

HR Tech Conference Preview

OCTOBER 2020 • \$8.95

Human Resource Executive®

Prioritizing mental health, fighting for racial equality – how Accenture CHRO and HR Executive of the Year Ellyn Shook is turning hardships into lessons. Page 10

Compassion in Crisis

Top HR
Products of
2020

Page 19

Childcare:
HR's Latest
Challenge

Page 30

Tackling
Political
Talk

Page 34



HELP WITH EXPENSES HEALTH INSURANCE DOESN'T COVER

Are you among the 57% of Americans who've had to pay an unexpected medical bill?¹ Did you think, "But I have health insurance. I should be covered?" That's why there's Aflac. We can pay you money directly² to help cover that bill. And for your prescriptions. And to help with your rent. And help with peace of mind when you, your clients and the employees you serve, need it most.

Get to know us at [Aflac.com/business](https://www.aflac.com/business).



¹NORC AmeriSpeak Omnibus Survey: Surprise Medical Bills. August 16-20, 2018. <https://www.norc.umd.edu/PDFs/Health%20Care%20Surveys/Surprise%20Bills%20Survey%20August%202018%20Topline.pdf> – accessed March 30, 2020.² Unless otherwise assigned. Coverage is underwritten by Aflac. In New York, coverage is underwritten by Aflac New York. Aflac WWHQ | 1932 Wynnton Road | Columbus, GA 31999

COVER STORY

HR Executive of the Year 2020 BY HRE STAFF

Accenture CHRO Ellyn Shook shares how she has led her organization through challenges including the coronavirus pandemic. Also, learn about the accomplishments of our HR Honor Roll inductees, Jennifer Landis of Black Hills Corp. and Michelle McGovern of the American College of Surgeons. Page 10

HR Tech

What COVID-19 Means for Artificial Intelligence 15

BY TOM STARNER

Artificial intelligence and its value to HR was knocked off track by the coronavirus. Now, experts explore how the role of AI will change in the coming year, including how HR leaders can get the most value from its use.



HR Tech Conference Preview 16

BY HRE STAFF

The HR tech industry's "town hall" may look a little different this year—the first time it will be held virtually—but will still feature powerhouse addresses from some of HR's biggest names.

Top HR Products 2020 19

BY HRE STAFF

HRE and the HR Technology Conference unveil the winners of the annual contest, which spotlights emerging solutions to advance HR innovation.

Benefits

Childcare: HR's Newest Challenge 30

BY JEN COLLETTA

As fall classes are underway—most of which are hybrid or entirely virtual—working American parents are hurtling toward burnout, juggling work and childcare in this unprecedented time. Find out what some employers are doing to ease that burden.

Talent Management

Politics in the New Workplace 34

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Encouraging open, respectful conversation will be key to navigating political talk at work, both in person and virtually, as the presidential election approaches.

Leadership

Reopening Your Workplace? Here's How to Tell Employees 36

BY CAROL PATTON

Many HR professionals are relying on analytics to create workplace policies and practices that keep workers safe but, experts say, they should also communicate concrete ways the employer used those data in order to convince employees it's safe to return.

Columns

HR in the Flow of Work

The Value of Employee Surveys 4

People Side of Digital

5 Radical Resets for Our New World of Work 22

Emerging Intelligence

Health, Safety and Ethics: The New Trifecta of HR 26

Beyond Benefits

Empathy: The Biggest Trend in COVID-19 Benefits 32

Talent Management

The Stake in the Heart of the Generations Myth 34

Coach's Corner

What Do I Owe Myself? 36

HR Leadership

The Making of a Culture-Maker 37

Departments

HR Trends 5

People 38

By the Numbers 39

HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE® Magazine (ISSN 1040-0443 USPS 002-565) is published monthly except December with combined issues for January/February and July/August by LRP Magazine Group, an LRP Media Group Company, Suite 500, 747 Dresher Rd., Horsham, PA 19044, (215) 784-0910. Periodicals postage paid at Horsham, PA and additional mailing office. Single copy price: \$8.95. Subscription rates: In U.S., \$94.95 for one year; \$138.95 for two years; \$180.95 for three years. In Canada and Mexico, \$106.95 for one year; \$169.95 for two years; \$222.95 for three years (U.S. currency). In all other foreign countries, \$138.95 for one year; \$222.95 for two years; \$307.95 for three years (U.S. currency; prices include air mail delivery). For subscription information, call 1-800-386-4176 or FAX to (215) 784-0317. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE, PO Box 2132, Skokie, IL 60076.

ONLINE AT HRExecutive.com



HR Tech Coverage

Catch up with all the news about this year's virtual HR Technology Conference & Exposition®.



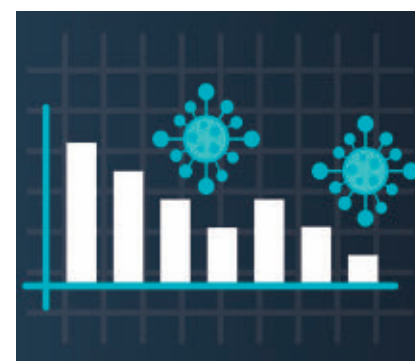
Inclusivity at Work

Employment lawyer Tamsin Kaplan shares four ways HR can create and maintain inclusive workplaces.



Insights from a CHRO

HR leaders like Naveen Bhateja of Medidata share best practices for thriving during challenging times.



COVID-19 Stats

Keep up with the latest employment-related numbers about the pandemic that are shaping HR strategies.



The Value of Employee Surveys

The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran an article titled “It’s Time to Get Rid of Employee Surveys,” which listed multiple reasons for ditching them. Personally, I believe employee surveys of all types are more valuable and important now than ever before. Every company should be incorporating them—along with other forms of feedback—

into their workforce strategy.

Here’s my take.

In today’s constantly changing and unpredictable work environment, it is essential to understand what employees think.

Employees today are suffering from a variety of stresses—health concerns, working from home (or being furloughed), family issues and economic uncertainties, among them. In the Josh Bersin Academy’s Big Reset research, we have found that more than 80% of companies are now using open town halls, regular surveys and focus groups to elicit employee input.

Collecting employee feedback throughout the COVID crisis shows employees that you care and are listening, builds employee trust (especially when coupled with a strong communications program) and provides an essential source of intelligence for business leaders.

We are in the midst of conducting a survey of Academy members on workforce practices during the pandemic. According to preliminary survey responses (approximately 1,000 to date), listening to employees when defining return-to-work plans is one of 10 practices most likely to predict positive organizational outcomes such as financial performance, customer satisfaction, change agility or workforce engagement and retention.

The Survey Market is on Fire

While 40% of companies still do traditional annual surveys, organizations are employing a new generation of listening tools. As technology has become more sophisticated, companies have become more mature in how they collect, compile and use employee feedback. Companies are routinely using pulse surveys, which have become an important way to collect employee feedback throughout the pandemic crisis. Solutions are now available to aggregate data from multiple sources and provide recommendations and suggestions.

Products from companies such as Medallia, Glint and Qualtrics can elicit feedback from employees in many forms (Medallia can capture video sentiment, for example), immediately analyze the data for managers and provide action plans or even alerts if serious issues arise.

We can also get feedback information from performance and goal management tools, engagement tools and recognition systems. Every time you give someone a kudo or thumbs up, you’re essentially providing a form of feedback. Waggl has an algorithm to measure voting reliability so you can crowdsource ideas in minutes. PepsiCo crowdsourced ideas for its “process shredder” and got over a million comments and ideas for new business processes in days, which then

led the company to radically simplify the performance process and also start a crowdsourced new beverage product!

Medallia can infer feedback from its case-management system and pop up surveys at the end of a transaction. And tools from companies such as Cultivate and Glint can analyze open-ended feedback for sentiment, themes and trends. Vault, the leader in a category I call “misconduct reporting tools,” can immediately identify harassment, ethical violations or compliance problems and create confidential cases for resolution.

A New Breed of Integrated Systems is Coming

The potential to provide meaningful feedback as part of everyday work is enormous. An HR leader from Farmers Insurance recently told me that, when the company rolled out Workplace by Facebook, people immediately began raising issues related to leave policy, benefits and pay that hadn’t surfaced in traditional surveys. The HR team could immediately respond to these issues and formulate actions, when needed. That’s the best example of “feedback to action” I can imagine, and it wasn’t done with AI.

Another new product, Eskalera, has built a set of diagnostics and listening tools to identify bias and diversity issues at work. This is a new form of an employee assessment and feedback system, one that I know will be popular with many big companies. Workday is introducing some standard metrics in this area as well, and SuccessFactors has had such technology for a few years.

The way I think about it, surveys are just one of many forms of feedback. In any organization, there are many places to see what employees are thinking, their issues and their complaints. What HR can now do is develop a comprehensive strategy for listening, very similar to what we do with customers.

In today’s environment, this is a business-critical issue. If an employee has a grievance or workplace safety issue, you want to hear about it immediately. Whatever HR software you buy, I can guarantee you’ll find employee feedback features. Performance management systems from Glint, BetterWorks, Lattice and 15Five now all include employee survey and sentiment analysis in their platforms. Recognition platforms from WorkHuman, OC Tanner, Achievers and Fond all give you feedback information. And if you need enterprise-wide feedback, offerings from Perceptyx, Gallup, Willis Towers Watson, Peakon, Humu and CultureAmp all provide amazing enterprise-level analysis.

Now is the time to open up our ears and listen. Employees are the most valuable source of information about what’s working (and what’s not) in any business. If you create a wide variety of channels for feedback, you’ll get an enormous wealth of help making the company perform better.

Josh Bersin is an analyst, author, educator and thought leader focusing on the global talent market and the challenges and trends impacting business workforces around the world. He will speak at the HR Technology Conference, being held virtually Oct. 27-30. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.

Human Resource
Executive

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 7

Kenneth F. Kahn
President

Timothy D. Burke
Senior Vice President/Publisher,
HR Products

Rebecca McKenna
Vice President Global Events and Publisher

Elizabeth Clarke
Executive Editor

David Shadovitz
Editor Emeritus

Jen Colletta
Managing Editor

Kathryn Mayer
Benefits Editor and Chair of the Health &
Benefits Leadership Conference

Nick Otto
Senior Editor, Digital

**Jason Averbook, Josh Bersin, Steve Boese,
Peter Cappelli, William M. Kutik,
Eva Sage-Gavin, John Sumser**
Contributing Columnists

GRAPHIC SERVICES

Joseph Ciocca
Production Director

Rebecca Eller
Art Director

Rebekah Galy-Davis
Media Production
Specialist/Team Lead

Jerry Criner
Media Production Specialist

Dianna Zisman
Media Production Coordinator

CIRCULATION

Dana Kubicko
Director of Audience Development

ADVERTISING HEADQUARTERS

Tim Jordan
Associate Publisher
Ste. 500, 747 Dresher Rd.
Horsham, PA 19044
(215) 784-0910, ext. 6550
tjordan@lrp.com

Joe Kirschen
Regional Sales Manager
(215) 784-0910, ext. 6295
jkirschen@lrp.com

Sharon Staehle
Director of Sales Enablement
(215) 784-0910, ext. 6390
sstaehle@lrp.com

Michele Garville
Digital Media Operations Specialist
(215) 784-0910, ext. 6386
mgarville@lrp.com

For subscription information,
please call (800) 386-4176, email
human_resource_executive@omeda.com,
or fax to (800) 661-5127.

Send payments to:
LRP Media Group
360 Hiatt Drive
Dept. 150F
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418

All other written correspondence to:
Customer Service Department
Human Resource Executive Magazine
P. O. Box 2132
Skokie, IL 60076



LRP CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

Kenneth F. Kahn
President

Todd Lutz
Chief Financial Officer

Timothy D. Burke
Senior Vice President/Publisher,
HR Products

Emanuel Cotronakis
Executive Vice President and
General Counsel

HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE® Magazine is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is published with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in providing legal, accounting or other professional services. If legal advice or other expertise is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. The publishers have taken all reasonable steps to verify the accuracy and completeness of information contained in HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE®. The publisher may not, however, be held responsible for any inaccuracies or omission of information in any article appearing in HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE®.

Entire contents Copyright © 2020, HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE®. All rights reserved. Material in this publication may not be reproduced in any form without written permission. Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by LRP Magazine Group, provided that the base fee of US\$10.00 per document, plus US\$5.25 per page is paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. For those organizations that have been granted a photocopy license by CCC, a separate system of payment has been arranged. The fee code for users of the Transactional Reporting Service is: 1040-0443/20/\$10.00+\$5.25.

Pushing the envelope on employee experience

While the pandemic has brought on unprecedented stress, it also can serve as an opportunity to fine-tune experiences

BY TOM STARNER



Special Advertising Supplement
Sponsored By



Workday People Experience takes care of employees so they can take care of business.

Employees who can work and collaborate easily pay it back with loyalty and productivity. Workday People Experience was built to maximize the benefits of working digitally. Machine learning delivers a smart, personalized experience, giving people what they need, when they need it. And as they progress and become more engaged, their personal growth drives business growth—and everybody wins.

Workday. For a changing world.™

Find out more at
workday.com/people-experience



Pushing the envelope on employee experience

When the calendar flipped to 2020, HR leaders and executives were focused on plans for the coming year—with employee experience goals on par with visions for talent management, benefits, performance and other HR priorities.

By March, their focus changed. Dramatically. The coronavirus pandemic—as disruptive a force as imaginable for those making HR and workforce decisions—exploded.

With offices briskly transformed into ghost towns and HR efforts shifted to keeping employees safe and working remotely, it might have been easy for HR leaders to pull back on something as esoteric-sounding as the employee experience, which was high on the leaderboard of pre-pandemic priorities. It held that high position because employee experience typically was not only focused on programs and offerings that help employees have a positive experience, it also is seen as a means to attract and retain talent in a competitive market. With the pandemic driving dramatic change, employers who may be neglecting employee experience do so at their own peril, say experts. In fact, the sweeping health catastrophe and resulting economic pain arguably has put an even greater importance on an employer's ability to deliver positive employee experiences.

"Never in modern history has it been more important for organizations to focus on the experience of their employees," says Chris Pinc, managing director, HR Software Product Management, at Willis Towers Watson. "All organizations have new responsibilities and challenges they didn't have six or seven months ago."

Pinc says primary among these objectives has been ensuring employees are safe from exposure to the pandemic; are able to care for their family members; and, in many cases, were ready to remain productive after the pandemic necessitated a shift to remote working.

"Organizations across a wide range of industries were able to pivot on a dime and enable remote work that has turned out to be more productive than anyone expected possible," Pinc says. "Even so, the challenge in maintaining a positive employee experience has been enormous."

Pinc says for employees in essential roles, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 has put employees in a state of constant alert. As for those working remotely, the experience has been extremely varied.

"For some people, the transition has been easy, but for others it has been brutal," Pinc says, adding that people who have had the hardest time are those caring for family members in high-risk populations, or who are at high-risk themselves. Parents with younger children [without] childcare have also struggled.

"Prior to the pandemic, employee experience was all about how to attract, retain and engage the best talent in a labor market that was more and more competitive," Pinc says. "The focus on employee experience has become so much more essential and core to who employees are as human beings."

According to Lauren Mason, senior principal at Mercer, going into 2020 employee experience was the No. 1 priority of HR leaders, based on Mercer's *Global Talent Trends* research.

"While we were collectively drawn to the concept of employee experience during an economic boom, it's far from a luxury," she says, adding that research from MIT has shown that companies that prioritize employee experience have twice the innovation, twice the customer satisfaction and 25% greater profitability—all metrics that will be critically important to weathering the ongoing economic crisis. Further, she adds, employee experience is a critical part of an employee's career and life journey, and it will not soon be forgotten.

"How employers respond will have a lasting impact on employee engagement, productivity and commitment," Mason says. "Employers still have a real opportunity to come out of this crisis with a better

and stronger employee experience than they started with.”

Mason offers four critical characteristics of an experience that employees crave: empathetic, enriching, embracing and efficient.

“These were true pre-pandemic in the economic boom, and they remain true now as we face tough economic times,” she says, explaining that, of the four, the importance of an empathetic experience cannot be stressed enough right now.

“Employees have had their lives upended by this crisis—some employees are working on the frontlines of this virus, potentially exposed to this deadly pathogen, and many others have had their lives disrupted as caregiving support systems like schools and daycares have closed,” she says.

Empathy can involve flexibility, support and resources to show employees you truly care about them.

“Empathy will be critical towards driving a positive employee experience through these uncertain times, and that will certainly pay dividends in the future to build longer-term engagement and commitment of employees,” according to Mason.

A New Opportunity for Tech

Greg Pryor, senior vice president and people and performance evangelist at Workday, explains that for the past few years employers have recognized the need to improve the employee experience. “Employees are the heartbeat of an organization and many are realizing the benefits of keeping an eye on the ongoing pulse of employee sentiment if they want to attract and retain the best people, and create a great place to work for all. In recent years, organizations shifted their focus to start investing



in technology and programs to help with employee experience.”

“This momentum was only expedited by COVID-19. The lines have been blurred between home and work, introducing new and unique challenges for the workforce. Now CHROs need to think about employee experience in a more holistic sense by taking employees’ emotional wellbeing and physical health into greater account, while also helping to sustain a positive culture with a vastly remote workforce. Technology plays a critical role in accomplishing that,” he says.

Pryor admits that making the employee experience more meaningful is not a quick or easy task for organizations. In order to understand where and how to make improvements, you need a robust dataset, which many organizations do not yet have. Without data to guide the direction of these initiatives, efforts could easily feel siloed or disjointed.

“While employee experience has long been a focus for HR leaders, many organizations were taking a fragmented approach—it could be six months before data from a survey was analyzed, and new programs were rolled out. By then,

the data is outdated. The pace of change today demands speed and when it comes to employee experience, every minute matters,” he says.

With COVID-19, organizations realized the urgent need to provide greater transparency and guidance, Pryor adds. And that means employees need a clear understanding of where to access information and access support when needed.

Pryor notes that in many cases, neither workload nor the business pressures are decreasing—which can cause increased stress for workers as they navigate this new environment. With all of the disruption workers are dealing with, HR and IT need to come together to determine how to enable and empower their people to succeed with tools and technologies that are intuitive and collaborative.

In fact, he says, there will be a huge emphasis on collaboration tools, explaining that the integrations among those tools across systems is critical. With the many changes to stability and ongoing operations, employers must track how are people doing, how are they getting along, how they are managing each other.

“Employers can use technology to hit those goals and bridge any gaps,” Pryor says.

Tracking and supporting employee wellness, for example, starts with surveying and collecting data to find areas for improvement. With the right solutions in place, organizations can act fast to suggest ways to improve wellness through guided journeys, targeted campaigns and recommendations on how and where to get support.

There also is the mission-critical nature of helping employees with self-service career guidance, including opportunities to update skill sets for a post-pandemic world.

HR Tech Strategies

On the HR tech specifics, Pryor explains that employers must take a deeper look into their digital experience strategy. For example, they

need to determine how hard it is to perform simple business tasks or access information. Or, how easy it is to collaborate with others or ask for assistance in times of need.

“These experiences have a huge impact on employee sentiment as well as productivity,” he says. “Organizations should be looking at ways to simplify the experience, and make it more personalized and accommodating to however their people prefer to work. Technology will be the connective tissue between workers and their work, organizations and co-workers.”

To move into this new world, Pryor offers some of the specific digital-driven solutions that can help employers meet yet-to-be-determined challenges.

For starters, machine learning and natural-language understanding are each critical to have within the tools people are using. Machine learning helps to improve and personalize the experience, while natural-language understanding allows the systems to recognize what people are looking for using common speak—not specific commands. Both of these technologies, Pryor says, create a more consumer-like feel to business applications,



which is exactly where employees are expecting their business applications to head.

“Our employees expect technology they interact with at work to be on par with what they engage with outside of work; intuitive and effortless,” he says. “If we want our people to adopt the technology we put in front of them, we have to make it as engaging and insightful as possible. Now more than ever, our people need seamless experiences.”

These seamless experiences help save employees valuable time and energy.

“We want them focused on getting work done and moving the business forward, not caught in a maze of systems trying to perform simple tasks,” he says.

