

**So, You Want to Work in Human Resources**  
Communication Studies Department

<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

**Overview:** Every organization wants to attract the most qualified employees and match them to jobs for which they are best suited. However, many enterprises are too large to permit close contact between top management and employees. Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists provide this connection.

The duties given to entry-level workers will vary, depending on whether the new workers have a degree in human resource management, have completed an internship, or have some other type of human resources-related experience. Entry-level workers often enter formal or on-the-job training programs in which they learn how to classify jobs, interview applicants, or administer employee benefits.

*Employee benefits managers and specialists* manage the company's employee benefits program, notably its health insurance and pension plans. Expertise in designing and administering benefits programs continues to take on importance as employer-provided benefits account for a growing proportion of overall compensation costs, and as benefit plans increase in number and complexity. For example, pension benefits might include a 401K or thrift savings, profit-sharing, and stock ownership plans; health benefits might include long-term catastrophic illness insurance and dental insurance. Benefits managers must keep abreast of changing Federal and State regulations and legislation that may affect employee benefits.

Human resources work usually takes place in clean, pleasant, and comfortable office settings.

**Education and Training:** In filling entry-level jobs, many employers seek college graduates who have majored in human resources, human resources administration, or industrial and labor relations. Other employers look for college graduates with a technical or business background or a well-rounded liberal arts education. Because an interdisciplinary background is appropriate in this field, a combination of courses in the social sciences, business, and behavioral sciences is useful. Most prospective human resources specialists should take courses in compensation, recruitment, training and development, and performance appraisal, as well as courses in principles of management, organizational structure, and industrial psychology. Other relevant courses include business administration, public administration, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and statistics.

**Other Qualifications:** The human resources field demands a range of personal qualities and skills. Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists must speak and write effectively. The growing diversity of the workforce requires that they work with or supervise people with various cultural backgrounds, levels of education, and experience. They must be able to cope with conflicting points of view, function under pressure, and demonstrate discretion, integrity, fair-mindedness, and a persuasive, congenial personality. Advanced degrees in law or business may be required for executive level positions.

**Job Outlook:** Employment of human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations. College graduates who have earned certification should have the best job opportunities.

**For More Information:** <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos021.htm>

**Source:** U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook