

# Human Resource Executive®



## 10 Benefits to Bet On

Employers can win big with high-value offerings.

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### 10 Benefits to Bet On

BY KATHRYN MAYER

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### A Global Crisis

Keep up with the latest developments as coronavirus continues to disrupt the world of work.

# Insights from a CHRO

## How Anne Erni has brought a culture of listening to Audible

BY JEN COLLETTA

The writing is on the wall for Audible—literally. In the lobby of the headquarters of the Amazon-owned Newark, N.J.-based audio-entertainment and education company are life-sized depictions of its People Principles—the five guiding tenets that shape what it means to be a member of the Audible community. The graphic illustrations are represented throughout the workspace, embedded in wallpapers and installations, suggesting how ubiquitous the People Principles are in Audible culture.

That's a culture centered on the concept that all employees are worth listening to, says Chief People Officer Anne Erni.

Erni joined the company in 2016, after heading up HR at Bloomberg L.P., where she managed a rapidly growing workforce. At Lehman Brothers, she wore multiple hats as managing director and chief diversity officer.

Erni's career has revolved around the idea that businesses can thrive if they truly amplify the voices of their workers—a message that has taken root at Audible.



was once a small focus area has evolved into a standard way of doing business.

### Why has Audible shifted from using terms like “diversity and inclusion” to “belonging”?

Audible seeks to connect millions of listeners with a wide variety of voices and perspectives, and it is important that our internal culture reflects our external purpose. Creating a culture of belonging is about embracing and amplifying the voices and perspectives of the many dimensions across the human spectrum. It's about including all aspects of diversity that extend far beyond the traditional EEO definitions and creating a culture each employee can identify with in some way and feel as though they are seen, valued, heard and connected.

### Audible is actively engaged in the local community in Newark. How has that work impacted employees?

At Audible, five People Principles guide everything we do. One of our principles revolves around how we engage with each other as colleagues and the community around us; we call it Activate Caring. Whether it's rebuilding a historic landmark into our tech-coding Innovation Cathedral, providing opportunities for our employees to help develop the future generation of Newark through our involvement with neighborhood schools or partnering with community artists to create and install a local park installation, our involvement connects our employees to Newark.

### When did you first feel the spark for pursuing a career in HR?

I spent the first 15 years of my career working on the trading floor on Wall Street. Five years into my tenure at Lehman Brothers, the president at the time tapped me on the shoulder and said: “Men run in packs; women don't. Go find your pack.” Those were my marching orders to start the first diversity initiative at Lehman. After a year of putting the women's initiative in place, I was asked to step off the trading floor to become the company's first chief diversity officer. My career has been in HR ever since.

### Do you have a personal mantra that keeps you motivated?

Earlier in my career, I had a wonderful female mentor. Her advice to me was that the harder I worked, the luckier I'd get. That was my mantra for many years, and I put in long hours knowing that it would pay off. But after having a bit more experience under my belt and listening to the perspectives of colleagues from different backgrounds than myself who have worked just as hard, I've realized that many workplaces have institutional structures that create obstacles for people. Yes, hard work is a key component of success, but without people in power stepping up to make workplaces more fair, many people won't achieve what they deserve. I believe that the mantra of leaders should be to recognize and remove obstacles to success so that hard work pays off.

### What are one or two of the biggest evolutions that the HR function in general has undergone since you've entered the field?

The advancement to automation and ultimately to cloud technology has been a significant game-changer. With today's technology, we can access and leverage data, insights and predictive analytics to inform better decision-making. Also, when I joined HR, it was uncommon to focus on diversity and inclusion, but what

### What program or policy that you've instituted since joining Audible has had the most widespread impact on employees?

There are many programs that I'm proud of, but our Community Hiring program is one that lies at the heart of Audible's mission. As part of the program, we collaborate with local organizations to identify and develop job seekers (including those who are currently experiencing homelessness) for customer-service roles at Audible and at other organizations.

### Related to your work at Audible ... what are you currently reading (or listening to)?

I am currently listening to *Utopia for Realists* by Rutger Bregman and thinking a lot about Audible's commitment to be a company that “means more than it does.” In the book, Bregman shares research that busts many myths about how to solve various social issues, and it's a very enlightening listen.

To nominate yourself or another HR leader to be interviewed in Insights from a CHRO, email [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).

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## Top Story

### Tech Spend Rising, But Adoption Challenges Remain

**It appears employers will be continuing to open up their checkbooks for HR technology, according to a new survey that reports seven out of 10 companies plan to boost spending on HR tech this year.**

The new PwC global survey of 600 HR and IT leaders found that the projected financial investment is designed to address human capital challenges that keep rising on CEOs' agendas, including recruiting, staff development and workforce expectations about technology. On the other hand, adoption challenges related to these investments remain a serious barrier, cited by 82% of respondents.



Dan Staley

Dan Staley, global HR technology leader at PwC, explains that, while the C-suite is optimistic about the value of new technology, eight in 10 users struggle with adoption challenges; additionally, the C-suite is twice as likely as managers to say these tools are actually effective.

"Although the rising number of companies with core HR technologies in the cloud are likely to report increased productivity, improved employee experience and better workforce insights," Staley says, "there's more work to do to enable and motivate people to commit to using these tools to change the ways they work and develop in their careers."

To address this disconnect and increase the effectiveness of these portfolios for all, Staley says, it's smart to start with the basics, including:

**Answer the right questions.** Get the right people in the room to determine the business problem to solve, and engage front-line employees to solve it. This will allow for better matching of technologies with needs.

**Increase the use of adoption techniques**, such as gamification and incentives, to encourage the workforce to learn and make new tech part of their day-to-day routines.

**Get feedback** during and after the implementation of new technology. Provide mechanisms for employees to offer suggestions on what is working and not working so that applications can be improved upon.

Another area of concern in the survey? About 80% of companies plan to implement artificial intelligence for their HR organizations over the next two years. As of today, however, 63% of companies have not yet done so, primarily because they have not zeroed in on the right use case.

"It is important for organizations to identify the business problem before jumping straight to a technology solution," Staley says.

The PwC research surfaced six main issues driving HR-tech expansion in 2020:

- Finding, attracting and retaining talent (58%)
- Developing people to reach their full potential (43%)
- Improving the employee experience (42%)
- Creating a collaborative work environment (40%)
- Workforce planning (38%)
- Ensuring wellbeing, inclusion and diversity (34%)

"Updating the candidate and employee experience is especially important for companies trying to fill critical talent gaps," Staley says. "Employers know that job seekers, particularly in high-demand fields, will turn down offers due to bad recruiting experiences, and they can't take that chance."

—Tom Starner



### Large Employers Set Sights on Paid Leave

**New research from the Business Group on Health finds that the majority of U.S.-based large employers are expanding paid-leave benefits, including adding or considering new types of paid leave, increasing the number of days available for leave and broadening eligibility.**

Nearly four in 10 (39%) respondents expanded paid-leave benefits in 2019; 38% are making changes this year; and 35% are considering doing so by 2022, the group found after surveying 113 large employers.

The expansion comes as more employers place a bigger emphasis on employee wellbeing—and more employees reach out to their employers for support.

"Employers are investing in leave benefits as part of a more holistic view of the role employee wellbeing plays in workforce strategy," says Brian Marcotte, president and CEO of the Business Group on Health. "Leave benefits, especially for new parents and working caregivers, are highly valued by employees and address a growing area of need. Employers are evaluating and, in many cases, expanding these and other benefits to help meet those needs."

Other research echoes Marcotte's sentiment that paid leave is highly valued by employees. Paid leave is one of the most desired non-insurance benefits, according to recent research from benefits provider Unum. Its survey of more than 1,500 working adults found the most desired employee benefits are paid time off (cited by 40% of employees), flexible and remote work options (30%), and paid family leave (22%).

A number of employers recently expanded their paid-leave benefits to better support employees. In January, Intel enhanced its leave policies for new parents, caregivers and grieving employees, while the J.M. Smucker Company, Pilot Flying J, Goldman

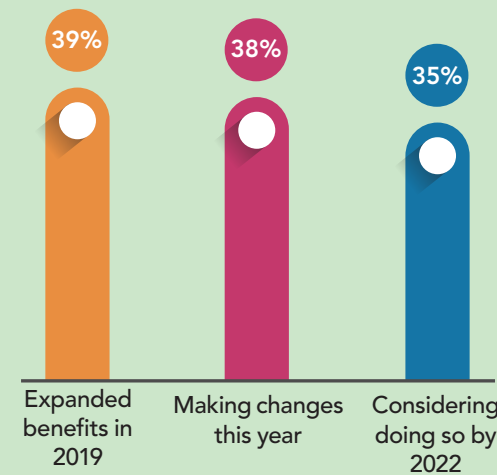
Sachs and *The Washington Post* are among the companies that recently expanded paid parental-leave benefits.

Intel, for instance, said the company's enhanced benefits are part of its investment to support employee wellbeing and will better help workers throughout their life stages.

"When our employees and their families are supported, they perform at their best," says Julie Ann Overcash, Intel's vice president of human resources and global director of compensation and benefits. "We strive to care for our employees and their families through every stage of life, whether they are caring for small children, aging parents or anyone in between."

While momentum has been growing for paid parental leave, in particular, the Business Group on Health's research found that employers are going beyond programs for just new parents. Time off for caregivers is one such growing area: 35% of the employers surveyed offer caregiver leave benefits, and another 28% are considering it by 2022. Furthermore, employers are expanding how they define family for leave purposes: 46% cover siblings, 46% cover parents of a spouse or partner and 38% cover grandparents.

#### Large Employers and Paid-Leave Benefits



Source: Business Group on Health

LuAnn Heinen, vice president of the Business Group on Health, says she expects more employers to expand paid-leave benefits in the near future.

"Employers see their roles changing and want to support employees during the times they need it most," she says.

—Kathryn Mayer

# Industry Experts Break Down Mega-Mergers

Major changes are afoot in the HR-technology market: Kronos Inc. and Ultimate Software announced in February they will soon join in a projected \$22 billion merger and, just days later, Cornerstone unveiled its plans to buy talent-management developer Saba, creating a combined company valued at \$1.4 billion.

Past history, of course, tells observers that mergers are always a risk; some go on to become smashing successes, others just smash onto the rocks.

To global industry analyst Josh Bersin, the Ultimate-Kronos merger appears to be an “opportunistic deal probably based” on the long-term goal of Hellman Friedman [the controlling shareholder of both Kronos and Ultimate] to build a large HCM company.

Bersin adds that, while he does see many synergies—for example, Kronos can sell HCM to its clients, Ultimate can sell workforce

management to its clients—the real impact is not yet clear.

“All of Kronos’ existing customers already have an HCM system, and most of Ultimate’s customers are likely already looking at other workforce-management tools,” he says, noting the huge amount of competition for the new entity. However, he does label Kronos and Ultimate as “two excellent companies with terrific product sets,” though the reasoning for the merger may have more to do with two companies looking for a partner and less about “solving new problems” for clients.

“The big issues companies face today are not buying more HR software, but actually buying less,” he says. “Companies are looking for simpler, more integrated solutions—if this merger makes this happen, it could be a long-term winner.”

As such, Cornerstone says, with the addition of Saba, the company will have an expanded reach and ability to help a larger, diverse group of employers realize the potential of their people with the right learning and development opportunities.

“For over 20 years, Saba has been committed to helping clients around the world attract, develop and engage their people,” said Phil Saunders, CEO and member of the Saba board



Credit: Ultimate Software

of directors, in a statement, “and I am thrilled about this union because of the value it will bring to them. We see a natural fit between Saba and Cornerstone. We are aligned on mission and a view of where the industry is heading.”

Jason Averbook, industry analyst and co-founder/CEO of Leapgen, adds that the Ultimate-Kronos merger also brings together mission-critical technology foundations: time and labor management and workforce planning along with foundational core people data.

“When we talk about the future of work, these are the foundational drivers that will help organizations be more efficient in maintaining and developing their workforce,” he says. “At the same time, it

allows them to plot a future picture of value for the workforce from both an HR and a business point of view.

“These are two companies that have become wildly successful in creating strong foundations for HR to build upon, and now the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts,” Averbook says.

John Sumser, principal analyst at HRExaminer, notes the breadth and depth of the available market in HR tech. With over 33,000 combined clients between Ultimate and Kronos, for instance, there are only a few hundred overlaps.

“The first opportunity for the new enterprise is cross-selling between accounts,” Sumser says. “From a customer perspective, this

means that there is little to be concerned about in the near- and medium-term. The joint operation will not be sunsetting any product lines.”

Meanwhile, Sumser says, radically rethinking the data asset created by the merger is an “enormous” opportunity.

“The combined offerings have visibility, from work planning and scheduling through the full talent-management suite,” he says. “It is impossible to overestimate the value that will be unlocked with projects that apply AI to the entire HR ecosystem.”

Sumser adds that, as with all mergers, the risk is in the execution and integration of the operations, explaining that the firms are beginning with a “nothing’s going to change” approach. But, he says, it is worth noting that the most senior members of Ultimate Software’s leadership—mainly founder Scott Scherr and CEO Adam Rogers—have chosen to leave. Aron Ain, longtime Kronos chief executive officer, will be CEO and chairman of the combined company—guiding an experienced executive team comprised of leaders from both Ultimate and Kronos.

“With that, the new firm has \$3 billion in revenue, a target of \$6 billion by 2025 and a clear focus on growth. I’d say this will be a big IPO in 2022,” Sumser predicts.

—Tom Starnier

## The Link Between Digital Health and Retention

Some organizations are rolling out an unusual employee-retention strategy: digital-health solutions.

More than one quarter (27%) of workers responding to a recent global survey say they’re much less or less likely to move to another company if their employer promotes or sponsors digital health solutions, such as an app to locate providers or access to virtual healthcare. Likewise, 48% would have more confidence in a digital health solution if it were offered by their employer.

The *Health on Demand* survey, which was recently conducted by Mercer Marsh Benefits, Mercer and Oliver Wyman, attracted responses from 16,564 workers and 1,300 employers in 13 global markets.

“It’s long been the status quo that employers are the source of healthcare and healthcare information,” says Kate Brown, leader

of the Center for Health Innovation at Mercer. “So, when employers put a program in front of their employees in terms of digital health, it’s coming from a trusted source.”

Respondents ranked 15 specific digital health solutions based on their personal value. The top U.S. and global employee solution (39%) is an app that “helps find the right doctor or medical care when and where needed.” Next on American workers’ list is personal or family portable, electronic medical records (38%), followed by telemedicine (36%) and wearable technology for self-managing health conditions (36%).

However, U.S. employers (58%) rated portable, electronic medical

records as their No. 1 choice, followed by telemedicine (52%), an app to find healthcare providers (45%) and then wearable technology (44%).



Kate Brown

“If you haven’t yet started to [develop] a digital health strategy, this is probably good evidence to present to your leadership or board,” says Brown, adding that 40% of employers believe promoting or sponsoring digital health solutions will aid staff retention. Another 68% are very or somewhat likely to invest more in digital health in the next five years.

Mercer grouped survey participants into four segments:

**Get me comfortable** (40%), dominated by skeptical Gen Xers, are less likely to quit if offered digital health benefits;

**Sign me up** (37%), mostly millennials, have high confidence in employer-provided solutions;

**Impress me** (19%), a generational mix, prefer to self-experiment with direct-to-consumer solutions; and

**Not for me** (5%), primarily baby boomers, express little interest in digital health.

Brown cautions HR professionals against getting distracted by “shiny” digital tools or getting lost in the complexity of deploying different solutions.

“Think holistically about your digital health strategy,” says Brown, adding that HR must create a comprehensive experience for end users. “The vast majority [of employees] is interested in digital health. It’s just a matter of whether or not they’re ready to jump in with two feet or need a little bit of convincing.”

—Carol Patton

## Report: Gig Workforce Driving Talent Challenges

It may come as little surprise to HR leaders that so-called gig work continues to rise. Most importantly, though, that growth spurt is driving employer demand for skilled talent, according to new research.

