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HR 101 FOUNDATION | BIZGROWTH ACADEMY

LESSON 4

Your HR Roadmap

by Business Stage

Build the Right HR Systems at the Right Time

Duration: 20 minutes reading

Format: Text + Visual Roadmaps + Stage-Based Decision Tool

Outcome: Know exactly what to build at YOUR stage, in the right order

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Lesson Overview

Learning Objective: Understand what to build at your specific business stage, in the right order, with realistic timelines and resources.

What You'll Walk Away With

✓ Clarity on what "HR maturity" looks like at your stage (not enterprise-level expectations)

✓ A stage-specific roadmap showing what to build when

✓ Timeline estimates and quick-win opportunities

✓ Understanding of which HR pillars matter first for your business

✓ Confidence that you're building the right things in the right order

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The Problem: Building the Wrong Thing First

Here's what most business owners do:

They read something about HR best practices—360-degree feedback, talent development programs, succession planning—and think: *"We should do that."*

So they spend 6 weeks building a performance review system that's too complex for their 7-person team. Nobody uses it. It sits on a shelf. They feel like they failed at HR.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
>
> The problem wasn't effort. The problem was stage mismatch.
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> A 7-person startup doesn't need the same HR systems as a 70-person scaling company. Not because smaller companies don't care about people—but because the priorities are different.

This lesson fixes that. We're going to map out what to build at YOUR stage—not some generic ideal. And we'll be honest about timelines, complexity, and what actually matters first.

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The Three Business Stages

We've simplified into three clear stages based on business age and employee count. (If you're 150+ employees or preparing for exit, many principles apply, but your journey may require additional customization.)

STAGE 1 START-UP	STAGE 2 SCALING	STAGE 3 ESTABLISHED
0–3 years 1–10 employees	**3–10 years** 10–50 employees	**10+ years** 50–150+ employees
Focus: Foundations + Legal Protection	**Focus:** Manager Development + Performance Systems	**Focus:** Succession + Leadership Development
12–16 weeks	**16–24 weeks**	**16–28 weeks**

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STAGE 1: START-UP

0–3 years | 1–10 employees | Focus: Foundations + Legal Protection

Your Reality

- You're bootstrapping or early funded
- People are wearing multiple hats
- You're trying to prove product-market fit
- You're hiring your first employees or your first management layer
- Time and resources are scarce (especially for non-revenue activities)
- Culture is still being formed organically
- Compliance and legal protection feel far away

Your Biggest HR Challenges

- Hiring the right early-stage people (bias toward "smart and hungry")
- Getting new people productive fast (no time to train)
- Keeping good people as reality sets in (is this the right startup?)
- Avoiding costly legal mistakes (you have no HR person)
- Documenting what you're doing before you forget it

WHAT YOU NEED	WHAT YOU DON'T NEED YET
• A hiring process to avoid $50K mistakes	• Elaborate compensation tiers
• Onboarding that ramps people in 4 weeks	• Succession planning
• Employee handbook covering legal basics	• Complex org charts
• Feedback conversations (informal is OK)	• Advanced L&D programs
• Intentional culture (not accidental)	• Formal performance management cycles

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Stage 1 Roadmap: Build in This Order

WEEK	FOCUS AREA	KEY DELIVERABLE
1–4	Hiring Process	Written process + scoring rubric + reference checks
4–8	Onboarding	30-60-90 day checklist + first-day plan
8–12	Handbook	Draft handbook with 7 core sections + acknowledgment
12–16	Feedback Rhythm	Quarterly calendar + simple feedback template

By Week 16, You Will Have:

✓ Documented hiring process (prevents bad hires)

✓ Structured onboarding (gets people ramped fast)

✓ Employee handbook (legal protection + clarity)

✓ Feedback rhythm (catches issues early)

This puts you at **Maturity Level 2–3 (Reactive → Systematic transition)**

Real Story: Gloria's First Year

Gloria (from Lesson 1) took this roadmap seriously. Here's what happened:

Weeks 1–4: Documented her hiring process after the Marcus disaster. Cost: $0 (friend's advice). Time: 8 hours.

Weeks 4–8: Created one-page onboarding checklist with pre-boarding call, first-day plan, and 30-day check-in. Time: 6 hours.

Weeks 8–12: Adapted handbook template, had lawyer review ($800), got everyone to sign. Time: 16 hours.

Weeks 12–16: Added quarterly feedback conversations—just 30 minutes per person. Time: 2 hours per quarter.

