



**BLACK HOLES &**  
**WHITE SPACES**

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF WORK AND HR  
WITH THE CHREATE PROJECT

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EDITED BY  
**JOHN BOUDREAU, IAN ZISKIN  
& CAROLYN REARICK**

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# The Unique Role for Executive Search Firms in Shaping Organizational Expectations for HR

Contributed by Allegis Partners

It is an unusual, and impressive, occurrence when a group of professionals convene during their personal time to discuss the inadequacies and insufficient readiness of their profession to meet current business demands—and then commit to changing that reality.

Certainly, professional groups including financial, accounting, legal, marketing, and others regularly gather to discuss new standards and methodologies to be integrated into their profession's tool kit. However, the general premise of those discussions is *not* the current inadequacy of practitioners to meet organizational and professional responsibilities.

Yet during the past three years, nearly 200 human capital thought leaders—the majority of whom are sitting or former chief HR officers, as well as leading academics and consultants in the HR space—have dedicated significant time and mind share to participate in just these kinds of meetings. Beyond outlining the challenges, they have concretely developed a 10-year vision for the future of HR that includes accelerated progress toward enhanced capabilities. And going a step further, the group has created action plans and new tools designed to propel this elevation of the HR profession and its service to constituent organizations.

The CHREATE (the Global Consortium to Reimagine **HR**, Employment Alternatives, Talent, and the Enterprise) initiative speaks volumes about the seriousness with which many HR professionals view the imperative of elevating the profession. After all, HR has had years of rough treatment in academic journals and elsewhere, and is often accused of being the

functional lightweight in the world of corporate professionals. For instance, consider last summer's *Harvard Business Review* cover story "It's Time to Blow Up HR and Build Something New."

But the commitment of CHREATE participants to remaking HR is more than a matter of professional pride. It is a matter of commitment to better serving clients and constituents, to holding up their vital end of contributing to corporate and organizational success in ways that improve the world in which we all live.

And after years of critics regularly referencing the need for HR leaders to deliver so much "more" without ever defining what "more" would really entail, the CHREATE Project has taken a careful, analytical look at the forces altering the workplace today, thereby driving changes in the nature of work itself. With these changes in mind, the CHREATE group has developed thorough and thoughtful capabilities profiles that may reshape the organizational structure of HR teams and also serve as benchmarks for HR leadership profiles for years to come.

However, as longtime executive search consultants, we understand that theory can only go so far.

To be impactful, the seeds of this good work need to be actively spread into organizational culture and into the expectations that CEOs, boards, and other corporate leaders set for HR. Expectations drive change. And executive search consultants are uniquely positioned in their relationships with CEOs and boards to convey and reinforce new expectations for HR leadership profiles—shifting conversations from purely operational requirements and transactional skills to strategic priorities—and then to bring into client companies the kind of highly equipped HR leadership that serves as a key driver of business performance.

As the only executive search firm represented on the CHREATE advisory board and one of only a few embedded in the actual work teams, Allegis Partners will take the lead in sharing this new understanding of required HR profiles with clients and others, while leveraging the power of this process to best meet corporate needs. To most directly accomplish this, we plan to ensure that the “future capabilities profile of the HR leader for 2026” is our standard as we discuss every CHRO search with our CEO clients. We have a unique, real-time opportunity to ensure that each client company CEO that we work with has the benefit of this cutting-edge thinking as the company selects its next HR leader.

Launched in 2013, the CHREATE initiative has proceeded in three stages. During the first phase, the group identified four key areas where accelerated progress for the HR profession would be pivotal to meeting future business challenges. Those areas included aligning HR with value creation for the organization, rewiring the work and tools of HR, enhancing the HR talent pipeline, and shaping expectations of HR’s key constituents.

During the second phase, progress included identifying the Five Forces of Change that are significantly remaking the workplace across geographic regions and business sectors. Those forces include the exponential pattern of technological change, social and organizational reconfiguration, the truly connected and information-rich world, the inclusive and diverse talent market, and human-machine collaboration.

The third phase looked to enable action that would springboard from the earlier findings. Allegis Partners’ participation began at this point, with a critical interest in bringing these new ideas to life by helping to shape HR constituent expectations through our executive search client relationships. And clearly, newly developed profiles of HR leadership are central to our involvement.