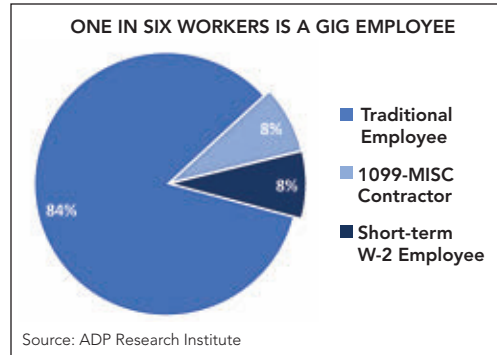
The report from the ADP Research Institute, titled *Illuminating the Shadow Workforce: Insights into the Gig Workforce in Businesses*, found that, from 2010 to 2019, the share of gig workers in businesses increased by 15%, with both short-term W-2 and 1099-M gig workers contributing equally to the uptick.

The report—fueled by anonymized payroll data of 18 million workers from 75,000 companies, coupled with 16,800 direct survey responses from traditional employees and gig workers (and 21 C-level executive interviews)—also reveals tenured workers and retirees are capitalizing on the tight U.S. labor market and the need for skilled workers by turning to gig work.

Ahu Yildirmaz, co-head of the ADP Research Institute, says the research shows that this changing workforce composition has significant talent management, budget and compliance implications for businesses of all sizes.

“It is clear there is a fundamental shift in the workforce as innovation continues to transform work, increasing the demand for skilled workers,” Yildirmaz said during a recent webinar. She added that, in order to bridge the talent gap in today’s particularly tight labor market, many companies are hiring skilled workers at a premium.

The ADP Research Institute study identified two worlds of gig workers: One entails 1099-M contractors who are independent and often hired for their skills on a project basis. These workers tend to be older, highly educated and choose to work on what they enjoy; in fact, 30% of 1099-M gig workers are 55 or older. For some, their gig work is supplemental income to retirement savings. The second group includes short-term W-2 employees, who are often younger, less educated, have a lower income and are typically working on a seasonal or on-call basis.



The report found one in six enterprise workers is actually a gig worker paid as either a 1099-M worker or a short-term W-2 employee, working one to six months.

Among other findings:

- Every industry relies on gig workers. Recreation, construction and business services are the top three industries utilizing the gig workforce.

- More than half of the 1099-M contractors work for the same company for 12 consecutive months, just like any traditional W-2 employee.

- Earning potential is similar to traditional workers. The average income for gig employees working for 12 consecutive months is similar, regardless of whether they are 1099-M workers or traditional W-2 employees.

The research predicts gig work will continue to grow, and that means an increasing impact on workforce dynamics,

forcing companies to optimize talent management and workforce strategy. For example, 60% of 1099-M gig workers say they will continue to gig for the next three years.

Yildirmaz says that, while the term “gig worker” has seamlessly integrated into our vernacular and culture, until now there has been

no real data-driven insight into the gig workforce in the enterprise space. She adds that this “shadow workforce” is comprised of workers with vast skill sets, who work across all industries and in all regions of the U.S.

“Additionally, we found that the majority of these workers are doing gig work out of preference,” she notes.

In fact, the research found that more than 70% of 1099-M gig workers say they are working independently by their own choice, not because they can’t find a “traditional” job. Most seem happy with gig work and place a premium on flexibility as a driving motivation behind their decision, over financial security or benefits. Of millennials and Gen Z workers (under the age of 34) surveyed, 74% say they would continue to work as a 1099-M worker—even if they lost their current health insurance.

—Tom Starner

## Resumes, Lies and Repercussions

New research by the automated reference-checking company Checkster shows that more than 78% of job applicants say they fudge or outright lie on their resumes—and that’s OK with most hiring managers.

According to the survey, hiring managers say they would hire candidates who inflated their resumes 66% of the time.

The ethical-standards study focused on 400 applicants and 400 hiring managers, HR professionals and recruiters. More than 60% of applicants said they have claimed mastery in skills they had only basic knowledge of, and more than half said they worked at some jobs longer in order to omit an employer. Other findings include:

- 42% made up relevant experience;
- 45% gave a false reason for leaving a job;
- 41% gave a director-level job when the actual title was manager; and
- 39% said they held a degree from a prestigious university instead of their own.

Among hiring respondents, 92% said they would still consider hiring a person who inflated their GPA by more than half a point. Flexibility for such fibbing seemed to skew slightly with age, with 69% of hiring managers under age 35 saying they would hire dishonest applicants at least some of the time, compared to 60% of those over 45.

These stats throw into question the institutional value companies place

on ethics, while showing that finding the right—and honest—candidate in a tight job market can be tough.

“What is important is to understand the fact that the ethical standard of what is acceptable or not is also different for different people,” says Yves Lermusi, Checkster’s CEO. That means “white lies” may be considered different than larger untruths.

While most might *intellectually* agree that hiring people who misrepresent themselves is a bad idea, recruiters and hiring managers need to be aligned with the company’s ethical standards, Lermusi says. The pressure on recruiters to find appropriate candidates can also contribute to them “brushing off” any inconsistencies they find that could suggest lies in the application.

“I think, as an organization, it is important to just say, ‘Hey, where do we draw the line?’ It is a discussion that we haven’t had in the industry [about] what constitutes [the] ethical and non-ethical,” he says. “There are some people who say, ‘We will never hire someone who created fake references,’ or they just say, ‘Sometimes it’s OK.’ Where do you draw the line?”

Checkster developed a free ethical-hiring benchmark questionnaire to help companies understand where inconsistencies in hiring practices could lead to hiring unethical employees.

“When we developed the study, we didn’t know if people would really admit that they [misrepresented themselves] as much as they do,” Lermusi notes. “When the results came back, we were stunned.”

—Maura Ciccarella

## Upcoming Events

**May 17-20** **ATD 2020 International Conference & Exposition, Colorado Convention Center, Denver.** This is the largest event for talent-development professionals worldwide. It will provide attendees with knowledge, strategies and solutions needed to effectively train and develop talent. Gain insights into the latest trends, best practices and new solutions for designing, delivering, implementing and measuring learning programs. For more information: ATD at [atdconference.td.org](http://atdconference.td.org).

**June 9-11** **Select HR Tech, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas.** The creators of *Human Resource Executive*® and the HR Technology Conference & Exposition® will hold this inaugural conference to provide hands-on learning for HR leaders about HR-technology trends and tools. Attendees will have the opportunity to take part in facilitated conversations with peers, in-depth master classes and group discussions with industry analysts, as well as explore an expo for one-on-one conversations with vendors and experts. For more information: LRP Media Group at [SelectHRTech.com](http://SelectHRTech.com).

**June 28-July 1** **SHRM Annual Conference & Exposition, San Diego Convention Center, San Diego.** More than 200 sessions across 10 tracks will offer insights into the challenges facing modern HR leaders and practitioners. Sessions explore the latest trends in such topics as benefits, culture, HR technology, diversity, leadership and talent management. For more information: SHRM at [annual.shrm.org](http://annual.shrm.org).

**Aug. 10-13** **FDR Training, Sheraton Phoenix Downtown, Phoenix.** Now in its 35th year, FDR Training has been the federal community’s most authoritative training event focusing on the areas of EEO, HR, LR, alternative-dispute resolution, legal compliance and much more. Each year, thousands of federal professionals gather to get in-depth, in-person guidance on current issues affecting agencies from the nation’s most respected federal experts. FDR also provides attendees the unique opportunity to interact with government leaders, industry experts and peers from across the

nation. For more information: LRP Media Group at [FDRtraining.com](http://FDRtraining.com).

**Oct. 13-16** **HR Technology Conference & Exposition®, The Venetian, Las Vegas.** As the industry’s leading independent event for 20-plus years, HR Tech has been a key catalyst for tens of thousands of HR and IT executives in their quest to leverage technology and secure HR’s role as a pivotal component in their company’s overall success. Hailed as the industry’s “town-hall meeting,” HR Tech is a once-a-year chance to learn from—and network with—respected thought leaders and like-minded professionals. HR Tech is not a user conference and does not sell speaking slots, which means each session gives practical and actionable takeaways—minus the sales pitch and vendor hype. Plus, home to the world’s largest HR-technology expo—the size of seven football fields—HR Tech gives attendees the chance to compare more products and services side by side than any other event. For more information: LRP Media Group at [HRTechConference.com](http://HRTechConference.com).

**Oct. 21-23** **CWC 2020 Compliance Conference, JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes, Orlando, Fla.** Explore practical solutions to everyday workplace challenges at sessions led by attorneys, policy analysts and association members with experience in designing, implementing and defending compliance and diversity programs. For more information: Center for Workplace Compliance at [cwc.org/CWC/Conferences](http://cwc.org/CWC/Conferences).

**Oct. 26-28** **Gartner ReimageHR Conference, Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort, Orlando, Fla.** The future of work is at the heart of this premier gathering of CHROs and HR leaders, which provides a critical update on the latest trends shaping the world of work, and the practices to build an HR action plan to keep up with them. Topics include the shift to greater transparency, process resequencing and work shifting. The conference will also present Gartner’s exclusive research, which can help HR leaders enrich their strategies. For more information: Gartner at [gartner.com/en/conferences/na/human-resource-us](http://gartner.com/en/conferences/na/human-resource-us).

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Deadline: May 1

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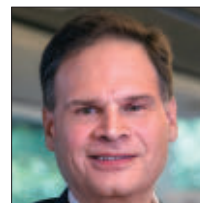
- Executives with responsibility for the entire HR function in his or her organization and with five or more years of experience in the HR field
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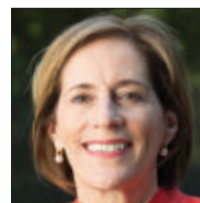
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Global Chief Human Resources Officer  
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# 10 Benefits to Bet On

EMPLOYERS SHOULD BE WILLING TO THINK OUTSIDE  
THE BOX ON BENEFITS, INDUSTRY EXPERTS SAY.

BY KATHRYN MAYER

It's a new era for employee benefits. A tightened job market, higher employee expectations and a diverse workforce are causing a shift in the offerings that workers want—and employers provide. While table-stakes benefits like health insurance and retirement accounts are still among the most important and high-value offerings, the workplace shift is putting the onus on HR leaders to go further in their efforts.

"Low unemployment, more choice in benefits and societal changes have a huge impact on employee expectations about what they want—both from their workplace and their career more broadly," says Kimberly Bowen, vice president of talent management at Unum.

Enter a range of high-value benefits that are helping employers better attract and retain talent, improve the wellbeing of their employees and get the most value for their money.

Although 2020 is seeing an influx of vital perks, here are 10 of the most impactful benefits that offer employers the most bang for their buck, according to *HRE* editors and industry experts.



## Student-Loan Repayment

A crushing amount of student debt—to the tune of \$1.6 trillion nationally, according to the Federal Reserve—is causing employees to clamor for assistance with the load.

Employers are starting to listen. Today, about 8% of employers offer a student-loan-repayment benefit, according to statistics from the Society for Human Resource Management—a percentage


that has doubled in the past year. Offering a repayment program is an added expense for employers, but advocates say it pays for itself with reduced turnover, increased employee satisfaction and a bigger boost to attraction and retention efforts.

For example, Trilogy Health Services, a senior-care-provider company that contributes \$100 a month to employees' student-loan payments, says employees who use the benefit stay with their company 2.5 times longer than those who aren't signed up for the program—a significant stat in the healthcare industry, which typically has record-high turnover rates. It's also a feel-good benefit that shows employees the company cares, says Todd Schmiedeler, the company's senior vice president of foundation and workforce development.

"We hear such great response from it," he says. "I had people that hugged me and cried when they were helped to pay off their debt. That makes us feel good about what we do."

Employers that want to help employees with student-loan debt but don't want to invest in repayment assistance can support them in other ways, experts say. For instance, allowing employees to trade in paid time off for a payment or incorporating financial education into a wellness program are rising options.

## Flexible Work Schedules



As the topic of work-life balance becomes more important, one workplace offering seems to have become more important, too: flexible work schedules and remote work options. A survey of more than 1,500 workers from Unum found that flexible and remote work options were the second most-desired non-insurance perk. Advocates say the option increases employee satisfaction, loyalty, retention and wellbeing. It also can help retain working parents, caregivers or workers with health conditions who have to balance doctors' appointments and work hours.

"For many, flexible and remote working options give people more choice in when, where and how they work, and a lot of people value that," says Unum's Bowen. "Having the option to work remotely may enable people to travel more, spend less time in traffic, or better balance their other responsibilities. These may seem like small wins, but that flexibility can play into employees' overall wellbeing and quality of both work and life."

For employers, the benefit can be a wise—and cheap—investment. Unlike other benefits, it can even save employers money by lowering overhead and office costs. It also can help employers find and keep talent, Bowen says. "From a talent-acquisition perspective, offering employees the option to work remotely can open more possibilities in who you hire," she says. "Quality talent can be scant in some geographic areas, but broadening your search to include remote workers outside of your market may help you find that perfect candidate."



## Health Savings Accounts

As the prevalence of high-deductible health plans grows, the value of the plans' associated health savings account is growing with it. For employees, HSAs provide "tremendous opportunity to maximize their savings dollars and help them stretch further—which will only become more important as healthcare costs continue to rise," says Begonya Klumb, head of HSAs at Fidelity Investments. Employees also benefit from tax advantages and as a way to save for healthcare costs in retirement.

Employers who not only offer HSAs, but contribute to them, see even more benefits, including helping employees drive the right behaviors and form the right habits, Klumb says. "Looking at our book of business, we see [employer HSA contributions] as one of the primary factors [that leads] employees to adopt the high-deductible health plan and open the HSA account. For some of our clients who have recently started to contribute to the HSAs, we have seen a more than 60% increase in the number of employees opening the HSA account."

Moreover, HSA contributions are deducted from payroll on a pre-tax basis that saves employers the FICA (Social Security and Medicare) taxes, she says.

**"Low unemployment, more choice in benefits and societal changes have a huge impact on employee expectations about what they want—both from their workplace and their career more broadly,"**

—KIMBERLY BOWEN



### Financial-Wellness Programs

Research continues to indicate that employees are financially stressed: Many live paycheck to paycheck, don't save as much for retirement as they want to, don't have funds for emergencies and have trouble focusing on work because of money concerns. Enter the financial-wellness program, a high-impact benefit that can help employees get on track, budget, save and be more focused on their jobs.

"Financial benefits play a critical role in effective total-rewards programs," says Scott Cawood, president and CEO of WorldatWork. "With life events, rising healthcare costs and personal debt the leading stressors within the workplace, it's no surprise that organizations are focusing on financial benefits, especially in such a tight labor market where retaining talent is so critical."

Costs for a financial-wellness program vary—a survey by the Employee Benefit Research Institute showed that 43% of employers spend less than \$50 per employee per year on such initiatives, whereas 21% spend more than \$500. But the investment may prove wise for employers, as American businesses lose \$500 billion per year due to employees' personal financial stress, according to research from Salary Finance.



### Paid Parental Leave

As there is no federal mandate for employers to provide paid time off for new parents, employers that offer generous paid parental-leave policies have an edge when it comes to keeping workers happy and on the job. The benefit also is a factor when it comes to recruiting talent: New hires looking to plan their families often consider a parental-leave policy or benefits as a reason to join a company. Jill Penrose, senior vice president of human resources and corporate communications at the J.M. Smucker Co., for instance, says the company's new 12-week paid-leave policy for all employees following the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child helps employees and the company at large. Not only does the policy promote work/life integration and "is right thing to do for our people," she says, the benefit "will be beneficial for our business, as [it] will allow employees to better focus on their professional responsibilities and continued development when they return to work."

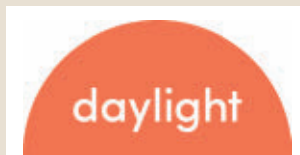
The benefit does carry an expense with it—losing workers for an extended amount of time. But many experts say the cost is a smart investment. In addition to helping employees, providing paid leave can benefit employers by boosting morale, productivity and loyalty.



## SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

A look at a handful of companies doing interesting and noteworthy work to solve HR's biggest pain points.

Compiled by HRE staff



### BIG HEALTH

**HR area:** Wellness

**What they're doing:** With worker stress levels at record highs, many employers are vexed by how to address the mental-health needs of their employees. Big Health is tackling the issue by meeting workers where they are: on mobile devices. Its fully automated Daylight app is designed to engage users who are experiencing worry and anxiety in healthy behavioral change. The app uses the power of personalization and the intimacy of voice to help build emotional connection and deliver therapeutic experiences—approaches that are rooted in clinical expertise but are designed to feel empathetic and entertaining.

