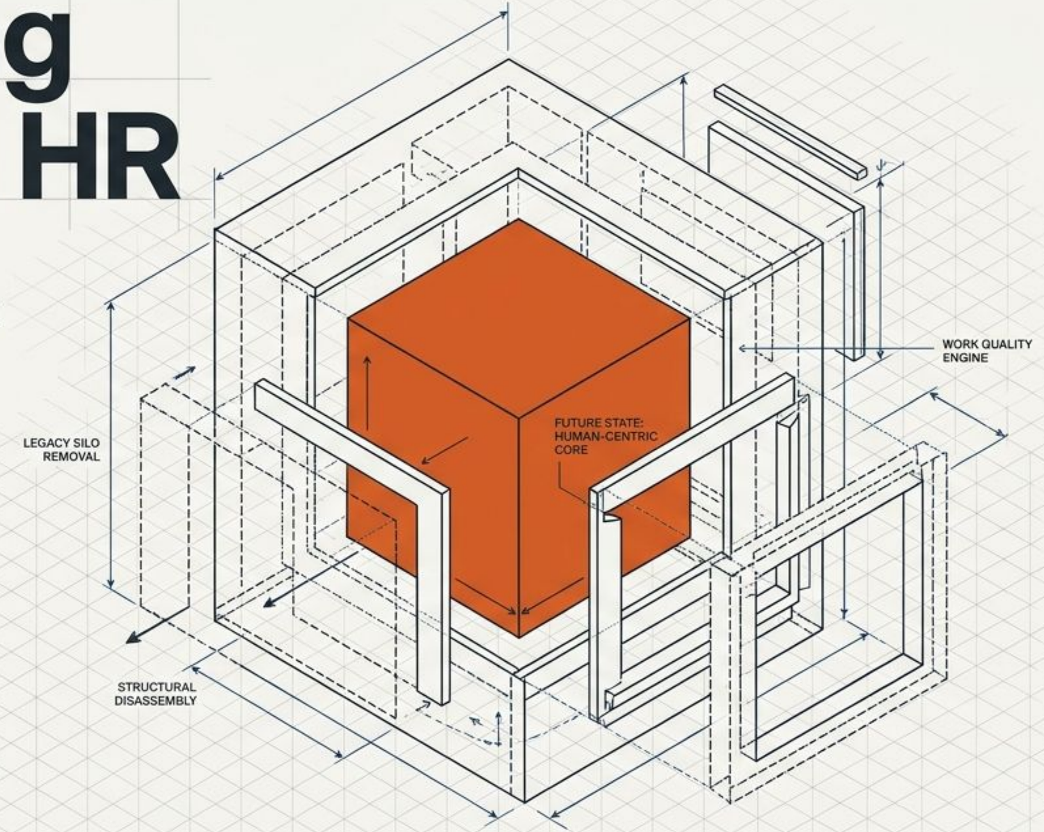
Dismantling Traditional HR

Redesigning People Operations for Work Quality, Not Employment Administration.



The Effectiveness Illusion

76%

of HR professionals rate their function's effectiveness as good or excellent.

48%

of business leaders agree.

The gap is widening because HR measures activity completion (tickets closed, requisitions filled) while the business measures work outcomes (productivity, retention).

