

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR HR CAREER?

A guide to five possible HR career paths.

Namely  HR for Humans

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
HR GENERALIST	4
TALENT ACQUISITION SPECIALIST	7
HR DATA ANALYST	10
PAYROLL & BENEFITS ADMINISTRATOR	13
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MANAGER	16
CONCLUSION	19

INTRODUCTION

Identifying and pursuing new opportunities in your career is always exciting. The field of HR offers a well-rounded mix of functions that draw on a diverse skill set—from accounting to psychology. Whether you begin your HR career in recruiting, payroll, or even outside the direct scope of HR, the experience you'll gain in people management will play an important role in your long-term career journey.

Good news: the HR profession is fluid. Many practitioners find themselves [falling in](#) and [out of](#) different practice areas based on the skills they develop and the needs of their companies. HR gives you the opportunity to try new things, switch specializations, and even change the trajectory of your career.

With that in mind, in this guide we'll showcase five possible HR career paths, their [job descriptions](#), and [average salaries](#). We've also included expert career advice from professionals in those roles.

Ready? Let's get started.



1

HR GENERALIST

A 360 degree view of your organization.

Job Description

Generalists have a part to play in nearly all aspects of HR, from recruiting to payroll and everything in between. While this can be a lot of responsibility for one person, the role gives you a 360 degree view of the company.

Qualifications

- At least 3 years of HR experience
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Exceptional organizational and communication skills

Responsibilities

- Execute on compensation, including payroll and benefits
- Oversee the hiring process from recruiting to onboarding
- Manage employee relations, concerns, and culture
- Administer performance management reporting
- Create high-level goals and processes
- Ensure company compliance across the board

National Average Salary*

\$55,880

Is It A Good Fit?

You might like this role if...

- You're a multi-tasker
- You like to have a variety of responsibilities
- You always want to learn new things
- You're well organized

Advancement Opportunity

Starting off as an HR Generalist gives you the experience and opportunity to move into any specialized role you desire. As you work in various parts of the business, you may find that you're particularly drawn to learning and development, recruiting, or benefits. As this happens, it won't be long before the other parts of your role just feel like items on a to-do list. The generalist role is a great way for you to dip your toes in the water and get a taste of all parts of the field.

If you thrive on having a hand in every piece of the HR function, you're well positioned to grow into an HR leadership role. An understanding of HR's place in the company gives you the on-the-ground experience needed to make strategic decisions in each of these areas. You may spend some time focusing on different specializations, but having HR Generalist experience is important if you want to pursue a role as a Chief People Officer down the road.

TAKE IT FROM DINA...

"Every day I'm checking in with someone from at least one team, whether it's a new manager who has an upcoming 1:1 centered around a tough conversation or someone whose new direct report just crossed the 90-day mark.

I'm fascinated by the quasi-philosophical questions that arise from people management and HR. Questions like, 'How do people understand value and seek recognition, and how does that impact performance management?' or, 'What is productivity and how can we enable people to be more impactful in their work?' There's certainly a lot to unravel and learn."



- Dina Amouzigh,
People Operations Manager

2

RECRUITING SPECIALIST

Talent acquisition is more strategic than ever.

Job Description

With a focus on finding and developing top talent, the Talent Acquisition Specialist helps to build and shape the organization. In this role, you understand the importance of attracting candidates who are both well equipped to do the job and a strong culture add. This role oversees the recruiting, interviewing, and [onboarding](#) of top talent. Over time, talent acquisition can be broken into even more specific roles, such as department-specific recruiters.

Qualifications

- 2 years of relevant experience
- Bachelor's degree
- Excellent communication and critical thinking skills

Responsibilities

- Work closely with hiring managers to define the ideal candidate
- Promote job openings and scout external talent
- Drive the hiring process, including background checks and offers
- Lead onboarding trainings for new employees
- Foster a strong employer brand to attract talent

National Average Salary*

\$50,800

Is It A Good Fit?

You might like this role if...

- You're passionate about people
- You enjoy coordinating logistics
- You're interested in the responsibilities of various departments

Advancement Opportunities

Talent acquisition is full of opportunities to specialize. Love talking tech, data, or sales? As you go deeper into recruiting you can focus on these areas and develop a unique candidate experience for your area of specialization. Have an interest in marketing? You can help develop the candidate pipeline further by honing in on the employer brand.

If people are your passion, your experience can help you rise into a managerial or directorial role within talent acquisition. They say a company is only as good as its people—and in a leadership position, you can help establish processes to ensure your company only brings in the best.

TAKE IT FROM ASHLEY...

“To thrive in talent acquisition, get to know your business and become an expert on the roles you’re supporting. This will drive a more positive candidate experience and move higher quality candidates through your pipeline. Communication is the key to becoming a great recruiting partner for both candidates and hiring managers. Always follow up and follow through—you never want either party to feel like they’re in the dark on next steps.



Don’t be afraid of data. Data can help you make smarter hiring decisions and identify any issues in the funnel. Remember, you’re the hiring expert, so be confident when the time comes to advise stakeholders on building a more effective recruiting process.”

**- Ashley Pelliccione,
Senior Director, Talent Acquisition**

3

HR DATA ANALYST

Data has become a company-wide priority.

Job Description

HR Data Analysts track metrics throughout the talent lifecycle, from [quality of hire](#) to [employee turnover](#), and [everything in between](#). This information helps the broader organization build processes that improve the employee experience and ultimately save money. This role is still relatively new, so it requires creativity and strategic, data-driven thinking in order to track useful metrics and turn trends into actionable insights.

