

In the year since graduating from college, Petra has been working a retail job, and she wants to move into something different. She's always been good with people, and she's very interested in how companies hire, train, develop, and retain their employees—especially considering how fast the world is changing.

Petra is seriously considering a career in Human Resources. Based on what you've learned, help Petra make the best decisions about how to develop herself as an HR professional and what kinds of issues she considers as she works toward applying for HR jobs.



Petra knows that her Aunt Mina spent her career in “personnel” at a manufacturing company. Even though Aunt Mina has been retired for years, Petra thinks it might be a good idea to talk to her.

In their conversation, Aunt Mina talks about “the men in the plant” and “the girls in the office.” She also tells Petra about how people would be sent to her office if they were not performing or were habitually absent or late. “A note to come see me was not a note anybody wanted to receive.



Petra goes hunting online to find articles about what's hot in HR right now. She wants to be prepared with good questions when she finally gets a job interview, and she's also just interested in the kinds of challenges she might face and what particular area of specialization could make her the most marketable.

Oh, who are we kidding? Petra is ambitious, and she wants to be recognized as a leader in the field someday.



Another area Petra is interested in is workforce diversity. She herself is biracial and a woman, so she figures she could fit into a diversity position pretty easily. Still, she wants to read more so she can be prepared to sound—and be—smart when it comes time to interview for jobs.



Diversity isn't just based on gender, orientation, or ethnicity. In the current workplace, diversity of the kind that helps companies thrive includes many more variables. As immigration laws and attitudes change, HR departments need to stay on top of them in order to recruit and retain excellent candidates from abroad. Further, age, gender, and sexual minorities have a lot to offer—may even be leading experts in their fields—but find some workplaces unwelcoming. In addition, employees' desire to live away from their company's home office—plus the increasing use of contract employees—means that there's a lot more workflow and interpersonal complexity to manage.

Petra has always been good at math and at the analytical parts of her current job, like tracking sales trends and predicting how much of a particular item to order for her store. Based on these skills, she's investigating the side of HR that has to do with metrics.

Petra has now spent a couple of months reading up on HR in her spare time, and she's ready to take a real step—beyond sitting at her computer in her sweatpants.



As you can see from Petra's story, changes in the workforce both at the micro level—as workplaces diversify hiring and focus on retraining workers as technology advances—and at the macro level—with geopolitical events and global corporations influencing how work is done are creating interesting challenges for HR professionals.

There are a lot of avenues for Petra to take in her HR career, and she needs to be smart in her choices and current in her information.

