

SOLO BUT MIGHTY

HR Department of One

AGENDA

The Reality of Solo HR: Operating Strategically, Not Just Reactively

Smart Prioritization & Time Management for HR Teams of One

Compliance Refresher: What HR-of-One Must Know

Cost-Effective Core HR Functions

HR Technology & Metrics for Maximum Impact

Real-World Scenarios



**SOLO DOESN'T MEAN
SMALL—YOUR
IMPACT IS IMMENSE**

Recruitment
& Hiring

Employee
Onboarding

Employee
Relations

Compliance
& Regulatory

Payroll &
Benefits

Performance
Management

Workforce
Planning &
Strategy

Culture &
Engagement

Training &
Development

Risk
Management

Offboarding

THE REALITY OF SOLO HR: OPERATING STRATEGICALLY, NOT JUST REACTIVELY



Understanding

Understanding the “HR-of-One” landscape:
Manage the full employee lifecycle with limited resources;
•Stay adaptable, proactive, and aligned with organizational priorities.

Focus on

How to shift from task-driven to strategy-driven:
Focus on high-impact work,
Automate repetitive tasks,
And build strong partnerships with leadership to anticipate needs.

Core

Core competencies for solo HR success:
Prioritization, influence, and boundaries:
Identify and act on what matters most.
Lead through communication, trust, and data.
Protect your time with clear processes and expectations.

SMART PRIORITIZATION & TIME MANAGEMENT FOR HR TEAMS OF ONE



High-impact vs. low-impact HR tasks: *Clarify which HR responsibilities truly move the needle—such as compliance, employee relations, and recruiting—and which tasks can be streamlined, deferred, or automated.*

Time-blocking and communication frameworks that reduce interruptions: *Use structured scheduling (e.g., blocked focus hours, designated “office hours”) to protect your time and reduce constant disruptions. Pair this with clear communication expectations so employees and managers know when and how to reach HR, resulting in fewer surprises and more productive workflow.*

How to use delegation, outsourcing, and technology intentionally: *Delegate tasks that don’t require HR expertise, outsource where appropriate, and automate routine work so HR can stay focused on strategy and risk management.*

COMPLIANCE REFRESHER ~

WHAT HR-OF-ONE MUST KNOW

FMLA essentials

FLSA: exempt vs. non-exempt

ADA: accommodation
and interactive
process basics

Reducing compliance
risk: documentation,
audits, and process
consistency

When to escalate or
seek external
expertise

FMLA ESSENTIALS

Category	Key Points
What FMLA Provides	• Up to 12 weeks unpaid, job-protected leave for qualifying family/medical reasons • Up to 26 weeks for military caregiver leave • Continued group health insurance during leave under the same terms
Employer Coverage	• Private employers with 50+ employees in 20+ workweeks in the current or prior year • All public agencies (regardless of size) • All public and private K–12 schools
Employee Eligibility	• Work for a covered employer • Have 12 months of service • Have 1,250 hours worked in prior 12 months • Work at a site with 50+ employees within 75 miles
Qualifying Reasons	• Birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child • Employee's own serious health condition • Care for spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition • Military caregiver or qualifying exigency leave
Employee Protections	• Return to the same or equivalent job after leave • Protection from interference or retaliation • Health benefits continue during leave
Types of Leave	• Continuous, intermittent, or reduced schedule leave allowed • Leave must be calculated using the employee's actual workweek, especially for variable schedules

FLSA: EXEMPT VS. NON-EXEMPT

Category	Exempt	Non-Exempt
Overtime	Not eligible	Must receive OT over 40 hrs./week
Pay Type	Salary basis required	Hourly or salary allowed
Minimum Salary	At least \$684/week under current enforceable rule	No minimum salary requirement
Duties Requirement	Must meet exempt duty categories	No duties test required
Timekeeping	Limited requirements	Detailed time records required

FLSA DUTIES TEST

Exemption Category

Primary Duties Required for Exempt Status

Executive Exemption

- Primary duty is **management** of a department or enterprise
- **Regularly supervises** at least two full-time employees (or equivalent)
- Has authority or significant influence in **hiring, firing, and personnel decisions**

Administrative Exemption

- Primary duty is **office or non-manual work** tied to management or general business operations
- Exercises **discretion and independent judgment** on significant matters

Professional Exemption (Learned/Creative)

- Work requires **advanced knowledge** in a field of science or learning gained through specialized education
- Learned professionals apply consistent **judgment and specialized expertise**
- Creative professionals rely on **originality, imagination, and talent** (e.g., artistic fields)

