partner is the role that is key to this discussion. The study states "By shifting toward a more strategic role, the uniformed services will join a small but growing number of successful organizations that focus human resource leaders on what the operating units need (this contrasts with the conventional role of simply building efficient human resource management systems)."[30] The first recommendation made in the report is to expand the scope of the human resource management function, to "Adopt a more strategic role,

including active participation by human resource leaders in strategy formulation. Increase emphasis on and accountability for working with leaders ... to tailor human resource management systems to achieve the outcomes leaders need to accomplish their organization's strategy."[31]

Joint Vision 2010 clearly identifies people as one of the six critical elements required to transform the operational concepts of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection, and focused logistics into joint capabilities. It states that each of the concepts incorporates the core strength of high quality people.[32] It also recognizes that in the future, "Accelerating rates of change will make the future environment more unpredictable and less stable..."[33] The Army, in US Army Posture Statement FY01, documents its commitment to transformation – looking forward to engaged, decisive, and versatile troops. It says "Manning the force is an integral part of our transformation strategy. It encompasses a commitment to the well being of all the personnel that form The Army family – its soldiers, civilians, veterans, and their families – as well as an emphasis on superior ways of investing in our most precious asset: our people."[34] Army transformation envisions changes comparable to those occurring in for-profit companies – particularly in organizations and technology, with resultant changes for people in those organizations using that technology, and a need for revolution in the way people programs must be managed to meet those challenges. Civilian employees have a far-reaching impact on the ability of commanders to meet their peacetime and wartime missions. Many civilians are assigned to base operations functions in military communities and installations, to support troops as they prepare to fight and win the nation's wars. They serve key roles in such career programs as logistics and communication – again, supporting soldiers primarily during peacetime but also during conflict. The 222,000 civilians working in The Army are critical to its success, and commanders must have all available tools to ensure the best management of this vital asset.

WHERE SHOULD PARTNERSHIPS EXIST?

As was demonstrated in Figure 1, a command relationship exists between the installation commander and the CPAC, and between CPOCMA and the CPOCs. However, other relationships also exist – those of serviced commanders with both the CPOC and CPAC, of MACOM commander and CHR staffs with the CPOC/CPAC and commanders, and of CPOCMA and ODASA (CPP) with all others. Table 3 shows the relationships that are Command (direct report), Serviced (receive service from CHR) and Ad Hoc (communications occur as appropriate to the situation).

	INSTALLATION OR ACTIVITY COMMANDER	TENANT COMMANDER	MACOM COMMANDER	C/S ARMY
CPAC	Command Serviced	Serviced	Command Serviced	Command Serviced
CPOC	Serviced	Serviced	Serviced Ad Hoc	Command Serviced
CPOCMA	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Command
MACOM CHR	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Command Serviced	Command
ODASA (CPP)	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Command Serviced

FIGURE 3. COMMAND/CHR RELATIONSHIPS

Table 3 illustrates the highly interrelated nature of CHR work at all levels with commanders at all levels. It stands to reason that there must be a spirit of partnership among all commanders and CHR leaders to accomplish the work. However, a partner or player must be in a position to have an impact on the mission. Because Ad Hoc communications occur only sporadically and between distant partners, and then generally only when a specific issue rises (a tenant commander may contact his MACOM CHR to discuss a request for waiver), the development of those partnerships is not as critical to the success of the commander as the Command and Serviced relationships.

The intent of the strategic partnership is to provide for improved *results* to meet the mission through a relationship between CHR and command. Although the chain of command is important to the commander and the CHR leader for various reasons, the relationship that absolutely must be strategic is between the CHR leader providing service and the commander receiving the service. In this relationship, the work of the CHR organization directly affects the way in which the commander carries out the mission, resulting in an ability or inability to hire qualified candidates; pay employees competitively; provide adequate rewards; or make other decisions that are required to sustain the civilian workforce. Further, few CHR products are the result of the efforts of only the CPOC or CPAC – each of them has a responsibility to provide certain services and products. The following table illustrates the resulting partnership requirements.

