

The Economic Value of HR Skills and Capability

The Josh Bersin Institute and Global HR Excellence Certification

Introduction

The HR profession is a complex, multifaceted global community. Practitioners hold more than 350 different job titles—from recruiter and trainer to industrial psychologist and data scientist—creating value in many ways.

As companies transform their organizations with “[superworker](#)” jobs enabled by AI, the profession has become more strategic than ever.¹ HR teams are responsible for AI upskilling, job and organizational redesign, and shifting work toward a productivity-first, AI-powered operating model.

We estimate the global HR workforce at 45 million people, excluding external consultants and vendors. On average, these people support more than 100 business counterparts, which means their work and consultative services provide significant leverage across organizational performance.

¹ *The Rise of the Superworker: How AI Makes Every Employee More Important Than Ever.*
Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.



How Do HR Professionals Grow in Their Careers?

HR is best understood as a craft, rather than a formal profession. Like skilled carpenters, great HR practitioners develop through experience, mentoring, and hands-on work. Over time, they build intuition—a “sixth sense”—for navigating tricky situations. We describe these seasoned HR experts as “full-stack”: individuals whose judgment is shaped by diverse roles, companies, and challenges—making them wise and consultative in their expertise.

The HR role also demands a heavy dose of confidence. HR professionals regularly confront tough situations: struggling leaders; underperforming teams; workplace conflict, including anger from poor treatment; and skepticism toward HR itself. Confidence, grounded in knowledge and experience, builds trust. In uncomfortable situations, a seasoned HR leader brings calm, clarity, and a path forward.

At the organizational level, skilled HR professionals develop a deep understanding of culture and change. They have lived through growth periods, layoffs, M&As, CEO transitions, and dramatic business transformations. They understand the leadership, training, culture, and motivational issues that make or break a strategy. This “change capability” brings multiple HR disciplines together, making HR leaders some of the most important leaders in the company.

Today, as AI challenges every executive, technologist, and manager, HR teams are being asked to transform almost everything: job design, operating models, and how people are trained and enabled to use AI effectively. As companies reorganize every business function around AI, strong HR teams are even more important than ever.



Fewer than a third of HR professionals study human resources in school or college; most enter from fields such as recruiting, law, psychology, training, or other business disciplines—drawn by a passion in helping people and fostering organizational effectiveness.²

2 [The State of Human Resources Leadership Report](#), BambooHR/bamboohr.com, 2023.



Investing in HR Professional Development

Over the past 30+ years, it has been consistently surprising how little investment companies make in HR professional development. Like the cobbler with no shoes, HR teams work hard to develop others but often must build capabilities on their own. Therefore, they often move between companies, looking for mentors and trying to find employers who treat HR as a strategic function.

Most companies understand the need to hire well, pay competitively, and manage compliance, onboarding, and training. But that is not enough: the complex human capital issues businesses face can make or break performance. HR teams need broader exposure, continuous learning, and a deeper understanding of new operating models, technologies, data, and AI.

The Josh Bersin Institute: A Standard of Global HR Excellence

Unlike SHRM, CIPD, and other organizations that award professional credentials, our purpose is to provide a real-world view of what global excellence looks like—drawing on our thousands of studies, interviews, maturity models, and benchmarks.

Through a series of case-based, in-depth learning experiences, in partnership with USC Marshall School of Business, we offer a comprehensive certification in “Global HR Excellence.” See Figure 1.

Our goal is simple: to help participants become master practitioners as quickly and effectively as possible.

Figure 1: Global Certification Program



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2026

The Josh Bersin Institute: A Standard of Global HR Excellence



Over 12 weeks, learners in our Global HR Excellence (GHRE) program will dive into the most critical areas of HR—learning about best practices, maturity models, technologies, new operating models, and industry solutions—supported by hundreds of real-world case studies.

Candidates are certified across 95 capabilities within our Global HR Capability Framework through an AI-based simulation. Along the way, they will build connections with peers and learn from both our team and the USC faculty—gaining perspective, judgment, and confidence.

Candidates also get access to Galileo®, the world's most authoritative AI agent for HR—continuously updated with new research, data, benchmarks, and case studies. Galileo is woven into the learning experience itself—helping them practice the craft of HR with world-class AI tools to make smarter, faster decisions.