**Why it's innovative:** The science behind Daylight is impressive: It relies on the most successful

cognitive and behavioral techniques and was designed with input from leading clinical experts; those strategies were brought to life with input from filmmakers and animators from companies like Pixar and Radiolab. On the employer side, the company develops custom communication strategies based on employee needs and delivers biannual reports on engagement, clinical outcomes, ROI and workplace performance, says Justin Riele, director of enterprise marketing at Big Health. Available 24/7, Daylight and Big Health's digital sleep-improvement program Sleepio aim to be powerful antidotes to the common problems plaguing workplace-wellness initiatives, such as low adherence and inconvenience. "Our products provide an efficient first step in mental healthcare that integrates with, rather than duplicates, existing resources," Riele says.



### JELLYVISION

**HR area:** Benefits

**What they're doing:** Jellyvision's ALEX is a virtual benefits counselor, designed to answer employee questions about everything from the differences among health plans to how much to save for retirement. Personalized for each company and user, ALEX is designed to provide employees an engaging experience—available 24/7—that makes traditionally tough decisions easier to understand.

**Why it's innovative:** It's no secret that employees hate exploring their benefits options. "Benefits can be complex, confusing and even a little boring,"

says Clark Kays, Jellyvision's director of brand and product marketing. "When people are confused and bored, they tend to make bad choices, and those bad choices have big financial consequences for both them and their employer." To tackle those challenges, ALEX is rooted in behavioral-science strategies and utilizes Interactive Conversation that allows it to personalize each interaction. The language is plain and straightforward and uses strategic humor to communicate complex concepts—driving better engagement with the benefits and more informed workforces. "That clear, human guidance saves employees and employers thousands of dollars and saves HR teams countless headaches," Kays says.

### Mental-Health Assistance

Wellness components that address mental health are growing in importance as more employees struggle with conditions including stress, anxiety and depression. Employers are beginning to recognize the toll mental-health concerns take on workers' personal and professional lives.

"The business case for offering effective and affordable mental healthcare is strong," says Michael Weiner, assist leader at EY. "Mental illness has become the No. 1 reason for disability around the globe. Compounding this is that only 30% of people with a mental illness seek treatment, despite the fact that there are effective treatments. Stigma, fear and cost continue to be significant reasons why people do not seek care."

Employers can help employees—and find offerings that fit their budget—in a variety of ways: by including therapy coverage in their health plans; adding tools that help employees cope with stress; or even embracing "mental-health days," which allow employees paid time off to deal with issues like burnout, depression or anxiety.



Research finds that education benefits double as recruitment and retention tools—80% of employees say education benefits would make them more likely to recommend their employers, according to Bright Horizons. Adding the benefit also shows an employer cares about employees' educational and career development, which workers say is important.

Assisting employees with education and tuition is an expense, to be sure, but companies often partner with universities and programs to drive down costs. The move also can help employers solve a big problem before it starts: a growing amount of student-loan debt.

### Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance has been around for a while, but it's growing in popularity. The benefit helps employees attain higher education and develop their skills, which can be valuable for both the employer and employee. "As the pace of technological change accelerates, the role—and value—of education in the workplace is exploding," says Patrick Donovan, senior vice president of emerging services for Bright Horizons.

### Breast-Milk Shipping

The rising benefit—which allows new moms to pump during a business trip, then ship the milk home overnight in a pharmaceutical-grade cooler, at no cost to them—is niche, to be sure. But it can have a big impact on the retention of new moms. According to Ovia Health, one in three women does not return to her job after giving birth, and stress about pumping at work is the second-biggest reason women don't return to their job after maternity leave. Though a breast-milk-shipping benefit can be pricey per employee, most employers who have the benefit don't have a significant number of employees who use it, so the cost is usually low. And the benefit has proven to be valuable for its users.

"Because it is so hyper-personalized, it's something that those who take advantage of it really, really appreciate," says Jason Russell, director of North America total rewards at SAP America. (SAP began offering the benefit in 2017.)





## HEADSPACE FOR WORK

### HR area: Mental health

**What they're doing:** Headspace for Work offers the Headspace mindfulness app that teaches meditation as a mental-health solution for companies to help employees manage stress and improve wellbeing. The science-based app, which is currently offered to employees at more than 600 companies, including Starbucks, Hyatt, Adobe and Unilever, allows premium access to the application. There, employees can access more than 1,000 hours of audio and video content to learn how to meditate, to set and achieve goals, to get inspired to learn and develop healthy habits, and to track stress levels over time.

**Why it's innovative:** Regardless of its source, stress always affects work. That's why Headspace for Work connects employees with an existing service that is evolving for the commercial market and that is easily accessible from home, office, mobile devices and even Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa—24 hours a day. Employers also receive a suite of products to help launch Headspace, to measure the effects of the tool and to create a mental-health strategy using the app, including live or virtual educational experiences for teams. Headspace reports stress reduction of 12-14% after 10 days of app use and 32% after 30 days, along with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety.



## BENEFITFOCUS

### HR area: Employee benefits

**What they're doing:** Benefitfocus leverages its massive data set of healthcare claims, enrollment elections and other benefit-related information to power its AI engine, BenefitSAIGE. This enables personalized experiences and improved outcomes across the entire benefits ecosystem: consumers, employers, health plans, brokers and benefit suppliers.

**Why it's innovative:** AI thrives on data. With more than 25 million consumers, 150,000 employers, 500 brokers and the nation's largest health plans, BenefitSAIGE has access to

more data—5 petabytes (or twice as much as the U.S. Census Bureau)—than any other AI-powered benefits platform, the company says. And that means benefits decisions are simpler at every stage—from conception and administration to selection and usage. The volume of data provides actionable insights in real time to help guide and support every member of the ecosystem, such as claims data that provide employers and brokers the insight needed to contain healthcare costs, build better benefit strategies and improve health outcome; and enrollment data that help health plans and voluntary benefit suppliers better understand what's driving consumer purchase decisions.

"It's acknowledgement on the part of the employer and HR leadership that we realize that, just because you're coming back to work, your identity as a mom doesn't stop."

Beyond the employees who use it, the benefit can also positively impact a company's culture at large, Russell says. "When your culture doesn't support a working mom—or working dad, for that matter—and doesn't acknowledge the fact that [workers] have other competing priorities ... that's a huge loss."

### Vaping Support

Tobacco cessation—focused on both traditional cigarettes and chewing tobacco—has historically been a priority for employers, and HR professionals in particular. But a growing number are turning their sights on vaping support and cessation. The move is driven by scores of stats showing the increase of vaping—and its drastic health impact. Digital programs that offer virtual and 24/7 support for employees and their families and children—young users are on the rise—can be a particularly impactful workplace offering, experts say.

"While not yet a hot topic among HR managers, it's certainly on the radar for 2020," says LuAnn Heinen, vice president of wellbeing and workforce strategy at the Business Group on Health.

For Generac Power Systems, a tobacco-cessation program was an important piece to add to its wellness efforts. More than a quarter of the company's 5,800 employees—3,000 of them are in the U.S.—were tobacco

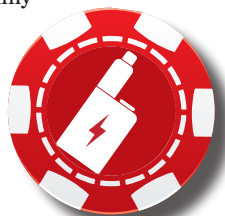
users. And vaping use, which was rising among employees, quickly became a conversation topic for the company's HR leaders. Generac offered a digital tobacco-cessation program called the EX program—offered through the Truth Initiative in collaboration with the Mayo Clinic. Not only has it helped employees quit vaping and improve their health, it's saved significant money for Generac, too—about \$182,000 net savings from people not using tobacco, which includes the \$10,000 the company pays annually for the EX program, a direct result of medical-cost savings.

### Telehealth Options

Virtual-care options can be valuable in terms of saving employees time and saving employers money. One big advantage? They can help triage and treat certain illnesses and conditions during any hour of the day and, in the process, save money on pricy emergency-room visits.

"Given the challenges with access to primary-care services and care for mental health and substance-use disorders, employers should consider making sure their employees have access to virtual care, such as telehealth," says Suzanne Delbanco, executive director for Catalyst for Payment Reform. "While it may be available through some health-insurance companies, employers can also contract for it directly and reduce the barriers their employees face in seeking care."

Send questions or comments about this story to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).



# Coronavirus: What Employers Need to

## Paid Leave at the Center of Coronavirus Conversations

**A**s travel restrictions and quarantine measures are taken to combat the coronavirus pandemic, lawmakers are looking for ways to alleviate burdens employees and employers might be facing.

Several pieces of federal legislation have been proposed to provide relief and, as the conversation plays out at the national level, state and local governments as well as private industries are looking at ways to address the situation.

For instance, residents in Colorado will be eligible for up to four days of paid sick leave from their employer while they are being tested for COVID-19 under new emergency rules.

The new rules will apply to people who work in the following industries: leisure and hospitality; food services; child care; education; home healthcare if people are working with elderly, disabled, sick or high-risk people; and nursing homes and community-living facilities.

Paid leave has also been a hot topic among private sector employers; in the past few years, more and more were already beefing up paid leave to include caregiving benefits.

Olive Garden's parent company, Darden, announced a permanent change to its paid sick-leave benefits for its more than 180,000 employees at the beginning of March: Employees will accrue one hour of sick leave for every 30 worked. The pay rate will be based on the worker's 13-week average. Current employees can use the benefit immediately, and their starting balance is based on their most recent 26 weeks of work. New hires, who will begin accruing paid sick leave as soon as they start, can use it after 90 days of employment.

A Darden representative said the policy had been in process for some time, but the company decided to accelerate its rollout due to COVID-19. The company said it plans to continue to enhance its current benefit plan, which already provides access to



flexible schedules, paid family and medical leave, healthcare plans and a 401(k) with company match—among many other programs.

"As we continue to make investments in our employees, we strengthen our greatest competitive edge—because when our team

members win, our guests win," said Gene Lee, Darden's president and CEO.

Darden owns Olive Garden, Longhorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Eddie V's, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen, Yard House, Seasons 52 and Bahama Breeze.

—Nick Otto

## Protecting Senior Workers from COVID-19

**A**cross the U.S., businesses, school districts and governments are taking extreme measures to curb the spread of coronavirus. "Social distancing" has emerged as the most effective measure for getting the pandemic under control, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending that people avoid crowds, cancel travel plans and try to maintain a distance of at least six feet from other people—and many state and local governments have issued mandates to support those efforts.

That solution is easier said than done, particularly for businesses that can't temporarily shut down or allow employees to work from home. Along with taking basic precautions that apply to all workers—ensuring access to hand sanitizer, holding meetings in large rooms and increasing the frequency at which the work site is



cleaned—employers should be taking extra considerations for employees who are seniors, who have been deemed most at risk of suffering severe complications, or even dying, from COVID-19.

"There's a special challenge for high-risk people where the nature of their work makes it very hard for them to work remotely," says Jeff Levin-Scherz, co-leader of the North American Health Management practice in the Boston office of Willis Towers Watson. "Employers across the

country are thinking long and hard about what to do in those situations."

Seattle-based Starbucks Corp. is offering up to 14 days of "catastrophe pay" to employees who have been exposed to COVID-19, as well as those who are most vulnerable to succumbing to the virus, including those over the age of 60. But with health experts unsure when the outbreak will abate, a two-week reprieve from the workplace may be far from sufficient. According to Levin-Scherz, businesses in the hospitality

and retail industries, where employees have frequent contact with the public, would be wise to reassign at-risk employees to back-of-the-house duties and place younger, healthier workers in customer-facing roles.

While older employees are more likely to experience serious illness from COVID-19, younger employees should also be encouraged to reduce the risk of contracting the virus, if for no other reason than to avoid passing it on to more vulnerable co-workers or family members. Levin-Scherz says employers should advise workers to stay home if they feel even slightly ill, as they could unknowingly spread the coronavirus to someone who may suffer grave consequences. All workers should be encouraged to take advantage of telemedicine services for unrelated health issues in order to avoid going to medical facilities where they could be exposed to COVID-19, he says.

"The coronavirus is a wake-up call for companies to review their strategies, policies and procedures for safeguarding employees in this and future epidemics," says Levin-Scherz.

—Julie Cook Ramirez

# Know

## 4 Ways to Encourage Resilience During Panic

**T**he fluid, uncertain nature of the COVID-19 crisis is fueling global panic, including among employees—which is prompting a new challenge for HR leaders to quell that anxiety.

Helping workers navigate those feelings is a business imperative, says Maggie Craddock, founder and president of executive-coaching firm Workplace Relationships.

“By focusing on the emotional resilience of their workforce, we believe that firms can cut the costs of hurried mistakes, minimize mental distractions and strengthen their overall culture,” she says.

Craddock, who has more than 20 years of experience as an executive coach, including for Fortune 500 CEOs and senior-management teams, says her organization recommends a four-stage process for driving emotional resilience and encouraging emotional agility under pressure:

**Awareness:** Recognize both the risks and potential opportunities of a crisis.

**Emotional Ownership:** Acknowledge emotional triggers and allow yourself to pause under pressure when encountering them.

**Interaction:** Consider others’ emotional triggers and how they may influence their interactions with you.

**Integration:** Set a consistent tone by strategically balancing your personal reactions and your professional responsibilities.

In addition to encouraging workers to adopt these strategies, Craddock notes, HR professionals must also consider their own responses to pressure.

“By pausing to identify the thoughts and feelings that are playing out inside of them, HR leaders will be better prepared to be respond authentically and effectively with others,” she says. “This is because, for all of us, the way we communicate with ourselves dictates the confidence we bring to things like our vocal tone during a phone call, our timing and even the sense of presence we convey through our writing if we are crafting a message from a remote location.”

—Jen Colletta

# How Joan Lunden Became a Caregiving Advocate

BY KATHRYN MAYER

**F**or many working moms, starting a new job just weeks after the birth of their first child would be a logistical nightmare. But for Joan Lunden, the situation was made easier thanks to her employer, ABC, which in 1980 recognized it needed to support Lunden’s caregiving reality as she became the new host of *Good Morning America*.

“I was fortunate,” she says. “I worked for a company that not only gave me time off when my daughters were born, but when I returned to work, I was privileged to be one of the first working women in this country to be allowed to bring my infant daughter to work with me.”

At that time, perks like that were highly unusual, Lunden explains.

“It was in my best interest, but also in their best interest. I helped to keep the ratings up, so they made profits. I think far too many businesses lose fabulous employees when they don’t extend paid leave and [give people the] assurance of keeping their jobs.”

Lunden’s self-described “good fortune” to be in that position with ABC—as well as the hundreds of letters she received from women nationwide explaining how meaningful benefits like hers would be in their own lives—helped light a “fire in me to embark on a path as a women’s and family advocate and do my part to help families get the support they need.”

That fire burned even brighter years later, when she began taking care of her mother, who had dementia, and her older brother, who had begun experiencing complications from Type II diabetes. Lunden spent years traveling cross-country from the East Coast, where she worked and was raising her children, to California, where her mom and brother lived, to helped take care of them until both of their deaths.

“As part of what has become known as the sandwich generation, I found myself caring for my children—ranging in age from young babies to teens and young adults—at the same time I was caring for my aging mom and brother, all while working full time,” says Lunden. She was going to speak about her story at HRE’s Health and Benefits Leadership Conference,

but the event was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Decades after Lunden paved the way at

ABC, many more employees are on a similar journey—parenting, taking care of older family members or both, especially in light of the ongoing global health crisis. It’s a group Lunden is passionate about helping.

She is the spokesperson for the senior-referral service A Place for Mom, a company that helps caregivers and families find the right care and resources for their loved ones. She co-authored *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Family Caregivers*, published in 2012; and hosted the series *Taking Care With Joan Lunden*—which explores the challenges of caregiving—on the RLTV network.

She also has taken her advocacy efforts to lawmakers. In late January, Lunden testified during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing in support of the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act sponsored by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.). The legislation would provide 12 weeks of partial income for family leave. Funding would come through a payroll tax.

“The number of American workers who will need personal medical leave either for themselves or for another family member is only going to increase,” she said, citing statistics from the Department of Health and Human Services that say about half of Americans turning 65 will develop a disability “serious enough that they will require care.”

“We are in the middle of a caregiving crisis, and that is why I so strongly believe that any paid-leave policy should address the full range of caregiving needs that families will face,” Lunden told lawmakers. “Families everywhere are counting on you, Congress, to enact this type of comprehensive paid family medical leave that will help all of us when we need it the most.”