According to Pryor, a fundamental arsenal of these tech tools might include: natural workspace integrations (bots in collaboration tools), personalized journeys to help guide people in key moments like a promotion or leave of absence, engagement surveys and intelligent interfaces that are dynamic and deliver relevant information to users.

“These types of technology create a bridge between a business and its people, so you can quickly and effectively measure, analyze and address critical issues,” he says.

Apart from the solutions, you also need reliable, actionable data. It’s important to build a cumulative knowledge base that HR and employers can turn to in order to help them manage day-to-day issues surrounding an



improved employee experience.

“Having a single source of truth for people is critically important,” Pryor says. “In a time when information is essential, it’s important to make sure that any knowledge base is accessible and intuitive. Ensuring information is

accurate and content is useful makes all the difference.”

Pryor notes that easily searchable and dynamic content that resonates with the user is key. Additionally, links to appropriate tasks and embedded video ensure that users get the full picture when searching for their answers.

Looking Ahead

With employers facing three distinct workplace scenarios (even within their own workforce)—on site, fully remote or a hybrid of the two—they have to plan well to effectively enhance the employee experience.

Mercer’s Mason says workplace flexibility is clearly evolving as a result of the pandemic, as it has essentially “proved” that employers can execute flexibility at scale, and in turn, reshaped employee expectations about work. Based on Mercer’s survey, 82% of employers are seeking to evolve their flexibility practices post-pandemic.

“As they do that, there are a few critical considerations as it relates to employee experience,” she says.

The first is that flexibility policies should be inclusive, with considerations made for all workforce segments.

"All jobs can flex, it's just a matter of figuring out the specifics," Mason explains. For example, some jobs can't be done remotely, but they can flex on when they work or how work gets done.

Secondly, she adds, it is important to understand what your employees value and not assume everyone wants to work remotely.

"In some of the early research we've seen on this, many employees are actually craving the normalcy of returning to the office in some fashion," Mason says.

Finally, maintaining the employee experience is critical regardless of work setting, to ensure the approach to flexibility is sustainable. Organizations should be considering enablers including:

- Policy, governance and leadership development
- Changes to people processes such as performance management or onboarding
- Infrastructure changes around real estate and technology.

"All of these factors are critical to maintaining and enhancing employee experience," Mason says.

WTW's Pinc notes that regardless of the workforce model all organizations need to go the extra mile to ensure and make clear that their top priority is the wellbeing of their employees and their family members. And, whether employees will be working remotely or in the office or other location, he says, all employers must regularly check in with them.

"The best way to do this is through frequent, brief pulse surveys, because the situation is so dynamic; surveys allow you to track progress with precision," Pinc says.

No matter the workspace, the experience needs to be optimized for success, adds Workday's Pryor, noting that this includes extending experiences to the places and device preferences of your people—including natural workspaces (such as Microsoft Teams and Slack) and in mobile devices.

"The workspace will likely maintain fluidity for now, and we need to ensure that we are creating as little friction as possible for our people to navigate our business systems," he says.

Also, personalizing experiences with an understanding of a person's location (whether they are remote or occasionally on site) means employers can push updates to workers about workplace guidelines, tips on working from home, etc. Pryor says surveying a workforce on sentiment and knowing if they have the tools they need to get work done—as well as encouraging people managers to check in and see if their teammates are enabled to do their jobs—can help measure any improvement in experiences.

In the end, Pryor says, the ongoing uncertainty may be highly stressful, but it also can serve as an opportunity to broaden what employee experience actually means.

He adds that most employees are asking themselves basic questions, including: "Will this company keep me safe? Will it allow me to take care of my family? Will it enable me to be productive despite enormous obstacles? Will it help me maintain my emotional and social wellbeing?"

"As we can all imagine, many organizations will be forever impacted by COVID-19," Pryor concludes. "It's crucial that organizations understand the skills of their organization so they can pivot their workforce and eventually look to upskill and reskill their organization as they move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's necessary to harness this data and use it to help reshape and empower careers as employees navigate the coming 'new normal,'" he adds.





Skills are the new currency. Make sure you know what your workforce is worth.

Skills are fast becoming an organization's most valuable asset, so a clear view of them matters. That's where skills management tools can help. At Workday, we use machine learning to build a skills inventory from resumes, job applications, and requisitions—giving you a single system that helps you find and deploy the competencies you need to succeed.

Workday. For a changing world.™

Skill up on skills at workday.com/skills

Top Story

How COVID-19 is Redefining Flexibility

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace flexibility had gained traction within HR circles, primarily as a workplace incentive to combat the struggle in attracting and retaining talent.

Today, the pandemic has transformed flexibility from a desirable perk into a powerful people practice, one that is expected to endure well after COVID-19 is in the rearview mirror, according to recent research from Mercer.

Lauren Mason, principal at Mercer, explains that the pandemic has reshaped both employer and employee expectations regarding flexibility. While flexibility from work primarily was offered through a combination of emergency leave and paid sick time and flexibility at work featured options such as work from home and job sharing, flexibility overall today has taken on a new meaning, given nationwide school and office closures.

“As employers look towards reinvention, pre-COVID approaches to flexibility may no longer be sufficient,” Mason says.

Mercer reports, in fact, that over 83% of organizations will continue workplace flexibility at a greater scale post-pandemic. She adds that COVID-19 has resulted in a great “experiment” for many organizations around flexibility, noting that office and school closures have resulted in real-time innovation.

“Companies have found—many somewhat surprisingly—that this experiment went much better than expected, with over 90% of employers saying productivity has stayed the same or increased as a result of remote working,” she says, noting that, as a result, Mercer is now seeing employers looking to real flexibility transformation post-pandemic.

While the most transformational shift around flexibility will likely be remote working, she warns it’s critical that employers take an inclusive approach that allows for flexibility as a central part of the value proposition for all employees, regardless of role.

“While all jobs may not be able to flex on where they work (e.g., remote working), all jobs can flex in some way—such as when they work, what they do, how the work is done or who does the work,” she says.

Mason believes this new approach to inclusive flexibility has been brought to prominence in a couple of ways.

The pandemic has shown the criticality of frontline workers to business continuity. Focusing only on remote working potentially disenfranchises this critical segment of a workforce, Mason says. Exploring other opportunities for flexibility for these employees will provide the opportunity to deliver better talent outcomes for all workers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, both parents are working in 60% of families in America. Mason explains that, while remote working can help support caregivers, employees will need continued flexibility with when and how work gets done, particularly in the face of school closures but also beyond as they seek to attract and retain working parents in their organization.

In short, workplace flexibility is a game-changer for employers in the post-COVID world.

“We are seeing sizeable shifts when it comes to remote working plans—with one in three organizations reporting that they will have half or more of their workforce remote, and three-quarters stating that they will have more than 25% of their workforce remote,” Mason says.

Mason believes that sustaining this level of flexibility at scale will require a transformation of people, processes and infrastructure to ensure that employers maintain—or enhance—the employee experience in a flexible environment and deliver on the value of flexible working with key outcomes such as engagement and productivity.

—Tom Starner

The Recruiting Challenges of the CARES Act

As a subcontractor of clinical evaluation services for Social Security Disability, The IMA Group temporarily closed in April due to COVID-19, furloughing most of its entry-level and frontline clinic staff. But when operations resumed the following month, 20% of employees did not return.

Besides collecting unemployment, these workers received a \$600 federal weekly unemployment benefit under The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. They were collecting more money not working—while also avoiding childcare expenses—than they were earning at their \$15 to \$18 per-hour job.

“When we started calling employees back to work, they felt they were being punished,” says Lisa Letarte, vice president of HR and chief compliance officer at IMA. “When this [\$600] was being paid, we couldn’t hire anybody. So, we currently have a 28% vacancy rate of 400 frontline positions. We were also getting only 10% of our normal volume of resumes and did not fill one position.”

Many companies faced the same predicament. The National Federation of Independent Business’ recent *Jobs Report* said that “51% of small business owners reported hiring or trying to hire in July. Forty-four percent reported few or no qualified applicants for positions they were trying to fill.”

Although the CARES Act was well-intended, it created a boomerang effect. Many organizations couldn’t find qualified candidates. Some had to raise their hourly rates. Others were handing out signing and retention bonuses. If the legislation is extended at a similar pay rate, employers may continue to struggle with recruiting and retention, trying everything they can to hire

quality candidates without busting their budget.

Winners and Losers

After the CARES Act expired in July, Letarte noticed an uptick in applications—from less qualified candidates—to roughly half of its normal volume. So, HR doubled the number of its recruiters in early August and introduced signing bonuses for people who stay for at least 90 days and retention bonuses that were payable at the end of September.

Meanwhile, more than 30 states have applied for federal jobless benefits that pay an extra \$300 a week to unemployed workers.

“This additional \$300 is going to put us pretty close to where we were when employees received \$600,” Letarte says. “We’re going to have the same issues if this goes into effect for as long as it stays in effect.”

In July, Investors Title Insurance Co. conducted 18 interviews after screening 447 applications. But in August, the number of applications and interviews jumped to 565 and 93, respectively, says John Herath, the company’s HR director.

“The CARES Act significantly impacted the quality of candidates who were applying for jobs paying up to \$50,000 a year,” he says, adding that none of its now remote 500 employees were laid off because of COVID-19.

To make recruiting more challenging, the state of North Carolina—where the company is based—dropped the requirement that unemployed workers had to search for another job while collecting unemployment, says Herath.

The company recently hired an HR generalist to assist its dedicated recruiter and changed its recruiting model to target passive, skilled candidates.

Herath says the fixed \$600 weekly benefit was too broad, especially since the cost of living varies among states, and should have been calculated like disability benefits that roughly equate to 60% of a person’s income.

Still, he says, it’s hard to argue with people who are

afraid to come to work during a pandemic.

“If you can stay home with your kids, earn more than you were making while working but don’t work and don’t need to look for another job, that’s a pretty good deal,” he says. “Any way you do this, there will be winners and losers.”

Ongoing Frustration

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the country’s unemployment rate soared from 3.5% in February to 14.4% in April, and then dropped to 10.2% in July. While 16.3 million people are still unemployed, the average person receives \$378 a week in unemployment benefits.

Orion Talent discovered that earning \$45,000 a year was the breakeven point at which workers made more money staying home—collecting \$600 plus their unemployment every week—than working, explains Tim Sweeney, senior partner and vice president of business development at the global recruiter.

So, for jobs paying under \$45,000 a year, he says, the number of candidate applications dropped, while no-shows for interviews increased. Unfortunately, Sweeney says, the CARES Act created a lack of urgency for people to work.

“People weren’t going to take a job that paid less than what they were making through the CARES Act,” he explains. “If CARES is renewed at \$300 or \$400 per week, you’ll see a [negative] impact but probably less.”

Meanwhile, his company is preparing to enter more applications into its system, employing more experienced recruiters and investing in technology to process more applications and step up communication with job candidates.

“Overall, our clients thought the CARES Act was definitely needed,” Sweeney says. “But, as we talked with companies starting to rebound, CARES did become a frustration for them and did create challenges for hiring.”

—Carol Patton

7 HR Considerations for Reopening

Not surprisingly, a return-to-the-workplace plan in the midst of a pandemic isn't the easiest feat. It requires a ton of prep, safety protocols, logistical considerations and robust communication—responsibilities that often fall on the shoulders of human resource professionals.

“As the culture ambassadors of their organizations, HR leaders have an opportunity and responsibility to shape this experience in a positive way for employees and the organization,” says David Osborne, CEO of wellness firm Virgin Pulse. “They should partner with their health, wellbeing and safety peers across the organization to build a comprehensive and integrated return-to-the-workplace strategy.”

Should HR leaders bring workers back into the office? What should they consider first? What should they do? *HRE* spoke to a number of experts for insight.

Listen to employees. HR leaders should hold regular listening sessions, conduct pulse surveys and encourage managers to talk proactively with their employees in team meetings and one-on-one discussions to understand how workers are feeling about returning to work, Osborne says. Find out: What concerns and stressors are top of mind for them? What would make them feel

safe returning to the workplace? What support do they need?

Be empathetic. Some employees are ready to come back into the office after months of working from home. Others simply aren't. Considering each employee's needs and not forcing anyone to come back if they aren't comfortable is key.

“It's about being empathetic and having compassion for what employees are going through and how they're feeling,” says Jay Jamrog, futurist and co-founder of research firm Institute for Corporate Productivity. “There are a lot of employees who don't feel safe; they don't want to go to work and catch the [virus] or bring it home to their families. The wellbeing of employees is huge, and [being empathetic is] the right thing to do.”

Consider at-risk employees. At-risk employees—who represent a big portion of the workforce—present a bigger challenge for HR and other corporate leaders as they consider reopening workplaces. The Kaiser Family Foundation recently found that one in four workers is at high risk for serious complications from COVID-19 if infected. Their analysis estimates that 37.7 million workers, or 24% of employed U.S. adults in 2018, are at high risk, including 10 million who are 65 or older and an additional 27.7 million with pre-existing medical conditions. The analysis also estimates that 12 million more at-risk adults who do not work themselves live in households with workers. For this group, indirect



exposure could be just as serious a risk as going to work themselves, Kaiser says.

HR leaders are wise to give special consideration to these employees, experts say. “Employers should take into account the higher risk some workers will face, allowing them to work at home where possible, to be tested and to minimize their risks if they return to work,” says KFF President and CEO Drew Altman.

Consider digital tools to help. A number of vendors, health companies and others have released tech tools that aim to help employees safely return to the workplace. Some of these combine live health coaching, screening, monitoring analytics and more. For instance, Alight Solutions released an app that provides configurable screening and access to healthcare concierge services for all employees returning to their physical workspaces. CVS Health released a customizable COVID-19 testing solution for employers that offers clinical consultation, testing execution, integrated reporting and additional health and safety solutions to help reduce COVID-19 transmission.

Don't cease work-from-home options. A number of companies—among them, Google, Apple and Facebook—have said they'll continue to embrace work-from-home options until next year as the pandemic continues. Others, like Twitter, are embracing work-from-home options indefinitely.

If an organization can continue to allow employees to work remotely without disruption to its business, many experts—and health officials—suggest doing so.

Embrace safety measures. Safety and health should ultimately be the No. 1 priority when thinking about the return of employees to the office. For employers that need employees

in workplaces, there are a number of basic steps to take, including following guidelines for social distancing, temperature checks, face masks and protective gear, sanitization stations, new protocols for meeting spaces, kitchens, keypads, visitors and updated floor plans.

About 40% of companies identified workplace safety as a top priority in June, compared to 27% in a survey conducted in April, according to Willis Towers Watson. Most employers (71%) have developed workplace and employee safety policies to prepare for the return of employees. Among precautions they are embracing, or considering, are screening workers on re-entry, providing personal protective equipment and reconfiguring workspaces.

Overcommunicate about your reopening and COVID plans.

Edward Jones CHRO Kristin Johnson says she's been clear about telling employees what will happen, when it will happen and what to expect in regard to a return to the workplace, which she says will be gradual. “We've been transparent along the way [about our plans for working in the office],” Johnson says.

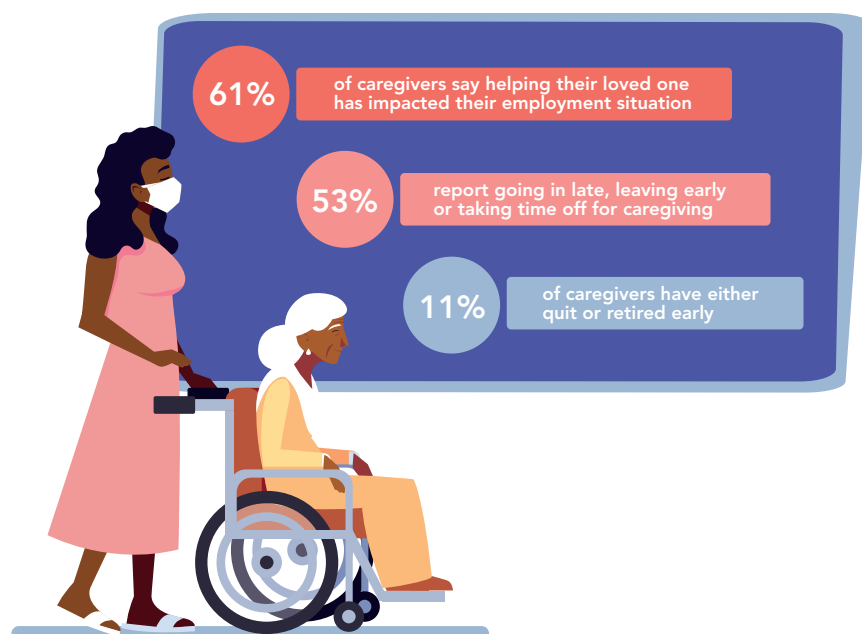
Likewise, Osborne says, “communication fosters connection, affirms culture and will help employees stay engaged as they work from home and transition back to the workplace.”

“Proactively update employees about what is happening across the organization—we suggest weekly updates through Zoom, email or videos from the CEO—and remember to celebrate successes and wins to keep employees engaged, aligned and motivated,” Osborne says. “Overcommunicate your company's COVID-19 and return-to-work plans and clearly define each phase and specific return-to-work requirements and protocols.”

—Kathryn Mayer

Caregiving Challenges

Nearly 42 million Americans are currently caring for aging loved ones, a particular challenge for workers during the pandemic.



Source: AARP



Remote Work, Racism Weighing on Workplaces

Remote work and systemic racism may not seem directly related on the surface, but both issues are weighing heavily on workplaces during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, according to recent pulse surveys from research firm i4cp, the Institute for Corporate Productivity.

Of 107 business professionals polled, 35% said recent increases in new infections of the virus have affected their plans for a return to the workplace, while 27% reported the pandemic hasn't had any impact on their timelines.

In addition, more than half are either in a "holding pattern" about going remote (30%), with no decision made yet, or are allowing employees to work remotely for the balance of the year (22%).

"Trepidation about these decisions is understandable," says Lorrie Lykins, vice president of research at i4cp. Lykins says that only 13% of survey respondents said their workers have already returned to the office on a voluntary basis. "Others are taking tentative steps," she adds. "Some noted approaches such as bringing back small groups of employees to the office as a pilot and assessing at the end of a few weeks."

There are obviously no easy solutions, a similar theme that emerged from a separate survey on workplace racism. That poll focused on social media, particularly on how employees' actions in their personal time can raise complex questions for employers.

Lykins says issues surrounding race, particularly in the current context of ongoing racial tensions, come up

consistently in online conversations, chat threads, emails and even LinkedIn posts, posing a challenge for HR leaders.

"Many of us are thinking about this and asking ourselves and one another questions about this issue," she says. For example, how should employers respond when employees post aberrant content on their private social media accounts? What is the best policy? What should be in the policy? What are the parameters? Who decides what is inflammatory, derogatory, offensive or racist? Where are the lines, and how do we know when they are crossed?

Unsurprisingly, a majority of respondents (51%) said their organizations take an investigative approach—looking into the post(s) in question and making decisions based on what they learn. But, Lykins notes, the number of organizations (23%) that currently have no policy addressing this issue was a surprise.

In fact, a few survey respondents noted in their comments that, while their organizations' stated core values and guiding principles are clear and reinforced to the workforce often, they aren't sure what the policy is on employees posting racist social media posts.

"We always say, 'We don't tolerate intolerance,' but specific to social media postings etc.—it's unclear," one survey participant wrote.

"Not having a policy can result in irrevocable damage to an organization's brand," Lykins says, adding that i4cp's research has shown that lower-performing organizations are more likely to remain silent when it comes to taking a stand on political or social issues.

"Not saying anything—which itself sends a message—can be as detrimental as having employees posting terrible things on an account that mentions they work for your organization."

—Tom Starner

COVID-19 is Changing How Employees View Benefits

Although the coronavirus pandemic has put employee benefits in a new spotlight, the crisis also has caused a drop in how employees perceive the value of their offerings and their trust in their company to make the best benefits decisions, a new analysis finds.

Research out this summer from The Hartford—which polled U.S. workers and human resources and benefits decision-makers in early March, just before the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S., and again in mid-June—found that: 73% of employees now say they value the insurance benefits their company offers them, down from 80% three months earlier.

The percentage of employees who say they trust their company is making the best decisions about the benefits available dropped six percentage points, from 61% in wave one of the study to 55% in wave two.

And when asked to rate their organization's overall benefits package compared with what other employers are offering in their marketplace, only 44% now rate their benefits as above average, compared to 56% in wave one.

Jonathan Bennett, head of group benefits at The Hartford, says the crisis is shining a light on gaps in benefit offerings, especially during a time when employees are most looking for support.

"I think the aperture that everyone has on their benefits has widened," he says. "As employees begin to look at the range of issues they're having to deal with and wondering about what benefit options might have helped them through the circumstance ... I think it's opening up to all of them, to different ideas and ways they could have been

better prepared. Employees are saying, 'I'm not sure my employer perhaps had enough information to really understand the scope of all the things that could possibly come to pass.'"

The good news is that employers are making progress on and looking for benefit additions to better support employees, he says. The Hartford's survey, for example, found that COVID-19 is driving significantly more employers to be interested in benefits including paid time off (31% to 52% from wave one to wave two of the study), employee assistance programs (38% to 56%), hospital indemnity insurance (34% to 48%), behavioral/mental health services (42% to 51%) and wellness benefits (42% to 51%). Meanwhile, it's also resulting in more employers taking responsibility for ensuring that their employees understand the benefits that are offered by their company.

"Nothing does better to crystalize issues than a crisis," Bennett says. "[Employers] are evaluating their benefits packages from a much broader purview than they have before and realizing there are gaps."

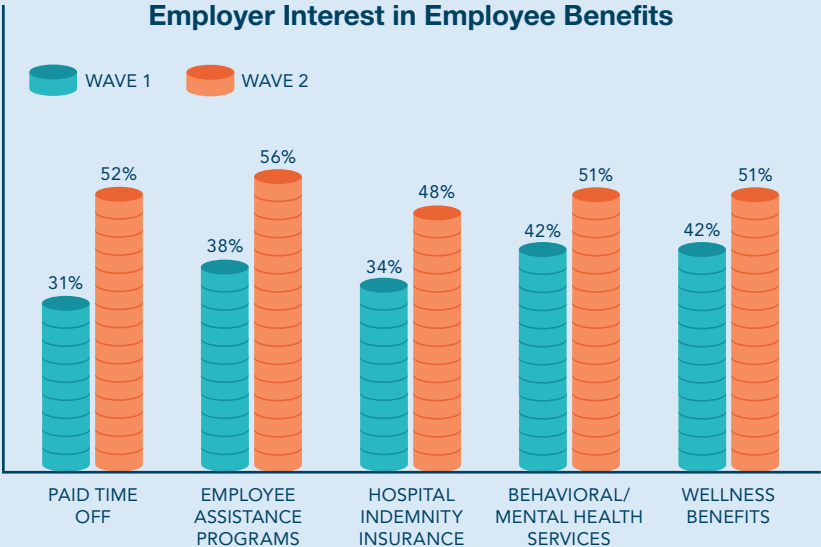
Previous research from consulting firm Willis Towers Watson also found that nearly half of the 817 employers it surveyed (47%) are enhancing healthcare benefits, 45% are broadening wellbeing programs and 33% plan to make changes to paid time off or vacation programs.

But the Hartford data—as well as mounting employee stress over a variety of issues—makes it clear there is more work to be done.

Bennett says that, in addition to adding and expanding benefit offerings, it is key for employers to communicate and remind employees about available resources. That's an especially important lesson in preparation for open enrollment season this fall.

"Communication is crucial," he says. "HR departments need to be engaging their workforce. A moment like this reveals things that a lot of people haven't thought about or considered but now reveals what needs to be done."

—Kathryn Mayer



Next Steps in the Kronos, Ultimate Software Merger Announced

Earlier this year, HCM giants Kronos and Ultimate Software announced they would merge in a record, industry-changing merger valued at \$22 billion. Now, the two companies are unveiling the highly anticipated next steps of their joint venture.

Starting Oct. 1, the newly formed company became known as UKG, standing for Ultimate Kronos Group. Company CEO Aron Ain told *HRE* that the new tagline, “Our purpose is people,” represents the spirit of “UKG’s unwavering commitment to our employees, their families, our customers and their people, our partners and our communities, while also incorporating both companies’ strong legacies into our new brand.”

The merger was announced just weeks before the coronavirus pandemic hit. The timing, Ain said, hasn’t stopped the two companies from forging ahead with the partnership.

“We’ve already done some magical work together since April, as we



Aron Ain

continue to navigate this pandemic and the unprecedented challenges it has brought to the world of work and our customers,” he said. “Despite these challenges, our people have shown incredible resilience as they continue to pave the way forward, inspiring our purpose each and every day.”

Both Ultimate and Kronos employees, customers and prospects were integral to developing the brand, Ain added.

“Every day, our people do what they do to improve the lives of the millions of people using our solutions,” Ain said in a company statement. “Our new brand represents the people-centric innovation, warmth and partnership our customers will experience with UKG products and services.”

The company will aim to “drive industry-leading productivity, visibility and workplace compliance” as well as support the increasingly diversified workforce, including gig and remote workers. That includes helping clients support employee engagement and leadership development, while providing data-driven workforce

continue to navigate this pandemic and the unprecedented challenges it has brought to the world of work and our customers,” he said. “Despite these challenges, our people have shown incredible resilience as they continue to pave the way forward, inspiring our purpose each and every day.”



insights and strategies for developing people-centered programs.

UKG, expected to be one of the world’s largest cloud companies, will continue to offer the leading products from both HCM providers, including Workforce Dimensions, Workforce Ready, UltiPro HCM and HR service delivery solutions. Together, the two companies bring more than 70 years of experience in the industry.

When the news was announced earlier this year, industry analyst Jason Averbook told *HRE* that the merger “creates a juggernaut in the HCM technology market like never seen before.”

“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,” he said.

—Jen Colletta

Depression Risk is Soaring. How Can HR Help?

The risk for depression among U.S. workers has risen a whopping 102% as a result of the coronavirus pandemic—and 305% for workers aged 20-39, according to new research.

Those findings from Total Brain’s July *Mental Health Index*—which compared pre-COVID data in February—echo scores of recent research indicating the pandemic is having a dramatic impact on mental health, including recent CDC data revealing one in four young adults say they have considered suicide in the past month because of the coronavirus. The index, in partnership with the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, One Mind at Work and the HR Policy Association and its American Health Policy Institute, is based on 500 anonymized assessments randomly selected among thousands of Total Brain assessments taken each week.

“The second wave of COVID is really a mental health wave,” Katy Riddick of One Mind at Work said this summer during a webinar



discussing the results. “It’s forcing employers to respond in a different way.”

What’s more, experts on the call predicted the numbers will worsen this fall, as working parents deal with stresses over both in-person and virtual schooling. Adding further fuel to the fire will be uncertainty over the upcoming election and the reality of going into the colder months.

“I think being outside has kept our mental health steadier,” said Michael

Thompson, president and CEO of the National Alliance. “But looking forward into the fall and then into the winter, we’ll be more on our toes as the weather potentially influences our ability to engage outside.”

Employees forgoing vacation time—due in part to stress over job security and extra responsibilities that make it hard to take time away from work—is further exacerbating mental health issues.

“Our ability to travel [and not being able to] interact with others plays

into depression as well,” said Chuck Columbus, CEO of the American Health Policy Institute.

The data indicate that employers need to make mental health “the absolute top priority,” said Janine Francolini, founder of Flawless Foundation.

The numbers ideally are giving a wakeup call—and hard evidence—to employers about the state of employees’ mental health. Employers previously had only anecdotal evidence of issues plaguing their workers due to the pandemic.

The pandemic is prompting employers to look at long-term planning and focus on leadership and communication,

said Riddick, director of strategy and engagement for One Mind at Work.

Another trend is a push toward building employee resilience. The fact that no one expected the pandemic—and most employers and employees were dramatically unprepared for it—is shifting employers’ focus to training employees and preparing for “how they can do a slightly better job if something should happen again,” she said.

—Kathryn Mayer

Insights from a CHRO

What This CHRO Learned From Her Time at Twitter

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Lynee Lucque is a seasoned HR professional with more than 20 years of experience with high-growth technology companies, where she has built and scaled HR infrastructures, often during periods of hyper-growth. Collaborative, down-to-earth and fast-moving, she has demonstrated a proven ability to adapt and assume increasing responsibilities as business needs change.

In 2018, Lucque joined Envoy, a San Francisco-based workplace platform provider, as vice president and head of people, overseeing the workplace, talent acquisition, HR, IT and facilities teams. Previously, she served as global human resources director at Twitter; head of HR business partnership, engineering, product, design, analytics and G&A at Mozilla; and lead HRBP, infrastructure and security engineering at Intel. She began her HR career as an HR consultant for the Make-a-Wish Foundation and then completed an internship in the HR leadership program at Chevron. Prior to embarking on an HR career, she led global teams in audit and risk & advisory engagements at KPMG and PwC.

Lucque earned a master's of business administration from the University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business, a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting from the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business and a coaching certificate from the Coaches Training Institute. Since 2019, she has served as a mentor and coach to the next generation of diverse leaders as a Bay Area chapter board member of Management Leadership for Tomorrow.

What attracted you to HR?

I was in finance, in public accounting, but the thing I really appreciated was being part of a team. So much success was dependent on the team and the individuals that make up the team. I became interested in building and organizing successful teams, so I was like, "What department plays the largest role in the success of teams?" It consistently came back to a role in the HR department. That led me to do a career switch.

Before you came to Envoy, you spent six years in HR at Twitter. What did you bring from that experience to Envoy?

Resiliency. So much can change during a company's growth stage, especially their hyper-growth stage. Find the fun in it, be creative, challenge yourself, but also manage your energy, so you can stay engaged and internally motivated. Also, broaden your definition of professional success. Earlier in my career, a linear progression was the only way I knew to grow. When I was hired at Twitter, my title was HR. We didn't have levels. We didn't have senior-this, lead-that, or director-this. It was, "Come in. We have lots of



problems, lots of opportunities. Contribute." I push Envoy [employees] to expand and broaden what their professional experience could be and not just tag it to a title or a linear progression.

What are your most pressing short- and long-term goals for HR at Envoy?

We just announced that we are going to continue our work-from-home strategy through the end of the calendar year. The No. 1 thing we are talking about right now is how do we continue to make everyone successful when we are digging into a longer period of work from home? Secondly, how do we continue to set up systems and process for scale? We had a dip and then a lot of success when we pivoted our focus to helping our customers return to work in a safe way. There is so much interest there. As we are entering into this remote environment and growing again, how do we do it in a way that's respectful to diversity and inclusion?

What do you anticipate being the long-term impact of COVID on the workplace?

The way we work is going to be different. I'm bullish on people coming back into the physical workspace, but the reality is they are not all going to come back at once and they're not going to come back in the same way. I think we are going to see a lot more flexibility in hybrid work situations. That's a big topic we are all tackling right now, and it will have continued impact post-vaccine, which I hope comes soon.

If you could have dinner with any famous or infamous person, living or deceased, who would it be and why?

I was in the audience when Maya Angelou was speaking years ago, and I wish I could have a do-over and have a one-on-one with her instead. She was full of wisdom, not just wisdom from a practical standpoint, but also an artist and creative. I just love people who balance that pragmatic with the creative.

What advice would you offer to young people contemplating a career in HR?

I'm a fan of the HR career. It offers variety, challenge and exposure that very few roles get to have. My advice would be don't just approach it from an HR perspective, but from a business perspective. How can the HR agenda help achieve or accelerate business outcomes?

To nominate yourself or another HR leader to be interviewed in Insights from a CHRO, email hreletters@lrp.com.

Making Frontline Employee Safety a Priority

BY SKYLER ZUR

The work of Sealed Air, which supports the safe delivery of food and consumer goods through such brands as Cryovac and Bubble Wrap, has become even more integral throughout the pandemic—a reality that is keeping CHRO Susan Edwards and her team motivated.



Edwards joined Sealed Air eight years ago and since February 2019 has served as global vice president and CHRO. *HRE* recently connected with Edwards to discuss how employers can make frontline employees feel more comfortable and how to keep employees engaged even while they're working from home.

What are some HR priorities once the pandemic subsides?

Some of the HR priorities that we were focused on before the pandemic have become even more important. Culture will evolve, and we are really focused on culture in a very different way than in the past because we are trying to move our company in a different direction. We were also having conversations about how to implement more flexible work practices around the globe, and we had even started to experiment with some remote workdays and flexible hours. The pandemic propelled us into full-on remote work for some of our employee population, and it was an opportunity for us to break some paradigms.

How have you been able to keep up the morale of the employees during such a difficult time?

We started to understand that our frontline employees, in the heat of making sure that the business stayed running and our customers were supported, wanted recognition for their work. We already had an electronic peer-to-peer recognition program that was primarily used for service anniversaries and birthdays, so we rebranded and rebooted it so that employees could now recognize each other for the tremendous work and commitment that was happening around our company. We also sent out surveys to our 6,000 remote workers to see how they were doing, as well our frontline employees to see what they needed, so now we have teams working to evaluate how we can best serve our employees.

What is the best career advice you have ever received?

I think it was something like, "Get yourself back up, dust yourself off, assess the situation and try again." I remember a particular leader I had that was really very effective at helping people to recover after something had happened that wasn't a complete success. I remember him teaching me and others how to be very resilient about accepting things that didn't quite work out and how to collect yourself and figure out how to go about it in a different way. I think that was one of the most impactful things I learned in my career.

Compassion in Crisis

Accenture CHRO and HR Executive of the Year Ellyn Shook is responding to the many new priorities brought by the pandemic with empathetic action.

BY KATHRYN MAYER

When COVID-19 thrust the country into lockdown in March, Ellyn Shook was like many: overworked, tired, scared, stressed. But as chief leadership and human resources officer of professional services giant Accenture, her responsibilities were greater than most—working feverishly in her New York apartment to get hundreds of thousands of employees across the globe situated to work from home and figuring out what to do next. She had begun daily hourlong COVID-19 crisis meetings with other company executives, and she wasn't sleeping or eating well. She also wasn't making time for walking, which is her go-to way to destress.

"I was panicking. Schools had already shut down in China, schools had shut down in Italy and we were potentially facing it in the U.S. What were people going to do?" says Shook, who has worked in HR for Accenture since 1988 and became CHRO in 2014.

It was at that time that her mentor and business partner Arianna Huffington—Accenture was one of the first corporate partners of Thrive Global, Huffington's wellness venture—called Shook to see how she was doing. "I'm working around the clock. We're trying to make sure all our workers are safe," Shook told her.

Huffington offered advice that gave her important perspective: "Stop. Stop for a minute. Accenture is not going to look to you for stamina, Ellyn. Accenture is going to look for you empathy, for creativity and to solve very complex problems. You need to sleep and you need to walk," recalls Shook, who has been named *HRE's* HR Executive of the Year for 2020 not only for her efforts in the past several months, but for her long list of accomplishments at Accenture. Those include promoting gender equality, focusing on employee wellness and leading the firm's more than \$1 billion annual investment in employee development.

Shook very literally heeded Huffington's advice: Every day for the past several months, she has blocked off 5:45-7:30 p.m. in her calendar and walked between 4 and 7 miles. It's an appointment she refuses to miss, walking in windstorms, in rain, in the blazing sun. On days she is in New York City, those

walks are in Central Park. When she's at her New Jersey home, she walks a giant loop in town and is often joined by her husband of 34 years, Pat.

She'll listen to *The New York Times* news podcast, "The Daily." She'll talk to her husband about their life or their days or their family. And, yes, she'll sometimes think about work: "Sometimes I do some of my most creative thinking during that time," she says.

In a crisis that's testing organizations—as well as CEOs and HR leaders—priorities are plenty: the safety and health of workers; driving employee engagement; the ever-changing technology required for the country's largest-ever, and unplanned, experiment in remote work. But perhaps most important, the pandemic has reiterated the importance of mental wellness, of work/life balance, of self-care. It's a lesson that drives Shook—not only for herself, but for all of Accenture's 513,000 employees.

"If you're not comfortable practicing self-care, there's no way you can be a leader in these times," Shook said during a recent video call from her New Jersey home. "You really can't. So I'm not shy about sharing those moments of self-care because I think they can help people grow."

Says Huffington: "It was clear [Accenture leaders] all had this incredible sense of responsibility and had this huge burden on their shoulders. It was about reframing: What was seen as a luxury and self-indulgent is actually an investment in herself that would make [Shook] a better leader. It's fantastic to see the impact of [the walks] on her and her leadership."

Although mental health has always been a priority for Shook, it took precedence in the pandemic—and for good reason: Three-quarters of employees say they are burnt out, prompted in part by pandemic-driven longer hours and intense stress. And depression risk for employees is up a whopping 102% for employees and 305% for employees aged 20-39 since the start of COVID-19, according to the most recent data from Total Brain.

"Quite frankly, mental health issues coming out of this pandemic can create [their] own pandemic," Shook says.

Shook worked with Huffington in March to launch Thriving Mind, a holistic mental wellbeing program developed in partnership with Thrive Global and research from Stanford Medicine, for all Accenture employees.

FEATURE AND COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOROTHY SHI STUDIO



Ellyn Shook

Category: Organizations with 7,500 or more employees

Title: Chief Leadership and HR Officer

Company: Accenture

Key HR Challenges: Successfully meeting a vast array of employee needs, including health and safety, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key HR Accomplishments: Launching new programs and initiatives—from a mental wellbeing program to virtual onboarding—that have helped Accenture employees stay healthy, focused and connected this year.

The e-learning course is designed to boost employees' awareness of their unique stress responses and to help them take steps to recharge and improve their resilience and mental wellbeing. In less than two months, the program attracted more than 65,000 participants. "It had unprecedented engagement, more than anything else they had offered," Huffington says. "A lot of companies are beginning to realize that's how you change the culture, not just by checking a box."

Changing the culture was indeed a priority for Shook when the pandemic hit.

"Work/life balance is taking on a new meaning," says Shook, who, as someone who spent a majority of her time traveling the world to visit employees, had her own adjusting to do when she began working from home full-time. "I started hearing vocabulary I didn't like; I heard people saying, 'I'm living at work' instead of, 'I work from home.' It's not a good mindset."

In addition to Thriving Mind, Shook and Accenture tried to help by promoting wellness and support: giving people permission to be transparent about what they need, for instance—encouraging them to take walks or hang out with their kids. Accenture recently halted all Friday meetings so employees are more inclined to take time off.

These might sound superficial, Shook says, but they're important: "It's what creates the environment for people to be successful in a time when it's very difficult to understand how you can be successful."

Overcoming Hardship

Crisis is not new for Accenture or for Shook. In fact, this year of coronavirus and racial tensions following the death of George Floyd comes on the heels of another major challenge for the organization. In 2019, the firm suffered a blow when its CEO, Pierre Nanterme, stepped down in mid-January while battling colon cancer. Twenty days later, he died.

"The organization really suffered from that loss because he was highly charismatic; he had huge belief in our people," Shook says. "He was such an inspiring human being."

While Shook was personally devastated, she also knew she had to help employees work through their grief. It's a role she took head on, says Accenture CEO Julie Sweet, who assumed the position last July after a CEO search and succession process in which Shook played a big role. "Ellyn was at the core of understanding what people were going through, what we had to deliver as a company and how to communicate in a genuine, respectful way that will help people with their loss and inspire them to do what they needed to do."

The ability to exhibit empathy and compassion while also acting as a business leader is a rare combination, Sweet says, but it's vital to Shook's success as CHRO. "I think of Ellyn as a great voice of our people, but also one of my strongest business leaders."

Nanterme's death did, in some ways, prepare Shook for the challenges this year has brought. Knowing the importance of preparing for inevitable losses during COVID-19, Accenture created a program that supports family members of colleagues who die. A group of employees in each country has been trained.

Shook is quick to say there's no right way, or one way, to help employees through challenges—especially during a pandemic that's wreaking havoc on nearly every issue: "With 513,000 employees in 51 countries, there's not going to be something that will solve everyone's problems," she says. "So, we try to get feedback and input from our people."