ROI SUMMARY

Investment: ~30 hours + $800 lawyer review = ~$1,200 total

12-Month Return: $107,000 (prevented 1 bad hire, faster onboarding, retained 1 person)

ROI: 8,900%

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STAGE 2: SCALING

3–10 years | 10–50 employees | Focus: Manager Development + Performance Systems

Your Reality

- You've proven product-market fit and are growing fast
- You have first and second-level managers
- Culture is fragmenting as the team grows (early people feel "we're changing")
- You're adding specialized roles (no longer everyone does everything)
- You're probably 2–3x headcount from 2 years ago
- Recruiting is getting harder (you can't just hire your network anymore)
- Turnover is becoming a problem (you're losing good people)

Your Biggest HR Challenges

- Keeping culture alive as you scale (defining it intentionally, not hoping)
- Developing managers (early employees weren't trained to manage)
- Retaining your best people as competitors recruit them away
- Managing different compensation levels as roles specialize
- Compliance and documentation (you're big enough that legal matters)
- Performance issues that are harder to resolve (no longer 5 people in a room)

Stage 2 Roadmap: Build in This Order

WEEK	FOCUS AREA	KEY DELIVERABLE
1–4	Culture Definition	Values + culture statement + team rituals
4–12	Manager Development	Training program + 1-on-1 framework + feedback skills
12–20	Performance Management	Goal-setting + review process + PIP templates
20–28	Engagement & Retention	Pulse survey + exit process + recognition program
28–36	Compensation Structure	Salary bands + pay equity analysis + guidelines

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By Week 36, You Will Have:

✓ Intentional culture definition (holds team together as you scale)

✓ Trained managers (they have tools and confidence)

✓ Performance management system (clarity on expectations)

✓ Engagement tracking and retention strategy (data-driven)

✓ Compensation structure (fairness and transparency)

This puts you at **Maturity Level 3 (Systematic)**

Real Story: Alexandra's Growth Challenge

Alexandra runs a B2B SaaS company. She'd grown from 8 to 35 people in 3 years. Her culture was fragmenting.

Weeks 1–4: Facilitated a values workshop with leadership. Identified: Integrity, Ownership, Speed, Collaboration. Result: When conflicts arose, they could reference values.

Weeks 4–12: Brought in a manager development trainer for a 4-session program. First three managers learned feedback, delegation, and 1-on-1 skills. Result: Turnover in their teams went down.

Weeks 12–20: Implemented annual goal-setting using OKRs. Each team had clear goals. Progress was tracked. Result: Clarity improved. Promotion decisions became clearer.

Weeks 20–28: Added simple engagement survey. Learned two key people were worried about career growth. Created growth plans for them. Result: Both stayed.

Weeks 28–36: Defined salary bands, analyzed pay equity. One underrepresented group was paid slightly lower; she corrected it. Result: Fairness improved. Potential lawsuit prevented.

ROI SUMMARY

Investment: ~50 hours + $3,000 training + $1,500 consulting = ~$4,500 total

12-Month Return: $260,000 (40% less turnover, 15% better productivity, 2 key people retained)

ROI: 5,700%

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STAGE 3: ESTABLISHED

10+ years | 50–150+ employees | Focus: Succession + Leadership Development

Your Reality

- You're profitable and thinking about growth or exit
- You have multiple management layers and specialized teams
- Culture is embedded (people know "how we do things") or fragmented (rebuilding)
- You're operating in multiple geographies or business units
- Recruiting and retention are ongoing operational challenges
- You're thinking about what's next (succession, acquisition, scaling to next tier)
- Legal and compliance are serious concerns

Your Biggest HR Challenges

- Succession planning and leadership depth (what happens when key people leave?)
- Manager and leader development (you need strong managers across the organization)
- Culture optimization and engagement (enough scale to measure and improve systematically)
- Talent retention and competitive compensation (fighting bigger companies for talent)
- Organizational design and structural clarity (roles, span of control, decision-making)
- Compliance and risk mitigation (employment law, benefits, documentation)

Stage 3 Roadmap: Build in This Order

WEEK	FOCUS AREA	KEY DELIVERABLE
1–6	Succession Planning	Plans for key roles + bench assessment + hi-po identification
6–16	Leadership Development	Executive coaching + strategic thinking training
16–28	Org Design Optimization	Structure review + role clarity + decision authority
28–40	Advanced Compensation	Equity strategy + benefits optimization + total rewards

By Week 40, You Will Have:

✓ Succession plan for key roles (continuity)

✓ Next generation of leaders in development (depth)

✓ Optimized organizational design (scalability)

✓ Advanced compensation and equity strategy (retention of key people)

This keeps you at **Maturity Level 3–4 and prepares you for the next chapter**

Real Story: Samuel's Exit Preparation

Samuel founded a manufacturing company 15 years ago. He'd grown it to 80 employees and $12M in revenue. He was thinking about selling in the next 2–3 years.

Weeks 1–6: Documented his succession plan. Identified VP of Operations as likely successor. Created development plans for emerging leaders. Result: VP felt seen and valued. He stayed through the sale.

