Strategic vs. Operational HR Cheat Sheet

DIMENSION	STRATEGIC HR	OPERATIONAL HR
Purpose	Shape the long-term direction of the workforce to meet evolving business goals	Execute daily HR functions to keep the workforce running smoothly
Scope	Enterprise-wide or business unit level, often involving cross-functional coordination	Departmental or individual employee level, focused on immediate needs
Time horizon	One to five years, with periodic reviews and adjustments	Daily, weekly, or monthly cycles
Decision level	Policy-making, directional, and investment decisions	Procedural, compliance, and execution decisions
Core activities	• Developing workforce strategy aligned with business growth • Designing organization-wide culture initiatives • Talent pipeline forecasting and succession planning • Crafting an employee value proposition to attract talent • Implementing AI/tech solutions for HR scalability • Identifying future skills and capability gaps • Leading change during mergers, acquisitions, or restructures	• Administering payroll and benefits • Conducting recruitment interviews to fill vacancies • Delivering HR projects • Managing employee onboarding/offboarding • Tracking leave and attendance • Updating HR policies in the HRIS • Addressing employee grievances • Organizing compliance training
Risks if neglected	• Talent shortages affecting competitiveness • Misalignment between workforce and business needs • Cultural drift or disengagement • Poor succession leading to leadership gaps • Unscalable HR services and solutions	• Payroll errors causing compliance issues • Friction in processes and handover points • High turnover due to poor onboarding • Employee dissatisfaction with slow issue resolution • Breaches in labor law compliance
Metrics & KPIs	• Leadership bench strength • Internal mobility rates • Skills gap closure rate • Engagement and innovation index	• Time to fill roles • Payroll accuracy rate • Training completion percentages • Absence and turnover rates
Example	Designing a three-year digital upskilling plan to prepare the workforce for automation, aligned with business expansion into new markets	Coordinating the logistics for a mandatory cybersecurity training for all employees within the next month.