Computer Employee Exemption

- Systems analysis, programming, software design, or testing/debugging of computer systems or programs
- Must perform high-level tech work (not help desk or routine IT tasks)

Outside Sales Exemption

- Primary duty is **making sales** or obtaining orders/contracts
- Must **regularly work away** from employer's place of business

Highly Compensated Employee (HCE) Exemption

- Must earn at least **\$107,432 annually**, including **\$684/week** on a salary basis
- Must **regularly perform at least one** executive, administrative, or professional duty



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees with disabilities and to engage in a collaborative, good-faith interactive process to identify effective solutions.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

A reasonable accommodation is a workplace adjustment that enables an employee with a disability to perform essential job functions without imposing undue hardship on the employer.

Common Examples:

Modified schedules or remote work

Assistive technology / ergonomic equipment

Workspace adjustments

Reassignment of non-essential duties

Employers may choose among effective accommodation options—they are not obligated to provide the employee's preferred accommodation if alternatives work equally well.



INTERACTIVE PROCESS

The ADA interactive process is an ongoing, good-faith collaboration between employer and employee to identify and implement effective accommodations—supported by documentation, open discussion, and legally required unless it causes undue hardship.

The Process

What Triggers the Process

An employee requests an accommodation (verbally or in writing), or
The employer recognizes that a disability-related adjustment may be needed, even if the employee does not use the words “ADA” or “accommodation.”

Initial Understanding & Documentation

The employer may request relevant medical documentation explaining the employee’s limitations and functional impacts.

Collaborative Discussion:

Employer and employee meet to clarify essential job functions.
Discuss how the disability affects performance.
Brainstorm multiple accommodation options.
Consider alternatives if the employee’s preferred option isn't feasible,
Employers may consult resources like the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) for guidance.

The employer assesses Accommodation Effectiveness of each option

Whether an accommodation would create an undue hardship.
Undue hardship refers to significant difficulty or expense based on the employer’s resources, size, and operational needs.

Implement Accommodation

Employers may implement a solution on a trial basis and adjust as needed.
Regular check-ins help ensure the accommodation remains effective.

Protect Compliance and Clarity ~ Document Every Step

Requests discussions
Documentation received
Decisions made
Outcomes and follow-ups

If the Request Is Denied

The employer must provide a written explanation
Offer alternatives when available
Employees may seek EEOC support if they believe their rights were violated.

FMLA VS. ADA

Category	FMLA	ADA
Purpose	Provides up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for serious health and family needs.	Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities.
What Triggers Coverage	Employee has a serious health condition or qualifying family/military need.	Employee has a disability that substantially limits major life activities or has a record/perception of disability.
Employer Coverage	Private employers with 50+ employees , all public agencies, all K–12 schools.	Employers with 15+ employees .
Employee Eligibility	Must meet all: • 12 months of service • 1,250 hours worked • Worksite with 50+ employees within 75 miles	Must be a qualified individual able to perform essential job functions <i>with or without</i> accommodations.
Type of Protection	Job-protected leave (generally unpaid). Allows employee time away from work.	Accommodations enabling the employee to work or return to work (may include leave).
Return-to-Work Requirements	Employer must restore employee to same or equivalent position after leave.	Employer must engage in interactive process to determine accommodations if employee returns with restrictions.
Medical Verification Rules	Employer may request medical certification supporting the need for leave.	Employer may request limited medical documentation describing functional limitations.
Leave Flexibility	Allows continuous, intermittent, or reduced-schedule leave.	Leave may be a reasonable accommodation , including extended leave beyond FMLA limits if not an undue hardship.
End of Leave Obligations	FMLA ends at 12 weeks (or 26 for military caregiver).	ADA obligations continue after FMLA ends ; employer must consider additional accommodations.
Interactive Process	Not required under FMLA.	Required; must be a good-faith dialogue to find effective accommodations.
Light Duty	Employee cannot be forced into light duty; may remain on FMLA leave if eligible.	Light duty or modified duties may be required if it is a reasonable accommodation.