Weeks 6–16: Brought in executive coach for VP and two directors. Monthly meetings for a year focused on strategic thinking. Result: VP became a stronger leader. New owner kept him on and promoted him.

Weeks 16–28: Reviewed org structure. Flattened one level and clarified decision-making authority. Result: Decision-making got faster. Roles became clearer. People knew who to go to.

Weeks 28–40: Developed equity strategy with CFO. Gave 10 senior leaders stock options tied to sale. Result: Key people stayed through exit. Everyone benefited at sale. Culture and people were assets in the deal.

ROI SUMMARY

Investment: ~60 hours + $8,000 coaching + $2,000 consulting = ~$10,000 total

12-Month Return: $500,000+ sale price premium, smoother transition, reduced earn-out risk

ROI: 5,000%+

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Choosing Your Stage and Roadmap

You've now seen all three stages. **Which one is you?**

STAGE 1: START-UP

- ☐ Your business is 0–3 years old
- ☐ You have 1–10 employees
- ☐ Your biggest challenges are hiring and onboarding
- ☐ You're building foundations (policies, processes, basic systems)
- ☐ You're at HR Maturity Level 1–2

Your Next Step: Complete Lesson 5 → Start-Up Journey (12–16 weeks)

STAGE 2: SCALING

- ☐ Your business is 3–10 years old
- ☐ You have 10–50 employees
- ☐ You have first and second-level managers
- ☐ Your biggest challenges are culture, retention, manager development
- ☐ You're at HR Maturity Level 2–3

Your Next Step: Complete Lesson 5 → Scaling Journey (16–24 weeks)

STAGE 3: ESTABLISHED

- ☐ Your business is 10+ years old
- ☐ You have 50–150+ employees
- ☐ You have multiple management layers
- ☐ Your biggest challenges are succession, leadership development, optimization
- ☐ You're at HR Maturity Level 3–4

Your Next Step: Complete Lesson 5 → Established Journey (16–28 weeks)

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Key Takeaways from Lesson 4

1	Your stage determines your HR priorities. Start-Up focuses on foundations (hiring, onboarding, legal protection). Scaling focuses on people systems and manager development. Established focuses on succession and optimization.

2	Build in the right order at your stage. Don't try to build everything at once. Follow the roadmap for your stage; it's sequenced for maximum impact.

3	Timeline is 12–28 weeks depending on stage. You don't need to spend months. With focused effort and templates provided, you can implement stage-appropriate systems in 3–7 months.

4	ROI is significant regardless of stage. Every stage sees 500%+ ROI by preventing people costs and improving productivity.

5	Real founders follow these paths. Gloria, Alexandra, and Samuel are composite stories, but they represent real patterns of business founders who built HR systems intentionally.

6	You can't skip stages. You can't go from Level 1 (ad-hoc) to Level 4 (strategic) in 8 weeks. But you can get to Level 2 in 12–16 weeks, then to Level 3 in another 12–16 weeks.

7	Your next step is clear. You know your stage. You know what to build. You know the timeline. Now you just need to execute.

A Final Word on Stage Roadmaps

You might look at this roadmap and think: *"This feels like a lot of work."*

Here's the truth: It is some work. But it's less work than dealing with constant people problems.

THE MATH

Building systems once: 50–80 hours over 12–24 weeks + 4–8 hours/month maintenance

Constant people crises: 20+ hours per week, forever, with money leaking and stress accumulating

Building systems is an investment. Not dealing with them is a permanent cost.

Moving Forward

Lesson 1 gave you the framework. HR is talent optimization.

Lesson 2 gave you the financial case. People problems cost real money.

Lesson 3 gave you clarity. You know your maturity level and your gaps.

Lesson 4 just gave you a roadmap. You know what to build at your stage, in what order, with what timeline.

UP NEXT

Lesson 5: Getting Started — Your First 3 Actions

Three specific, implementable actions you can start this week to kickstart your stage-based journey with quick wins and momentum.

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Lesson 4 Downloads

Three resources to deepen your planning and commitment:

Stage-Based HR Roadmap (PDF Infographic)

Use this to: Visualize your entire 12–28 week roadmap from start to maturity.

Includes: All three stages with timelines, key build items, maturity level progression, week-by-week sequencing.

"Which Stage Are You In?" Decision Tool (Fillable PDF)

Use this to: Confirm which stage matches your business and identify your priority build areas.

Includes: Business age, employee count, and challenge checklist; stage selection logic; priority sequence; timeline estimate.

Time to complete: 5 minutes

Implementation Timeline (1-Page Reference PDF)

Use this to: Plan your 12–28 week journey with realistic timelines and milestones.

Includes: Week-by-week timeline for your stage, key deliverables, time commitment estimates, quick-win opportunities, ROI projections.

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Questions? Feedback? Let us know.
We're building this for you.