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FabJob Guide to  
**Become a  
Human Resources  
Professional**



TARA FOOTE

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Human Resources as a Profession

### 1.1.1 What Human Resources Professionals Do

Human resources professionals help businesses and organizations manage their staff. The human resources professional serves as a **link** between management and employees. Providing specialized services to staff members, the HR Specialist's goal is to foster positive relationships, to increase job satisfaction, and to make sure employee needs are met.



A human resources professional will work with an organization's management team to assess the **staffing** needs of a company by analyzing organizational structures and job requirements.

Specialists also prepare job descriptions, assess employee performance and maintain human resources records. They coordinate programs such as employee assistance programs (EAPs) and workplace diversity programs. They also assess learning needs and coordinate and lead **training programs**. Specific responsibilities may include:

- **Recruitment and selection** – attracting qualified employees and matching them to jobs within the organization
- **Training and development** – conducting employee orientation and ongoing technical training and personal development classes for staff members and management

- **Employee relations** – working with employees and management to address staff member concerns, administer performance appraisals, and aid with assistance programs
- **Human resources administration** – developing company policies and procedures, employee surveys, and other administrative duties
- **Salary and benefits** – administering employee pay and other compensation

HR specialists' work will vary by type of organization and the degree of specialization within the human resources department. Chapter 4 of this guide gives detailed information and resources to assist you in doing each part of the job.

## 1.1.2 Who Can Do Well in This Career

While anyone may enter this career, those who are likely to enjoy it and be successful tend to have particular skills.

The most important skills required for this type of career are **communication skills**. In the past, much of the work of human resources professionals involved paperwork. For example, specialists would have analyzed job needs and administered the hiring process. With cutbacks in staff, even employees who worked primarily in the background processing paper now have to deal more directly with people.

Specialists in human resources require excellent written and oral communication skills. They need to be able to establish rapport with people of all educational and occupational backgrounds, and must be able to work cooperatively with members of a team. An HR specialist should be a good investigator and **problem solver**, and know how to motivate people.

They require conflict resolution and **negotiation skills**, and an ability to work under high pressure. Remaining calm and controlled while helping others to do so is a valuable skill, and tact and discretion are vital. A willingness to pursue ongoing education on various aspects of the work, and changing regulations is important in most human resources positions.

HR positions often require additional knowledge and skills, such as a specialization in training or strong computer skills.

You will find more information about specific skills, and how to develop them, in Chapter 2 of this guide.

### 1.1.3 Where the Jobs Are

Although widely distributed across all industries, the majority of human resources professionals in the United States and Canada work in government, business manufacturing, hospitality and services, finance, insurance and real estate. Chapter 3 of this guide offers step-by-step advice on how to get hired.

## 1.2 The Benefits of This Profession

Aside from the rewarding and fulfilling career opportunities, why should you consider a career as a human resources professional? Great working conditions, excellent pay, and plenty of job opportunities are just a few of the reasons why entering this field is a **smart career choice!**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, human resources professionals usually work in well-equipped offices of large organizations. In some cases, they work for small companies, where they have an opportunity to handle a variety of tasks. They generally work **regular hours**, five days a week, with little overtime required.

In the U.S., human resources managers earned about \$85,102 in 2010, while Canadian human resources managers earned an average of C\$84,433. This amount is much higher than the average salary (approximately C\$49,068 in 2010) for full-time, full year workers in all Canadian professions. In a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, bachelor's degree candidates majoring in human resources in the U.S. received starting offers averaging \$45,170.

Both U.S. and Canadian projections call for human resources professional jobs to grow much faster than the average for all occupations. Job openings are forecast to become available because of people retiring or otherwise leaving the workforce, with the remainder of growth coming from new demands including legislation, revising workplace standards, and rising healthcare costs. This growth projection appears to be high as increasingly more companies see the need to operate with a human resources professional staff member.

Whether you are interested in working for a small company or a large organization, there are many opportunities available for hardworking, energetic, and qualified individuals!