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The natural attributes that support HR professionals to excel in their role may also be holding the profession back from having a more senior and influential voice at the management table, according to a research project.

The project, which involved 23 senior Australian HR professionals, found that their leadership attributes and learnings were "out of kilter" with those usually found at a director/CEO level.

"What we've discovered so far is our senior HR people have attributes that are very relational driven," said Paul Findlay, managing director of white collar training provider PD Training, which conducted the research project.

"That's not surprising because it's our job to be that person. However when we profile senior business leaders and CEOs, their profiles are primarily achievement driven – they want to get stuff done now and they want outcomes.

"So we have a disconnect between HR and other leaders and if, as a profession, we want more influence and to be taken more seriously we need to bridge the gaps."

The HR professionals were put through a new leadership mapping tool to determine their leadership preferences and to map precise development plans to support business strategy.

"If, as a profession, we want more influence and to be taken more seriously we need to bridge the gaps"

The leadership development companion (LDC) tool, which uses a short psychometric test to map how comfortable a person is in undertaking various leadership functions and whether it comes naturally to them or requires a stretch.

The tool also maps personalities into four quadrants: consultative counsellor, adaptive coach, contemplative advisor and directive driver, and 90 per cent of the HR professionals who undertook the test fell into either the consultative counselor or adaptive coach quadrants.

"Conversely, the majority of other business heads and CEOs usually fall into the directive driver quadrant," Findlay said.

This initial sample is part of a larger study to compare the attributes of people focused leaders with other leadership cohorts.

"We're looking to profile at least 100 people focused leaders," he said.

"Through analysis and training mapping we want to assist HR professionals to focus their professional needs to ultimately gain a stronger, focused voice at the leadership table."

Image source: iStock

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Craig Donaldson is editor of Inside HR magazine, and is responsible for the strategic planning, creation, production and ongoing development of the magazine, its online presence and social media platforms. Craig has been a journalist and editor for 15 years, and written for a range of HR and business publications locally and internationally, with a focus on driving effective organisational results through people.

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