The Josh Bersin Institute: A Standard of Global HR Excellence

As an institute, our role is to maintain the curricula, Global HR Capability Framework (see Figure 2), and long-term value of the credential. Graduates become part of a highly regarded community, supported by ongoing engagement with the world's leading organizations to ensure the program reflects the most relevant and innovative practices in the field.

Figure 2: Global HR Capability Framework

Talent Acquisition	Workforce Planning	Learning & Development	Performance & Career	Leadership & Succession
Employment brand Mobile & social media Sourcing Recruiting AI Job descriptions Onboarding Interviewing Recruitment tools	Global economic trends Budgeting Talent intelligence Work design & redesign	L&D needs assessment Competency models Learning experience creation L&D tools & technology AI transformation of L&D	Performance management design Engaging leaders in development Career progression models Global mobility programs Performance management tools Performance coaching	Leadership models Identifying potential leaders Developing early leaders Developing senior leaders Succession management
Rewards & Recognition	Benefits & Wellbeing	Compensation	Employee Experience	Communications
Pay & recognition systems Recognition vendors/tools	Benefits programs Wellbeing programs Corporate social responsibility & volunteer programs Employee support	Compensation models Compensation benchmarking Internal pay equity Executive compensation Total rewards strategy Payroll strategy & management	Measuring engagement Acting on survey results Survey vendors & tools Employee experience strategy Digital/AI employee experience	Employee communications Crisis communications
Facilities & Workspace	Workforce Management	HR Tech/Service Delivery	HR Solution Design	Labor Relations
Sustainable workspaces Moving to new facilities Health & safety Flexible workspace policies	Workforce scheduling Time & leave management Skills planning Labor optimization Shift management Contingent workforce management	Core HR systems Service-center design AI agent building Case management AI architecture Data management Using AI tools & agents	Design thinking Agile methods User experience Product management AI agent administration & support	Labor/union relationships Harassment & discrimination Senior-level terminations
People Analytics	Change & Transformation	Organizational Effectiveness & Culture	Working with Senior Leadership	Leadership of HR
Types of people data Statistical analysis Using analysis tools Data visualization Data privacy & ethics Advanced analytics Workforce data consulting	Change management Mergers & acquisitions Layoffs & divestiture AI transformation	Managing organizational culture Global cultural issues Organization design Creating talent density DEI strategy & measurement	Consulting with C-level execs Selecting senior leaders Board governance	Leading the entire HR function Leading functional areas within HR Senior business partnership HR operating models

■ Talent Acquisition & Planning
■ Talent Development & Growth
■ Total Rewards
■ Employee Experience & Workplace
■ Workforce Management
■ Employee Services
■ Intelligence & Strategy

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2026

Economic Value of The Josh Bersin Institute (JBI) Accreditation

In addition to focusing on best practices and innovation, our work is grounded in business outcomes. The programs are designed to directly support business growth.

How do we quantify the value of a JBI certification?

Our data provides the proof: Over the past decade (since the founding of our first Josh Bersin Academy), we have assessed the capabilities of tens of thousands of HR professionals using our 95-level Global HR Capability Framework. This assessment spans every major industry and includes HR professionals from more than 130 countries.



Top HR Capabilities Directly Correlated to Revenue Growth

When we analyze these capabilities against "company growth rates" (companies that are growing vs. those with zero or negative growth), we uncovered a small set of *critical HR capabilities that matter* across three broad domains:

- **Leadership & Coaching:** Leadership assessment, development, alignment, and coaching
- **Change & Organization Design:** Change management, culture, and strategic change enablement
- **Strategic Partnership:** Consulting, complex problem-solving, and HR business partnering