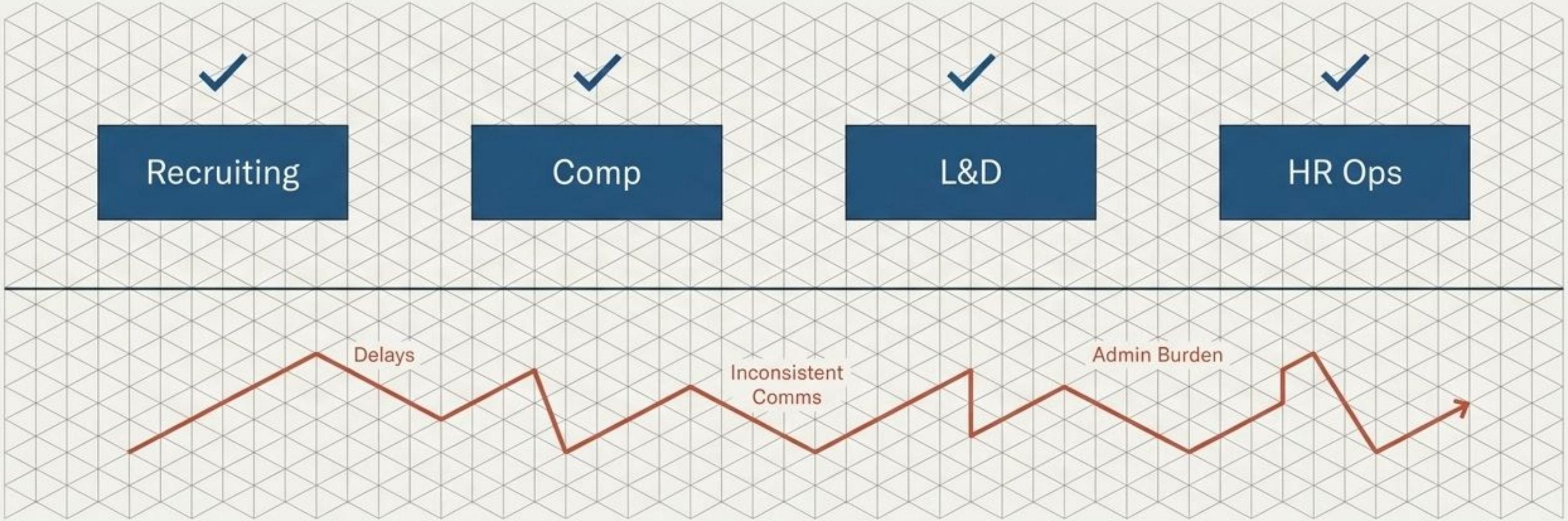
Source: SHRM, 2023

The Root Cause: Employment Administration vs. Work Quality

Industrial-Era Personnel Model (Status Quo)	Modern Work-Quality Model (The Blueprint)
Focus: Discrete employment stages (silos).	**Focus:** Integrated daily experience.
Organizing Principle: Activity ownership.	**Organizing Principle:** Improving work quality.
Metrics: Time-to-fill, completion rates.	**Metrics:** Productivity, trust, capability velocity.

Key Insight: We have organized HR around administering **employment activities rather than engineering productive, humane work environments.**

The Silo Trap & Handoff Friction



When functions optimize independently, the overarching employee experience fragments. Each function reports green metrics; the employee experiences a red timeline.

Reference: Patricio et al., 2011

The Systemic Cost of Functional Fragmentation

Capability Drag

30% gap between needed skills and actual proficiency—despite employees completing 60 hours of training annually.

(IBM)

Talent Loss

High performers are 3.5x more likely to leave over perceived unfairness, yet retention programs treat all departures equally.

(Gartner)

Manager Drag

64% of managers rate their organization's performance management systems as ineffective or counterproductive.

(Conference Board)

Speed Penalties

6-8 week traditional recruiting processes yield offer acceptance rates below 40%.

(Lever)

The New True North

If a policy, program, or intervention doesn't answer 'yes' to demonstrably improving one of these six dimensions, it should not exist.