There are programs and initiatives designed to help, though, including:

- A new benefit through childcare provider Bright Horizons that aims to help Accenture's working parents with distance learning;

About the Competition

Every year, *Human Resource Executive*[®] selects one HR leader for our prestigious HR Executive of the Year honor, which has now been bestowed upon 32 individuals since 1989. Along with this top recognition, we have recognized more than 100 leaders on our HR Honor Roll. With the dramatic changes the HR industry has undergone in 2020, this year more than ever, it's important to acknowledge HR excellence in the face of unprecedented challenges and to draw lessons from the innovative work these winners are doing at their organizations.

A panel of seven judges reviewed this year's submissions and based their selections on the following criteria: the candidate's ability to handle significant problems in the human resource field, the candidate's role and/or success in establishing the HR function as an integral part of his or her organization, the candidate's management skills as demonstrated within the HR function and the candidate's contributions to the HR profession.

The HR Honor Roll competition is divided into two categories: organizations with fewer than 7,500 employees and organizations with 7,500 or more employees. Despite standout applicants in both categories, this year, we recognized two HR executives at organizations with fewer than 7,500 employees.

Judges for the 2020 competition were Dr. Fred Foulkes, professor in the Questrom School of Business at Boston University; Richard Antoine, president of AOCConsulting; Timothy D. Burke, senior vice president and publisher of HR products at LRP Media Group; David Shadovitz, editor emeritus of *HRE*; and three former Executives of the Year: Tracy Keogh, chief HR officer at HP; Lisa Buckingham, executive vice president and chief people, place and brand officer at Lincoln Financial Group; and Diane Gherson, CHRO at IBM.

- A new virtual onboarding program that has made new hires feel connected. The program includes digital interaction, teambuilding activities, virtual learning and company swag sent to the employees' homes; and
- Accenture's online COVID-19 site, called #moretogethernow, which offers tools for everything from remote work to mental health to resources for parents juggling their jobs with the demands of their new "co-workers"—their children. The site was launched in a week, and in its first several days, attracted more than 30,000 page views and 23,000 unique visitors.

Working fast to create and launch programs was vital during the crisis—and it's something Shook excels at, Sweet says. "She reminds us at the leadership table that progress is more important than perfection."

Perhaps most significant to Shook, though, has been an effort to support the greater good and employees everywhere, not just Accenture's workforce: People + Work Connect, an employer-to-employer initiative launched in April that connects employers laying off or furloughing workers with organizations in need of talent. The analytics-driven platform, built by Accenture pro bono, is free for employers and was the brainchild of Shook, alongside CHROs Lisa Buckingham of Lincoln Financial Group, Pat Wadors of ServiceNow and Christy

Pambianchi of Verizon. The group helped take the idea to reality in just 14 business days.

Since launching with leading companies—Marriott, Nordstrom and Walmart among them—about 1,400 organizations across more than 90 countries have engaged in the process, with nearly 420,000 (open jobs and available people combined) on the platform.

"We felt we had an obligation as leaders to think really differently on how to solve this problem that was going to face society, which was mass unemployment," Shook says.

Equality in Action

While COVID-19 has been the biggest mountain for employers this year—and maybe ever—it's hard to talk about 2020 without addressing racial injustice. After nationwide protests, employers across all industries have tried to find their footing; many released statements of support for racial equality.

It's an important acknowledgement, but for Shook, diversity, inclusion and equality aren't just buzzwords, but a mission with deeply personal roots. Shook's father was superintendent of schools in Orange County, N.Y., and signed the integration orders for Black and white kids to go to school together in the district Shook attended. "He was an incredible activist and leader in racial and education equality, and that's how I grew up," she says. "He died a year before I got this job, and to carry forward his mission in this role is a privilege, a huge privilege."

Shook, like Accenture, has been a vocal advocate for gender and racial equality and made it a priority to set public goals. For one, the company announced plans to achieve a gender-balanced workforce by 2025. Accenture is well on its way: Today, 45% of its employees are women. Currently, 49% of new hires are women, and more than 215,000 women are employed globally, up from 100,000 in 2013. Accenture, furthermore, is one of very few companies with both a female CEO and CFO.

Now, Accenture hopes to do the same for racial equality. In early September, the firm released substantial new goals for strides in race equality and representation: It will increase the representation of Black workers to 12% from 9%; and the representation of Hispanic and Latinx people to 13% from 9.5%. It also pledged to more than double the number of managing directors from those groups and to launch new mandatory training to support workers in identifying and speaking up about racism.

The initiatives are not only a transparent display of action, they are vital to Accenture's success, Shook says.

"When George Floyd was killed, we continued to learn things about our workforce," she says. "We have an unwavering belief at Accenture that our diversity makes us smarter and more innovative. We want our people to be successful professionally and personally because, when that magic happens, it's when you unlock the full potential of an organization. Race is a business issue."

For her leadership across all these areas, it's no surprise that Huffington describes Shook as "a pioneer, a visionary, an innovator" in equality, in wellness and in leadership. "Courage is the word that comes to mind [when I think of her]," Sweet adds. For her part, Shook is quick to credit her "ambitious, intelligent, compassionate, committed" HR team for much of the company's, and her own, success. The team's priority of keeping the workplace human in a digital world has only been accelerated by this year's struggles. It's a focus Shook thinks will last, even after the pandemic has passed.

"Empathy is important, but I really believe that compassion will likely be one of the most important leadership characteristics that emerges out of this time," she says. "Empathy is one thing but being able to respond to it and act on the issues is critically important."

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.

Chasing Impact, Value

Jennifer Landis strives to create opportunities that help Black Hills Corp. employees achieve personal and professional goals.

BY CAROL PATTON

In 2000, Jennifer Landis was hired by Black Hills Corp., a gas and electric utility, as an account manager in IT and was responsible for technology integration and employee training in HR and other departments. Over time, she became so drawn to the HR space that she pitched her own business plan to the then-CHRO about what she could accomplish if transferred to HR.

"I thought I was going to lose my job for my audacity for putting myself out there like that," says Landis, who holds a master's degree in global HR development.

Hardly. Since then, she has been promoted to director of organizational development, director of corporate HR and talent management, and then vice president of HR before assuming her current role as senior vice president and CHRO in 2017. Although she credits her 50-member "amazing" team for the company's HR accomplishments, her leadership has been the driving force behind employees' personal and professional growth, the company's strategic responses to COVID, a world-class succession-planning strategy and employee performance accountability.

Leading through Change

In her short time as the top HR leader, Landis' work has made a meaningful impact on the organization, its workforce and even its CEO, Linden (Linn) Evans.

Early on, Landis visited more than 100 of the company's operating sites to develop a better understanding of the workforce culture and sub-cultures. Likewise, she accompanied Evans during a three-month employee tour throughout eight states during his CEO transition.

Besides her contributions to the energy industry—like participating in CHRO roundtables or presenting at this fall's conference of Women's International Network of Utility Professionals—she has led the creation of the company's HR Solution Center, established recognition awards for HR excellence and implemented cross-functional rotations among employees in organizational development, talent acquisition, total rewards and HR business partner groups. Under her guidance, HR also created a set of six management practices

that clarify expectations of the company's leaders, which reflect 25% of their performance rating.

Even the company's board commended Landis and her team for developing a world-class strategic talent-review process that places promising leaders in key developmental assignments to build their skills, enabling HR to better assess their capabilities.

"My great passion and life's work is to create opportunities for other people to be able to chase their own forms of value creation and lead through service to others," says Landis, adding that her philosophy extends to her HR team. "My job is really to work alongside my team members. I get to know them very well, remove any barriers that get in their way, make sure they stay on the rails and make sure they get every opportunity to get out in front."

Value Creation

When COVID-19 struck earlier this year, there was much for HR to do. Landis and her team created and implemented paid pandemic leave and hardship leave programs. If employees test positive for the virus, suspect they have it or even come into contact with someone who does, they can take time off with pay to quarantine without touching any of their benefits. So far, she says, 20 of the 150 employees who have taken this leave tested positive for COVID-19.

However, if employees are struggling with problems related to the pandemic, such as childcare, they can receive half pay while resolving these issues. Up to now, five employees have taken advantage of the program.

Sometimes, Landis participates in video calls, generally conducted by Evans, that provide employees with updates surrounding the pandemic, everything from new policies to the heroic or compassionate deeds performed by workers. More than 1,500 employees tune in each week. HR also distributes COVID-related newsletters to targeted employee populations.

Among Landis' most difficult COVID challenges was developing a return-to-work plan. In late August, 300



Jennifer Landis

Category: Organizations with fewer than 7,500 employees

Title: Senior Vice President and CHRO

Company: Black Hills Corp.

Key HR Challenges: Keeping employees safe and focused. More than half of the utility company's 3,000 employees work in the field, tackling hazardous situations like repairing downed power lines. But some may fail to observe safety policies or practices because they're distracted or concerned about the health of their family and friends during the pandemic.

Key HR Accomplishments: Growing a diverse talent base within the organization. Eight years ago, the company employed two female officers. Today, 10 of its officers—about 35%—are women. Three women also serve on its board of directors. HR is changing the face of talent at the white, male-dominated utility.

employees voluntarily began returning to the office. More will return in phases—every three weeks—after completing training on psychological readiness, new corporate policies and health protocols.

Throughout her career, Landis says, she has chased impact, never big job titles with big salaries.

"I've always chased value creation, impact and where I can help contribute or create value for people," she says. "I've never had to worry about money or titles. They followed as long as I was focused on providing value."

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.

A Transformational Journey

American College of Surgeons CHRO Michelle McGovern relies on strategic partnerships to build a world-class HR function
BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Michelle McGovern, director of human resources and operations at the American College of Surgeons in Chicago, relishes her role as a strategic partner and key member of the leadership team. Partnership lies at the heart of everything she does and has been an integral component of HR's numerous accomplishments under her leadership.

When McGovern assumed her current position in July 2012, the HR function at ACS was purely transactional. Comprised of one administrative assistant and two temps, the HR team was primarily tasked with handling paperwork and benefits but did little to develop human capital. Over the past eight years, McGovern has transformed the function into a technology-driven strategic partner, hired a seven-person team and spearheaded an array of innovative programs for the organization's 450 employees.

"They were looking for someone to come in and roll up their sleeves and not only deliver what they needed in terms of recruiting and training and implementing a time-keeping system, but also to have the vision and experience to be able to see where we could go," says McGovern. "It was really an opportunity to start at the ground up and help them understand what strategic HR could be and all the other avenues we bring to the organization that they'd never experienced."

McGovern immediately went on a "listening campaign," meeting with each division leader and their staff to find out "what was missing." The answer was basically everything. She got right to work, cherry-picking her team of "rock stars," creating interview processes and swim lanes, change management and internal processes, and compiling a 20-page interview guide featuring behavioral-based questions. She discovered the organization's time-keeping vendor wasn't ready to launch its product, so McGovern partnered with accounting to initiate a "much larger RFP" for full HRIS providers. That resulted in the selection of a comprehensive integrated platform that includes payroll and time keeping and supports greater manager and staff access. In addition, HR integrated applicant tracking, automated the organization's new hire enrollment, created onboarding tools, and took benefits, open enrollment, performance reviews and compensation management completely online.

Improving Performance

Working with the performance improvement division, McGovern built a continuing education program structured around five pillars:

- ULearn: All-staff training, including subjects such as emotional intelligence;
- ULive: Health and wellness training, including ergonomics, CPR, stop-the-bleed, financial wellness and retirement preparedness;
- UConnect: Monthly training for managers and supervisors on coaching, performance management, review writing and other relevant topics;
- UImprove: Change management courses, including how to use change management tools and how to map workflow; and
- ULead: Strategic content delivered to the organization's top 35 leaders, taught by GE, the University of Chicago-Loyola and other experts.

Three years ago, McGovern developed Power of 8, a women's coaching program, to provide a forum for personal growth and increase networking within the organization. Over eight months, she hosts a monthly lunch with the group and makes herself available for one-on-one coaching in between. So far, three cohorts have completed the program, which Executive Director David Hoyt credits for boosting retention among female employees. Only one participant has left ACS and that was due to relocation, rather than job dissatisfaction. The rest of the women have stayed connected, with some meeting regularly. Many have expanded responsibilities or been promoted.

A year into her tenure at ACS, McGovern saw her own responsibilities expand when leadership set out to evaluate whether the organization needed a chief operating officer. Rather than creating a COO position, the decision was made to split the duties between McGovern and the organization's Chief Financial Officer Gay Vincent.

Uncharted Waters

With the arrival of COVID-19, McGovern was tasked with quickly shifting a workforce that rarely worked from home to nearly 100% remote work. She developed guidelines for working from home and partnered with IT to ensure employees had the necessary technology and network support. She created a daily email—The Staff Update—held virtual all-staff meetings, created Thankful Thursdays highlighting staff members and compiled a video of employees' children to celebrate their graduations in a nontraditional way.

With recruiting on hold, McGovern directed her two recruiters to serve as "outreach advocates," touching base with every staff member across the organization to check if they needed anything. Months



Michelle McGovern

Category: Organizations with fewer than 7,500 employees

Title: Director of Human Resources and Operations

Company: American College of Surgeons

Key HR Challenges: Building an HR function from the ground up for the organization, which had little in the way of HR when McGovern arrived. Lacking succession planning, staff training, applicant tracking, guidelines for recruiting and interviewing or even a basic HR infrastructure, ACS was in serious need of a complete transformation.

Key HR Accomplishments: Transitioning a 100% paper-based system to a comprehensive integrated platform. Ninety-five percent of HR is now online, including payroll and time keeping, benefits, applicant tracking, new hire enrollment, onboarding, open enrollment, performance reviews and compensation management.

later, with no end to COVID in sight, McGovern is working hard to maintain HR's level of enthusiasm and energy. Regardless of how long the pandemic lasts or what challenges arise in its aftermath, Hoyt is confident ACS has the right person in the CHRO spot to handle whatever comes next.

"Michelle represents the epitome of the human resources professional," says Hoyt. "She is a role model, a builder, a strategic thinker, and she uses the opportunity and advantage of human capital development to meet the priorities and goals of the organization."

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.



AI, HR and COVID— A Perfect Storm?

Experts say artificial intelligence has been rapidly deployed throughout the HR function to meet new pandemic-driven needs.

BY TOM STARNER

As the pandemic workplace continues to evolve, emerging technology has—and will continue—to play a pivotal role in that refinement. And no technology arguably has had more of an impact than artificial intelligence.

One HR area that quickly benefited from AI-based solutions as COVID-19 gained steam was workforce management—recruiting for employers whose business sectors continued to thrive, or managing furloughs and layoffs for the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic.

According to Greg Moran, CEO at OutMatch, a SaaS-based talent intelligence platform, the movement toward HR digitization, with the use of AI and machine learning, was already well underway at the start of year. But it began to really take off during the pandemic.

“During the pandemic, we have seen new technologies really start to emerge because it wasn’t happening as quickly in talent management as you would see in other parts of the organization,” Moran says. “More than

anything, what we really saw was this almost immediate adoption of those tech solutions.”

Moran adds that the quick shift was out of pure necessity.

“You had to find the tools that were going to enable you to identify a candidate, which we’ve always been doing online, but then very quickly be able to screen that candidate and identify whether this person was going to be a good fit or not,” he says.

Moran explains that, during the early stages of the pandemic, many organizations experienced the same talent acquisition inefficiencies as before—now, they were just moved online. And that’s where he believes AI and machine learning can make a difference.

“Where AI really started to help was an organization saying, ‘OK, this is not working. We can’t have our recruiters just sitting on one Zoom call after another, after another, after another, all day long.’ It’s not a productive use of time.”

Moran notes the key to success is determining how to incorporate AI tools that can make more efficient decisions and create a more candidate-driven process.

“What AI has really enabled more than anything else is a truly candidate-led process, as opposed to a more recruiter-led

process,” he says. With the latter, the candidate applies, and hopefully a recruiter actually calls them back—what Moran calls an “empty box” approach. Such a strategy is a particular turnoff for talented job seekers who are still in demand during the pandemic, as employers seek to remain competitive in a rough economic landscape.

“AI really gets an organization away from that negative process, when used effectively,” he says.

With AI-based tools, candidates can apply online and take an assessment immediately. Based on the results, they receive a tailored interview to complete in real time. If they’re still a good match, an online interview can focus on targeted questions based on the results of the assessment.

“At that point, what that means for the organization is they’re down to a very select group of people,” Moran says. “That’s where the Zoom interviews with just your finalists really start to be effective.”

Humair Ghauri, chief product officer at employment website CareerBuilder, adds that, as cities begin to reopen and employees return to work in some areas, the way businesses source talent are shifting to meet changing demand.

“Leveraging technology and AI-powered tools was important in the tight labor market we saw just a few months ago, and will remain critical as companies rebuild their post-pandemic

workforces,” he says.

Even during the pandemic, Ghauri says, employers are looking to capitalize on broader talent pools while finding ways to consolidate vendors, achieve cost savings and get a higher return on their investment.

With HR teams especially strapped for time and resources in recent months, they have leaned heavily on automation and smart technology such as AI, he says.

To meet that demand, for example, CareerBuilder recently updated its Talent Acquisition Suite, with advancements on its AI-powered tools. The move aims to improve efficiency, deliver more qualified, diverse candidates and reduce cost per candidate by as much as 50%.

“HR technology partners that offer tools to support HR teams throughout the entire funnel—while being agile enough to adapt to changing hiring needs as the economic situation changes—are invaluable,” Ghauri notes.

AI-Powered Remote Work

Ken Lazarus, the former CEO of Scout Exchange, a Boston-based staffing and recruiting firm that was recently acquired by Aquent, says the most fundamental change to talent acquisition during the pandemic has been the decoupling of living location from work location. Pre-pandemic, employers looking for an employee most often searched for those who lived near where the office was

Learn more about AI’s impact on the future of HR at the free, virtual HR Technology Conference, Oct. 27-30. Visit HRTechnologyConference.com for more information.

located. As the pandemic unfolded, the change was swift and dramatic—and AI was there to help make that adapting a bit easier, Lazarus says.

“With AI tools and people getting more comfortable with remote working during the pandemic, employers were able to take advantage,” he says. “The AI tools existed to make that happen.”

Seth Earley—CEO of Earley Information Science and author of *The AI-Powered Enterprise: Harness the Power of Ontologies to Make Your Business Smarter, Faster and*

More Profitable—predicts many organizations will continue to allow remote work even post-pandemic. Thus, organizations “will have to be more aware about what this change means for recruitment, job satisfaction, performance and retention.” In fact, tech giant Google said in late July it will continue its remote work strategy until at least the middle of 2021. No doubt other employers will follow suit.

Earley says greater use of remote teams means that work culture will be more fluid and, by design, will need

to be less dependent on physical cues that in-person communication provides. At the same time, he adds, measuring and maintaining employee engagement will require heightened integration of HR and day-to-day collaboration tools. This need will arise, Earley explains, because many HR applications are legacy-based, on-premise and siloed, making it harder to read signals of disengagement across multiple systems.

“AI-powered, integrated cloud solutions will enable aggregation of analytics and flag low-engagement employees and employees likely to leave,” Earley says. He adds that the rapid deployment of remote work and new collaboration technologies means that data, architecture and user experience functions were likely cut in the rush to adapt during the pandemic.

“These tools will need to be reconciled, rationalized, standardized and correctly re-architected to improve rather than detract from productivity,” he adds.

According to Earley, fewer in-office interactions will increase dependency on knowledge bases and improved information access and usability. For example, the days of asking a colleague for routine information because it is too difficult to locate on the intranet “will, by necessity, be behind us.”

Plus, he says, employees who have to use multiple systems to accomplish their work (or who have to adapt to a different team’s preferred technology) will be less satisfied due to the overhead and inefficiency such disconnected environments cause. Using AI tools to integrate and bridge the gaps—including through chatbots for answering routine or team- and project-specific questions, semantic search and better knowledge architecture—will improve job satisfaction and increase productivity.

“Many elements of the post-pandemic workplace will change dramatically, such as the role of serendipitous in-person interactions,” Earley says. “Intelligent collaboration systems can help fill this gap.”