If passed, the law would help millions of employees who take care of family members. Research by the AARP says there were about 41 million family caregivers in the United States in 2017, and they provided about 34 billion hours of unpaid care for other adults. The economic value of their efforts was estimated at \$470 billion.

And although some states offer paid caregiving leave and employers are beginning to zero in on caregiving and parental efforts—a recent survey of 113 large employers by the Business Group on Health found 40% of respondents expanded paid-leave benefits in 2019, for instance—gaps still remain. While larger employers are more likely to offer competitive benefits like caregiving and parental leave, most mid-size and smaller companies are less likely to. Part-time workers are even less likely to receive such benefits. And though the federal Family and Medical Leave Act allows many employees to take off up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year without risk of losing their jobs, it doesn’t provide any financial assistance for employees.

“A few short weeks would give time to bond with a new baby, a chance to say goodbye to a loved one and peace of mind to care for yourself in life’s most challenging times,” Lunden says about enforcing a paid family-leave program. “Paid family and medical leave will support families, and also employers, since they won’t have to lose workers when life happens. In the end, not having to make that choice between income and caring for our loved ones will make us all stronger, both at work and at home.”

It’s a fight Lunden refuses to give up. “I’m hoping to use my public platform to help ensure that Americans everywhere get the support they need to tend to new babies and aging relatives and still be able to keep their jobs,” she says. “It was 40 years ago that ABC extended paid leave to me for my maternity leave and allowed me to bring my newborn daughter to work. Americans wrote in, happy to see a change beginning to take place, but asked, ‘What about the rest of us?’ Here we are, 40 years later, still asking the same question.”

To successfully navigate a robotic-process-automation journey, HR needs to first get a few underlying tasks right. BY TOM STARNER

## Maximizing ROI from RPA

**R**obotic-process automation (RPA) may not be as flashy as artificial intelligence or machine learning, but—even with its relative simplicity—it’s apparently driving some impressive results in the HR world.

RPA refers to software that uses bots to mimic human action—a potential goldmine for HR leaders looking to make their functions run more efficiently. For one thing, with its quick installation footprint, an RPA solution can be up and running within a few months. Best of all, tasks and processes that once required repetitive, mind-numbing people power can be done instantly—if you use RPA properly.

According to a new report from the Hackett Group, 9% of employers say they have a large-scale RPA implementation happening this year within HR, while 39% have launched pilots or small-scale implementations.

But even more telling, Hackett’s *Achieving HR Excellence in an Age of Digital Disruption* research found that an impressive 83% of participants report that RPA projects realized business expectations—by far, the highest number of any technology adoption/solution listed within the research. After RPA on the “met expectations” scale, business-process-management tools were second, followed by best-of-breed point solutions and cloud-based core operations.

Clearly, the Hackett report makes a strong data-based case that RPA represents low-hanging fruit for HR leaders when it comes to using tech to drive bottom-line results, among other benefits.

Miami-based Harry Osle, principal in charge and global human resources practice leader for Hackett, says the firm has seen businesses use RPA to zoom in on high-volume transaction-processing areas such as finance—where tasks like accounts payable or invoicing easily lend themselves to RPA.

“Then, it sort of migrates into the HR space,” he says, adding that HR can turn RPA into a serious tech success story if it gets on board smartly. “So far, we’re seeing many organizations focusing in on RPA, but I wouldn’t say HR is leading the trend.”

What exactly is RPA? Elissa Tucker, principal research lead for human capital management at American Productivity & Quality Center, a nonprofit membership-based research firm in Houston, defines it as: a server-based form of process automation that applies decision models or business rules to repetitive, predictable, rules-based activities that require little or no human oversight.

Most commonly, Tucker says, RPA is applied to high-volume, repeatable HR processes such as resume screening, onboarding, salary administration, timesheet management and offer-letter generation.

“Many HR functions are still at an early stage of their RPA journey,” Tucker says, noting that more than half of APQC’s recent *Open Standards Benchmarking in HR Technology and Analytics* survey respondents are either planning or piloting their first RPA program. Also, a relatively small 17% of HR functions have reached the highest level of “RPA maturity,” which Tucker defines as artificial intelligence-based cognitive automation for autonomous decision-making and discovery.

### Busting RPA Myths

Early success within HR aside, there is the RPA elephant in the room: job losses because of the introduction of bot-driven work. While this is often a hot topic, experts say the real impact is overblown.

“The first thing that often comes to mind about RPA is its potential to reduce headcount and generate cost savings,” Tucker says. “While the potential for RPA to reduce full-time employee hours required to perform certain HR processes and save HR costs is substantial, I think the greater



potential for RPA in HR lies in two other areas.”

First, she says, RPA—by increasing responsiveness and accuracy and enabling personalization—has the potential to be a key driver in HR’s ability to deliver an employee experience that attracts and retains top talent. Second, she says, RPA is a foundational element for data-driven decision-making, providing HR with easy access to the clean data needed to offer credible, predictive—even prescriptive—guidance to business leaders.



Jonathan Sears

Jonathan Sears, a partner at EY and the firm’s people advisory services leader, says there is a “huge myth” that automation will drive job loss. Instead, the research

he’s seeing suggests that, while automation could lead to the loss of 80 million jobs, it also has the potential to create more than 130 million new jobs.

“If I’m an HR leader and I’m implementing RPA, the conversation I’m having with my team is about rescaling and upscaling and ensuring jobs are being created through the use of automation,” says Sears, who will present a session on RPA at Select HR Tech, June 9-11 in Las Vegas. “It’s not a conversation about job loss; it’s a conversation of actually elevating people into hopefully more value-added roles across the organization.”

### Choose the Right Process

As for the benefits of RPA, early real-world successes and the Hackett data demonstrate it can turn rote tasks into fault-free processes.

“When it’s done right, RPA obviously has a very high success rate,” says London-based Paul Morrison, principal and global lead of RPA and smart automation at the Hackett Group.

“But, if you do it wrong, it can be a disaster.” That’s because, unlike AI or ML, RPA is not a learning application, per se; what you tell RPA to do, it does. “RPA is a relatively new type of software. It’s been around for only five to six years, so it’s still in the disruptive phase and is attractive in many ways because of that.”

Morrison says a key dynamic driving RPA adoption is that it can be implemented for specific uses quickly—going from “idea to life” in as few as 10 weeks.

“That’s completely doable and much faster than most other HR-technology interventions,” he says. “It’s new, it can be quick to install and, because of that speed, it’s also relatively cost-effective to implement.”

It’s also opened up opportunities to automate areas that were probably too expensive or couldn’t be automated before, which explains some of the interest—and certainly the hype over expectations for RPA in HR.

APQC’s Tucker cautions that, while the potential impact of RPA is significant, realizing these benefits will require a measured approach from HR. APQC’s research has shown, for example, that satisfaction with RPA projects, regardless of function, is significantly related to selecting the right processes to automate and including the right stakeholders on the RPA project team.

“The greatest gains are realized by automating processes that are relatively mature—not in a state of flux—and simple,” she says, noting that this helps ensure the cost of automation is small compared to the benefits it will bring. It’s also important to include HR subject-matter experts, process-management experts and IT staff on the RPA project team.

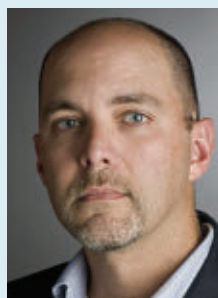
“Each perspective is needed for efficient RPA work that yields an automated process that end users will accept,” she says, adding that RPA also empowers the HR function to be more responsive to employee needs. For example, a bot can be available 24 hours a day and seven days a week with the ability to answer questions from employees instantly and accurately. Along with self-service portals, interactive bots help provide better service that enhances the employee experience when it comes to HR processes.

### Proceed with Caution

EY’s Sears warns that companies that just pursue RPA automation for the sake of automation are going to miss their ROI targets—mainly because they’re not thinking about process first or what they need to simplify and standardize before moving to RPA. In short, as is the case with every HR-tech implementation, if the existing,

## INSIDE HR TECH

By **Steve Boese**/Columnist



# Navigating Mergers, Acquisitions and Coronavirus

Back in November 2018, after a few high-profile M&A transactions in the HR-tech market (Ultimate Software acquiring PeopleDoc and Saba acquiring Lumesse and Halogen Software), I wrote a column about how HR leaders could protect their organizations’ interests moving forward—particularly if they were customers of one of the providers involved in the transactions.

With another round of recent M&A announcements in the HR-tech market (a merger of Kronos and Ultimate and the acquisition of Saba by Cornerstone OnDemand), I want to revisit the issues facing customers (and even potential customers) of an enterprise-technology provider that is a party to a major M&A transaction. In my previous column, I advised HR leaders to press the executives of the technology providers on their commitment to ongoing development and product roadmaps, to carefully monitor impacts to customer service and account management, and to develop HR-technology strategies that contain contingencies in case solutions are retired or sunsetted due to M&A activity. I think these basic recommendations are still valid, so I recommend checking out that piece at [HRExecutive.com](http://HRExecutive.com) for more details on how to navigate M&A activity with regard to HR technology.

In a “normal” world, that M&A activity would dominate conversations about HR and workplaces. But, as everyone is aware, nothing about the last few weeks has been “normal” at all. Right now, the most important issue impacting work, workplaces and people across the globe is the increasingly scary and spreading coronavirus, or COVID-19. I won’t bother to recap the current state of the crisis; even if I could, that information would be dated within minutes of my writing it down. Let’s just say that, while things are not looking encouraging at the moment, eventually—let’s hope—this global crisis will begin to come under control, and things like software companies buying other software companies will capture our interest again.

No matter what point we are at in this unfolding pandemic, I do think there are already some extremely important things we can learn from it, and that can, and perhaps should, be applied to the organization of work, the design of workplaces and the ways that employers engage with employees and their communities.

First, and the most apparent workplace implication from the spread of COVID-19, surrounds the importance of remote work and work-from-home policies, including how open and prepared organizations are to adopt these policies. It seems likely that we are now in the middle of the largest-ever experiment with remote working. For organizations in

the U.S. that have not yet been subject to significant impacts, the time is now (actually the time was probably weeks or months ago) to put in place a comprehensive protocol for remote work. Policies, technologies and methods of communication and engagement all are needed. One of the many enduring lessons from COVID-19 will be how it shifts remote work from a “nice-to-have” perk to an essential component of every enterprise’s business and operations strategy.

Next, this crisis has to remind us—and force us—to recognize the truly global nature of work. Even if we think we are a small organization in the middle of America with no international operations or customers, this outbreak, which developed in a medium-sized city on the other side of the world, now affects us all. Even the smallest organizations can see disruption in procurement, for example, given the global nature of manufacturing of parts and supplies of all kinds. Or, a prolonged crisis might impair ability to secure financing, if a global financial recession makes access to capital more difficult.

And let’s not forget about people issues. You may have an employee with a relative working or living in an area that has been hardest hit by COVID-19. Business travel has been disrupted or discontinued for most organizations; the idea of being in crowded airports and airplanes likely seems a risk not worth taking to most. It is eye-opening to think about how so much of the world is connected. And we have to think about our organizations in that way from now on.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this global crisis has reminded us all about the importance of open, timely and transparent communication. When things are uncertain, when events unfold that are outside our expectations and experiences, and especially when a situation seems a little bit scary, HR and business leaders have to lead. A large part of leadership is helping people work their way through this uncertainty in a manner that is calm, sensible and honest. Even if your organization is not yet directly at risk from COVID-19, chances are that, as this situation continues, your business will be impacted. Whether it is a dramatic fall in your stock price (and your employees’ 401(k) balances), a loss of revenue from canceled customer orders or something worse, your obligation as a leader is to communicate with your people as frequently and openly as possible.

Even if you are a little bit uncertain or scared yourself.

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underlying process is faulty, a poor outcome is sure to follow.

Companies that think “technology is the silver bullet and aren’t willing to transform and think about process actually get the same or worse outcomes by putting in the technology,”

he says. “The risk with RPA is actually greater because, with RPA, it’s not learning over time. It’s not AI; RPA is repeating a defined process so, if your process is bad, it will not work.”

In the end, says Karen Piercy, a Philadelphia-based partner in Mercer’s

HR transformation business, the objective for any automation strategy—but especially RPA—is to produce maximum results with minimal effort. With that, Piercy explains that not every job is ripe for complete automation. For example, she says,



Karen Piercy

tasks that truly benefit from a human touch might be best left as they are. The same goes for processes that may be monotonous but require very little manpower and don’t warrant the cost

of automation.

Most of all, Piercy says, while automation implies a completely hands-off process, many automated processes are designed to be used interactively, helping employees work faster and more effectively. Therefore, any RPA implementation should be easy for employees to grasp and use, rather than being dauntingly technical or requiring lengthy training courses.

“The most effective uses of automation in the office will improve the employee experience by mimicking the user-friendly, intuitive systems employees already know and enjoy in the consumer area,” Piercy says.

Before an organization jumps directly to RPA, she adds, it needs to look at its processes, rooting out manual, repetitive, rules-based tasks.

“If a process meets those criteria, then you need to determine if there is enough volume for a return on the investment for RPA,” Piercy says, adding that automating a step that takes a long time to do manually makes sense only if there is a very high volume, or if accuracy is critical.

“But if volumes and touch time are low,” she adds, “it might be less expensive to leave as a manual process, to automate parts of it through existing technology or to create an interface to connect technologies.”

In the end, Sears believes RPA holds enormous potential to shift how humans work.

“HR is a natural use case for RPA because there are a lot of repeatable administrative processes,” he says. Also, the good news is, RPA is not limited by company size, as the ROI for RPA is there whether it’s a \$1 billion or a \$30 billion company.

“It’s just about ensuring that you’re smart about how you choose to take the RPA journey,” Sears says.

## HR IN THE FLOW OF WORK

By Josh Bersin/Columnist



# Performance and Rewards in the Future of Work

Today’s organizations are very interconnected. People work in a more agile fashion

(though not necessarily in the agile methodology), they lend a hand to other projects and teams and their managers are less involved in their day-to-day activities.

Edgar Schein, former professor for the MIT Sloan School of Management, once told me that the most valuable cultural asset for any company is the desire of employees to help each other. Therefore, we should be thinking about how we motivate and recognize people who demonstrate this behavior.

The traditional performance process is based on *individual* achievements. However, research now shows that the highest-performing companies reward people for team goals, not just individual goals. Yet, fewer than one-third of companies do this.

Most performance-management processes are also riddled with other problems. Mercer’s *2019 Global Performance Management Study* found that only 2% of leaders believe their performance process delivers high value, only half have goals at the business-unit level and less than 3% believe they have excellent feedback practices. The study also found that only 30% of companies rate managers on their people-leadership capabilities, and only 9% reward managers based on their ability to lead people.

As I learned during my seven years at Deloitte, the success of the organization is based on alignment, continuous feedback, trust and accountability. The Mercer study clearly points out that pay-for-performance is on the rise, and the top driver of success is a sense of fairness and transparency in pay.

I’m seeing performance management again taking center stage, but this time it’s all about sound goal setting, clear expectations, focus, feedback, growth and a fair, equitable and well-designed way of rewarding people. Additionally, the HR-driven employee-performance process must be directly linked to business goals.

What do we do about pay? It’s still very important, but in today’s world, we must review it more often, adjust it based on market changes and create total transparency in the process. I recently talked with an executive whose company does quarterly pay reviews

for all major roles, and employees receive cost-of-living adjustments at least once per year. Patagonia aligns raises in base pay for an individual’s in-the-job performance and then pays high bonuses for beyond-the-job contributions. Pay is an area with many opportunities to innovate.

Finally, the research points out that career growth is key to performance and rewards. The best reward for any ambitious person is a promotion. That may not mean a higher-level job, but it does mean a new, exciting, expanded role. Creating a talent network for career growth is key to the future of work.

As you think about your priorities, I strongly advise you to revisit the performance and pay practices in your company. I recently finished research on the management of technology workers, which found that empowerment, clear goals, pay-for-performance and transparency are all key to high performance. In a sense, tech workers are the “canaries in the coal mine,” teaching us what everyone needs to perform better in this new world.

Let me conclude with an interesting observation from the Mercer research. The authors claim, “Managers, as we know them, will cease to exist and AI will play a bigger role.” While I think this prediction is a bit over the top, there is some truth to the statement. One of the biggest challenges I run into as I visit HR teams around the world is the realignment and development of leaders to meet the management requirements of today. In this new world, leadership is not about setting goals and holding people accountable. I’d argue that’s the simplest part of the job. The primary responsibilities are listening, coaching, advising, connecting and serving as the career stewards for the people around you.