	INSTALLATION OR ACTIVITY COMMANDER	TENANT COMMANDER	MACOM COMMANDER	C/S ARMY
CPAC	✲	✲	✲	
CPOC	✲	✲	✲	
CPOCMA				
MACOM CHR			✲	
OASA (CPP)				✲

TABLE 4. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS REQUIRED

CPAC Partnerships. The CPAC provides CHR services to commanders and staffs – to the commander in the chain of command, and tenant commanders associated with the serviced installation or activity. This will include the MACOM commander if the region provides service to a MACOM. While the typical CPAC Director works closely with the installation or activity commander (a natural relationship due to the chain of command), he or she must also take necessary steps to form a partnership with other serviced commanders. The CPAC Director and staff must know as much about each serviced command as the organization belonging to the chain of command. The primary challenge will be time – and the ever-present pull of the urgent over the important.

CPOC Partnerships. The CPOC provides service to a region, which includes many installations and activities. Challenges for the CPOC Director center on the geographical spread and the absence of natural relationships with particular commanders as exists with the CPAC. There are fewer opportunities to work together, so the CPOC Director must make conscious efforts to meet with and learn about the serviced installations – earning a place at the table.

MACOM and ODASA (CPP) Partnerships. Staff relationships are somewhat different than operating level relationships, but the same imperative exists for partnering. More latitude exists at staff levels for system design. CHR professionals at staff levels must partner with commanders and senior staff officials to be able to design system modifications and initiatives that complement and even complete the organization's strategy.

CONDITIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Army CHR has been in turmoil over the past ten years. There are fewer CHR professionals and they are learning new functions. The culture change is not over – it continues with new automated tools and work methods being introduced on an almost constant basis. CHR staff members attempt to resolve the paradox of the urgent (today's service requirements) versus the important (developing staff, building partnerships). These conditions hinder the ability of the HR leaders to be strategic partners with commanders, but they can be overcome.

Current literature discussed a number of issues that must be present for strategic partnerships to occur between CHR and leaders. Army must lay the groundwork for each of these to develop before partnerships can be realized.

Understanding by, and commitment from commanders and CHR leaders at all levels. Important concepts in Army are captured in doctrine, and then responsible individuals are trained and held accountable. This concept should be applied to the commander/CHR partnership. The requirement for partnerships between commanders and CHR leaders must be established in doctrine, published, and disseminated through multiple chains of command so that all understand and expect it.

The ODASA (CPP) publishes a five-year CHR Strategic Plan and updates it annually. The current plan suggests that the CHR employees need to step into new roles – one of which is partnering with leaders – understanding the missions, goals, and work processes of the organization and in partnership with leaders, developing and implementing strategies.[35] In response to the Army Vision of "Soldiers on point for the nation --- persuasive in peace, invincible in war" it posits a CHR vision of "Maximizing human potential to meet the Army's mission."[36] Its CHR Supporting Mission is "Provide customers with flexible human resource strategies and solutions to recruit and retain a highly effective, capable force."[37] Finally, a CHR Guiding Principle is "Develop a technically competent and confident CHR team that is strategic in its approach to CHR issues, concepts, and daily operations..."[38] This CHR Strategic Plan is an excellent start – but more emphasis is required to turn the plan into reality by creating ways to build it into training, regular communication, and most importantly, program and individual evaluation.

Partnership must be the first and foremost point of discussion regarding CHR in Pre-Command Courses and applicable instructional blocks in schools such as the US Army War College. ODASA (CPP) must incorporate training in strategic thought and partnering in the Army Civilian Training, Education and Development System (ACTEDS) plan for CHR leadership

positions. CPOCMA's Training Management Division (Army's training developers for CHR) should produce one or more courses in CHR Strategic Partnerships with Commanders, and ODASA (CPP) must require each CPOC, CPAC, MACOM and Army CHR leader to attend. This training should include strategic theory; National, Defense, and Army strategy; and leading HR theories – for instance, skills in organizational diagnosis, relationship management, and design of results oriented solutions to command problems ("fit").

Army's civilian personnel review organization, the Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency (CPEA)[39] must develop ways to measure the extent and benefits of partnerships with commanders in their reviews of CPOC and CPAC operations. Partnership must be included as a critical element of performance in CHR leader support forms and measured in performance ratings. All measurements must focus on *results*, not merely activities – do the partnerships exist, do they create a culture that supports the commander's strategic direction, and do locally developed programs fit and enhance the commander's mission?

