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Is Your Organization Designed for What's Next?

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, organizational needs are shifting. AI adoption, ongoing talent shortages in specialized roles, economic uncertainty, shifting workforce expectations, and geopolitical pressures continue to reshape how organizations operate and compete. Leaders are feeling the impact and asking themselves tough questions: ***Do we still have the right people in the right roles to meet the demands of today and tomorrow?*** Increasingly, organizations are reconsidering their organizational design not simply to reduce costs, but to improve agility, accelerate decision-making, and ensure people are focused on the highest-value work.

As organizations evaluate how work gets done and what capabilities will be needed in the future, leaders are increasingly examining whether their current structure, leadership capacity, and workforce plans still support their strategic goals. Strategy is only as effective as an organization's ability to execute it. As priorities evolve, structures, decision-making processes, and roles that once supported success can unintentionally slow progress.

Organizational Design: Turning Strategy into Execution

Intentional organizational design aligns strategy, structure, leadership, and accountability so the business can deliver on its objectives. It looks at how decisions are made, how teams work together, and whether the organization has the capabilities its strategy requires. When it works well, organizations execute faster, adapt more readily, and make better use of their people.

When is it Time to Reassess Your Organizational Design?

How do you know if your organization is designed effectively? The signs are often subtle at first. Decisions take longer than they should. Accountability becomes unclear. Teams duplicate effort. Leaders become bottlenecks.

In our work with senior leaders and HR professionals, we often see four common triggers that prompt a reassessment of structure and roles:

1. Shifting Business Needs – This could be prompted by lagging performance indicators, such as the profit and loss statement, or by a more future-focused strategy that is responding to external pressures and opportunities.

2. Technological Evolution – Automation, AI, and digital systems are changing how work gets done and by whom. As technology reshapes workflows and decision-making, it often reveals outdated role definitions or exposes gaps in team structure and capabilities, accelerating the need for reassessment.

3. Underutilized Talent – It is not uncommon for leaders to sense that some team members have outgrown their roles or their current roles no longer reflect their capabilities, which can affect both engagement and performance.

4. Lack of Role Clarity – This can emerge over time as roles evolve without formal updates. It can happen with long-standing team members or even with new hires who walk into an unclear or shifting mandate.

"The most successful organizations are not waiting for performance challenges to force change. They are regularly evaluating structures, capabilities, and workforce plans to ensure they are prepared for future demands."

- **Laurel A. Clark, FCPHR, MBA, C.Dir., ACC**
Sr. Associate, KBRS



The Human Side of Organizational Redesign

Whether rightsizing, or shifting your team based on the ebbs and flows of your organization needs and goals, how changes are planned, communicated, and implemented will influence how the entire organization moves forward. Culture, trust, and productivity can all be affected, for better or worse.

That's where HR comes in. Whether your organization uses titles like Human Resources, People and Culture, or Talent Advisors, these professionals play a vital role in guiding change. For simplicity, we'll refer to them collectively as HR throughout this article.

HR's Strategic Role in Workforce Planning and Organizational Design

1. Planning

Good planning lays the foundation for everything that follows.

This is where strategy meets execution. HR can support by:

- Conducting a skills and workforce gap analysis
- Mapping current roles to future needs
- Identifying overlapping roles and mission-critical talent
- Building a clear, step-by-step plan for the change

"One of the most consistent themes we see in our work is that organizations who invest time upfront in planning are the ones who navigate change with the most stability. It's not just about structure, it's about setting people up for success."

- **Janice Tanner Ernst, CPHR**
Partner, KBRS



2. Capability Building

Redesign is not only about changing roles and org charts. It is an opportunity to prepare people and leaders for the future. A seasoned HR advisor can help leaders explore how existing talent might contribute in new ways through:

- Upskilling and reskilling for emerging priorities
- Redesigning roles around an employees strengths and potential
- Creating stretch assignments and internal career pathways
- Developing leaders to guide teams through uncertainty
- Redeploying people to areas where they can create greater impact

When organizations pair structural change with a meaningful investment in people, redesign can create renewed energy, stronger leadership, and new opportunities for growth.

> "The strongest organizational redesigns don't just determine which roles are needed next. Instead, they help people and leaders build the capabilities to succeed in them."
>
> - **Heather Peters, PCC, MER, LINX-EF**
> Senior Associate, KBRS



3. Communications

Change can be unsettling for teams. Clear and compassionate communication is crucial. Experienced HR leaders can help develop a communications plan that considers:

- Leadership alignment and internal messaging
- How and when to inform affected individuals
- Communication to the broader team
- Any external communication needed, including clients or partners

The timing, tone, and transparency of your messaging can significantly shape how change is received.

4. Managing Impact

Most organizations do everything they can to upskill, reskill, and redeploy their teams. These efforts can create real growth opportunities for individuals. But even in progressive people-first organizations, there may come a time when restructuring results in employment termination.

Supporting both exiting and staying employees through transition is vital. This includes:

- Equipping managers to respond to concerns from remaining team members
- Offering Outplacement Services/Career Transition to support exiting employees in their next steps
- Providing access to emotional and mental health supports where appropriate
- Reinforcing a sense of purpose and stability

While significant attention is often paid to departing employees, retaining the confidence, engagement, and trust of those who remain is equally critical to long-term success. People remember how they were treated during difficult times. That memory shapes engagement and loyalty moving forward.

5. Compliance

If it becomes clear that a change in organizational design will result in material changes to employment contracts or the ending of employment, employment standards and legal obligations should be considered.

Pairing thoughtful HR guidance on the human impact of change with sound legal advice protects both your organization and your people.

"Supporting people through transition isn't just the right thing to do, it's a strategic investment in your future culture. How you treat people during change will echo long after the restructuring is complete."

- **Peter Clarkson**
  Career Transition Lead, KBRS



6. Sustaining Positive Momentum

Restructuring isn't the end of the story. HR leaders can help ensure the organization stays on track by:

- Monitoring morale and engagement
- Supporting leaders as they reinforce new structures and expectations
- Aligning talent strategies with the organization's new direction

Change that is well-managed can lead to renewed energy and clarity.

"We often remind leaders that the real work begins after the announcement. Following through with consistent messaging, support, and accountability is what helps new structures take root."

- **Joanne Brown, CPHR, CLC**
  Senior Associate, KBRS



Change Is Hard, But It Can Be Human-Centered

A thoughtful and well-executed plan serves both the organization and its people. When leaders support their teams with care and clarity, even difficult transitions can be moments that strengthen culture, rather than erode it.

Whether you're evaluating future workforce needs, exploring organizational redesign, preparing for growth, or managing a period of transition, experienced HR advisors can help leaders make thoughtful decisions that balance business priorities and employee experience.

How can KBRS help?

From organizational design and workforce planning, to leadership development and restructuring, KBRS helps leaders navigate their most important talent decisions with confidence.

Contact our Experts:

Our team of People Strategy Consultants includes certified coaches, seasoned HR leaders, and experienced advisors who bring practical guidance and decades of experience helping organizations navigate their most important people decisions.



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