Take a good look at your leadership model, and don’t be in the 91% of companies that don’t reward leaders for the real role they play. Everyone is a leader in the future of work, and it is important that we start redefining what leaders do.

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# Reskilling: A Matter of 'Survival'

BY CAROL PATTON



Donald Fan, senior director in the global office of culture, diversity & inclusion at Walmart, shares details about the retailer's reskilling and upskilling practices at the 2019 Colloquium of Global Diversity.

**F**uture growth is dependent on smart reskilling strategies.

About two years ago, Dentsply Sirona, a global manufacturer of dental products and technology, began reskilling its workforce to better adapt to future customer needs.

The company's CEO, Don Casey, led the internal communication effort, which included sales forums, online meetings, video broadcasts and other types of messaging that solicited employee feedback and encouraged workers to think holistically about evolving customer needs, says Lisa Yankie, senior vice president and CHRO at Dentsply Sirona, which supports 15,000 employees in 40 countries.

"The primary objective was being customer-centric [instead of product-centric]," she says, adding that the company's customers were also surveyed about their expectations. "We helped employees understand what digitization means, what the new skills of the workforce would look like, how we need to develop them and how it would impact specific roles."

The company created a new position called clinical development managers. Those managers participated in three face-to-face seminars and completed 20 hours of webinar training that expanded their understanding of the needs of dental practices beyond products. More than two-thirds of the new roles were filled with internal transfers, while the

remainder were hired externally.

Reskilling or upskilling employees—reskilling involves learning new skills for different jobs while upskilling improves employee skills that are applied in their current roles—is no longer a trend but a survival strategy that fuels or sustains a company's growth. As technology evolves and assumes more workplace tasks, HR has discovered that many employees are not equipped to handle 21st-century responsibilities, such as programming robots to stock shelves or manage inventory. To succeed in the digital era, HR professionals are transforming the learning and work experience. They're identifying internal skills gaps and investing in employee-reskilling programs. But instead of traditionally matching people to positions, HR is linking employee skills to work that needs to get done.

At Dentsply Sirona, the manufacturer did something unusual with its customers who are perceived as reskilling partners: It also trained them in

new digital technologies. About 470,000 dental professionals in 97 countries completed nearly 15,000 courses last year at its Dental Academy, says Yankie, adding that some courses are free.

"We had a huge focus on expanding skills in our customers and making sure—from a digital-transformation perspective—that our customers have professional offerings that are

delivered across the globe to increase their technical knowledge," she says.

Among HR's challenges, adds Yankie, is preparing leaders to articulate the "why" behind reskilling, finding balance between investing in reskilling programs and hiring external talent, and minimizing unconscious bias by extending reskilling opportunities to the entire workforce.

The company is considering a reskilling program for frontline leaders and currently reskills finance, IT and HR professionals to ensure it has the right skill sets in place to support its future. The project started in the U.S. and is being rolled out in other countries, adds Yankie.

"We bring the perspectives of both sides together [our customers and business] to understand how we have to reskill to meet customer demands in the future," she says.

## Clear Career Paths

While reskilling is an effective way to help employers keep pace with new skills needed, employees must buy into the concept for training to be effective.

Consider Walmart. In 2017, it launched the Walmart Academy in 200 stores nationwide and then introduced 14,000 reskilling courses last year via a LinkedIn-style online-learning platform for its 1.4 million U.S. employees, says Donald Fan, senior director in the global office of culture, diversity & inclusion at Walmart.

As Walmart designs its future workforce, he says, HR aims to break down traditional jobs into tasks. Which ones could be automated? Which ones could be contracted to gig workers? Which ones need to be performed in-house? It is the latter category, he says, that defined its reskilling curriculum.

## 8-Step Strategy

**T**he recent *Open Standards Benchmarking* survey addressing talent acquisition and optimization conducted by the American Productivity & Quality Center found that 85% of organizations are reskilling current employees, says Elissa Tucker, principal research lead, human capital management at the APQC. The median number of days it's taking to close skill gaps through training is 28.

**Tucker identifies the following steps employers need to take when launching reskilling programs:**

1. Promote reskilling, specifically its value for both your business and workforce. Recruit managers as change agents.
2. Identify the organization's future skill and job-role requirements. Develop a short list of critical skills needed for each job role.
3. Inventory the skills, experiences and accomplishments of current employees.
4. Compare future skills needed with current capabilities to reveal gaps. Consider employees with transferrable skills and experiences.
5. Empower and encourage employees to own their reskilling. Clarify what activities employees can perform to develop critical skills.
6. Be transparent about skills required for future jobs. Offer employee tools that match in-demand capabilities with available and anticipated jobs.
7. Train managers to tie employee interests with future capabilities and jobs.
8. Track the capabilities your organization is gaining and losing.



## Approaching People Transformation with a Disruptive Mindset

In the last few decades, we have watched the decline of brick-and-mortar retail, dining

in and taking out, newspapers, textbooks, post office boxes, shopping malls, cassette tapes, parking meters and online privacy. *Watched* the decline, or did we *force* the decline? Chicken. Egg.

Did those industries feel a compelling need to better serve their customers? Did competition force their hands? Or did their customers actually demand it—in a vacuum, with only a taste of its promise?

If the former is true, enterprises can rest on their laurels and decide when it's time—when they'll let customers in on the secret that something better may be possible, picking when they feel their business is ready to undergo disruption.

If the other scenarios are more likely than the first—if they're in play at all—every business owner or leader across the globe understands the need to digitize if they have a hope to survive, let alone thrive, in a competitive and customer-savvy experience economy.

*Harvard Business Review* reported 93% of business leaders confirmed delivering a relevant and reliable customer experience will be critical to their company's overall business performance. And, in today's connected world, businesses are competing on speed and agility to meet customer expectations. Most organizations (97%) are undertaking or planning to undertake digital-transformation initiatives, hoping to increase efficiency and improve customer experience. Transformation is the response to both customer and competition, and companies are best served when they create their strategy proactively, not reactively.

### Disruption As a Growth Catalyst—Not a Salvage Mission

Did you set a New Year's resolution? Whatever it is, it probably involved change—but you can't change your actions, outcomes or future without first changing your mind to do it.

A mindset for disruption places a greater emphasis on growth mindset; on design thinking to create space for imagination, creativity and fresh approaches to status quo; on inventor behavior versus copycat behavior. When you have a disruptive mindset, you *invite* healthy disruption into your organization, recognizing it to be a catalyst for growth and innovation. It's not chaos to be managed, it's a culture to be nourished. You hire for this; reward, retain and develop for this; give permission and incentive for this.

Lasting transformation cannot occur without mindset, leadership and culture to support it. Disruption is simply change you plan for, change that is welcomed and invited, change as a culture. If you don't develop a mindset for transformation and future state, infuse this among your organization's leadership and bleed it into your culture, your company will flounder rather than flourish under disruption.

### So, How Do You Create a Disruptive Mindset?

When you approach transformation and digitization as a culture, a choice, a new bar you set for yourself, you get everything else right: mindset, cultural alignment, executive sponsorship, change marketing and value articulation.

Technology doesn't drive growth; disruption drives growth—rather, growth breeds disruption. Disruptive, exponential change requires an approach to leadership, strategy and culture that is future-focused. Have you imagined what your future employee looks like? Your future customers? The future potential of your company requires an understanding of your future customer and the future employees you will need to help you drive the business.

Here are a few ways you can create a disruptive mindset, one that embraces transformation as an innovation and growth accelerator:

1. **Force your own demise.** Identify the risks acting as barriers to future state or preventing you from making necessary changes. Consider personal prejudices, external detractors, limiting culture or belief systems that prevent you from embracing transformation as a way of being. Create strategies to address those.

2. **Create a movement around change.** This is your rally cry; a movement is *moving*. Write your manifesto. This is your *I Have a Dream* speech. A movement is able to move without you because you've created supporters—torchbearers, if you will. Wrap a storytelling system around the disruption you're creating: Identify a hero, use symbols and rituals, outline a journey to success and visualize an outcome.

3. **There's a lot to be said around the power of visualization,** and I don't mean the kind intended to attract success or outcomes. Visualizing future state requires articulating a clear, commonly shared, top-down vision of the experience or outcome you expect to deliver, the changes that will require and the business model that will result.

Culture in disruptive organizations can thrive in flux. Beliefs and behaviors likely need to change to support disruption, and one can change the other. Align your beliefs around the future state you're attempting to create, and behaviors will follow. Change your behaviors to support and move toward the future state you're trying to create, and your beliefs naturally will reshape themselves as an outcome. Beliefs or behaviors should move you forward, not hold you back. Those might include transparency of leadership and mission, permission to share experiences and challenges, accountability and trust.

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After identifying skill gaps within its workforce, Walmart learned that IT skills were in short supply. So, the retailer collaborated with IBM, the Consumer Technology Association and other companies to form the Apprenticeship Coalition to help employees train for new IT jobs.

Still, more needed to be done. HR developed clear career paths for reskilled individuals and provided talking points for managers to encourage staff to take advantage of reskilling programs that utilized new technology. Fan points to virtual reality-based modules that focus on digital literacy, interfacing with customers and improving customer flow, personal development, financial literacy, and health and wellness awareness.

Walmart Academy also supports an activity-planning team comprised of store coordinators who manage training and logistics. They receive an online newsletter that updates them about new classes and offers additional learning resources.

"We look through futuristic lenses," says Fan, explaining that Walmart's leaders initially discussed the company's future brand and value proposition, the talent pipeline it needs to thrive and new ways of working. "Jobs are defined as more career-oriented versus task-oriented. That drives our reskilling training programs and efforts."

### Part of the Job

According to a new report published by the World Economic Forum, *Towards a Reskilling Revolution*, companies must share detailed information with workers about positions that may become obsolete and create possible transition opportunities and attractive upskilling and reskilling programs with minimal barriers to entry.

"Strategic workforce planning must be translated into HR practices and shared with all employees, who tend to have less insight than companies when it comes to future skills needed," states the report. "However, online learning alone is often not effective, and a blended training approach—where online training is accompanied by classroom modules, on-the-job training and mentorship programs—frequently offers the greatest potential for impact."

Make no mistake: Employees expect reskilling. Some even demand it. The report mentions results from the *Decoding Global Talent 2018 Survey* by Boston Consulting Group that questioned more than 360,000 global employees and job seekers around the world.

According to the report, employees value learning and training opportunities and career-development options more than their job security, financial compensation and the interest they find in their day-to-day job.



Kate Bravery

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1.37 million workers projected to be displaced out of their jobs in the next decade “may be reskilled to new viable [similar skill sets] and

desirable [higher wages] growing roles at an average cost of \$24,800 per displaced worker.”

But reskilling can be an uphill battle, especially when it involves so-called “employee de-learning.” Unlike reskilling that helps employees learn 21st-century technologies and skills to perform a different job, de-learning helps workers *unlearn* traditional ways of working, forget job descriptions and rethink what it takes to be best in class, according to the WEF.

Perhaps nothing is more difficult than changing employee minds and behaviors.

At Dentsply Sirona, unlearning is an integral part of its systematic approach to professional employee development. Yankee says employees continuously train and learn new things, partly through its e-learning platform, and are encouraged to question what they have learned in the past. By design, teams are formed with diverse members who “reverse mentor” peers across all ages by teaching them new technology skills. Through the company’s integrated degree program, young employees are also connected with seasoned professionals to de-learn by experiencing new perspectives and challenging deep-rooted routines.

“[This] is an essential part of reskilling,” Yankee says. “Our overall goal is to help our employees adapt to new tools. This most often comes along with learning about new ways of working due to digitization or other fundamental changes. Sometimes, but not always, this needs a prior process of de-learning of specific habits if these contradict the new ways of working.”

Meanwhile, one out of three workers are concerned that their jobs will be replaced within the next five years by automation or artificial intelligence, according to Mercer’s *Global Talent Trends 2020* survey. Eighty-nine percent of responding companies are also restructuring, which leads to job displacement and fuzzy career options.

“In the rush to de-layer organizations, we squashed career pathways,” says Kate Bravery, global head of advisory and insights at Mercer. “So, younger people are not always seeing the next role in their company because it’s not clear.”

She says key barriers to reskilling include “time poverty,” or lack of time to reskill, and the inability of reskilled workers to move from one career track to another. But among the most “shocking” results from Mercer’s survey is that executives felt that only 45% of

their workforce could adapt to the new world of work. Yet, 77% of responding employees support reskilling.

Likewise, Bravery says, many HR professionals believe their ability to create a reskilling agenda is hampered by not knowing what skills current

workers possess and not linking reskilling to business goals.

Successful reskilling, she says, requires HR professionals to do these four things:

- shift their focus from job architecture to skill architecture;

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- hone career paths for specific employee populations;
- offer peer-to-peer learning; and
- educate line managers on how to make strategic decisions about the workforce.

“The whole concept of making good strategic decisions is about when does it make sense to build capability, buy capability or redesign jobs,” says Bravery, pointing to a client that built a nine-month reskilling program to transition executive assistants with strong coordination skills into program managers. “Employees realize that it has to be part of their life if they want to be relevant in the future.”

## Matchmakers

Unfortunately, many companies engage in reskilling without a clear goal in sight, says Ravin Jesuthasan, managing director at Willis Tower Watson. He says he’s lost track of how many companies have invested millions in reskilling but don’t realize any ROI.

“Match skills to tasks or work, as opposed to matching a person to a position,” he says, adding that HR needs to break down job responsibilities,



Ravin Jesuthasan

turn them into projects and have them completed by combinations of people, as opposed to one dedicated person in a full-time job.

“That’s the big mindset shift

that organizations are struggling with; successful ones are addressing it and seeing some pretty significant gains.”

Business leaders must also engage in this conversation upfront, he adds, which can help ensure that the organization can generate the demand for these new skills.

“Then, make it as easy as possible for a business leader to tap the person you reskilled,” Jesuthasan says. “Active management of the utilization of these skills needs to happen. That’s a key part of HR’s role.”

## Community Effort

Nearly two years ago, BDO USA, a tax and financial-advisory firm that supports 7,330 employees (BDO

supports 88,000 global employees), raised the digital quotient of its client-service professionals by challenging them to learn about digital trends and emerging technologies.

“Our workforce expects to be doing things on the leading edge of technology,” says Cathy Moy, chief people officer at BDO USA. “You can’t stay in the game with profitability unless you’re operating with efficiencies that these technologies and digital transformation bring.”

Roughly half of its U.S. workforce completed the 12-hour challenge, a self-paced, online-learning program about robotic-process automation, bitcoin and other technologies. Business units with the highest completion rates received pizza parties, online recognition and bragging rights.

The company’s online newspaper slowly introduced the program’s digestible modules to avoid overwhelming employees, she says, adding that, last year, dozens of employees also attended a three-day hackathon at the Microsoft Technology Center in Dallas to develop a robotic-process-automation prototype.



Catherine Moy

Moy says upskilling requires a marriage between HR and business unit leaders to decide which employees need what skills. Since learning, innovation

and change are embedded into the company’s culture, she notes, explaining how upskilling can offer a “top-shelf” employee and customer experience was not a tough sell.

Meanwhile, BDO isn’t upskilling in isolation.

“We’re part of a broader community of public accounting,” Moy says, adding that she serves on an emerging-technologies taskforce for the Association of International Certified Public Accountants. “We want our people to be at the leading edge and contribute to the community as a whole in our industry.”

*Send questions or comments about this story to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).*

## EMERGING INTELLIGENCE

By John Sumser/Columnist



# Unpeeling the Layers of Culture

The word “culture” gets tossed around as if there was an agreed-upon definition held by everyone in the conversation. Not only isn’t that true, but much of our industry ignores the solid academic work done in this arena. The abominable failure rates for HR-technology implementations are due in part to our shallow ideas of what culture is and how things change in it.

In my investigations of biases in tech, I stumbled onto the idea of “Columbusing,” which is the act of discovering something that was already there, often for a long time, and thinking it’s novel simply because it’s new to you. It’s taken from the story of Christopher Columbus, who thought he “discovered” a vast continent, even though civilizations older than his native country were already there.

Columbusing is the categorical error many technology companies make when bringing their offerings to our shores, especially about organizational culture.