According to Earley, fixing the foundation of the employee experience, in part through AI-based applications, needs to be the priority for the future winners across all market segments.

“This will be a challenge in the post-pandemic era, but those who do not do it will lose talent, customers and market share to the ones that do,” Earley says.

Words of Caution

As the founding partner of Future Workplace, an HR advisory and research firm, Jeanne Meister spends much of her professional time thinking about AI, HR and how the future will shake out. Looking past the pandemic, Meister, while a strong proponent of AI-based solutions, says employers must safeguard data, avoiding potential bias and lack of transparency.

“Employee awareness about privacy and how much they are willing to blithely share is intensifying,” she says, “and must be seriously factored into any post-pandemic AI use.”

Here Are the Top Speakers at HR Tech

The first-ever virtual conference kicks off later this month.

BY ELIZABETH CLARKE

Major industry shifts dictating changes in HR systems. Huge disruptions remaking the HR tech market. Vital work combating systemic workplace racism.

Those are just a few of the monumental topics on the agenda for the first-ever virtual HR Technology Conference & Exposition®, which will take place from Oct. 27-30.

Eight keynote speakers, two each day, will highlight the event, starting with global analyst and *HRE* partner Josh Bersin, dean of the Josh Bersin Academy. Bersin will kick off nearly 55 hours of content on the latest HR trends, case studies and best practices beginning at 11 a.m. Oct. 27.

Always a favorite at the live event, Bersin will deliver high-level insights into the rapidly changing HR tech market and predictions for what 2020 will mean to HR leaders heading into the next year. His virtual session is titled “Dealing with Disruption: How the New Normal Is Shaking Up the HR Technology Market.”

“I am excited to be able to contribute to the HR Technology Conference this year,” Bersin told *HRE*. “In our new ‘mostly digital world,’ the new format will be exciting and I hope we can reach an even bigger audience. We will also make time to answer questions and hear from you online!”

Indeed, attendees of the free, interactive event will be able to watch and listen from a desktop or mobile device from anywhere in the world and can interact with speakers and other presenters through live question-and-answer sessions, among other features of the sophisticated virtual platform powering the event. Those include:

- AI-powered peer-to-peer matchmaking that will help attendees connect with those facing similar challenges;
- in-depth and interactive product demonstrations from top industry software providers that allow for live chat;
- a networking lounge for informal mingling;
- a relaxation lounge for a shot of wellbeing;
- roundtable discussions; and
- virtual locations to stock up on the requisite conference swag and enter to win prizes.

Also speaking Oct. 27 will be Stacey Harris, chief research officer of Sapient Insights Group, delivering the public debut of the *Sierra-Cedar/Sapient Insights 2020 HR Systems Survey* findings.

“Over the last two decades, this research has provided an opportunity for our HR technology community to share their successes, challenges and hopes for a better future—and in 2020 the need to share is more important

than ever,” Harris said. “This year’s open conference format is exactly what our community needs, allowing everyone access to data and information that could help them make better decisions as we head into 2021 for both their organizations and employees.”

Results from the 23rd annual survey will provide insights from more than 20,000 organizations around the world to help HR leaders determine what skills and leadership qualities they’ll need in the new era of HR, along with ideas and data about the business case for designing a flexible HR tech environment. She will speak at 4:45 p.m., wrapping up the first day of the conference.

“We’ll also be sharing exciting new Voice of the Customer charts; with validated customer feedback in payroll, HR service delivery, learning, recruiting and business intelligence applications,” Harris said. “More than ever, it is important to understand how effective our HR technology and services are at meeting the needs of our community.”

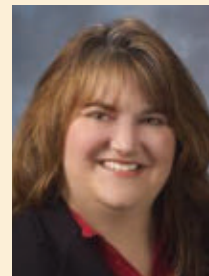
Another highlight will be hearing insights on HR tech’s role in workplace health and safety now that the world has changed from John Sumser, founder and principal analyst of *HRExaminer*. His keynote, titled “How HR (and Technology) Can Address Workplace Health and Safety—Without Knowing All the Answers,” will address how the pandemic and the advancement of intelligent tools are changing HR’s role and its technology.

Sumser will speak Oct. 30.

Other keynote speakers are:

- Stacia Garr, co-founder and principal analyst at RedThread Research, on why you must have purpose and technology, especially during disruption. **Oct. 28**
- Steve Boese, chair of the HR Technology Conference, presenting *HRE*’s Top HR Products for 2020. **Oct. 28**
- Jason Averbook, CEO and founder of Leapgen, on navigating the new challenges of work. **Oct. 29**
- Tolonda Tolbert, Ph.D., co-founder and head of strategy and culture at Eskalera, on how to interrupt systemic discrimination. **Oct. 29**
- Lincoln Financial Group CHRO Lisa Buckingham. **Oct. 30**

For more information on the conference, the speakers, the platform and to register, visit hrtechnologyconference.com.



Stacey Harris



PREPARE TO BE WOWED!

HR Tech 2020 virtual will be a state-of-the-art online gathering of professionals passionate about HR technology from around the globe complimented by insightful content, an abundance of resources and so much more!

8 POWERFUL KEYNOTES OVER 4 AMAZING DAYS



**JOSH
BERSIN**



**STACEY
HARRIS**



**JASON
AVERBOOK**



**STACIA
GARR**



**JOHN
SUMSER**



**TOLANDA
TOLBERT**



**LISA
BUCKINGHAM**



WORLD'S LARGEST INTERACTIVE ONLINE HR TECH MARKETPLACE

1,000S OF SOLUTIONS

**SECURE YOUR FREE
VIRTUAL TICKET NOW AT
www.HRTechConference.com**

Visit virtual booths to watch demos, review product materials and more as well as set up video appointments to engage with product experts — all to help you learn the latest HR technology solutions and find the right fit for your organization.

SPONSORS

DIAMOND

servicenow

GOLD

BetterUp

BRONZE

fountain **dialoghealth** **SIKICH**
Two-way text messaging. ACCOUNTING TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY

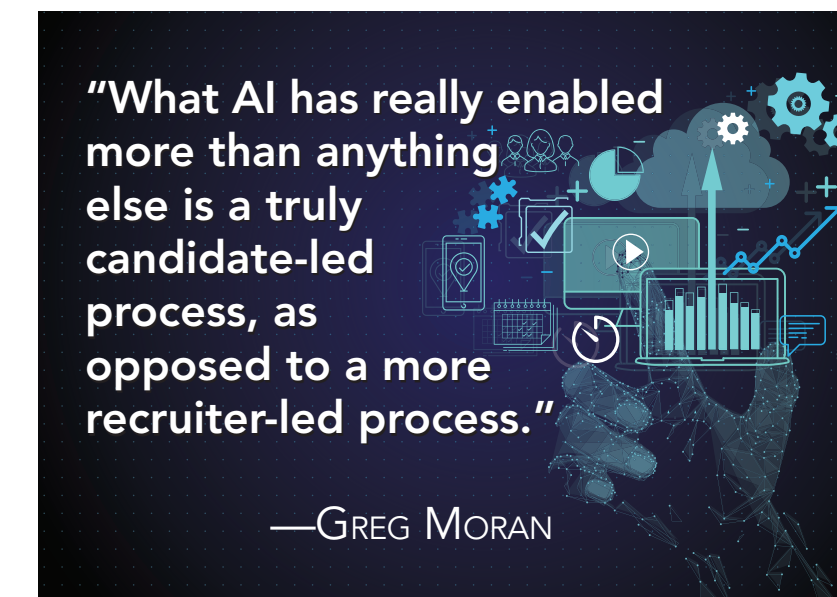
HR Technology

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

In 2019, for example, Future Workplace and Oracle co-conducted the largest survey of its kind probing the attitudes of employees toward AI in the workplace. The research, *AI@Work*, included a survey of 8,370 HR leaders, hiring managers and workers across 10 countries, and found that 71% were “at least sometimes concerned” about data breaches. Also, 80% of respondents said their company should ask for permission before using AI to gather data on them.

Meister also cites a recent case in which the use of AI without a “human in the loop” led to major litigation. In this example, the Michigan Integrated Data Automated System (MiDAS), used AI to replace human investigators, with the goal of improving efficiencies in determining fraudulent unemployment claims. The outcome was quite different.

Due to the lack of human verification, the AI algorithms used erroneously by MiDAS flagged over 30,000 unemployment claimants for committing fraud. Jennifer Lord, the attorney acting on behalf of plaintiffs in a class-action suit, commented that the “faulty algorithms used resulted in thousands of claimants filing for bankruptcy, losing homes and unable to pass credit checks.”



To avoid making that type of mistake in the age of algorithms, humans need to work in partnership with AI to ensure fairness, explainability and accountability.

“Already, a number of AI providers are touting how they place humans in the loop to answer questions AI cannot,” Meister says, adding that this trend may even lead to possible new HR job role: “chatbot coach.”

For instance, she cites DBS Bank in Taiwan, whose head of HR created such a position. In a post-pandemic world, a chatbot coach would work with a recruiting team to handle the routine tasks of screening, scheduling and answering frequently asked questions by candidates. Human recruiters then have more time to focus on strategic areas.

“More HR leaders will explore using AI post-pandemic and there well may

be a new focus with new use cases,” Meister says.

John Sumser, founder, principal author and editor-in-chief of *HRExaminer*, has a few more suggestions for HR leaders in the post-pandemic AI world: Be creative, and stay away from outdated processes.

“Some HR tech vendors are going to show HR AI-based solutions they claim will continue to work,” Sumser says. “But, in general, we’re in a new period and historical data has now become mainly irrelevant.”

Instead, Sumser calls the post-pandemic HR world a “super opportunity” to stop, examine and discard old assumptions—a truly rare opportunity to think outside the box.

“When you get a chance to totally re-examine your assumptions, all sorts of things become possible,” he says.

“And if you’re examining assumptions about what works and what doesn’t work, the smart thing to do is make that inquiry as broad as possible.

“You can’t predict a future that has little to do with the past,” he adds. “This is new territory in so many ways.”

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.

LOVE BENEFITS?

Subscribe to receive our weekly updates!

SIGN UP TODAY!

<https://hrexecutive.com/home-page/subscribe/>

Human Resource
Executive
HREBENEFITS

These 16 solutions illustrate the HR tech innovation on the horizon.

Top HR Products 2020

BY STEVE BOESE AND ELIZABETH CLARKE

Welcome to *Human Resource Executive*'s revamped Top HR Products contest. This year, for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus pandemic, the contest looks a little different because we merged the two longstanding, most prestigious awards and recognitions in the HR technology industry: Top HR Products of the Year, selected by the editors of *Human Resource Executive*, and the Awesome New Technologies for HR, recognized at the HR Technology Conference.

New for 2020, the programs were managed in concert by the experts at *Human Resource Executive* and the program chair of HR Tech, creating a single process allowing us to better identify and showcase the very best in HR technology. The goal, of course, remained the same: spotlight the most innovative new solutions on the market that are helping business leaders meet the ever-evolving HR needs of their organizations.

This year, we received 110 submissions. Our panel reviewed each one, narrowed the list, watched demos, reviewed and trimmed the list again before deciding on these 16 products as the best of the best.

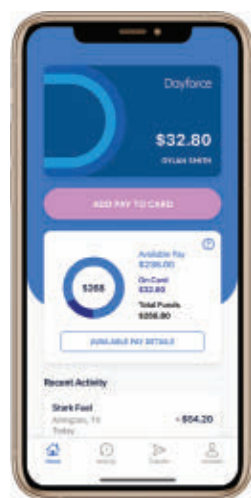
To be eligible for the joint honor, tools must have been developed within the last year and be generally available this fall. Submissions were judged on their innovation in the HR tech space, with particular attention to how the tools are breaking new ground, how much value they add to the HR function, how intuitive they are for users and whether they deliver what they promise.

As always, we encourage you to perform your own due diligence before making any investments.

Core HR

Dayforce Wallet

Ceridian
ceridian.com



What it is: Dayforce Wallet is a digital financial management solution that helps employees manage their earnings. Combining a physical card with a digital experience, Dayforce Wallet gives employees access to their earned wages on demand, which are then immediately deposited into their digital wallet account. Unlike other products in the market, Dayforce Wallet leverages the Dayforce platform's continuous calculation capabilities, which means funds are accurate—not an approximation of earned wages. There are also no direct fees for the employer or employee.

Why we like it: Clean and easy to use, Dayforce Wallet works just like any other app that employees are used to using. Aside from that, its value lies in allowing workers access to their pay on demand before payday. They can make the request through the app and have the money deposited to the Dayforce card, all while standing in a line at the supermarket. The app will track expenses and

doesn't require a traditional bank account. For employers, the value might be even greater: All of this can be done without disrupting cashflow or payroll processes for the organization. No approvals are required, and deductions are handled automatically.

Next Gen Pay

ADP
adp.com

What it is: The Next Gen Payroll Platform enables companies to revolutionize the way they pay their employees. Built natively on the public cloud, Next Gen Pay is a real-time global payroll platform that gives practitioners and employees transparency into how they are paid. With patent-pending rules for configuring payroll, this is realized through a natural language "policy catalogue" that allows practitioners to easily understand regulatory and policy changes by modeling the real impact to the bottom line. The same technology delivers a breakthrough employee experience with transparency and predictive insights to model and understand the impact of potential life changes.



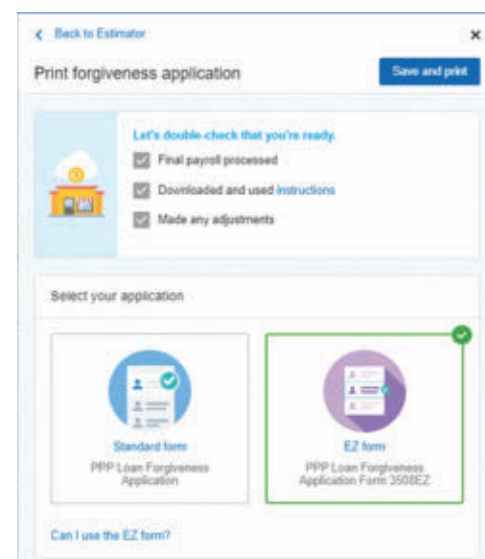
Why we like it: Payroll is the foundational HR technology that all organizations must adopt. With myriad statutory and regulatory requirements and rules surrounding payroll, along with the need for organizations to remain compliant across these rules, payroll can be seen as largely an administrative burden and not an area where innovation can drive better user experiences and improved decision-making. But this product shows that, with modern technology, payroll can indeed be more than an administrative support solution. The ability for payroll and HR leaders to leverage real-time cost modeling of policy changes and the impact to an employee of a potential life change turns payroll into a dynamic, forward-looking business insights tool.

Paychex Flex Remote Workforce Enablement

Paychex
paychex.com

What it is: The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the critical role technology plays in facilitating workforce productivity, engagement, and compliance for all businesses. As business leaders plan for what the future of work will look like for their organization, many will shift to a remote or hybrid operation. From virtual conversations and digital document management to flexible payments and Paycheck Protection Program support, Paychex Flex® offers solutions to help HR professionals, managers and employees comply with new regulations, drive engagement, streamline communications and deliver productivity from anywhere and on any device. In an increasingly complex world of work, Paychex makes it simple.

Why we like it: The business and people challenges that have arisen with the pandemic have impacted all organizations. From shifting to remote work to managing challenging financial conditions and keeping employees connected to the organization, these are novel and unprecedented circumstances. The Paychex Flex Remote Workforce Enablement set of solutions addresses many of these new challenges with new capability to manage and enable the move to remote work, manage important business documents completely virtually and help organizations navigate programs like the Paycheck Protection Program. Finally, Paychex enables real-time payroll funding, a critical tool to help many struggling organizations manage their cash flow and help keep employees on the payroll in what are difficult times.



HR Technology

Diversity and Inclusion

Pluto

Pluto
[Pluto.life](#)

What it is: Pluto is a workforce analytics and communication platform equipping companies with tools and insights to build diverse, inclusive and equitable workforces. Starting with data collection, Pluto redefines what it means to take an anonymous survey. Pluto's inclusive story forms guide employees through exploring and sharing their identities and perspectives. In-depth analytics enable companies to assess strengths and opportunities and measure impact over time. Anonymous two-way messaging and incident reporting features provide a space to engage in dialogue with employees and address workplace issues faster. Pluto's proprietary privacy measures respect users and protect identities throughout the entire process.

Why we like it: This platform "reimagines" data collection with its Mad Libs-style format that lets users tell their own stories and help organizations compile deep dives into their own concerns about diversity, inclusion and equity. With high levels of privacy and options for organizational personalization, Pluto can provide deep insights into the analytics to allow leaders to choose actions for change. New in the past year are two-way messaging, COVID-19 and anti-racism stories for collecting data and mental health initiatives.



Employee Experience

Moodtracker

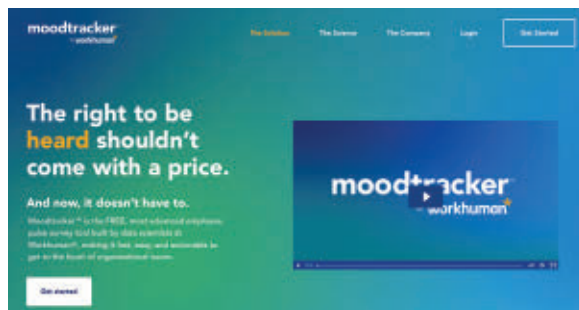
Workhuman

[Workhuman.com/moodtracker/](#)

What it is: Built by data scientists at Workhuman, Moodtracker is an employee pulse survey solution that combines an unlimited number of respondents, an unlimited number of surveys, AI-driven technologies like smart sampling, automated analysis, professionally designed research and actionable insights into a single, free solution. Once survey responses are collected, Moodtracker identifies and recommends the right actions to take to improve company culture, meaning organizations will always understand how their employees are feeling while

simultaneously increasing productivity and driving better retention.

Why we like it: It's hard to argue with a free tool that also provides an easy-to-use experience for both managing and taking surveys. It takes just minutes to set up a survey and seconds to complete one, and



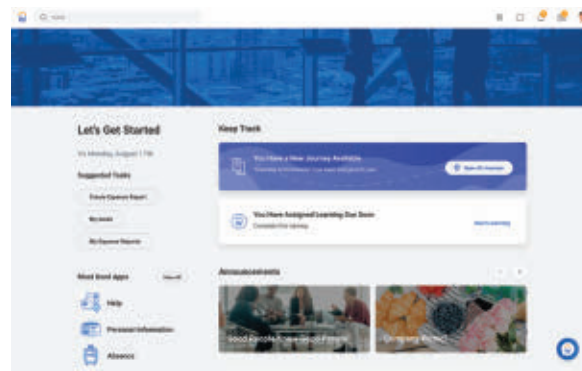
interpreting the results and determining next steps is clear and easy because the tool provides recommendations, such as quick blurbs around "Your employees are feeling lonely," for example. Managers can then click to read more or to "Foster employee connections by celebrating life events." This tool was in design before the pandemic, but its usefulness jumped exponentially when employees were sent home to work.

People Experience

Workday

[Workday.com](#)

What it is: Workday's People Experience provides employees with faster access to answers, information and tasks. People ask questions using their preferred channel—search, interactive chatbots, Microsoft Teams or Slack—and get instant answers from a knowledge base or recommended actions within Workday or other applications. The platform provides a personalized approach to support and guidance with new ways to communicate with employees, such as journey paths. Machine learning delivers a hyper-personalized employee experience aimed at improving efficiency, knowledge sharing and collaboration, all supported on any device—from desktop to tablet to mobile.



Why we like it: New this year in People Experience are journey paths and custom cards, which early adopters immediately put to use around remote work and the Black Lives Matter movement. The tools allow organizations to further customize, personalize and generally improve employee experience.