Transformation 1: Employee Relations

Damage Control

Reactive investigations

Risk management

HR as organizational defense

Trust Architecture

Proactive fairness monitoring

Transparent decision frameworks

Manager-owned trust

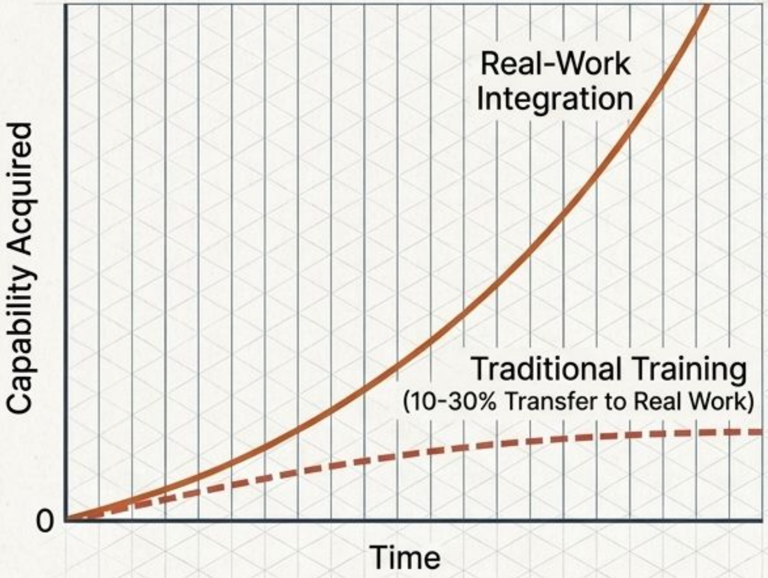
High-trust organizations see 50% higher productivity and 76% higher engagement (Zak, 2017).

Case In Point

Patagonia: Managers own trust-building and issue resolution; HR functions as coaches designing fair systems, not central investigators.

Transformation 2: Learning & Development

From Content Delivery to Capability Building

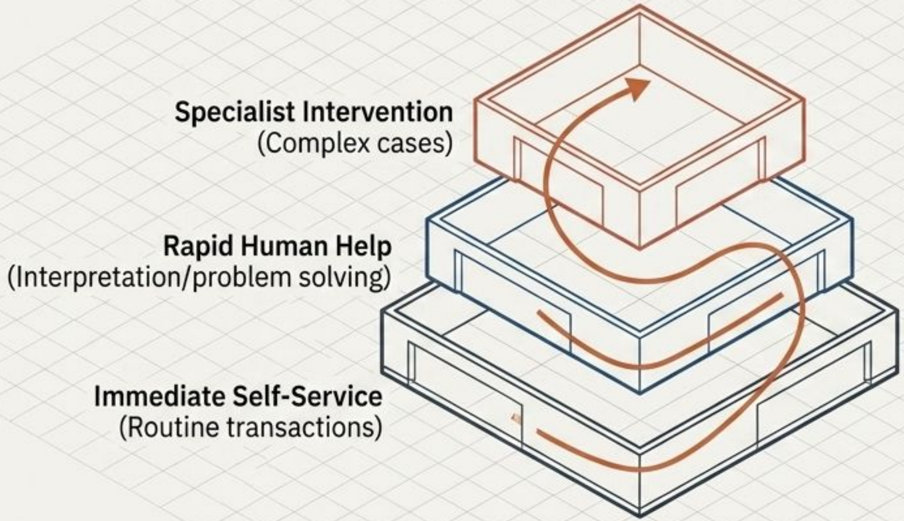


- Stop confusing training completion with capability acquisition (BCG: 89% complete training, only 37% gain skills).
- Shift to **performance-based** design and manager-led coaching.
- Create **real-work learning loops** over isolated classroom time.

Case In Point — **Microsoft**: Eliminated most traditional courses in favor of manager-led capability frameworks and real-work learning assignments.