There is pretty significant intellectual work from academics like Peter Senge and Edgar Schein on the nature of organizational culture. But the science is young, and discoveries are easier when things are new.

Our organizations (and the people who inhabit them) are complex, dynamic systems. These systems don’t change in inherently rational or logical ways. I really like a way of thinking about this called *The Pace Layers View of Systemic Change*, one of Stewart Brand’s best ideas, published by MIT. It’s a fantastic framework for thinking about change and organizational learning.

The basic idea is that complex systems, like organizations, experience change at different rates in different areas. It’s useful to imagine these as layers of change. The framework is presented with the fastest-moving layer at the top and the slowest-moving layer at the bottom. Some parts respond quickly to the shock of change. Others move more slowly to preserve the status quo. The relationships between the layers allow the organization to adjust while maintaining continuity.

“Each layer is functionally different from the others and operates somewhat independently, but each layer influences and responds to the layers closest to it in a way that makes the whole system resilient,” Brand wrote.

Here are the *Pace* layers applied to an organizational setting:

**Workforce Sentiment (Weather)** This is the area most often described as “culture” in HR-tech products. It is composed of the workforce’s response to a combination of external influences and the deeper layers.

**The Work** The stuff that people actually do in the organization changes based on trends, seasonality, contract, growth stage and other elements of value creation. The work is directly affected by the workforce “weather” above and the capital investment in infrastructure and resources below.

**Infrastructure** This layer includes both financial and habitual investment. The solid infrastructure is the result of investments in equipment, facilities, software and other tools. Habitual investment boils down to “the way we do things,” which can be more entrenched than even the solid infrastructure.

**Administration and Governance** The elements of this layer include resource allocation and the processes for acquiring forgiveness and permission. You can’t have infrastructure without resource-prioritization decisions. This layer may also be known as “organizational politics.”

**Organizational Culture** Culture begins as the set of relationships among members of the small founding group. You can often see the impact of the founders decades later. It’s a set of values and a way of seeing the world. It usually has a core definition of what is and isn’t actual work.

**Context (Region, Language, Industry, Ecosystem)** The element in organizational life that is least likely to change is the context in which the organization came to be.

As we move into the next phases of intelligent tools, it’s important to set expectations reasonably. Great introduction and adoption strategies can be built by accounting for the differing rates of change that move our organizations.

*John Sumser is the principal analyst at HRExaminer. He researches the impact of data, analytics, AI and associated ethical issues on the workplace. Send questions or comments to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).*

# Q&A

## ON BENEFITS



**Ben Carter, vice president of total rewards, Workday**

**Q:** What are the biggest challenges facing HR leaders today, as far as benefits are concerned?

**A:** Three challenges are top of mind for HR leaders. The first is global benefits administration—having the ability to deliver global benefits programs through a robust benefits platform while navigating complex local laws. Changing regulations are also a challenge. HR leaders need to keep careful track of global compliance and evolving benefit regulations, such as the Affordable Care Act in the United States.

And last, but certainly not least, HR leaders must focus on employee engagement. During the enrollment period, employees need to be kept fully aware and informed of their options and the implications of their decisions.

**Q:** Where do you expect to see HR and benefits leaders focusing their attention in the coming months as they attempt to address those challenges?

**A:** It's going to take more than a couple of months, but I expect HR leaders to investigate more progressive options that might be available outside of the traditional health network/carrier plans. We want to continue to think about different approaches for steering employees to high-quality providers with a track record of delivering positive outcomes efficiently.

In the meantime, I see a continued trend to drive people to high-deductible health plans (HDHPs), with greater education about the benefits of an HSA, which typically goes hand-in-hand with an HDHP.

Other areas of focus include fine-tuning wellness programs to focus on a smaller number of programs that can have the greatest impact; maintaining competitive plans while remaining within budget targets for the organization; and creating a total rewards experience that meets the needs of our increasingly multi-generational workforces. And, of course, we need to engage with employees about all of these benefits with mobile-optimized technology that's available anytime, anywhere.

**Q:** What areas of employee benefits are especially ripe for innovation?

**A:** One area I just mentioned is moving away from the traditional network/carrier strategy, and thinking more about the discounts and breadth of the network.

I also think our communication methods are ripe for innovation. How are we educating and communicating to employees about their benefits, and how are we helping them make better decisions during their enrollment?

Lastly, we need to examine how we think about retiree medical needs and what that support could look like.



# Q&A

## ON BENEFITS



**Gene Lanzoni, assistant vice president, thought leadership, Guardian Life**

**Q:** What are the biggest challenges facing HR leaders today as far as benefits are concerned?

**A:** There is a battle for talent in the job market today—driven by high employee turnover and a 3.6% unemployment rate, as well as rapidly evolving employee needs.

In 2019, U.S. workers quit their jobs at the fastest rate on record. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 3.5 million Americans voluntarily leave their jobs every month. Another study revealed that one-third of U.S. workers seriously considered quitting their job in the last three months.

High employee turnover can have a significant impact on the health of a business, both financially and emotionally. This amount of turnover can produce any number of negative effects on business, including lost productivity, money, time and more.

And while a low U.S. unemployment rate is evidence of a healthy economy offering a growing surplus of available employment opportunities for the nation's workforce—there are roughly 7.3 million job openings in the U.S.—it also produces competitive challenges for employers.

Companies wanting to attract new hires and retain existing employees in such a competitive landscape are taking a deeper look at the benefits they offer. In the past, it was enough to offer medical and retirement plans.

But those two benefit pillars are table stakes and no longer differentiate companies, with high-deductible health plans (HDHPs), premium increases and policy limitations placing a greater financial responsibility on employees. For example, 70% of employers now offer HDHPs—leading to a 53% increase in deductibles for employees.

**Q:** Where do you expect to see HR and benefits leaders focusing their attention in the coming months as they attempt to address those challenges?

**A:** In the *Sixth Annual Guardian Workplace Benefits Study*, employees shared the top benefits that would motivate them to want to work for an employer. A popular choice (55%) was supplemental health-insurance benefits.

Employees viewed supplemental insurance offerings—like accident, critical illness, cancer and hospital-indemnity coverage—as welcome additions that can help pay for expenses not covered by their medical plan, as well as expand care possibilities. According to the study, most employees appreciate the “safety net” supplemental insurance plans provide—both on the wallet and on the mind.

But just edging out supplemental insurance as a top benefit choice was time off for parental bonding and caregiving. Findings show that what employees want more than anything is time with loved ones. With nearly six in 10 working Americans saying they would prefer to work for an employer who offered paid time off for parental bonding and caregiving, the conclusion that is simply that employees are looking for more flexible work arrangements and options that allow them to address their various situations. This is particularly relevant for the “Sandwich Generation,” the often-overwhelmed and financially stressed group of middle-aged Americans supporting both grown children and aging parents. This financial stress leads to emotional and physical stress, impacting wellbeing at home and work.



**Q:** What areas of employee benefits are especially ripe for innovation?

**A:** Companies need to invest in helping their employees learn about and enroll in the benefits they offer. For example, half of companies offer mental-health and substance-abuse support and services, particularly through employee-assistance programs. Yet, less than 10% of employees have used an EAP. That is a huge gap.

According to Guardian's *Workplace Benefits Study*, one in five employees stated a desire to have access to counseling and substance-abuse-rehab benefits. This highlights the need many have to improve awareness and education of current benefit plan offerings.

What do employees want from their enrollment experience? The study highlights four big needs: making the experience easy to understand with clear explanations and simple language; personalized information and advice tailored to their needs; expert guidance, with a professional available to answer questions and validate choices; and digital support in the form of mobile apps, modeling tools and short videos.

A company can offer the best benefits package to attract and retain employees, but it won't matter if their employees don't use and appreciate those benefits. That's why technology can help employees understand how to enroll in their benefits and how they contribute to their overall health. This will drive use of benefits and loyalty, and make for happier employees who feel valued.

Unless otherwise noted, the source of all information is Guardian's *Sixth Annual Workplace Benefits Study: What Employees Want (2019)* [guardianlife.com/business/what-employees-want](https://guardianlife.com/business/what-employees-want)

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# Q&A

## ON BENEFITS



**Larry Nisenon, senior vice president, chief commercial officer, Genworth U.S. Life Insurance division**



**Q:** What are the biggest challenges facing HR leaders today, as far as benefits are concerned?

**A:** Based on our conversations with HR leaders, there are several key challenges they face: retention of their top employees, which also ties into succession planning; staying abreast of current benefit offerings and anticipating their employees' needs; and, thirdly, bringing true value to their employee-benefits platform. Given the current employment cycle and the competition for top talent, there is an enormous focus on value-added programs that go beyond the traditional and expected services. Many of these newer services focus on improving work/life balance, addressing employees' family issues and creating a more holistic employee "total-rewards" offering.

**Q:** Where do you expect to see HR and benefits leaders focusing their attention in the coming months as they attempt to address those challenges?

**A:** HR and benefit leaders are focusing on 2021 open enrollment and what offerings are available to deliver strong value to their associates. As mentioned above, the competitive talent marketplace has put an

enormous spotlight on how companies are distinguishing themselves and addressing both current and prospective employees' needs. Our conversations with HR leaders have centered on what innovative programs address family care, financial wellness and employee engagement, with the goal of more effective recruitment and retention programs.

**Q:** What areas of employee benefits are especially ripe for innovation?

**A:** Empowering new technologies to drive great employee satisfaction seems to be a great opportunity. Whether it comes in the form of smartphone applications, simpler website designs, or using artificial intelligence and data science to predict employee trends and needs, employers and their employees are looking for ease of use and efficiency when choosing and using their benefits. This innovation also takes the form of enhanced connectivity through texting, chatbots and other new enhancements. When used correctly, they can create a stronger and more efficient benefits experience for the employee. That said, technology still struggles to replicate true human connectivity, which needs to be balanced against technological enhancements in order to truly drive employee satisfaction.



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<sup>1</sup> Genworth Beyond Dollars 2018 The Ripple Effect of the Need for Care  
<sup>2</sup> Based on CareScout internal data as of January 2020.



# Q&A

## ON BENEFITS



**Sherri Bockhorst, senior vice president of innovation and strategy, Businessolver**

**Q:** What are the biggest challenges facing HR leaders today, as far as employee benefits is concerned?

**A:** I believe the single biggest trend facing HR is the transition to a gig economy. Consider two key challenges related to this trend: the need to attract and retain a different kind of workforce and workers' general lack of benefits knowledge.

We are already seeing the dynamic changes that come from addressing a new type of worker, and this paradigm shift will continue. Employees rarely stay with the same employer throughout their career. My father, who had a lifetime career with a single employer, is appalled that I'm now on my fifth employer in my benefits career. But the future workforce is even more transient. The convergence of rapid change within businesses and the increased desire for workplace flexibility, coupled with emerging technology that supports both, will lead to continued growth in a gig workforce across many generations.

However, we also have the additional challenge of benefits literacy. Even employees who have had the luxury of employers pouring resources into employee-benefits communication and engagement programs struggle with benefits literacy.

Businessolver's recent study shows that 80% of employees covered under employer-sponsored group plans can't effectively compare options or maximize their benefits. This has an adverse impact on the overall health, emotional and financial wellbeing of individuals.

Lack of benefits literacy, coupled with the more transient workforce, creates an opportune time for HR leaders to transform employee benefits.

**Q:** Where do you expect to see HR and benefits leaders focusing their attention in the coming months as they attempt to address those challenges?

**A:** To address these challenges, employers need to rethink their benefits strategies. Rather than focusing predominately on the attraction and retention of full-time employees, part-time workers and recurring gig workers also need to be given more attention. But what do these employees need? What do they want?

They need access to affordable benefit options, and they want the guidance to select appropriately among the available choices.

To be an employer of choice in this gig economy, you have to be willing to push the envelope of what you previously considered with traditional benefits programs. New coverage options, like the Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement, provides innovative options that never existed before to deliver benefits to employees across the employment spectrum. This creates greater opportunities for benefits to play a key role in your retention, recruitment and recurring worker strategies while also controlling the bottom line.

Want to learn more? Join me at our Health & Benefits Leadership Conference session, "Part-Time and Gig Workers Have the Upper Hands. Is It Time to Extend Yours," which will be held 2:15 p.m. April 15 at the Aria in Las Vegas.

**Q:** What areas of employee benefits are especially ripe for innovation?

**A:** Adoption of an ICHRA coupled with the individual market addresses the accessibility and affordability of benefits issue for a gig workforce. Next, we need to focus our innovation on the lack of benefits literacy.



It starts with moving to a consumer-focused mentality. To improve benefits literacy, you need personalization and accessibility, both of which can be solved through artificial intelligence and machine learning solutions. At Businessolver, we built our AI navigator, Sofia<sup>SM</sup>, to provide that high-touch and personalized experience. She is accessible through text and voice recognition, from desktop to phone, takes calls or chats, and is available 24/7 in 28 languages. As we continue to innovate, her future is even brighter. In an effort to increase benefits literacy, Sofia will soon ask the "question behind the question," helping workers to better maximize the benefits available to them.

Continuing to innovate through AI to help people not only at time of need, but in advance of such need, will truly change the trajectory of engagement, benefits optimization and healthcare utilization to lead to improved overall health and financial wellbeing.

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# Q&A

## ON BENEFITS



**Craig Rubino, Vice President,  
E\*TRADE Financial Corporate  
Services, Inc.**

**Q:** What are the biggest challenges facing HR leaders today, as far as benefits are concerned?

**A:** Companies have traditionally focused on designing benefits programs that balance compensation, retirement options and perhaps deferred compensation—all with the goal of encouraging savings. But, for many employees, long-term financial success today depends on wise debt management. Debt is a massive barrier to long-term financial wellness, and HR leaders are rising to the challenge of helping their employees address this piece of the puzzle.

HR leaders are starting to understand that a more holistic “financial-wellness” approach is about removing obstacles within their employees’ lives. Debt is more than a roadblock to saving and investing—it’s directly affecting employee wellbeing and performance. According to PWC, half of all employees say they spend three or more hours at work each week dealing with their financial stress, and one third admit to being distracted by personal financial woes while at work.<sup>1</sup>

Also, student debt plays an outsized role in today’s financial stress, with 45 million

Americans owing \$1.6 trillion in student loans—a number set to grow each year. Tackling student debt is vital not only to set up employees for long-term financial success but also to restore positive and productive workplaces.

If you want to help your employees build confidence—and build savings for retirement—they need to be able to address their debt problems first. The challenge is to do that in tandem with all the other considerations of benefits administration and planning.

**Q:** Where do you expect to see HR and benefits leaders focusing their attention in the coming months as they attempt to address those challenges?

**A:** Student loan repayment benefit programs are growing in popularity. The historic stimulus bill recently passed by Congress includes provisions that now allow companies to make tax-free contributions toward paying down employees’ student debt, similar to the tax benefits they receive for contributing to 401(k) investment plans. Employees could then receive up to \$5,250 annually in student loan repayment assistance as a pre-tax benefit, and employers also save on the payroll tax they currently pay when offering student loan repayment benefits.

There’s a sea change in awareness and positioning, and it’s becoming more important than ever to find a provider that can offer a broad range of solutions, such as equity compensation, retirement benefits and planning, premium savings accounts, 529 (education) savings, student loan repayment, refinancing and counseling programs.

**Q:** What areas of employee benefits are especially ripe for innovation?

**A:** We know shifting toward financial wellness is the right thing to do and—along with delivering a more holistic benefits experience—this means offering comprehensive financial education and support. Employees are seeking more accessible participant dashboards, more planning tools, and calculators that help them quickly assess and fully understand the impact of their debt on their total financial picture. That

way, they can make smart decisions for investing in the future while managing their current financial responsibilities and goals—including repaying student debt.

Participant education must help employees understand not only how to repay debt but also how that debt affects their broader goals—whether they are trying to save up for

a house, put money aside for healthcare, or start a family. The reality is that your employees face these worries all at once, on top of whatever long-term-savings needs their current benefits plans may help address. Innovation will mean supporting a broad spectrum of financial wellness needs for a modern, diverse workforce.

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<sup>1</sup> PWC, Employee Financial Wellness Survey [pwc.com/us/en/private-company-services/publications/assets/pwc-2019-employee-wellness-survey.pdf](https://www.pwc.com/us/en/private-company-services/publications/assets/pwc-2019-employee-wellness-survey.pdf)



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Employees from the Workday Dublin office, which represents more than 65 nationalities, take part in VIBE Week, designed to inspire workers to actively participate in building inclusion.