Learning/Reskilling

Language Learning Solution

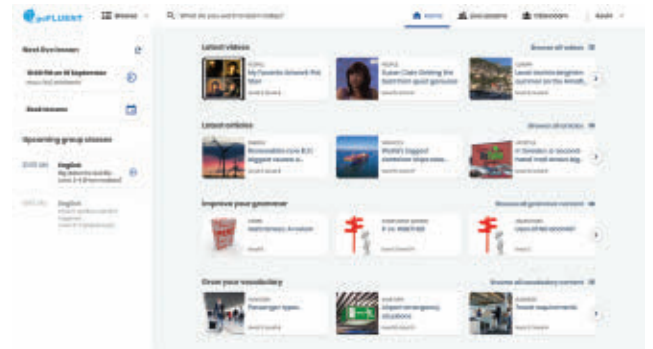
GoFLUENT

[Gofluent.com](#)

What it is: GoFLUENT solves an age-old problem that is a growing challenge for organizations navigating concerns around how to accelerate language proficiency at scale. Less than 5% of the planet speaks English natively despite its importance in global business. GoFLUENT's enterprise portal delivers an experience that accelerates an individual's ability to improve existing language skills or learn one of nine languages from scratch. GoFLUENT blends three essential elements: highly curated and business-relevant content; an AI-based Netflix-like user experience; and live, cloud-based human interaction with expert language teachers available 24-7.

Why we like it: This platform puts the full force of technology behind efforts to teach language to business

learners, allowing users to personalize the lessons—from verb tenses to preparing for a presentation to specific business communications. The platform's slick new portal unites relevant content with mobile-friendly technology and human instruction and coaching that looks poised to deliver on its promise of "hyper-personalized" instruction that will accelerate learning. One bonus, the platform can integrate within enterprise systems and provides HR teams easy access to insights and analytics about learners.



Talent Acquisition

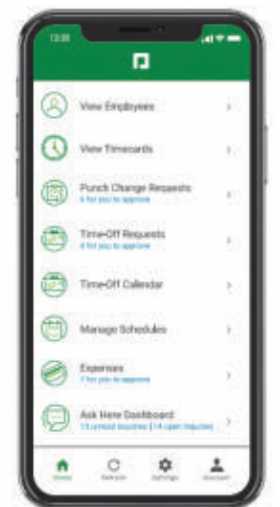
Manager on the Go

Paycom

[Paycom.com](#)

What it is: Managers can't be in two places at once. The Manager on the Go tool means they no longer need to be at their desk to complete approvals or perform other essential tasks involving the employees they supervise. Accessible through the Paycom mobile app, Manager on the Go allows for anywhere, anytime completion.

Why we like it: Much of the innovation in HR technology over the last several years has focused on the individual user, i.e., the average employee. And that made sense since, for decades, most HR and administrative technologies were designed for the back-office HR and payroll departments and not for the employees. But one key employee role has been a little bit underserved in this shift—the frontline manager. Somewhere between the back-office user and the average employee user, the manager needs functional, powerful, easy-to-use, efficient HR tools. Paycom's Manager on the Go strikes that careful balance, giving managers fast, simple and complete access to all of their key functions: time-off approvals, employee schedules, expenses and much more, making the manager's administrative tasks easy to complete, and allowing them to keep focus on their teams.



Microsoft Teams, Outlook Integration

iCIMS

[icims.com](#)

What it is: The iCIMS integration into Microsoft Teams and Outlook simplifies how recruiters and hiring teams collaborate. Recruiters can automate interview scheduling through Microsoft Outlook and solicit real-time feedback from hiring teams directly within Microsoft Teams. By connecting iCIMS with Outlook and

See some of the Top HR Products on Oct. 28 during a keynote with Steve Boese at the virtual HR Tech Conference. Register at [HRTechnologyConference.com](https://hrtechnologyconference.com).

Teams, recruiting organizations can automate interview scheduling and

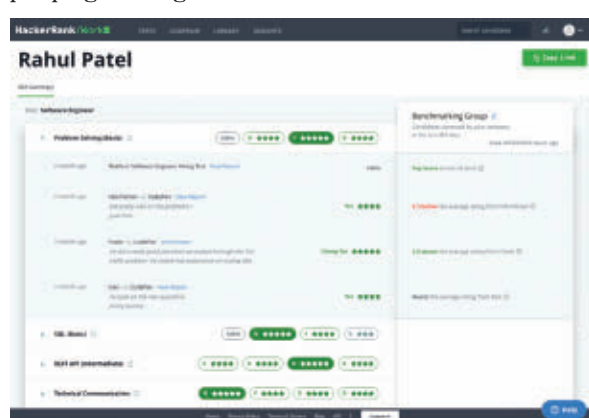
receive instant interview feedback from hiring teams without having to chase anyone down; empower candidates with self-scheduling capabilities based on the hiring team's Outlook calendar availability; and boost productivity between recruiters and hiring teams by enabling collaboration in their flow of work.

Why we like it: Whether it was driven by the rapid increase in work from home and the need to improve virtual collaboration or it was an existing trend that the pandemic only served to accelerate, organizations are rapidly adopting and increasing their use of collaboration technologies like Microsoft Teams. With chat, file sharing, video conferencing and more in one platform, many employees "live" in these tools all day long. iCIMS recognized this and has quickly developed deep and rich integrations, from its leading recruiting technology suite to MS Teams, enabling much more efficient solicitation and capture of interview feedback and, in a first-of-its-kind application, supporting the capture of real-time feedback as part of a video interview.

Remote Hiring Solution

HackerRank
[Hackerrank.com](https://hackerrank.com)

What it is: The HackerRank Remote Hiring Solution powers the candidate journey from invite to offer. Based on an intelligent skills profile by role, the platform allows recruiters to widen their reach to candidates, power technical assessments, host live pair-programming interviews and benchmark each candidate's skill set. HackerRank



built its skills definition by analyzing assessments made by the HackerRank community through tens of millions of code submissions. Once they were established, these skills were validated by an independent Skills Advisory Council.

Why we like it: With most organizations moving to a largely or totally virtual hiring process, technologies

play an essential role in facilitating efficient and quality hiring. Particularly for assessing and interviewing for such technical roles as developers and programmers, a robust and purpose-built platform for technical hiring is key. That's what HackerRank has created: a comprehensive platform to support the remote hiring process for technical roles based on well-defined skills. With code pairing, virtual white boards and a deep knowledge base for technical assessments, the HackerRank remote hiring solution stands out as an innovative solution for any organization with technical hiring challenges and is especially suited to today's remote hiring paradigm.

Talent Management

Accelerated Coaching and Scaled Mentoring Program

PILOT
pilot.coach

What it is: PILOT provides virtual career development through a structured program of individual reflection, manager feedback, executive mentoring and live group coaching sessions. PILOT offers a solution that's affordable, quick to deploy and fosters employee agency and ownership. In six months, participants advocate for themselves, create stronger connections with their colleagues and develop a habit of self-improvement. The solution can be rolled out in just two weeks, and the platform manages the communications, scheduling, operations, analytics and nudging, enabling HR to play a more strategic role.

Why we like it: Simple and turnkey are the key concepts for this coaching, mentoring and career development tool. It's HR tech for leaders that doesn't require much from HR but delivers an easy-to-use platform that brings together HR, employees, managers and executives to teach, motivate behavior change and prompt action. New this year are the manager and executive components of the

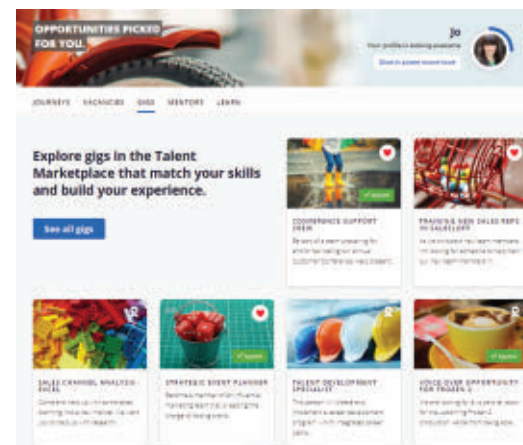


platform, which helps scale the impact of the tool with relatively little time commitment from those involved.

Fuel Marketplace

Fuel50
fuel50.com

What it is: Fuel50's FuelMarketplace™ is an AI-driven internal talent mobility solution supporting organizations and their people with smart-matching to gigs, job vacancies, career opportunities and learning modules, coupled with 360-degree feedback to support their continual career development. With powerful talent pipeline insights,



FuelMarketplace also supports leaders to build agile teams based on best talent-fit. The platform provides talent mobility analytics and trends to support workforce planning and help organizations make strategic workforce decisions, while also matching employees with career growth opportunities based on their skills and talents. It also creates gig networks for cross-organization project fulfillment—supporting a truly agile, future-proofed workforce.

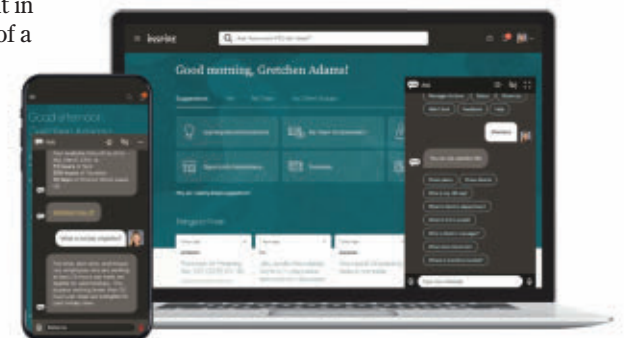
Why we like it: With straight line, up the organizational ladder

types or career paths largely disappearing in the modern, leaner and flatter organization, employees need to have more creative and alternative methods of finding opportunities, developing skills and visualizing their own career journeys. The Fuel Marketplace from Fuel50 brings together a set of capabilities that allow employees to leverage AI to be matched with opportunities and gigs, and suggests ways in which they can navigate their career plans. With a modern, easy-to-use and fun interface, employees can clearly visualize where they are on their journey and how they can best move forward to reach their goals.

Opportunity Marketplace

Oracle
[Oracle.com](https://oracle.com)

What it is: Opportunity Marketplace brings the flexibility of gig work to the world of full-time employment in order to meet new demands of a flexible organization and its employees. Combining job postings and internal gigs in one place, Opportunity Marketplace provides a simple, easy-to-use tool—accessible on any device—that fosters career mobility within an organization. Internal gigs allow employees to engage in different activities within the organization and expand their network while learning new skills and experiences. With Opportunity Marketplace, organizations can maintain high levels of engagement and retention while improving the overall employee experience.



Why we like it: Organizations are seeking new ways to foster employee skills and career development outside of the traditional or classic hierarchical ladder of promotions. One of the methods that has emerged to create new opportunities for employees to build new skills or to exercise skills that they have but don't get to utilize in their current role is the use of gig or short-term projects. These gig projects also allow the organization to accomplish projects and tasks in an efficient way. Oracle Opportunity Marketplace is an easy-to-use solution that connects employees seeking gig or side projects with managers and others in the organization who have small projects that need to get done. Easily create gigs, apply for gigs, evaluate a gig candidate's profile and past gigs completed, all in a very user-friendly and modern design.

Skills Graph

Cornerstone
[CornerstoneOnDemand.com](https://cornerstoneondemand.com)

What it is: In times of rapid change, businesses need to understand the fundamental value an employee brings to the table to quickly manage workforce disruptions and optimize results. Cornerstone's Skills Graph helps business leaders understand, develop and intelligently deploy people with a view of strategic skills needed today and tomorrow. Built on a robust and constantly updated skills taxonomy of over 53,000 skills that cover an array of industries, the tool scans profiles, roles, content performance reviews and more to tag skills and connect development resources to the individual to maximize their development.



HR Technology

Why we like it: Reskilling, or the development of new skills for employees to meet the requirements of the future workplace, has been a priority item for most HR leaders in the last several years. Finding a way to intelligently accomplish workforce reskilling at scale is the challenge that the Cornerstone Skills Graph was built to perform. By leveraging its deep data set and using AI to build out an employee skills profile in an automated manner, it allows the organization to better connect individuals to the learning resources that can help them meet their reskilling objectives. Over time, employees and the organization become better equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

Workforce Insights

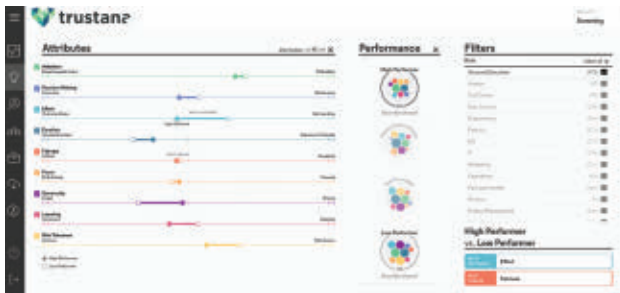
Pymetrics

Pymetrics.ai

What it is: With Workforce Insights, companies can answer key talent management questions and future-proof their workforce using a unique dataset and interactive dashboard. The data is collected

when employees play Pymetrics' behavioral science-based exercises, which assess an employee's cognitive, social and emotional attributes. Using this data, leaders can explore how teams line up to competencies such as digital literacy, leadership and teamwork; compare attributes in roles to industry benchmarks; discover teams' inherent attributes and develop strategies to improve their collaboration; and uncover how each team learns and the best training path based on data.

Why we like it: One of the key questions HR leaders must answer today is, "Does the organization have the skills and capabilities we need for the future?" While many solutions try to address skills and capabilities on an individual level, insights into organizational level capability is much more difficult to assess. Pymetrics Workforce



Insights solution solves this problem for organizations by expanding and visualizing organizational capabilities in a compelling and modern design—probably the best UX of all the solutions on this year's list. HR leaders can use this data to address important questions and challenges around building the organization for the future, assessing the teamwork of the organization, and comparing to industry benchmarks.



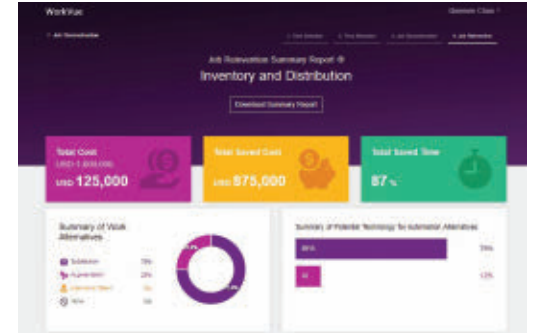
WorkVue

Willis Towers Watson

WillisTowersWatson.com

What it is: WorkVue, the first-of-its-kind, AI-driven software, provides a practical approach to reinventing jobs through innovative technology with real-time visualization to support decision-making. It brings Willis Towers Watson's revolutionary Reinventing Jobs methodology to life and is designed to help organizations deliver on their business strategies by future-proofing the way their work is organized. WorkVue allows organizations to dynamically deconstruct jobs into tasks, evaluate ways to optimize work—across technology, employees and non-traditional talent—and reconfigure the work into new, more optimal jobs.

Why we like it: With emerging technologies like AI and RPA driving organizations to reimagine and redesign their organizations and roles to best leverage these advances, HR leaders need supporting tools to make these redesign efforts understandable and actionable. It is easy to say the organization should adopt more AI and automation tools, but it is hard to develop a coherent plan for doing that. WorkVue is an innovative solution that allows HR and business leaders to take a measured, clear and quantitative approach to job and role redesign and to create the optimal mix of advanced technologies with essential human capabilities when designing the job roles of the future.



PEOPLE SIDE OF DIGITAL

By Jason Averbook / Columnist



5 Radical Resets for Our New World of Work

At the peak of an economic cycle, we tend to push people harder and harder and

harder, with talent trying to out-compete one another. Digital transformation in these circumstances tends to transform the business, but it does nothing to reinvent the work environment. I was starting to wonder when this was ever going to end. That is, until 2020 changed everything: how we work, how we live, what we value, everything.

The radical disruption of 2020 has forced five resets:

Reset work: 2020 is the year we make the digital workplace thrive.

We have necessarily redefined the notion of a physical workplace to one that is distributed, digital and built for collaboration, communication and community. We've never needed to be more agile in terms of the way work gets done. The focus is on:

- Efficiency
- Location
- Meaning
- Agility to match changing strategy

Reset budgets: Simplify, do the right things, make work easier.

Whatever you planned to finance, transform or advance with your budget this year, new priorities demand new investment strategies. This is the year that defied prediction; uncertainty is to be expected, but focus available dollars on what your business needs to get to the other side. Remember these guideposts:

- Live with uncertainty.
- Focus on what is right for your business now, not what was planned.
- Drive true business value, not just HR value.

Reset leadership: A new focus on empathy and understanding.

Building trust, shepherding people through change, leading with heart and demonstrating authenticity are never more critical than during radical unrest. Demonstrating care for your people allows you to protect and tend to the most valuable asset in your business. Follow these three steps:

- Listen
- Act
- Do it again

Reset trust: Take it seriously and learn to live by it.

In a year that has defied predictions at every turn, we look for the one thing we can trust: humanity. The more we communicate with each other, the more we create consistency and accuracy in the way we share and disseminate information. And the closer we bring people together through shared experiences, values and community, the better equipped we are to navigate the path ahead. Concentrate on:

- Data accuracy
- Communication
- Desire to work with versus deflect

Reset HR: Come together and operate as the heroes we need to be.

The most important, successful, industry-defining HR professionals of the future will understand their roles to be strategic, inventive, transformation-driving and purposeful. Building fluid networks and community, empowering people, experimenting and designing, and creating transparency will shape the new wave of digital transformation, and HR can lead the way by:

- Aligning
- Assessing
- Acting

HR just finished a philosophical wave where we went gaga for AI, tech, tools, growth, data and digital disruption. The next wave will add resilience, caring and an appreciation for every individual in the company. Every individual can do incredible things if given the right opportunities, empowerment, tools and information—which means we need to design the company from the individual in, not from the company out. In this digital disruption era, organizational structures that were designed to control and align people need to be rewired to empower individualized people.

Digital transformation is not betting the company on the future; it's betting on your people as the future. This is the last big opportunity for HR to do a reset. Let's not waste it.

Jason Averbook is a leading analyst, thought leader and consultant in the area of HR, the future of work and the impact technology can have on that future. He is the co-founder and CEO of Leapgen, a global consultancy helping organizations shape their future workplace. Averbook will speak at the free, virtual HR Technology Conference, Oct. 27-30. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.



Learn in place

We are here to help you to emerge stronger from this crisis.

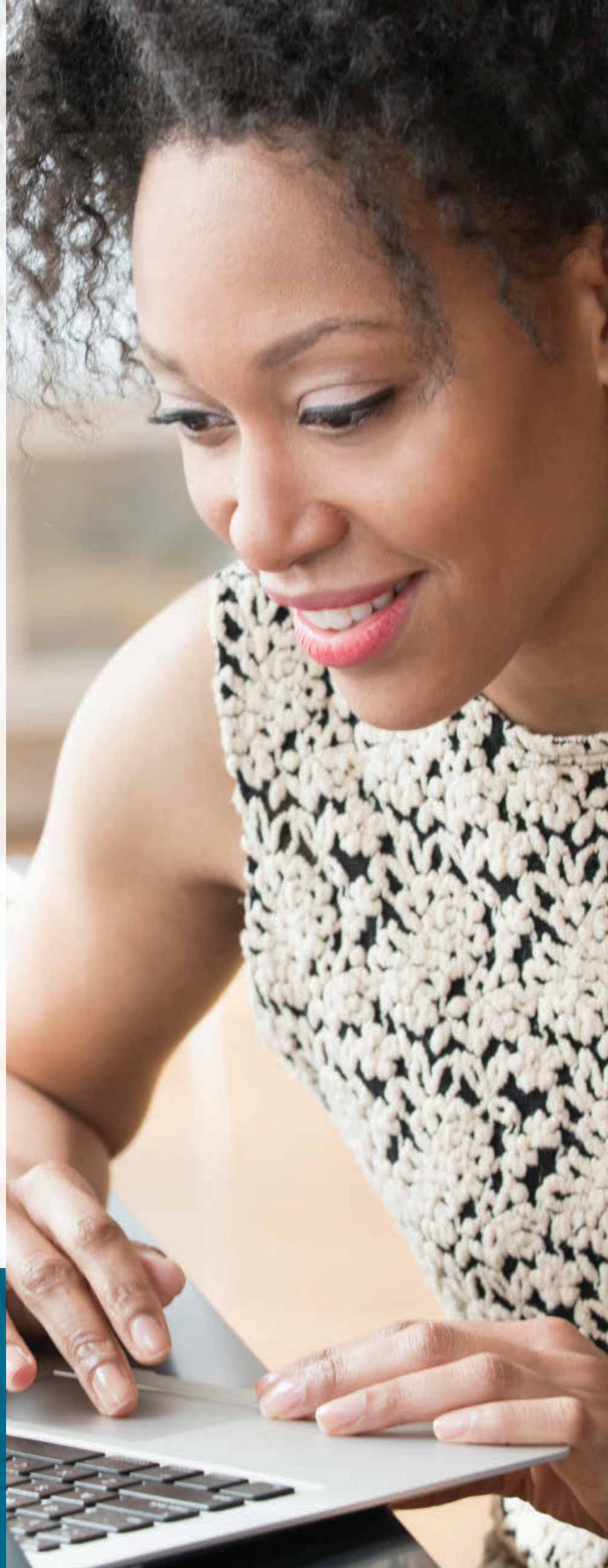
With travel bans widening and instructor-led training no longer an option, elearning can provide a critical and efficient path to rapidly educate employees during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sign up today at go.opensesame.com/free-offer to access free courses about preventing the spread of coronavirus, how to work and manage remotely, the importance of social distancing and more until 15 June 2020.