Qualifications

- 5 years relevant experience in data analysis or statistics
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Comprehensive understanding of the HR space

Responsibilities

- Establish core metrics to measure inefficiencies in the talent lifecycle
- Benchmark results and identify fluctuations over time
- Create surveys for qualitative insights
- Work with the rest of the HR team to implement changes

National Average Salary*

\$80,000

Is It A Good Fit?

You might like this role if...

- You're always asking "why?"
- You're passionate about data
- You love a challenge
- You can translate numbers into real life scenarios

Advancement Opportunity

If people analytics is your passion, you could work your way up to exciting roles like Chief Analytics Officer or Chief Data Officer. Even the broader Chief People Officer or Chief Human Resources Officer roles could benefit from analytics experience. Success in these roles requires a data-driven approach to process and strategy decisions.

If you don't see yourself staying in a data-specific role down the line, fear not—analytical skills can be applied to virtually every business domain. Working in analytics gives you the skill set to move around into a variety of other disciplines and make quantitative decisions around qualitative processes.

TAKE IT FROM ERIC...

“Getting started in a People Analytics career requires some knowledge and appreciation for each one of HR’s centers of excellence. If you currently work in just one area, schedule conversations or partner on projects with people in unfamiliar realms of HR to expand the breadth of your knowledge.

However, don't go too big, too fast: start by speaking with leaders to identify a business problem that inspires a research question, then think about what numbers and data can help you answer that question.

If you want to thrive in People Analytics, ultimately you'll need to brush up on statistics. Statistical correlations and t-tests are a good place to start. We often look at summary statistics (averages, percentages) and infer relationships between things, but correlations provide you a rigorous way to measure the strength of those relationships.”



**- Eric Knudsen,
Manager, People Analytics**

4

PAYROLL & BENEFITS ADMIN

When it comes to compensation, communication is key.

Job Description

Whether it's a missed paycheck, medical issue, or tax season, employees rely on their Payroll and Benefits Administrators to answer a variety of questions and make sure every detail is in order. Payroll and Benefits Administrators maintain processes to ensure that employees are properly compensated, covered, and understand their complete compensation package.

Qualifications

- 3-5 years of relevant experience in benefits or payroll
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Strong communication skills, particularly around complex processes

Responsibilities

- Establish processes for distribution and management of payroll and benefits
- Run payroll for employees
- Research and implement benefits plans
- Communicate insurance plans to employees
- Address any employee payroll concerns
- Understand compliance around fair compensation and benefits legislation

National Average Salary*

\$42,908

Is It A Good Fit?

You might like this role if...

- You are analytical
- You pay great attention to detail
- You're well organized
- You're a creative problem solver

Advancement Opportunity

A thorough understanding of the payroll and/or benefits fields equips you with the opportunity to grow into leadership roles in either profession. Whether it means staying in HR as a Chief People Officer and making strategic benefits decisions, or advancing into a Chief Financial Officer role down the line, these specializations equip you with a universal skillset needed across all industries and business types.

TAKE IT FROM CHERI...

“I love getting to know people on the team when they reach out for help. I often get emails from employees with payroll questions. Sometimes employees don’t receive their direct deposit, so I’m constantly communicating with employees to answer any questions that come up and get them resolved.

You never know what issues might come up (or how long they’ll take to resolve). My first payroll took me a day and a half, but as I gain experience, I’ve been able to complete them in 2-3 hours. Every day brings a new challenge and opportunity to learn.”



**- Cheri Greene,
Accounting Specialist**

5

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

A central contact for employee concerns and questions.

Job Description

Within the HR department, the Employee Relations Manager handles all things people. This means the Employee Relations Manager works collaboratively across the HR team, relying on peers for expert guidance when different employee situations arise—but the role’s primary focus is to advise and consult employees on any concerns.

Qualifications

- 3-5 years relevant HR experience
- Bachelor’s degree or higher
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills

Responsibilities

- Handle employee personal concerns that affect their work life
- Facilitate a safe and comfortable workspace
- Advise management on practices and policies
- Administer colleague relations and grievance procedures
- Ensure compliance with employment regulations

National Average Salary*

\$76,988

Is It A Good Fit?

You might like this role if...

- You care about people
- You know how to lead hard conversations
- You’re interested in the more human elements of HR
- You’re patient and empathetic

Advancement Opportunities

Working so closely with the people on your team helps you develop the management skills you'll need in the future regardless of industry or specialization. Spending time getting to know individuals at your company, help resolve their problems, and giving them career guidance could lead you to one day be a great manager, Chief People Officer, or even CEO. You'll also get exposure to a variety of different departments and learn about the advantages and challenges of different roles. Working in employee relations is a great path that can provide you with the skills you need whether you pursue a long-term career in HR or make a career change.

TAKE IT FROM ONEIL...

“The first thing I do every day is walk through the office and try to say ‘good morning’ to as many people as possible. This way, I’ve already engaged with employees before even making it to my desk.

I find that people won't trust you if they don't know who you are. Walking around the office helps employees know you're human and not some bureaucrat sitting behind a desk. HR often has a reputation that can put people on edge, because it seems like we're only there to evaluate them or deliver some kind of bad news. Being present every day helps show that we care and alleviates that tension.”



**- Oneil Franso,
Director, Organizational Development**

7

CONCLUSION

The possibilities are endless.

CONCLUSION

HR touches every part of the employee experience and as the field grows, there are more and more [HR career paths](#) to choose from. The best way to find your niche is to dive right in, get your hands dirty, and see what tasks align most with your goals and interests. Here's to finding the right stops along your path to Chief People Officer, Chief Happiness Officer, or even [Chief Listening Officer!](#) Though we've touched on five potential paths, always remember that the possibilities are endless.

** All national salary averages come from Glassdoor.*