# Is 'Belonging' the New 'D&I'?

Organizations are increasingly looking to foster a sense of belonging.

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

**P**at Wadors was roughly two-thirds through her tenure as senior vice president of global talent at Sunnyvale, Calif.-based LinkedIn when she was invited to participate in a panel discussion on diversity at a Professional Business Women's Conference in 2016. An admitted introvert, Wadors was understandably nervous about speaking in front of a roomful of peers, but she would be up there with several other people, so how bad could it be? Two weeks before the event, however, the moderator called to ask Wadors to deliver some introductory remarks about her feelings on the progress made within the diversity and inclusion space. With trepidation, she promised to give it some thought.

That night, Wadors tossed and turned, as she became aware that diversity and inclusion "hadn't grabbed [her] heart." Around 3 in the morning, she recalls, she had the realization that "D&I is necessary, but not sufficient."

Rather, it's an "intellectual argument"—not about "the heart and the humanity of it." Wadors found her mind wandering back to childhood experiences on the Little League field when, as the only girl on the team, she was made to feel like she didn't belong. Her teammates stole her mitt, taunted her and excluded her from post-game pizza parties. Determined to fit in, Wadors practiced even harder, increasing her strength and skills. Several weeks later, she made a game-winning out against a particularly tough adversary. At that moment, everything changed, as her teammates began viewing her not merely as a girl whose presence was unwanted, but as a valued member of the team. It was then, standing on a Little League field at the age of 10—Wadors recognized more than three decades later—that she experienced her first belonging moment.

"I went, 'Oh, my God, it's those moments of belonging that I felt part of the team in an authentic way, with my quirks and with my personality,'" Wadors recalls.

Wadors spent the next two hours "riffing" in her head about the moments when she didn't belong and when she did. That, she discovered, was what grabbed her heart. Excited by her realization that belonging was the missing component in the D&I space, Wadors dove into research and learned that humans are "genetically wired to belong." She began formulating her first presentation on what she called DIBS, an acronym for diversity, inclusion and belonging. She consulted a variety of reference books to try to define the word, but it was *Urban Dictionary's* definition of it (in relation to its use for claiming possession of an objection) as "the most powerful force in the universe" that got Wadors so excited; her squealing actually brought LinkedIn's CEO Jeff Weiner running to her office to find out what was going on.

"When someone is different and insecure and they get to be authentic and are welcomed in a team, we can unlock their super powers and bring out the best—not only in that person, but the team and, therefore, the product, the service, the company, the world," says Wadors. "If I could tap into that and create belonging moments and unlock that in others, we could create an amazing culture."

## Universal Concept

Over the past four years, the importance of fostering a sense of belonging has been embraced by a growing number of companies, particularly those in the tech industry, where titles, programs and functions incorporating diversity, inclusion and belonging are becoming increasingly commonplace. While critics may be quick to dismiss belonging as yet

**"Belonging is that sense of inclusion, where people feel 'This is a place where I fit in and am accepted for who I am.' "**  
**—STEPHANIE CREARY, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

another touchy-feely buzzword—and some may suggest it is already implicitly covered by inclusion—belonging is a necessary addition to the D&I space, according to Stephanie Creary, assistant professor of management at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

"Many companies have initiatives in place to create inclusion from a behavioral perspective—including people in meetings, in different events, giving them a seat at the table—but merely including someone doesn't mean you are automatically going to get this positive emotional experience of feeling connected to this workplace, this team, this organization," says Creary. "Belonging is that sense of inclusion, where people feel 'This is a place where I fit in and am accepted for who I am.' "

While inclusion can seem somewhat vague or ambiguous, belonging is easy for employees to understand because it's a universal concept to which everyone can relate, according to Laura Sherbin, managing director of New York-based Culture@Work. "Belonging is a very common term that a lot of people can identify with because everyone at their core feels the need to belong," she says.

In her first year as vice president of diversity, inclusion and belonging at Indeed.com, LaFawn Davis has experienced that firsthand, as she's traveled the world, holding Ask Me Anything events—and explaining the company's priorities and goals related to DIBS—at each of its global offices.

"When I'm talking to employees and I say 'belonging,' you immediately see their body language change," says Davis. "It's something everyone can understand, no matter where they are, and that gives you an avenue to talk about diversity and inclusion in a way that's relevant for everyone globally."

While belonging instantly resonates with employees, Sherbin says, senior leaders often struggle to understand what it means in a corporate setting, primarily because they consider the feeling as coming from inside an individual, rather than something that can be instilled by those around them.

"Everybody knows what makes them feel like they belong, but what might make someone feel like they belong is incredibly individually specific," says Sherbin. "Senior leaders are held accountable for creating

environments in which their workers can thrive, but when you ask them what they could do to help someone feel like they belong, that can be a very difficult question to ask."

#### Creating Micro-Moments

In her current position as chief talent officer at San Jose, Calif.-based ServiceNow, Wadors strives to foster a sense of belonging by opening staff

meetings with an opportunity for employees to share their personal and professional selves. Employees are free to talk about anything that's going on in their lives—good, bad or otherwise. Family illnesses or celebrations, past experiences, stories of when they have or haven't felt like they've belonged—anything employees would like to share is welcome, with the goal

*continued on page 37*



LaFawn Davis



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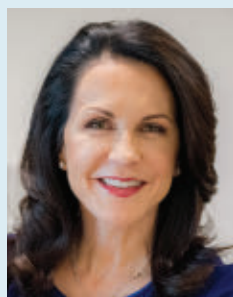
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# A Day in the Life of a Leader: Circa 2030

I would like you to time travel with me. Let's leap forward to 2030 and visit a fictional future HR leader, Zoe. Zoe works for Acme, a large multinational, as its chief human resources officer. At just 40 years of age, she is almost 20 years into the career portion of her life journey—one that will likely last another 30 to 40 years.

Let's follow Zoe throughout her day to get a glimpse into what the future of HR looks like. She wears many hats:

**7:30 a.m. Employee Journey Curator.** After a virtual-reality yoga class (today, Zoe's digital twin performed pigeon pose on a beach in the West Indies), Zoe zooms into the city via the hyperloop to meet with her company's latest recruits. They're here today thanks to a sophisticated mutual-matching system, involving AI algorithms identifying the characteristics of her company's most successful candidates and human judgment based on face-to-face interviews. Candidates' motivation and behavior maps, values and mission were matched with the company and available roles. Today, Zoe and her team will not only be immersing the candidates in the company's culture, values and mission but also gleaning more about their continuous-learning preferences and desired career journeys. They'll finish their day with a virtual tour of the company's offices and plants in major markets around the world, meeting in a virtual "safe space" with their global colleagues. And they'll leave with a map that delineates first steps on their Acme employee journey. Zoe's No. 1 priority is to help employees co-create a tailored employee experience, one that helps them achieve their goals as they help the company achieve its objectives. Since better linking the two, the company has been able to meet or exceed its revenue goals more consistently. Zoe and her team have KPIs that factor into the company's financial health, as attracting and retaining top talent have been shown to contribute significantly to company growth.

**10 a.m. Empathy & Intuition Experience Designer.** Zoe checks on her team's latest pulse survey to see how each of them is feeling. Using the psychographic analysis provided from the questions her team answered yesterday (everything from weekend plans to stress levels), she realizes she has quite a few people planning on putting in weekend hours—and they sound a little down about it. Comparing their feedback to the stress levels their digital wearables are indicating, she realizes it's time to help them switch gears. Zoe schedules an impromptu team lunch, gathering the team for their favorite Thai takeout in the solarium. She coaches them on ways to streamline the workflow for the looming deadline, asking for areas where they see the team could be more efficient. The resulting ideas—which include bringing in their top gig-economy workers to help them with the workload—mean that if they work late the last couple of nights of the week, they can likely all have a work-free weekend. She promises to suit up for a Friday

late-afternoon celebration on the volleyball court if they make deadline by end of week. This was not just a feel-good exercise; Acme's analysis of data from its employees shows that top-performing teams are those that step away from day-to-day demands for extended periods, such as weekends and vacations. Zoe's job as a leader is to tune into her team's needs and help craft that positive experience, aided by data insights and basic emotional intelligence.

**12 p.m. Balance Orchestrator.** Lunch is a quick power snooze in Acme's infrared-light nap pods, followed by a salad in the courtyard listening to the soothing sounds of a cool jazz trio. Zoe's wearable reminds her she needs to move more and drink water this afternoon to reach her optimum health goals today. She also receives a reminder from her AI-powered career coach that she has two weeks to complete a portion of her own career-development plan, and that she can download a course, *Advanced Collaboration Techniques for the Post-Digital Age*—taught by a professor at the nearby Ivy League college—for viewing at her own convenience.

**1 p.m. Insights Translator.** Acme's latest product launch requires a team with top skills in customer design, user analytics, creative visualization and market intelligence. Zoe meets with the product-launch team leads to run them through the latest AI matching system, introducing them to employee profiles that are a good fit for what they need—covering full-time and variable workforce options. They then cross-match these profiles with human feedback on each of the potential team members, watching short videos of these potential team members talking about their passions and the skills they'd like to acquire. The group has already been vetted to ensure the most balanced diversity metrics, as company research shows diverse teams lead to the most successful launches. Last, she helps the team sort through available AI robot teammates based on the skills they most need to reach their goals. She leaves the team to discuss the possibilities, promising to help facilitate the process when they've narrowed down their list.

**3 p.m. First-Class Follower.** Zoe and her fellow senior leaders attend a visioning session, led by the company's most junior managers. The managers are teaching senior leaders how to better use the latest in virtual reality and AI to help the creative process. Senior staff are asked to come with "beginner's mind," erasing preconceptions and allowing themselves to experiment, ask questions and even fail in the group exercises, without worrying about how it will impact their perception. They ask wonderfully curious questions, leaving with a renewed excitement for helping their teams envision what doesn't exist yet.

**4 p.m. Mission Maven.** Heading to City Hall, Zoe and several dozen employees are excited to participate in an urban-planning session with their HQ city's citizens and planning officials. One of Acme's major corporate values is green spaces in urban environments. The team has pitched an idea for urban

gardens in underserved communities, and they're ready to talk to residents about the practicalities of the plan. Zoe has lent the city several Acme employees who are taking on the project as part of their mini-sabbaticals, particularly because it gives them some of the life experience they indicated they wanted in their career/life integration sessions. Zoe's company takes a "choose-your-own-adventure" approach to help employees mold a life that integrates their work and other desired experiences, finding it essential to attracting and retaining key talent. Self-agency is a given among top talent at leading companies—they won't settle for anything less. Zoe sees herself as a partner with talent, an enabler of, rather than a gatekeeper to, these experiences.

**5:30 p.m. Zen Master.** Back in the office, digital wellness tones sound over the speaker system, reminding all who are still immersed in the digital world to take a break, have some dinner, stretch or otherwise re-enter the physical world. Judging from the sounds in the hallway, the 6 p.m. meditation class will be fairly full tonight. She considers the virtual version, but can't resist the solarium at dusk and the sound of colleagues' laughter. As she packs up to head out, her real and virtual assistants wish her a good evening.

Zoe has a pretty full life, right? But also an immensely exciting one, tailored for her desired journey. So many of these technologies and opportunities exist today—from AI-fueled hiring to a mission-based culture. But they tend to exist in pockets, rather than on a large scale. Leaders of the future will not only bridge the human/digital divide, they'll master their own work/life integration and digital wellness, they'll collaborate and connect colleagues, they'll nail "followership" because they know lifelong learning is the path of a true leader, and they'll keep it all balanced with a focus on the higher goal—shared mission and purpose. While financial performance is no longer the sole goal, it is still the one that keeps a company competitive. HR leaders of the future do all of the above while tied into profitability far more closely than they are today—of that I'm sure.

It's a tall order, but the future is on its way faster than you think. And I'm having fascinating conversations with senior human resources leaders who are already embracing some of the skill sets we've painted here.

Fasten your seatbelts. As power continues to shift from financial capital to human, intellectual and social capital, HR's role will become even more pivotal. Our job as true architects of our future companies is coming of age. The question is: Are we ready?

*Eva Sage-Gavin is a former CHRO with more than three decades of experience in Fortune 500 corporations. She currently serves as the senior managing director for Accenture's global talent and organization consulting practice and as a technology board director. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.*

continued from page 35  
of “nurturing the human connection”  
through storytelling.

“Storytelling unlocks chemicals in our brain and makes us more compassionate and more able to listen and connect to each other,” says Wadors. “The goal is to get to know the human and where they are in life. When we do, we discover we can trust each other, we can make mistakes and not feel silly, so we take more risks.”

Seeking to bring the concept to life, many companies have begun creating short online videos in which employees share stories about times when they felt they truly belonged at work. The ability to see the faces of actual employees as they talk about their real-life experiences makes belonging real in the eyes of the workforce because



**“When someone is different and insecure and they get to be authentic and are welcomed in a team, we can unlock their super powers and bring out the best—not only in that person, but the team and, therefore, the product, the service, the company, the world.”**

— PAT WADORS, LINKEDIN

all, says Taylor. Workday’s focus on belonging has helped its leaders build on their diversity practices, particularly through the results of the company’s *Belonging Index*, which includes questions from the *Best Workday*

the quieter voices are not missing or overshadowed or spoken over.”

### Impediments to Belonging

In recent years, cultivating a sense of belonging has been increasingly complicated by social unrest and a contentious political environment, says Louis Montgomery, Jr., practice leader, human resources and diversity officers practices at Korn Ferry in Reston, Va.

“There are all kinds of issues out there that, when and if discussed—and they are frequently discussed at work—could make things more challenging in terms of people feeling connected to the organization,” he explains. “The polarization and political talk can have a negative impact around belonging.”

Discussions around police shootings of unarmed black men, a deeply divided electorate, hate crimes and other outside factors often serve as impediments to belonging, says Sherbin, as employees may feel wary of being around colleagues who view contentious issues differently than they do. All too often, that causes conversation to stop because people don’t feel safe talking about it.

“The voice track that begins happening in your head is one of



Carin Taylor

incredible isolation that ‘I’m the only person that’s bothered by this’ or ‘I’m not safe around certain colleagues and certain demographics because there is

so much hate,’” says Sherbin.

Rather than allowing an environment to fester in which employees clam up and feel increasingly isolated, Creary recommends organizations encourage workers to follow their hearts and provide opportunities for them to “express the self” by dialoging about outside events that are affecting or concerning them.

“Employees have the need to express their feeling about what’s happening outside of work,” says Creary. “This is a critical component of moving towards a sense of belonging where it’s not just about the tasks I do and my expertise, it’s also about me as a human and that is valued here as well.”

Send questions or comments to  
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As part of VIBE Week, Workday employees at the company’s New York office show off their “Up Your Game” diversity & inclusion cards

it is clearly “not just a message on a webpage or a word thrown in next to ‘diversity,’” says Creary.

Believing that diversity, inclusion and belonging are at the forefront of a workplace culture where employees want to go above and beyond to give their best to the company, Pleasanton, Calif.-based Workday Inc. created a strategy called VIBE (valuing inclusion, belonging and equity for all) at Workday. The goal is to inspire employees to actively participate in building inclusion and ensuring that Workday is a “psychologically and emotionally healthy place to work,” explains Chief Diversity Officer Carin Taylor.

“When we talk about belonging, we work to create an environment where there is psychological safety, trust, empathy and openness for everyone,” says Taylor. “When employees feel like they belong, they are able to bring their best selves to work.”

In 2019, the company hosted its first VIBE Week, featuring speakers, learnings and social gatherings across 34 Workday global locations to “get everyone rallying around how we value inclusion, belonging and equity for

survey pertaining to belonging. Insights from the index are used to determine where more education or programs are needed.

“When leaders notice there are discrepancies related to belonging and inclusion on their teams, they have responded by running a workshop tailored to those specific needs,” says Taylor. “These include building trust, strengthening relationships, understanding how bias impacts teams and/or creating strategies for building more diverse teams.”

While commitment from leadership is crucial, Taylor is quick to note that employees are also expected to “take personal accountability to create a culture of VIBE.” That theme is woven throughout companies that have embraced the concept of belonging. As Wadors explains, “you don’t need permission to unlock respect and care and compassion.”