We are ready to support your organization to curate the best courses to meet your other training needs and quickly deploy them to your employees. Contact us today for a free elearning consultation at [\(503\) 808-1268](tel:5038081268).

Sign up today at
[go.opensesame.com/
free-offer](https://go.opensesame.com/free-offer)

[\(503\) 808-1286](tel:5038081286)
info@opensesame.com



HR Technology

Q&A with HR Tech Influencer: Dave Ulrich

The speaker, author and professor shares his outlook on the pandemic's impact on HR tech.

BY HRE STAFF

The role of HR leaders has never been more important, as organizations struggle to keep up with near-daily changes to the world of work ushered in by the coronavirus pandemic and other global challenges. With such a tall order for HR leaders, it's beneficial to look to industry experts for their experience and guidance. Earlier this year, *HRE* and the HR Tech Conference unveiled the second edition of the Top 100 HR Tech Influencers, comprised of HR, business and technology leaders whose insights are needed now more than ever.

Influencer Dave Ulrich is the Rensis Likert Professor at the Ross School of Business at University of Michigan and a partner at consulting firm The RBL Group. He has written several best-selling business books and was ranked by *Business Week* as the nation's top management guru.

Ulrich recently spoke with *HRE* about the pandemic's impact on HR and the technology that powers HR innovation.

HRE: What HR tech trend that was gaining steam before COVID-19 has been most disrupted? What's replacing it, if anything?

Ulrich: Coming out of the combined crises of the global pandemic, racial strife and economic downturn (for many) is an increased need to rethink organization effectiveness. For years (decades), efforts have been made to describe organization actions—culture maps, best practices, scorecards, dashboards. With the advent of technology and focus on information asymmetry, these descriptions can now be turned into prescriptions that create an “organization guidance system” that informs leaders where to invest in talent, leadership, organization and HR to deliver

value to employees, internal customers, investors and outside communities.

HRE: How can HR leaders best evaluate the rapid influx of post-pandemic tools that is flooding the market?

Ulrich: Here are some simple questions to filter the hundreds of new HR-related apps: 1. Focus outside-in: To what extent does this new digital technology connect its solution to external customers and investors? If the app does not increase value in the marketplace, move on. 2. Build on previous work: Does the new technological innovation build on, complement and extend previous work? Digital innovation with no roots in the past will not likely have fruits in the future. 3. Deliver on strategy and goals: How will the technology enable strategic choices? Technology is a means not an end; it enables strategy.

HRE: How do you think the remote work switch will affect employee expectations for workplace technology?

Ulrich: Traditionally, people go “to work,” are “at work” and return “from work.” With this mindset, work has a physical space and place boundary. The emerging boundaries for work may focus less on space and place and more on creating value for key stakeholders. Instead of asking, “Where are you working?” leaders may ask, “How does your work create value for our customers?” Creating value for customers, investors and communities outside the organization can be done anywhere: in an office, at home, on an airplane, in a hotel, etc. The value of creating value for customers may become the focus of work. For example, it is not enough to have a culture based on values; the “right” culture means that the values inside a company create value for customers and investors outside. With work defined by value boundaries, employee actions are not tied to a place, but to value created for customers.



Current Events Remain Top of Mind at HR Tech China

The dramatic shift in priorities facing the global HR community this year—a worldwide health crisis that has upended the traditional world of work, along with fervent calls for action on diversity and inclusion—took center stage at the 2020 Human Resources Technology China Conference. Current events were undeniable, as the conference—originally scheduled for May—was held in September in Shanghai, with some presentations delivered virtually.

Dozens of speakers from around the globe explored the HR areas that have undergone the most change in 2020 and those that will continue to evolve in the coming months and years, regardless of geographic location: employee engagement, the war for skills, emerging technologies and bias in the workplace, among them.

Perry Timms, founder and chief energy officer of People & Transformational HR, noted how the rapid changes brought by global events like COVID-19 highlight the need for agile business practices in HR. HR leaders need to become more “responsive people professionals,” Timms said. “HR professionals need to move from administrators and an enabling function to being the power source behind successful organizations who can last.”

Agile project development, Timms noted, can be part of a solution to one of the most pressing issues facing HR today: burnout. This type of overwork is countered by employees feeling fulfilled, which research has shown can be achieved through flexibility in schedules, having a say in projects, the freedom to be creative, flexibility in where work is done, latitude for innovation and the ability for the employee to prioritize the workload—all of which are central to agile models.

The shift to virtual has also been a defining feature of the pandemic's impact on HR. Even before the health crisis, digital recruiting was on the rise, said Joy Koh, head of consulting at Alexander Mann Solutions, noting

that half of job candidates surveyed apply on their mobile devices, and more than half will abandon the process if it's not simple and straightforward.

With the disruption of the coronavirus pandemic, more organizations have turned to virtual job fairs, video interviews and AI assessments, noted Kensi Sy, general manager of Alexander Mann Solutions in China. About 80% of Chinese companies surveyed plan to move their recruitment activities online this year, he added.

When creating “contact-free talent acquisition” processes, Sy said, employees should consider factors such as the candidate experience, diversity and inclusion, data-driven insights and cost-efficiency.

“We always must strike a balance and include human touchpoints in any of our virtual processes,” Koh added. “Make sure the design behind the digital process is robust and continue to monitor and adjust.”

Adjusting to the HR implications of the pandemic was a primary theme of industry analyst Josh Bersin's presentation on “Untangling the HR Tech Market in 2021.” Bersin highlighted the organizational need for agility and resiliency to weather the constant change that the health crisis will continue to produce.

“And I mean lower-case ‘a,’” he said. “Not only are we doing things in an agile way but we're operating in a much more resilient model. If you look at most HR departments in the world at the moment, they're highly distributed, highly empowered and people are getting more education and training than ever before.”

Because of that, HR technology needs to be easy to use, easy to deploy and able to provide data right out of the box, Bersin said. Traditionally, HR tech buyers selected solutions based on finding the right product; going forward, they should be looking at finding the right



Donghao Lansheng Group Vice President Li Dong at HR Tech China

platform, Bersin said—one that prioritizes flexibility, ease of use, vendor trust, system fit and configurability.

“We're not exactly sure what's going to happen [with the pandemic in 2021], but we can be assured that technology is going to play a very, very large role,” Bersin said.

Li Dong, vice president of event organizer Donghao Lansheng Group, echoed that sentiment in comments on behalf of DLG.

“The human resource service industry has entered a critical period of digital transformation and platform upgrading,” Li told the crowd. “Driven by science and technology, the scale, specialization and internationalization of the human resources industry continue to increase and the concentration and influence continue to strengthen ... Looking ahead, the development of the human resources industry will increasingly rely on technology, and the cross-border integration of modern service industry and high-tech industry is unstoppable.”

—Jen Colletta

4 New Imperatives for an Inclusive Workforce

BY ANNE FULTON



Recent protests against racism throughout the U.S. have given the campaign for greater diversity and inclusion a new sense of urgency.

For human resource leaders, the lessons from the tumultuous year of 2020 (so far) are that HR has a clear and unequivocal mandate to create equity initiatives that drive positive change for ALL stakeholders in their organizations. Building an inclusive workforce has never, ever been more critical to the future of our organizations. A recent whitepaper from Gartner may have put it best:

“Amid an ever-widening public conversation about race, equity and justice, we are all processing emotions. But as corporate citizens and HR leaders, we have to consider more than our own feelings; we must be ready to empathize with and respond to the reactions, frustrations and concerns of our employees, managers, leaders and communities.”

The numbers make it clear that there is a lot of work ahead.

- Women continue to be paid less than their male counterparts. According to the World Economic Forum, there is a 32% global gender gap.
- Women of color represent 18% of entry-level positions, but only 9% go on to become directors or senior managers, according to a May 2020 report from Catalyst.
- In the executive ranks, just 7% of vice presidents and 5% of senior vice presidents are diverse women, and Catalyst found that just 4% eventually make it to a C-suite position.

Despite the limited progress in building a diverse workforce, the benefits of one are well established. Diversity has a significant effect on just about every aspect of a company's culture, and research has shown that bringing diverse viewpoints into organizational discussion improves outcomes at all levels.

A recent story on CNBC.com made a clear business case for greater diversity and inclusion, when it noted: “Social values aside, there's a real financial risk for companies that fail to put their money where their mouth is. A lack of diversity in background and experience can stifle innovation and promote group-think, while companies that don't prioritize inclusion may struggle to attract and retain top talent and younger workers.”

This has been an incredibly challenging year, and for the rest of 2020 and beyond, HR leaders can guide

their organizations in four key areas that will help to drive consistent and measurable improvement in diversity and inclusion.

Encourage Transparent Conversations

Employees need leaders—at all levels—who demonstrate the organization's willingness to engage in difficult conversations about respect, equity and systemic change.

Transparent conversations that include an organization's full leadership team are necessary, but they are only the beginning. More than ever, leaders who do not commit to ongoing dialogue and to taking action on the issues raised will lose the trust of their employees.

HR leaders can help by offering managers guidance on how and when those conversations might take place, as well as how they can respond to issues that employees raise that require an equitable resolution.

Connect All Employees to Training and Development

Diversity and inclusion issues can be complex and often uncomfortable to address. But there is an answer: diversity training.

For diversity training to make a difference, it must be mandatory for all employees at all levels. In addition to issuing written policies, in-person training with activities such as role-playing can help employees better understand and explore diversity and inclusion issues in a safe manner.

Employees should be required to verify that they have completed online training and read the company's policies. Those policies must also make clear the consequences of non-compliance, and organizations must enforce those rules or risk jeopardizing the progress they've made so far.

One more thing to keep in mind: Although having a diversity training program is important, that's not enough. The specific kind of training you do is critical, too.

The *Harvard Business Review* made this point when it wrote, “A blanket [diversity training] program will likely be a waste of your time—and your employees' time. But by tailoring empirically supported exercises and activities to your goals and your employees' characteristics, you can make progress in making your organization more welcoming and inclusive.”

Reassess Recruiting and Hiring Tactics

A lack of workforce diversity can be a huge obstacle for companies seeking to draw in more women and people of color. That's why taking a fresh and frequent look at everything that

impacts how your company sources, interviews and retains employees is essential.

One way to approach this problem is with a modified version of the divide-and-conquer method. For example, review current metrics to assess just how well your existing practices are helping you to meet diversity goals, then tackle one area at a time for improvement, such as adding more people of color to the finance team or more women in software development.

Diverse candidates want to work for a company that welcomes them and responds to their needs, so be prepared to take a closer look at everything from marketing to healthcare policies with an eye to how they can support your efforts to recruit a diverse workforce.

In short, the more diverse your staff is, the easier it will be to recruit other diverse people to come on board.

Get Help from Cutting-Edge Technology

A recent Gartner report shows what many HR leaders should remember: that it takes support from the right technology to ensure that your diversity and inclusion initiatives are successful.

Here's how they put it: “Embedding artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in talent selection will enable organizations to actively seek out and



engage potential workers, creating a more diverse and flexible workforce with skills closely matched to top business priorities.”

There are many reasons to invest in technology, but if you truly want to build a diverse, high-performing workforce, investing in AI and other modern technologies is an important piece of the puzzle. The workforce of the future expects progress—and a transparent talent marketplace helps companies deliver it.

Getting to that point may be difficult, but leveraging technology in this battle is key ... if you truly are dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive and sustainable workforce that allows you to meet your business goals both today and in the future.

Yes, building an inclusive workforce has never, ever been more critical to the future of our organizations. Are you doing all you can do to get there?

Top 100 HR Tech Influencer Anne Fulton is co-founder and CEO of Fuel50, an award-winning talent marketplace platform.

HRExecutive.com

STRATEGIC HR INSIGHTS, ANALYSIS AND TRENDS
FROM THE EDITORS OF HUMAN RESOURCE EXECUTIVE®

Human Resource
Executive

EMERGING INTELLIGENCE

By **John Sumser**/Columnist



Long-time observers of the HR technology industry

traditionally have not considered health and safety to be a part of the territory. Health was a benefits question, while safety belonged to the facilities team. Disabilities caused by work were the province of workers' comp. The industries with on-site medical teams never purchased much talent management software.

Two powerful forces—the pandemic and the advance of intelligent tools—are changing HR's role, the mission it serves and the technology it uses. And the neglected areas of health and safety are taking a central role in 21st century HR.

Until early this spring, the bulk of the economy worked in settings where the workplace injuries were often caused by repetitive motion, like we see with carpal tunnel syndrome. Today, those same places are hotbeds of health concerns from a virus that we are just beginning to understand. The office building is now a dangerous place.

As the profession evolved, HR began to pride itself on offering definitive answers to questions. With its DNA in accounting and payroll, HR has traditionally focused on bringing certainty to ambiguous situations. Clear problem resolution became the hallmark of great HR.

But in today's strange world, many of the answers related to employee safety are speculative. It is hard to definitively counteract a risk you do not understand. So, many planned office openings depend on solutions that "we hope" will stem the spread of the virus.

Yet, HR tech has been exploring how to make sense of new information and questions for the past decade. Speculative decision-making began to take hold with the arrival of intelligent tools (AI). HR began to learn to incorporate machine-generated inputs into decision-making. Essentially, the machine calculated a probability and the human placed the bet.

Health, Safety and Ethics: The New Trifecta of HR



A decade's worth of data-driven decision-making initiatives led us to overlook the fact that virtually all HR decisions are speculative, to some degree. Human bias is the difference between the data and the decision (if you allow for the fact that the data contains biases of its own). We started to learn how to see and understand that implicit flaw in decision-making.

A new form of decision-making is emerging in HR functions. Machine inputs can create better

this, never do that), ethics begins with the idea that we might not have the right question, the right data or both. The goal of ethical decision-making is to determine the right thing this time. Each decision illuminates our way along a path towards a better manifestation of company values. Ethical decision-making means that we are always looking for a better definition of the problem.

In much of contemporary HR, compliance with policies and laws

Where laws and policies offer definitive guidelines, ethics begins with the idea that we might not have the right question, the right data or both.

decisions that are harder to make. Increasingly, the question is "What is the right thing to do"? This is the realm of ethics.

Ethics is a decision-making style involving questions. Where laws and policies offer definitive guidance (do this, don't do that, always do

is the final stop in big decisions. Today, things are more complex. Many decisions involving either the pandemic or intelligent tools venture into places that policies and the law have not gone. In most cases, we are years away from legislation and have to adopt solutions now.

Current events make it clear that there is a direct relationship between the health and safety of both the employee and the organization. This idea was an interesting theory before the pandemic. It is now the heart of the matter. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two.

Even more interesting is our dawning realization that employee and organizational development are two sides of the same coin. Without a solid grounding in health and safety, employee development seemed to be always evolving away from the organization's needs.

In the mid-20th century, in-house training was all about doing the actual job. When safety was an operational requirement, there was deep alignment between training and operations. As training content grew softer, the real-time connection faded.

What makes this so exciting to me is that when health, safety and development are understood as a continuum, it becomes possible to understand the ethical framework for the use of intelligent tools.

Much like the virus, no one really knows where we are headed with AI. Privacy, transparency, management of bias, unintended consequences, numeracy, explainability, fairness, accuracy, data security and accountability are primary questions in the deployment of intelligent tools. It takes a team trained to think beyond the organization's mindset to effectively guide the incorporation of machines as workers.

An HR framework for ethical decision-making about safety, health and development of both the organization and the employee looks pretty much the same for either AI or the pandemic. In its next phase, I imagine that HR will become the custodian of this part of the company.

John Sumser is the principal analyst at HRExaminer. He researches the impact of data, analytics, AI and associated ethical issues on the workplace. Sumser will speak at the HR Technology Conference, being held virtually Oct. 27-30. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.

Q&A

ON TECHNOLOGY



Neil Jensen, Vice President,
HCM Product Strategy, Workday



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

A: Given current world events, every HR leader on the planet is trying to be agile in the wake of constant change. They're seeking HR technology that can move with them and support their need to dynamically make changes to best align workers with work, match skills with the most critical tasks and deliver on the demands of the business. Some leaders are performing heroic efforts to patch together data and insights from multiple source systems in order to create the basis for sound decision-making. Others have been proactive and deployed a unified system that does the hard work for them. But every HR department is looking for ways to effectively and strategically plan for their needs, execute on those scenarios and then analyze the impacts. The ability to move at speed and scale will set a company apart from its competition.

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

A: In the pursuit of agility, HR leaders will be looking for ways to better attract and retain diverse talent and provide the right capabilities to help upskill existing workers to meet rapidly evolving business needs. And, increasingly, they'll leverage tools to predict capabilities they will need in the future so they can start to

prepare now. HR leaders are also focusing on technologies that allow them to create strategic workforce plans—ones that enable them to create scenarios for a wide array of business conditions and align on a path forward. They are looking for tools that allow them to best match workers with critical business functions and redeploy workers to best match their skills to the most critical tasks. They are looking for efficient ways to help workers build skills and stay relevant as work shifts and the need for new skills emerge. Ultimately, they know they'll need to do all this and provide a compelling worker experience, one that focuses on the needs of the worker and personalizes the entire journey.

Q: What areas of employee HR technology are ripe for innovation?

A: For years, HR technology vendors have worked to make improvements to each function under the umbrella of HCM. They put focus into features and capabilities that enhance the depth of a specific functional application. What they missed is that employees expect more. They expect applications to work together and guide them as they make choices related to their career and career development. They expect guidance and recommendations on what to do next to build their skills, advance their career development and match them with available work. The model is ripe for innovation, and the connected experience will provide a missing link for the future.

Q&A

ON TECHNOLOGY



Craig Rubino, senior director, client and participant engagement, E*Trade

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

A: Any conversation must begin by acknowledging the complex realities of the coronavirus pandemic, social and racial justice movements, and how companies and individuals are adapting.

HR teams are tackling these converging crises with a focus on empathy and humanity, creating new solutions to engage culture, motivate teams and support employees through personal challenges—all while working remotely on a large scale. HR leaders are leaning on technology more than ever to help address these challenges and engage their teams.

Companies are still riding the whirlwind as they equip their workforces with the tools to execute their jobs and stay healthy—from simple things like providing monitors, laptops and communications platforms to updating employee benefits. Behind the scenes, this includes adjusting internal systems to be able to report from a regulatory standpoint and making sure benefits plan providers can support companies and their employees in this changing environment.

HR is also on the frontline of education efforts, helping employees understand their benefits and how recent stimulus legislation has affected the resources available to them—from virtual and on-demand benefits training to supplemental emergency coverage, not to mention managing communication and training through organizational changes, day-to-day work and virtual learning.

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

A: HR leaders are working to shift their programs and effectively communicate changes as they move into a new phase—for example, leveraging tech to engage with online employee resource groups that help employees manage challenges and serve the community.

Mental health and wellness resources are a key focus area, as HR leaders structure community engagement to promote a healthy lifestyle under stressful circumstances. Benefits will play a strategic role as companies create a new normal, whether adjusting certain awards programs or continuing to carve out changes in response to legislation and new developments. At the same time, companies are refining a more personalized approach to employee wellness through remote experiences, with a sharp rise in the adoption of technology like Zoom, WebEx and Microsoft Teams Rooms to facilitate team hangouts, entertainment and education.

