



## HR Healer

**Leena Nair (37)**

Executive Director (HR), Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL)

**BEEN THERE:** 15 years at Unilever in a variety of roles

**DONE WHAT:** Got HUL back to Day Zero on campuses after six years

THE 'LISTERS' AT HUL HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A REVERED (and much tracked and trailed) lot. But there's more to this bunch—which makes up roughly a fourth of HUL's 1,000-odd managers—than meets the conventional eye. Some 15 per cent of these whiz kids are graded as sustained high-performance (SHP) listers—basically invaluable resources, but who don't have the legs to take on leadership roles. And then there are the high-performance (HP) listers, who currently would total around 100 (or at any time 10 per cent of HUL managers). These are the wunderkinds who are typically spotted early, and trained and mentored for leadership positions. Leena Nair, Executive Director (HR), would easily be somewhere on the top of that HP list. She's been in that hallowed zone for most of the 15 years she's been with Unilever's India subsidiary. That explains why Nair went on to become the first woman on the eight-member Management Committee (MC) of HUL; and for good measure, also the youngest ever Executive Director. Early this year, she delivered the goods by getting HUL back to Day Zero on the campuses of management schools that matter (HUL had dropped to #15). "We broke out of the sector clutter and positioned ourselves as a company that produces leaders," says Nair, who believes that money is the last reason for most people leaving. The top three are: dissatisfaction with the job; with one's immediate boss; and with the future of the company and oneself.

Leaving HUL isn't likely to figure on Nair's career radar; she is after all still an HP lister, and being on the MC means that no less than the Unilever Board is closely watching every move she makes. There's plenty they've got to watch out for.

BRIAN CARVALHO