



NATALIE SWIFT

FACT FILE

We asked our **superhero Head of Faculty, Natalie Swift**, some of our burning questions about a **career in HR**.

Natalie has over 20 years' experience in HR and management training, working at a senior level across public and private sectors. Her path has given her the opportunity to take on many different responsibilities, and she now owns her own HR firm and continues with other ventures at the same time.

If you're unsure about taking the step, or you're in HR and want to know what else the industry can offer, give our interview a read and feel inspired by the various roles and situations you will come across throughout a career in HR.

1. *Have you always wanted to be in HR?*

At school I enjoyed being part of sports teams and found a natural tendency towards a coordinating role - arranging training sessions, cover for sick players, resolving conflicts within the team and coordinating social events. I really enjoyed the feeling of supporting a group of people in joint activities and being a central part of that community. I didn't spot the link between this and working in HR at the time.

My degree was in property management, and I left university not sure which career path I wanted to follow. Within 6 months of being in work on a general graduate training programme I realised the link between Personnel work (as it was called then) and my natural enjoyment of supporting groups of people. I moved into my first role in a Personnel department in 1996, aged 22.

2. *How did you get into it?*

I applied for a role as an Assistant Personnel Officer with an accountancy company, who had a great graduate training scheme for the accountants there. They applied this commitment to graduate development to myself too, and offered to fund a 2-year CIPD Post-graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (Level 7) qualification alongside my work, which gave me an amazing start to my career in HR.

3. *Have you always been a member of CIPD?*

I joined CIPD as a Student Member in 1996 when I began studying for the CIPD Level 7 qualification. After completing my studies and Continuing Professional Development requirements, I became a Chartered Member in 2000. Since then, I have always worked in HR, and remained a member of the CIPD throughout my working life.

4. And how has CIPD membership enhanced your career?

The CIPD have enhanced my career in many ways. Their wide-ranging qualification provided me with the specialist knowledge I needed to establish my credibility in HR. I refer to their website often for factsheets, studies, reports, and other reference materials. This supports my ongoing development and helps with staying up to date on news in the profession. Their employment law and payroll helplines have also proved useful over the years.

5. What do you love most about working in HR?

What I love about HR is the ability to make a significant difference in people's working lives. The work is also incredibly varied! I could be recruiting someone to a job they will flourish in, helping people to develop their skills and careers, supporting business owners/managers with complex HR issues, being the ethical voice in the room, resolving disputes, developing a remuneration strategy, or any number of other activities.

The range of support and advice we provide from the HR role can help reduce stress, improve business performance, and create better working lives for those we come into contact with.

6. To anyone who is unsure about whether to make the move into HR and L&D – what advice would you give them?

If you are interested in HR or L&D as a career path but not quite sure what it involves, I would advise contacting some big local employers (as they are likely to have big HR teams) and asking if you can do a week or two of unpaid work experience shadowing a HR Advisor or L&D Advisor. This will give you a good flavour for the work and help you to decide if it is right for you. You could also do some research online, using the CIPD and ACAS websites to find out more about the role of HR/L&D in businesses.

7. Besides a qualification, what would you want students to gain from embarking on a CIPD course with e-Careers?

On the e-Careers CIPD courses, learners will broaden their understanding of the business environment that HR/L&D works in, and the ways in which we can contribute to business success and better working lives. HR L&D has an important role to play in society and the economy, and it is rewarding to understand where we add this value and the positive outcomes which flow from our work.

The qualification will also enable learners to develop a deep understanding of key technical concepts in HR/L&D, producing the specialist skills needed to confidently and competently carry out the role of professional advisor to any organisation.