Transformation 3: HR Operations

From Ticket Closure to Experience Design

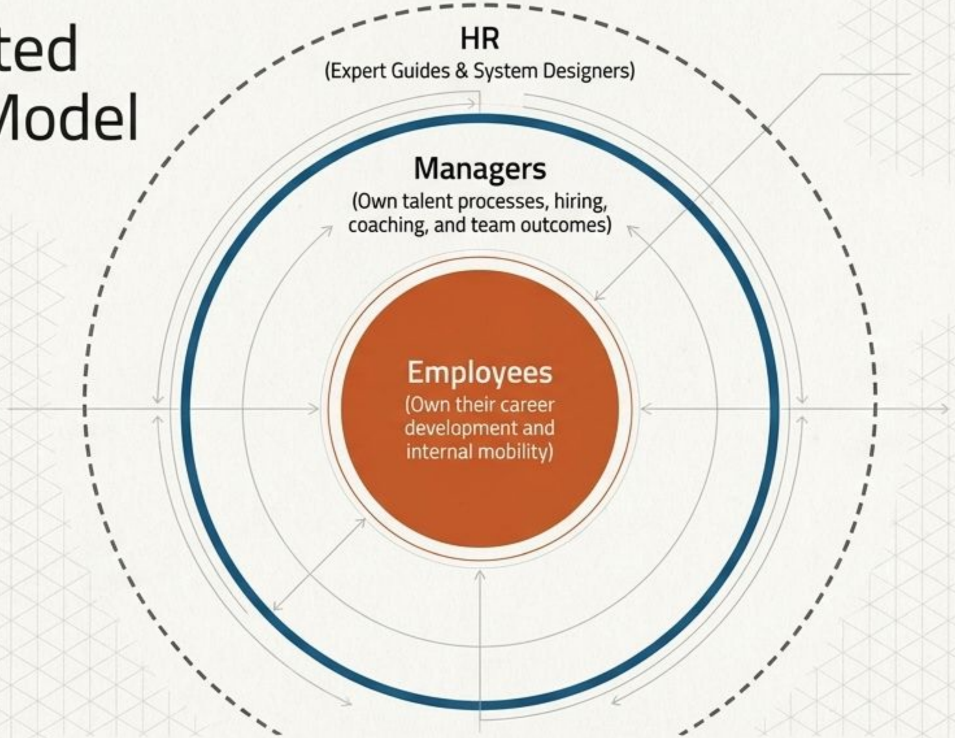


Stop measuring ticket throughput.
Start mapping end-to-end friction points and designing for user journey success.

Case In Point	**Unilever:** Automated routine transactions and integrated systems for new hires, eliminating 27 separate HR interactions and reducing time-to-productivity by 30%.

SYNTHESIS

The Distributed Ownership Model



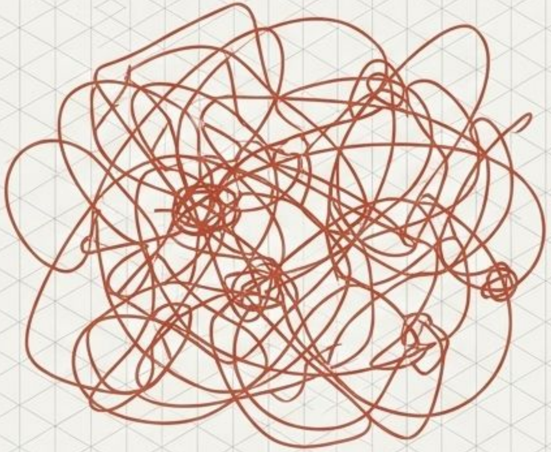
Concentrating people responsibilities in HR causes manager abdication. When managers own the system and HR designs it, capability and team effectiveness surge.

Case In Point

Barry-Wehmiller: Managers trained as "people-leadership stewards" owning the outcomes; HR provides the frameworks.