COST-EFFECTIVE CORE HR FUNCTIONS

Recruiting & Onboarding

Low-cost sourcing strategies

Fast but effective screening and selection

Onboarding systems that reduce errors and save time

Compensation & Benefits Planning

Salary benchmark basics for small organizations

How to structure a simple but strong compensation framework

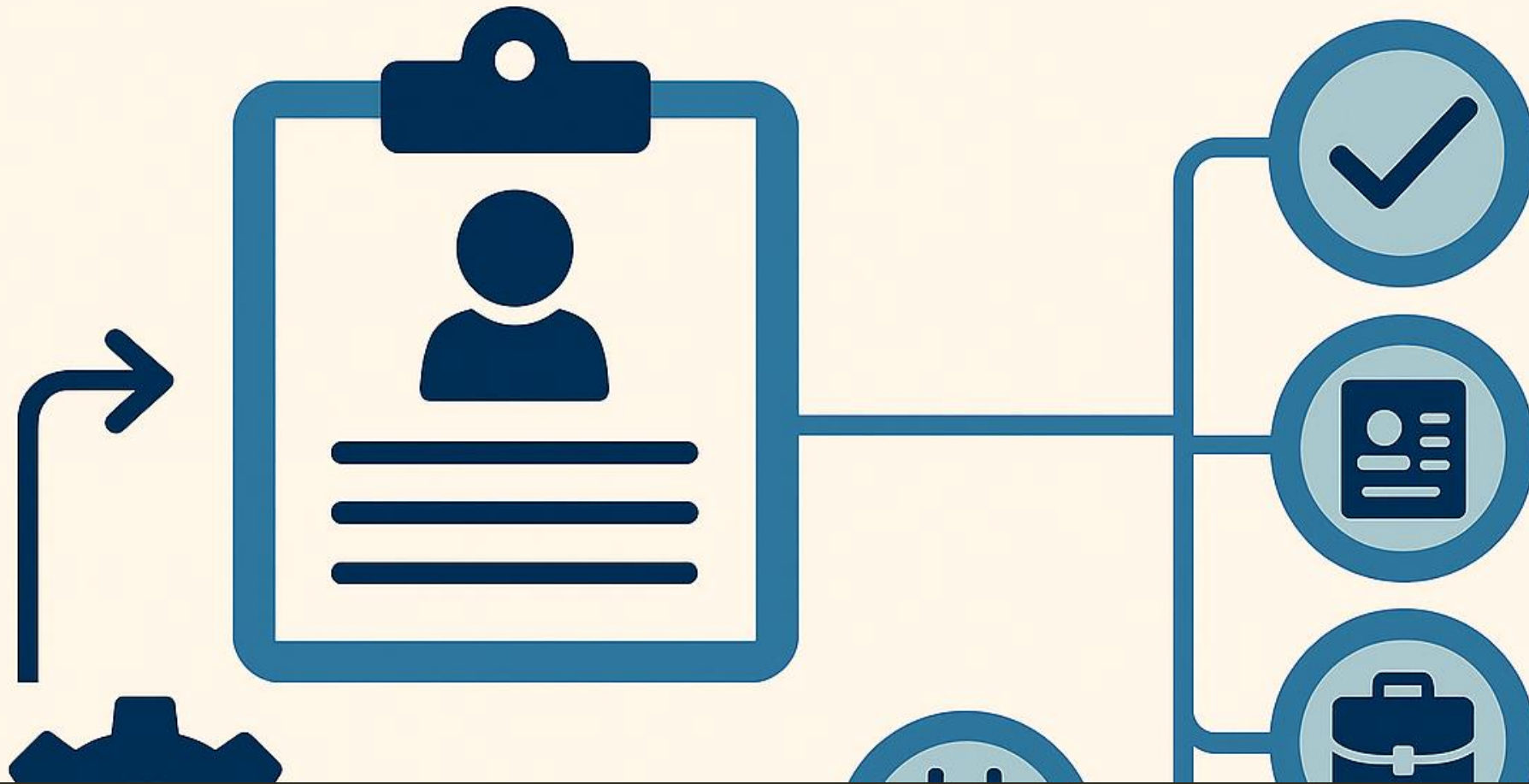
Creative, no-cost and low-cost benefits and perks

COST-EFFECTIVE CORE HR FUNCTIONS

Talent Development

Skill development can happen without a budget by using free options such as job shadowing or peer-to-peer learning sessions.

Microlearning can happen through quick manager-led coaching moments, such as a supervisor showing an employee a faster way to complete a task during their shift.



HR TECHNOLOGY & METRICS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

- Essential tools for HR-of-one (HRIS, ATS, timekeeping, ER tracking)
- Automating repetitive tasks
- Simple, meaningful HR metrics to track and present to leadership
- Showing impact even without a large team or budget



IN THIS SESSION WE:

Revisited the core strategies for thriving as an HR-of-One: prioritization, efficiency tools, compliance awareness, and relationship-building.

Reinforced the importance of leveraging automation, external networks, and structured processes to reduce overwhelm and maximize impact.

THANK YOU!!!



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