“You can give [colleagues] micro-moments a thousand times a day,” she says. “It’s how you greet people and appreciate them and invite them to lunch and hold space for the introverts, allow them time to process and ensure

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# Recruiting: The Moments that Matter

**Hiring (and keeping) the best candidates often comes down to building strong connections during the recruiting process.**

BY ANDREW R. McILVAINE

**M**ichele Mavi, director of internal recruiting for staffing firm Atrium, says she understands all too well what's at stake during the hiring process.

"You can poison the well with one bad hire," she says. "It's better to not make a hire at all than make the wrong one."

For Mavi, getting the right person is especially critical. She is in charge of finding people to establish new Atrium offices in various cities around the country, as the company expands into providing staffing services for clients in the fashion retail industry. The ideal candidate, says Mavi, is a person with executive-level experience and a start-up mentality.

"The type of person we're looking for typically already has a stable

position with a good track record, so we're asking them to take a bit of a risk in joining us and that requires us to entice them by showing them who we are as a company," she says.

At Twine, a technology company that's gone from several to 1,000 employees within the past two years, founder and CEO Joseph Quan is focused on ensuring new hires feel tightly connected to the firm even before their official start date.

"Once a candidate accepts an offer, we do a lot of things," he says. "We share internal memos and documents with them that are relevant to their new role. We get them set up on email and Slack so they feel connected to their new teams, and we get their clothing sizes so they'll have company swag waiting for them at their desks on their first day."

At Graham Co., one of the nation's largest insurance brokers, Vice President of HR Karen Boyle is focused on hiring sales and client-service professionals who may not have insurance backgrounds yet possess the attributes that the company values.

"We pride ourselves on being the gold standard in the insurance world,"

she says. "We hire good, kind people and teach them our way of consulting."

Finding the right people for these roles includes ensuring not only that they're committed to maintaining Graham's strong reputation but that they're also comfortable with the less-glamorous aspects of the work, says Boyle.

"We want to ensure people have a full, honest picture of what to expect," she says.

Finding a job is often a fraught process for candidates, similar in some ways to buying a house or even getting married. The organizations that are the most successful in attracting and retaining good hires, say experts, are the ones that prioritize building strong relationships with them at the outset. This includes familiarizing them with the company and its mission, providing realistic job previews and helping them get to know the people they'll be working for and with.

"I often compare the candidate experience to dating: The better the date, the better chance there is of a long-term relationship," says Jen Clark, vice president of talent acquisition at staffing firm OperationsInc.

## The Role of Technology

"It's a battle for talent right now," says Clark. "If you're not focused on candidate experience, then you're going to lose them."

A survey by Gartner late last year found that 70% of job candidates expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the hiring organization kept them up to date during the recruitment process. Although this has always been a pain point in recruiting, candidates tend to find such delays especially galling these days, says Lauren Smith, vice president of Gartner's HR practice.

"We're in an age when you can track the progress of your pizza delivery on your phone," she says. In light of this, people have less patience than ever for recruiting's "black hole."

Companies that can demonstrate that they "have it together"—i.e., they're organized and intentional about their interactions with people—stand a much better chance of landing quality candidates than those that don't, says Smith.

As with many HR processes, technology can be a key enabler.

Brianna Foulds, director of talent acquisition at HCM vendor Cornerstone OnDemand Inc. (which recently acquired rival software-maker Saba for \$1.4 billion), says that, when it comes to the "moments that matter" for her organization's candidates, the smart use of tech is crucial.

"I try and narrow it down to making things simple, fast, transparent and organized," says Foulds, who oversees hiring roughly 500 people a year for fast-growing CSOD, which has about 2,000 employees.

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# Talent Management

Indeed, Foulds actually has had to dial things back a bit because the process was moving too fast for some job applicants.

"We did a survey and found that candidates felt they were receiving feedback too quickly," she says.

Candidates who applied for a job at CSOD would often hear back within an hour about whether their skills and experiences matched the position's requirements. Many were convinced that the speedy response meant no human had set eyes on their application, says Foulds.

"Candidates want speed and expect automation, but they also want to feel

that a person is on the other end," she says.

CSOD, which uses its own software for recruiting, responded by increasing the length of time in which candidates receive responses from less than to more than an hour. It also modified the response text for rejected candidates to note that the application had been reviewed by a recruiter and that, while the candidate's skills weren't a match for that position, they might match another position.

"Ironically, candidates usually complain about a black hole but, in this case, we had to slow down a little," says Foulds.

Kyle Lagunas, director of strategy for talent management vendor Beamery, says chatbots can free up recruiters to spend more time providing a personalized experience for candidates.

"By answering candidates' questions quickly, bots can help candidates feel more engaged with the recruiting organization," he says.

Beamery, which provides recruitment software and services to large companies, partners with vendors such as HiredScore and Brazen to help its clients develop more sophisticated campaigns for hard-to-fill roles. HiredScore uses "deep learning" to recommend



Karen Boyle

the ideal candidates for various roles, while Brazen uses a combination of chatbots and "chat servers" to offer candidates a "higher-touch" experience than is possible

with chatbots alone, says Lagunas.

Of course, more tech isn't always the answer, cautions Mavi. "I think, with the rise of AI, there's been a lot that gets lost."

When you schedule a meeting the old-fashioned way instead of using a bot, for example, you learn certain things about a candidate, she says.

"It's about their responsiveness, the tone in their voice, you pick up certain nuances you'd otherwise miss," says Mavi. "Tech certainly has its place, but I think it's very dangerous—even with a lot of the administrative stuff—to completely eliminate the human element."

## Telling a Good Story

At Atrium, Mavi takes pains to avoid using the "hard sell" when recruiting executive-level talent for the company. She started out recruiting for Atrium's clients but has since transitioned to recruiting for leadership positions inside the company.

"I never try to push the job first; I start out by pushing interest in the company," she says.

Mavi and her team rely on multiple channels to reach candidates and share positive media stories about Atrium, including profiles of founder and CEO Rebecca Cenni.

"We're a woman-owned organization, and we think of ourselves as disrupting the staffing space," says Mavi.

The outreach is a two-way street: Mavi not only shares information about the company with candidates she thinks are promising but also lets them know that the company has done its homework on them.

"I highlight things in their track record that are attractive to us, and I also let them know I've shared their profile with the executive team and that they're interested in getting to know the person," she says.

She carefully considers who the candidate will speak with first.

"During that initial phone call, you want it to be with someone in the company that you anticipate the candidate will connect with the most while discussing this potential opportunity," says Mavi.

At Graham Co., candidates meet not only with senior leaders but also with newer employees.

"One of the first things we try and do is rep the company and the position honestly: the good and the bad," says

## TALENT MANAGEMENT

By Peter Cappelli/Columnist



## Our Surprising Bias in Hiring

Jeffrey Polzer at Harvard Business School posed a deceptively simple question in a case about hiring: If you had an algorithm that

predicted reasonably well who is likely to succeed in a job, and you had a hiring manager, armed with those data, who nevertheless thought that another reasonably identical candidate with a lower score on the algorithm was better ... which would you choose?

My experience posing this question to executives, confirmed by that of my colleagues, is that the overwhelming number of them want to go with the hiring manager's preferences.

You might say that's not surprising; maybe they just don't trust the algorithm. But, if you adjust the story to make its predictive power reasonably good, it doesn't change the outcome. Nor does it help to explain how algorithms work. If, instead, we switch up the story so that it is not an algorithm, per se—which the participants may not completely understand—and just say that one candidate had higher scores on tests that predict performance, the results don't seem to change, either.

You can tell by now that I have really been pushing to pin down what the explanation is here. When I embellish the account to make it clear that the manager's preference for one of the candidates is based on his or her judgment, not from objective criteria, most of the participants still think we should go with the manager's preference.

So, I push harder and remind them about interviews and how bad most of us are at them, how we tend to prefer people like us and how the way we usually do them ("unstructured," where each manager asks candidates whatever they want) leads to bias. Yes, that makes the class uncomfortable, but it doesn't sway their conclusion much. No matter what I do to the story, the manager's preferences win out.

I can't say I know for certain why that is, but I don't think, in the end, people are willing to go with the manager's view because they think it will lead to a better hire. You can stack the story in such a way that it is difficult to believe that could be the case. I believe the

thinking is that we *should* let the hiring manager pick who will work for them, that it is something like their right to be able to have people they prefer work for them.

If this is the case, it seems troubling to me. Yes, we all might prefer to work with people we like, but is that really more important than hiring someone who might likely perform better in the job? I think, for some people, it seems to be that way. One explanation for this outcome might be that we think of the hiring decision as being more about the hiring manager than about the organization: We should give them what they want, as if this is something like picking out office furniture. You should get to pick out the one you like.

Maybe some of the willingness to let hiring managers choose whom they like also comes from the decentralization of business that has gone on over the past generation. Before then, recruiting departments actually made the hiring decisions. Line managers did not get any say in the process. New hires were seen as assets of the company, not of a division, and surely not of a particular office. Given that, it didn't make much sense for hiring to be done at the local level.

It seems pretty clear to me that the power in hiring decisions has to go back to the center—that is, if we actually care about the quality of hires. A simple reason for that is because line managers don't do enough hiring to get good at it, and we don't train them on how to hire—so how could they get good at it? But doing so at this point is going to require overcoming a lot of resistance.

We started the process of pushing a lot of HR tasks off to line managers a few years ago as a way of cutting back on the costs of having large, centralized HR departments. It seemed cheaper just to add this task onto what operating managers were doing and, while they don't like to do most of these tasks, they want to control whom they hire. Except they aren't good at it—and that's the problem.

*Peter Cappelli is the George W. Taylor Professor of Management and director of the Center for Human Resources at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.*

Boyle. "It's not rosy 100% of the time for every job. It's important to be transparent."

By having candidates meet one on one with recent hires, they'll get a fuller picture of what a job entails and the struggles they may encounter as they move forward, she says.

"It's really about letting the candidates hear from those they'll be in the trenches with once they start," says Boyle.

Graham Co. has also adjusted its recruiting process to accommodate candidates' schedules.

"We used to require candidates to come to our head office in Philadelphia for interviews, but now we use video interviews and in-person meetings at our Washington and New York offices as alternatives," she says. "It helps them see that we're willing to bend a little to make this process more friendly to them."

The ability to provide meaningful moments to candidates during the recruiting process requires HR leaders to acknowledge that certain candidates need prioritization, says Quan.

"I would argue that you need to be super-selective in terms of who you're spending time on," he says. "Certain candidates are of very high quality, and you need to triple-down on them."

Candidates—particularly the high-quality ones—are interested in meeting

## Social Media: A Recruitment Help or Hindrance?

*In order for social media to serve as an effective recruitment tool, HR must develop a digital-marketing strategy and positive candidate experience.*

"If you have a reasonable, frictionless candidate experience, then social media becomes a viable way to reach people," says Ira S. Wolfe, president and chief googlization officer at Success Performance Solutions, a national HR-consulting firm. "Social media is an extraordinary [recruitment] opportunity. It's word of mouth on steroids."

But not all HR professionals experience good results.

According to a national survey of more than 500 HR professionals by Clutch—a B2B ratings and reviews platform—nearly one out of four (24%) ranked social media as their least favorite recruiting strategy, ahead of passive recruiting (17%) and university career fairs (13%).

The problem, says Wolfe, focuses less on social media and more on HR professionals who fail to create a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes social-media components. There must be strong collaboration between HR and marketing because HR leaders generally aren't skilled or experienced at maximizing the six primary social-media platforms for recruiting: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and, yes, even YouTube.

Besides, not all platforms are alike, adds Wolfe, the author of *Recruiting in the Age of Googlization*, which addresses recruitment strategies in a fast-changing world; he's giving

away the first 500 copies for free (excluding postage). Google it for more information.

Recruiters need to identify which ones attract their target audiences and then figure out the purpose, tone and feel of their messaging. Where you post information—even job ads—should never be arbitrary, Wolfe says. As an example, he says, Instagram or Pinterest can be helpful when recruiting retail or hospitality workers but not necessarily highly skilled professionals.

Yet, despite recruiters' best efforts, candidates can still slip away, says Wolfe, pointing to a career page that turns them off or a difficult application process. Based on his own research with new clients, he says, the abandonment rate on career sites averages 50% but can soar to 90%. Make sure your site tells a compelling story that explains why candidates might want to work for your organization versus simply describing job responsibilities, he advises.

Likewise, pay attention to language. If you want to attract more women to a male-dominated field, write the job ad and promotional materials using a female voice.

"If you're going after a more diverse demographic, the language needs to express the needs of that gender, ethnicity or race," Wolfe adds. "Tell a story that fits into their life, not yours." —Carol Patton

with hiring managers and spending time with the teams they'd be working with, says Quan. This, of course, may not always be welcomed by busy managers, he acknowledges.

"Recruiting is often treated as a cost center, but when you do that it creates

a pernicious attitude that permeates the company," says Quan.

It's an attitude that should not be tolerated, he says.

"Recruiting and sharing information should be a key part of your job as a manager," he says. "As

a leader, your No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 priorities are to get the right people in place and make sure they're doing their job."

Send questions or comments to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).

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# People

## Compiled by Jen Colletta

Clothing company *Levi Strauss & Co.* announced it has hired **Tracy Layney** as senior vice president and CHRO.

Layney has more than two decades of HR experience, including most recently as senior vice president and CHRO at Shutterfly Inc. She also held several leadership positions at Gap Inc., including as chief people officer of Old Navy, its largest division. Her latest appointment is a homecoming of sorts, as Layney previously worked at Levi Strauss & Co. in 2003 as a senior organization readiness manager.

Layney earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Pennsylvania.



**Renae Lenertz**, the longtime director of HR at *Trinity Health*, has been promoted to chief HR officer and vice president of HR of the health system.

Lenertz held her previous position with Trinity for more than 20 years, overseeing daily HR operations, including employee relations, talent management and compensation, among other areas. Her new role will allow her to play an expanded strategic role in aligning the organization's HR strategies with its mission.

She began her career in HR at ManorCare, before joining Trinity in 1998.

*Lockheed Martin* veteran **Greg Karol** recently assumed the post of vice president of human resources, tasked with overseeing all aspects of the firm's global HR strategies, including recruiting, development, retention, benefits, diversity and inclusion, labor relations and training.

Karol has spent more than 30 years at Lockheed, most recently as vice president of HR for its aeronautics



segment and previously as vice president of corporate labor relations and vice president of HR for missiles and fire control. He joined the company in 1986.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Central Florida and a master's in business administration and HR management from the Florida Institute of Technology, as well as a master's in HR programs from Rutgers University.

**Katrice A. Albert** has joined leadership-training company *S2A Solutions* as its executive vice president of culture, innovation and inclusion. Albert will focus on equity and inclusion, leadership development and creating purpose-driven business

solutions, as well as leading the company's new practice in higher education and intercollegiate athletics.

Most recently, Albert was the executive vice president of inclusion and HR at the National Collegiate Athletic Association and has also served as the vice president for equity and diversity at the University of Minnesota and the vice provost for equity, diversity and community outreach at Louisiana State University. She is also the founder and managing member of Third Eye Consulting Group, a diversity-management consulting firm.

Albert earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Xavier University, a master's in counseling psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi and a doctorate in counseling psychology from Auburn University.



11,053

The number of federal lawsuits filed in 2019 that allege violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Source: Seyfarth Shaw



43,580

The number of cases now in the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's backlog, the lowest in 13 years.

Source: Bloomberg Law



45 to 54

The age range of workers who most commonly lack digital skills, including being unable to complete basic computer tasks, never having used a computer or resisting computer-based assessments.

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

39%

Percentage of large employers that expanded paid-leave benefits in 2019.

Source: Business Group on Health

49%

Percentage of employees who say they've suffered from stress, anxiety or depression due to financial stress.

Source: Willis Towers Watson



70%

Percentage of employees who are saving less for retirement than they think they should.

Source: Willis Towers Watson

70%

Percentage of Gen X employees who say their company should do more to support holistic health.

Source: Welltok

25%

Percentage of HR professionals surveyed who are extremely challenged by disparate federal, state and local recreational marijuana laws and managing employee drug use—up from 6% of those surveyed in 2017.

Source: XpertHR



40%

Percentage of millennials, the largest generation in the workforce, who say flexibility

to work from anywhere is a priority when evaluating job opportunities.

Source: LinkedIn

38%

Percentage of workers who say they live paycheck to paycheck.

Source: Willis Towers Watson



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