The CHREATE group's further consideration of the Five Forces of Change led to identifying newly required organizational capabilities and, thereby, new roles within HR and elsewhere in the organization. These new roles in no way dismiss or diminish the requirement for traditional HR skills, but they layer on strategic elements that both elevate the leadership role and meet the evolving needs of organizations today. What's more, they are bound to forever change the way CEOs, boards, and other organizational leaders view HR professionals.

The four new HR roles, as identified and defined by the CHREATE team, are:

- **The Organizational Performance Engineer:** An expert in these new ways of working, this person is a facilitator of virtual team effectiveness, a developer of all types of leadership, and a master in talent transitions. She is highly skilled in talent and task optimization, as well as organization principles such as agility, networks, power, and trust.
- **The Culture Architect and Community Activist:** This culture expert, advocate, and brand builder connects current and potential workers' purpose to the organization's mission and goals. He is adept at principles of values, norms, and beliefs, articulated through both virtual and personal means. He is also a social responsibility leader who influences beyond organizational boundaries— shaping policies, regulations, and legislation that better support the new world of work.
- **The Global Talent Scout, Convener, and Coach:** This HR professional understands new talent platforms and optimizes the relationships between workers, work, and the organization. She uses whatever platform is best (for example, free agent, contractor, or regular employee) and is a talent contract manager, talent platform manager, and career/life coach.
- **The Trend Forecaster and Technology Integrator:** An expert at manipulating big data and understanding and modeling trends, he knows how to code to adjust the algorithms as well as design work to optimally combine technology, automation, and human contributions.

These redefined talent profiles are compelling, but they will not power a change in HR leadership until the ideas move from theory into practice. Executive search firms and others are uniquely situated to influence this change.

It is fair to say that CEOs, like all leaders, don't always know what they don't know. In this case, CEOs may know conceptually, but not specifically, what great HR leadership can look like or what it can do for an organization—after all, they may never have seen it. And it should not be the job of CEOs to define these standards for the human resources profession, certainly not without the help of expert thought leaders in the HR space. The profession needs to show CEOs what it is capable of contributing. This is where search firms, particularly those with focused expertise in the HR space, have perhaps the greatest ability to move the needle in elevating expectations for HR professionals. Through their relationships with CEOs and board leaders, search firms can introduce these new HR leadership profiles in C-suites and boardrooms.

Considering HR leadership through the lenses of the four newly defined roles above will represent a dramatic shift in corporate thinking about HR. Until now, CEO and search professional conversations about HR leadership have centered on such needs as for a talent management expert, for someone with compensation and benefits experience, or for some other type of established professional. These are the traditional terms and skill sets that a CEO would expect to discuss when considering HR leaders.

However, the CHREATE thinking demands an entirely new dialogue between search professionals and their clients—and perhaps a new HR organizational structure. Our vision is to see the search consultant engage the CEO in conversation and questions related to personal, executive team, and corporate priorities. Current talent resources and gaps will be assessed, within both the HR group and the senior executive team. Priorities will become evident. This process better explores and

defines corporate needs, allowing for improved matching to candidate aptitudes. Then, for instance, if the CEO is committed to expanding data utilization but the HR team has limited resources in those skills, the Trend Forecaster and Technology Integrator profile might rise to the top for the client. A scoring system can highlight corporate preferences across all four new HR talent profile types to help inform and clarify decision making. And other assessment tools are also in the works.

Interest in the findings of CHREATE and the changing ways in which organizations should think about HR is already evident. As Allegis Partners responds to requests to present the findings to both corporate leadership and HR teams, the concepts are clearly piquing the curiosity of CEOs and other senior executives in our client companies.

The ability to integrate these findings and analytics into our already-reliable process of identifying, assessing, and selecting candidates for clients is an exciting prospect for Allegis Partners, as it should be for all search firms that hold a true commitment to understanding the ideal future profile of the HR professional, as well as to educating clients, rather than continuing to deliver yesterday's paradigm. We firmly believe that this new framework for selecting HR leaders will better reflect the challenges and priorities of companies, regardless of business sector, and will deliver leaders who will become integral to helping their companies meet business goals and build shareholder value.

The advocacy of executive search firms for elevated expectations when considering HR leaders can be a powerful force in raising the standards for both HR and corporate performance. Allegis Partners will be privileged to be the first executive search firm to fully integrate the significant advances of CHREATE into its search process, enhancing our service to clients, and better enabling HR leaders to meet emerging expectations.