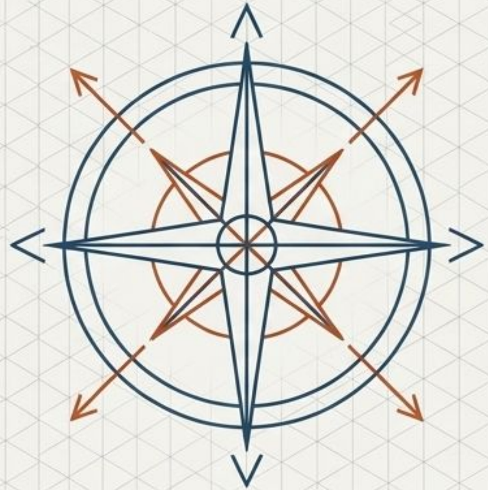
Policy Architecture: Principles Over Rules

BEFORE



Comprehensive rulebooks create an illusion of control while reducing actual compliance and fairness (March et al., 2000).

AFTER



Replace comprehensive rules with clear principles. Trust managers with decision trees, transparent authority, and context.

Case In Point

Netflix: Replaced exhaustive manuals with core behavioral principles, trusting managers to make context-appropriate decisions within clear boundaries.

Outcome-Driven Measurement

❌ Stop Measuring: Policies published, training completed, tickets closed.

Start Measuring: Lagging Indicators (The Results)

- Retention of high-performers
- Output per employee
- Capability levels

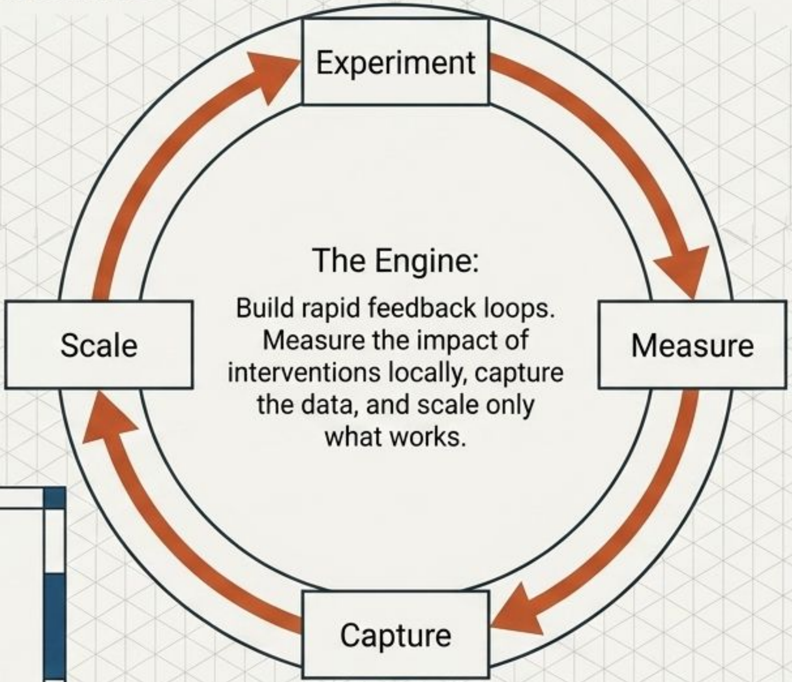
Start Measuring: Leading Indicators (The Predictors)

- Clarity of roles
- Org trust levels
- Learning velocity
- Perceived fairness

Measure what actually predicts organizational performance, and make the data visible cross-functionally.

Continuous Improvement & Learning Systems

Reject imported, out-of-context "best practices." Treat people-ops interventions as hypotheses to be tested.



Case In Point

Bridgewater Associates: "Radical transparency" and systematic organizational learning where work practices are treated as continuously improvable through data.

The 3 Actionable Principles of Redesign

1
Shift from Activity to Outcome.
(HR is accountable for system quality; managers own the day-to-day activities).

2
Measure What Matters.
(Replace throughput and completion metrics with visible work-quality indicators).

3
Build Distributed Capability.
(Invest in manager people-leadership rather than creating dependencies on centralized HR expertise).

The question isn't whether traditional HR can be incrementally improved. The question is whether organizations will accept the performance consequences of maintaining it.

— Jonathan H. Westover, PhD