Technical expertise in CHR organizations. Training is a key to ensure technical expertise in CHR organizations. Significant changes in business practices and technology over the past few years caused an intense training requirement for the Army's CHR, and many technical courses are in place. The Army's ACTEDS plan for CHR has a solid foundation for development; the problem for Army is in execution. CHR leaders are reluctant to attend or allow employees to attend training because of lost time in service provision (the problem of the urgent versus the important). Some CHR leaders have made significant headway in ensuring technical expertise exists in their organizations; others have not. The expertise simply must be developed, and CHR leaders must be held accountable for making this happen.

Credibility of the CHR leader. Credibility includes multiple aspects: strategic thinking (understanding strategic theory, knowing the commander's strategy, understanding the culture and vocabulary as well as operational issues); having fortitude and discipline; focusing on the customer; and overcoming the natural tension between strategic partnerships and traditional CHR roles.

Because credibility has been defined as "earning a place at the table" this aspect of the partnership is the most personal to the CHR leader. A philosophy of partnership is the first imperative for a CHR leader and anything less should not be tolerated. Credibility will, in some positions, be difficult because new individuals are in CHR leadership positions and the history of downsizing and structural changes have been confusing for some commanders and CHR

professionals. New relationships might need to be built before partnerships can be created. Training in strategic thought and partnerships will provide a start, but beyond the training, the CHR leader must clearly demonstrate both a desire and ability to provide the most effective CHR service possible. The CHR leader must be interested enough to pursue self-development in the areas of leadership and strategy (to be able to overcome the tension within the CHR organization), gutsy enough (to make a place at the table if necessary), and aggressive enough (to learn about the serviced organizations from the staff and leadership). Nothing else will substitute.

CONCLUSIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF ARMY

Ulrich says "Being an effective HR professional does not mean simply moving from operational to strategic work. It means learning to master both operational and strategic processes and people."[40] If Army and its CHR community take appropriate actions, our commanders will understand the value of partnership. Our CHR professionals will be credible, technically sound, and committed – able to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of organizations, and use that diagnosis to align CHR strategy to the business strategy – and able to execute the strategy to support the Army toward its vision. Army transformation requires a great deal from commanders, and a responsive, responsible partner in their CHR leader will provide them with the ability to make the most of their civilian workforce.

Enlightened managers in private industry "are beginning to understand that it's the integration of finance, operations, *and* people as part of an overall business strategy, that enables one organization to perform better than another."[41] Another contemporary author states, "Both in status and in substance, HRM activities are truly becoming codetermininants of organizational survival and prosperity."[42] The Army CHR professional must step up to the plate and become not only a partner, but also a player – the CHR community must begin to "score".

One author used an illustration from A. A. Milne to explain the current situation: "Here is Edward Bear, coming down the stairs now, bump, BumP, BUMP – on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is as far as he knows, the only way of coming down the stairs, but sometimes he feels that there is really another way, if only he could stop bumping for a minute and think of it."[43] Edward Bear, like the Army CHR community, is so engaged in the urgent that he hasn't time for the important. Army CHR must stop bumping and concentrate on getting down the stairs – to strategic partnerships with commanders.

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ENDNOTES

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[4] Dave Ulrich, Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997), 236.

[5] Ibid., 25.

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[7] Susan Albers Mohrman et al., Tomorrow's Organization: Crafting Winning Capabilities in a Dynamic World (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 221.

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[10] Ulrich, ed., Delivering Results, 112.

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[12] Ibid., 4.

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[17] Ulrich, Human Resource Champions, 189.

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[23] General Accounting Office, Management of VA – Improved Human Resource Planning Needed to Achieve Strategic Goals (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Accounting Office, March 1993), 16.

[24] Office of Personnel Management, Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness, Strategic Human Resources Management: Aligning with the Mission (Washington, D.C., 1999), i.

[25] Ibid., 23.

[26] Ibid., 26.

[27] General Accounting Office, 19.

[28] The 8th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, Rewarding, Organizing and Managing People in the 21st Century: Time for a Strategic Approach (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy), The Pentagon, June 30, 1997), vi.

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[32] John M. Shalikashvili, Joint Vision 2010 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), 2.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Department of the Army, Organization and Functions, U.S. Army Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, Army Regulation 10-89 (Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of the Army, 15 December 1989), 1.

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[41] Ulrich, Losey, and Lake, eds., 147.

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