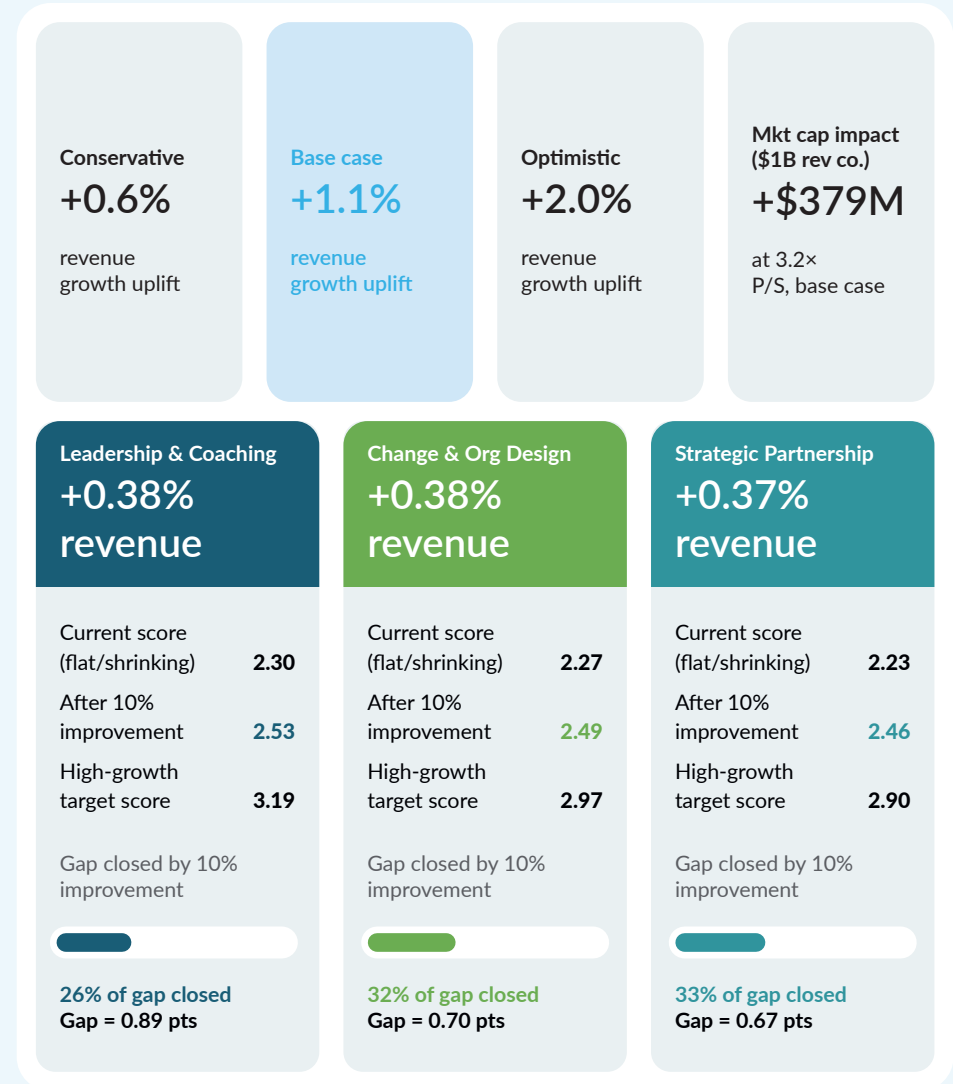
These skill sets directly correlate with revenue growth. While many HR programs focus on hiring, training, and operational efficiency, it is strength in leadership, change agility, and problem-solving that drives growth. Today, as AI reshapes work, this equation is stronger than ever.

To quantify the impact, we asked, "How much additional growth is likely if an HR team improves its capabilities in these critical areas by a modest 10%?"

The results are staggering: A 10% improvement in these critical skills will generate an average of 1.1% in additional revenue growth. For a \$1 billion revenue company that operates at the median price-to-sales ratio of the S&P 500, this translates to approximately *\$379 million in additional market value*.

In other words, the economic value of a JBI certification is significant. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Analysis of HR Capability Impact



Source: The Josh Bersin Company Capability Assessment Data (n=15,100 respondents)

Why This Matters

Why do leadership, change agility, and consulting capabilities create so much value?

Rapid business growth depends on a combination of strong sales and marketing execution, tight alignment across service and support functions, and an innovative research and engineering engine that can stay ahead of the market. The key ingredients are all fundamentally people-related: leadership, alignment, organization design, and problem-solving.

When HR teams strengthen leadership, enable a strong culture of change, and provide high-quality strategic guidance, business performance improves.

These three big capability areas represent the enduring value of HR—especially as AI automates more tactical work.

Join Us on the Journey

Build and certify your HR excellence!

Learn more at joshbersin.com/institute