The country has seen many organizations across industries get more involved with their diversity and inclusion teams, creating new plans to educate employees, matching donations to organizations like the ACLU or NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and providing volunteer and outreach opportunities for employees.

This is just the start. We're on the cusp of innovations that could help companies engage communities more deeply and drive behavior even while remote. For example, conferences have shifted online, creating virtual experiences attendees can explore at their leisure.

Q: What areas of employee HR technology are especially ripe for innovation?

A: Disruption can drive creativity. As companies reinvent workplace culture and infrastructure, the benefits space continues



to serve as a pillar for employee engagement, support and, ultimately, productivity.

Recent events have stressed the importance of identifying and scaling benefits programs, including stock plans, and leveraging virtual education—for example, through virtual benefits fairs where employees can navigate through various topics based on their needs. As companies adjust their benefits in response to recent events, benefits plan systems are becoming more intuitive, self-served and digitally responsive both via mobile and web.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is also at the forefront as companies seek new mechanisms to manage and engage with employees, from streamlining recruitment to leveraging chatbots to share updates internally—enhancing communication and knowledge-sharing to support the virtual environment that everyone's living in right now.

*Craig Rubino is a senior director at E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. (E*TRADE). This commentary contains current opinions from E*TRADE Financial Corporation and its affiliates, which are subject to change without notice. E*TRADE is not affiliated with Human Resource Executive®, and all commentary is owned solely by E*TRADE.*

*In connection with stock plan solutions offered by E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc., E*TRADE Securities LLC provides brokerage services to stock plan participants.*

*E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. and E*TRADE Securities LLC are separate but affiliated companies.*



WHEN YOU SAY YOUR COMPANY INVESTS IN ITS EMPLOYEES, DO YOU ACTUALLY MEAN IT?

With E*TRADE Corporate Services on your side, you will. We've expanded our offerings beyond stock plan administration and an industry-leading platform for a more holistic approach to participant financial well-being. We have new tools that allow you to offer benefit solutions like contributions to employees' student loans, access to student loan refinancing lenders, and contributions to employees' 529 college savings plans.

Let us help you find powerful financial wellness solutions for your employees.
Call 800-783-3388.

E*TRADE[®]
CORPORATE SERVICES

As of June 14, 2019, Group Five Stock Plan Administration Benchmark Study and Financial Reporting Benchmark Study rated Equity Edge Online[®] highest in Loyalty and Overall Satisfaction for the eighth consecutive year (2012–2019) among all plan sponsors who use a commercial system to manage the recordkeeping of their stock plans in-house. E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. was also rated highest among partial administration plan sponsors in overall satisfaction for brokerage services three years in a row in the same study. Group Five, LLC is not affiliated with E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. or the E*TRADE Financial family of companies. The E*TRADE Financial family of companies provides financial services that include trading, investing, banking, managing employee stock and financial wellness benefit plans. E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. recently acquired Gradifi, Inc. Gradifi offers financial wellness benefits focused on solutions for employers to provide their employees student loan and college savings benefits. Securities products and services are offered by E*TRADE Securities LLC, Member FINRA/SIPC. E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. and E*TRADE Securities LLC are separate but affiliated companies. © 2020 E*TRADE Financial Corporation. All rights reserved.

Benefits

The pandemic has shuttered schools and childcare centers, leaving working parents in the lurch—and opening the door for employers to step up and support them.

BY JEN COLLETTA

Childcare: HR's Newest Challenge

The original document for this story sat open on my laptop for 54 minutes before I was able to complete this first sentence. I put my 2-year-old son, Jackson, down for his daily nap nearly an hour ago and have spent the time since alternating between “shushing” him through his video monitor and yelling at the dog each time she barks and rouses him again. I also made three trips up to his room to stop him from pulling down his blinds, plug the monitor back into the wall after he pulled it out and, as a topper, change a dirty diaper that he had stuck his hand into.

In mid-March, my 8-4 routine was upended for the new daily setup: racing cars through my now perpetually messy living room, hide and seek, lots of timeouts, and never-ending bottle washing and diaper changing. Those previous eight hours of work are now squeezed into any second that isn't Jackson-dominated—from 5:45 a.m. until he wakes around 6:30; during our three or four dog walks, while I push his tricycle; from our kitchen counter while switching between email and dramatic interpretations of Disney songs to cheer him into eating his lunch and, later, dinner; during the glorious two hours of naptime; and, finally after 8 p.m., once his day is done and mine gears back up.

It's a merry-go-round of a routine that, on one hand, has made the quarantined months seem to fly by—but, on the other, makes the pressures of each day palpable: the relentless “mommy guilt” I feel when I hide in the bathroom to answer an email while Jackson hammers at the door and the nagging worries that I'm not investing a full eight hours of work in a day that just doesn't seem to have enough hours.

Those competing demands are facing millions of working parents



today who, overnight, had to take on the role of educator, disciplinarian, chef, entertainer, nurturer—titles all parents hold to some degree, but rarely concurrently and exclusively—along with their full-time work. And it's taking a toll.

According to Bright Horizons, the nation's largest provider of employer-sponsored childcare, 75% of parents juggling work and childcare report higher anxiety levels since the pandemic started. Women are at particular risk.

The Mom Project—which works with employers to advance parent-friendly policies and connects working moms with employment opportunities and community—reports that, during the pandemic, working mothers are handling 70% of childcare responsibilities during business hours and getting only 2.6 hours of uninterrupted work time each day. WerkLabs, the data



Allison Robinson

and insights division of the organization, found an 80% increase in the number of women reporting they use their mobile device for work since

the health crisis started; 72% of women surveyed said that constant connectedness churns up the pressure to be available outside normal working hours.

“The lines between work and family have blurred,” says Allison Robinson, CEO and founder of The Mom Project. “Moms are facing these impossible demands and, because of that, [they're also facing] this socio-emotional crisis where they feel like they're not able to do any of it well.”

That's fueling fears of a looming turnover crisis among working parents, particularly women, that may already be materializing. In a survey conducted this summer, parenting benefits start-up Cleo found that one-third of respondents reported at least one parent in their family had reduced hours or left the workforce since the pandemic started to care for children.

WorldatWork found that more than 20% of the more than 200 employers it polled reported having lost employees because of their children's educational needs. Further, The Mom Project found that a staggering 70%



Steve Beauchamp

of working moms it surveyed would consider leaving their job if it was economically feasible.

To get ahead of that crisis, Steve Beauchamp, CEO of HR and payroll provider Paylocity, notes that employers need to be transparent with workers about what they're willing to do to retain them despite childcare conflicts.

“When people don't know what accommodations might be available to them, they could feel trapped and like there's no alternative but to leave,” Beauchamp says. “If they know, ‘Here's three or four different ways you can work less hours or change your schedule,’ they might be able to find ways to stay.”

That message is especially important as the pandemic drags on. Jennifer Vena, vice president of consulting services at Bright Horizons, says many parents “pieced it together in the spring, when there was a lot of support and everyone was in the same boat,” and when summer came, local organizations and even neighborhood high school and college kids may have helped out with childcare. But now that fall is upon us, and many schools aren't returning to in-person education, the longevity of the childcare crisis is becoming untenable for most parents.

“Working parents are burnt out,” she says, “and they need support.”

What is HR Doing for Working Parents?

Here are some ideas for employers looking to support working parents:



- Increase or add childcare reimbursement
- Help parents find and hire caregivers
- Boost or add childcare leave
- Allow "flexible flex schedules"
- Arrange split schedules with long mid-day breaks



- Allow four, 10-hour workdays each week
- Swap one workday during the week for a weekend day
- Reduce hours until schools resume in person

Leading in Unprecedented Times

As the pandemic swept the nation, nearly half of working American parents lost their previous childcare arrangement, prompting some employers to step up with both direct and supportive interventions, says Nigel Birtwistle, head of client services at Bright Horizons. The organization has seen an influx in employers subsidizing enrollment in childcare centers for employees' children—and advocating to get them enrolled, as competition is high, with so many centers closed. Others are recruiting, placing and, in some cases, paying for nannies to provide one-on-one care, along with offering access to virtual tutoring programs and micro-school initiatives—small, in-person facilitated learning—for school-aged children.

Bank of America is among the employers providing direct support

through its childcare reimbursement program. Launched earlier this year, the organization recently extended the program through the end of the year. Employees can claim between \$75-\$100 per day in childcare reimbursements for kids up to age 12 or up to age 21 if the child has special needs. The program applies to employees working at home or in an office, and there is no cap on the number of days for which employees can claim childcare reimbursements.

Jessica Cullen, Bank of America relationship manager, relies on the reimbursement program for care for her 3- and 1-year-old daughters. She found her own caregiver—a teacher at her daughters' daycare center—and says she completed the reimbursement application in less than two minutes.

"My entire management team has been extremely supportive, especially with me having children at home," she says. "It makes me really proud to work for Bank of America."

Read more about BofA's childcare programs at [HRExecutive.com](https://www.hrexecutive.com).

In preparation for schools starting in the fall, software corporation Autodesk instituted a remote childcare leave program this summer that allows working parents in its 12,000-member workforce to take up to four hours per day,



Linda Ho

three days a week, of additional paid time off to care for children.

"That leave has not been capped," notes Linda Ho, vice president of culture and capability at Autodesk, "so it could be ongoing until we fix the childcare issues that we have as a country."

Such direct caregiving support is on the rise but still not widespread. See **graphic on this page.**

'Flexible' Flex Policies

What is much more common is flexibility. According to the Institute for Corporate Productivity, 53% of employers surveyed are expanding their flexible work arrangements and an additional 45% are considering it.

Before the pandemic, only about five of California-based insurance company Kern Health System's 500 employees worked remotely. Today, all are working from home, and the organization is considering revising its telecommuting process for the long run.

"We've really revamped and rewritten our flex policy," says CHRO Anita Martin, who notes the organization has long been a "traditional" one, where employees worked 8 a.m.-5 p.m. schedules every day in the office. "It's kind of a flexible flex policy now because it's not written in stone."

Martin recently has fielded such employee requests as starting the day at 6 a.m. to homeschool a child from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. and ending the workday at 3 p.m. Each request needs to be handled individually, she says.

The personalization of flexibility is key, notes Paylocity's Beauchamp, as working parents shouldn't be regarded as a monolith.

An employee's journey to health and well-being can be a complex road.



We can help navigate.

5Star Life Insurance Company can help provide employees peace of mind and financial protection on their life journey, while helping achieve corporate goals and manage employee benefit costs.

With innovative employee benefit solutions that include Voluntary Life Insurance options, Accident Insurance, Healthcare Indemnity and Critical Illness coverage, we can provide tools and guidance to help your employees create their own path to health and wellbeing.

The journey starts here:

www.5starlifeinsurance.com/journey

or contact your employee benefits consultant today!



The journey to health and well-being starts with planning for tomorrow, today.



Products underwritten by 5Star Life Insurance Company (a Lincoln, Nebraska company); Administered by NTT Data at 777 Research Drive, Lincoln, NE 68521. Products not available in all states. Policies # 5SACPOL; Rider 5SACSCFR; 5SHIPOL.

HBLCR820

8/20



Bank of America's Jessica Cullen with daughters Matilda, 3, and Ramona, 1

BEYOND BENEFITS

By Kathryn Mayer/Columnist



Empathy: The Biggest Trend in COVID-19 Benefits

It goes without saying that it's sky-high stress time for employees. A massive wave of uncertainty and angst over health, employment, family and more is flooding the now-virtual workplace. But I'm fairly impressed and encouraged to see a number of employers quickly work to tackle these issues. There are a number of benefit offerings, programs and resources—some essential, some creative—that are vital right now.

But the more time that goes on, I feel fairly confident in identifying the most important benefit trend of the pandemic: empathy.

I recently dove into a big story for HRE about the role of HR leaders during the recent turmoil, and I talked with a handful of CHROs about how they're handling a triple threat of crises—the pandemic, racial tension and subsequent economic turmoil. There were a lot of similarities in their responses.

"The realization of this lasting until the end of the year or more, it's creating a lot of things—isolation, loneliness, stresses. And I think helping people through this [is important]," Steve Pemberton, chief human resources officer at software firm Workhuman, told me.

"We talked a lot about flexibility and empathy and working with our leaders on giving them training to try to meet [employees] where they are," said Jo Deal, CHRO at software company LogMeIn. "And, really, every day, just survive."

And Kathie Patterson, CHRO of financial services firm Ally Financial, noted: "Our employees are struggling. As a company, we say we like to demonstrate a high degree of care. This is the moment you've got to walk the talk."

These are not surprising soundbites, given the circumstances, but I think—at least hope—that they go beyond just lip service.

At a time of collective grief, uncertainty and anxiety, there is a new spotlight on how employers treat their employees. It's not just about salary or nice-to-have perks—it's getting to a deeper, more meaningful level. How do you help them cope? How do you show them you have their back? What resources can you provide? What flexibility? What recognition? What leeway? At a time when the world and our finances, our health and everything else seems so fragile, we often look to our work life as a constant. Point blank, employees are looking for leadership, guidance and support from their employers.

Benefits that exhibit empathy are crucial and easy to spot—from financial wellness tools, stipends and bonuses to mental health programs, resources and apps to help employees manage stress, sleep better or meditate to focus and relieve stress. There are also new perks being rolled out as a result of the pandemic, like virtual camp programs that aim to help working parents, virtual fitness classes, emergency paid leave programs, hazard pay, mental health days and more. All of it is helpful and encouraging—and further proof that offerings

need to be fluid and moldable as situations and pain points shift.

Taking a big picture look—and it sounds quaint to put it so simply—it's all about employees, about empathy. Perhaps more than a specific program or benefit, overall understanding and compassion are most important. If a parent needs to take some time off or have different work hours that best fit their schedule and needs, it's OK. Mental health days and resources to help should be encouraged. There should be acknowledgement that distractions and stresses are commonplace. Acceptance that, if employees don't feel safe coming back to the office and can do their work remotely, that's OK too. Really, just overall acceptance that employees may not be doing OK, and that's, well, OK.

There's no playbook for what we're going through right now. But I've noticed that the employers that have stepped up in their efforts to prioritize all aspects of employee wellbeing—controlling angst, giving them flexibility, helping build resilience, providing an outlet for their stress and telling them that it's OK not to be OK—is what's making the difference. Employers may not be able to control what's happening, but they can sure help.

Kathryn Mayer is HRE's benefits editor and chair of the Health & Benefits Leadership Conference. She has covered benefits for the better part of a decade. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Denver. She can be reached at kmayer@lrp.com.

"Each individual circumstance is different," Beauchamp says. "There are single parents, parents who have a partner working in an office or others who are essential workers, people whose partners have different schedules. Everybody's personal scenario drives the flexibility they're going to need."

Paylocity is rolling out a "menu of options" to help employees—nearly all of whom have been working remotely since March—manage the work/life integration. Plans that could be considered include split schedules, such as a several-hour break in the middle of the day for caregiving, and a four-day week of 10-hour days.

Figuring out which options to put on the table should start with a "real, open and transparent conversation" with employees to determine their needs, he says, noting that Paylocity is currently surveying employees about arrangements that could ease their at-home burdens.

"Previously, employers may say, 'This is our approach and here's a great solution,'" says Birtwistle of Bright

Horizons. "Now, however, they're offering more of a choice. They're giving employees the option to select programs and solutions that fit their needs and their preferences."

Lasting Change

Even before the pandemic, the United States was careening into a childcare crisis. About half of Americans were living in a so-called "childcare desert," where care is hard to come by, according to Bright Horizons. And cost was a challenge: American parents were spending, on average, between \$9,000 and \$9,600 per year on childcare, with some expending up to 42% of their income on childcare.

The situation has grown more dire recently, with estimates that up to 40% of childcare centers shuttered by the pandemic will never reopen. This summer, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$60 million bailout for the childcare industry, which remained stalled as of presstime.

Mainstream attention on the childcare crisis has had one positive

effect, notes The Mom Project's Robinson.

"For so long, so many women felt like they couldn't talk about childcare issues, and this pandemic has really humanized the whole issue," she says. "It's put people into focus."

That mindset shift, also fueled by the general success of new remote-work environments, has led many employers to reconsider longstanding recruitment and retention strategies, notes Ho of Autodesk, which could benefit working parents in the long run. For instance, as her company evaluates the potential of a distributed workforce, it is opening up opportunities to hire in new geographical regions and for positions with reduced travel requirements, optimum for working parents.



Anita Martin

"There are many things about the pandemic that are terrible but there is a silver lining," she says. "It's making the employer-employee relationship quite different, and it allows the employer to think very differently and broadly about the candidates out there who could be a really great fit."

Martin of Kern Health Systems also strikes a note of optimism, saying the pandemic has made her HR department more resilient and agile—allowing it to better meet the rapidly changing needs of its employees, especially working parents.

"My department has learned to do things very differently than we used to. And we won't go back because some of the things we're doing now are so much better than before," she says. "I think if we can take the best of what we've learned during this period, a lot of companies are going to come out much stronger."

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.

It's a New Era for Employee Benefits. It's Time to Rethink Your Strategy.

Human Resource
Executive



April 7 - 9, 2021
ARIA Resort & Casino
Las Vegas

The coronavirus has put employee benefits in the spotlight. Gain actionable insight on how to keep your employee health, wellness and benefits programs fresh, competitive and in tune with the times.

Opening Keynoter



Joan Lunden

Former *Good Morning America* Co-host

Based on her own experience caregiving for her mom and brother, Joan will discuss the importance of caregiver support in the workplace.



GOLD SPONSOR



Stay Connected



#BenefitsConf

**Secure your spot at
www.BenefitsConf.com today
to step up your benefits game
to meet today's challenges!**

**Save an EXTRA \$75.00
with Code HRE75**

Politics in the New Workplace



Experts say open and respectful conversation is key to maintaining civility.

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

From “Make America Great Again” hats to “Biden/Harris” yard signs, there’s no denying we are deep in the throes of a presidential election year. By all accounts, it’s shaping up to be one of the most contentious face-offs in American history. With emotions running high, employers must figure out how best to handle political talk in the workplace—virtual or in person.

“Absolutely, employers need to be concerned about it and preparing for how they are going to address it,” says

Doug Kauffman, partner of Balch & Bingham LLP in Birmingham, Ala. “They are already having to deal with issues and it’s not going to get any better as we come to November.”

In terms of employee attitudes toward workplace political discussions, there’s a general lack of consensus as to what’s acceptable. According to a new survey by Menlo Park, Calif.-based specialized staffing firm Robert Half, 22% of professionals feel it’s appropriate to discuss politics with colleagues, while

26% believe it’s never OK. Just over half (53%) say it depends on the situation.

“Many people are willing to talk about politics if it can be done in a respectful fashion,” says Paul McDonald, senior executive director of Robert Half. “We are seeing those conversations happen more often today because people are looking for things to discuss since they’ve been disconnected from one another due to the pandemic.”

In today’s deeply polarized political climate, how can an employer prevent

TALENT MANAGEMENT

By Peter Cappelli / Columnist



The Stake in the Heart of the Generations Myth

Here’s the most important story for human resources that has come along in quite a while. It comes from the National Academies of

Science, Engineering and Medicine, the independent research organization that undertakes policy-focused research for the U.S. government and its agencies.

This particular study was undertaken for the U.S. Army, which recruits about 80,000 new soldiers every year and has an interest in whether young people are really different now than in the past. The question they asked the National Academies to investigate was to what extent is thinking about generational differences useful. An outside committee of experts prepared the report after poring over all the evidence and hearing from other experts and interested parties.

The report they issued is called, appropriately enough, *Are Generational Categories Meaningful Distinctions for Workforce Management?* These reports usually produce a lot of “on the one hand” and “on the other” conclusions. Not so in this case. Here’s their conclusion: “A focus on generational characteristics is not supported by science and is not useful for informing workforce management decisions.”

Allow me to translate: There is nothing sensible or useful in the idea of “millennials” or “Gen X” or “four generations in the workforce” or “Gen Now” (OK, I made that one up). Nada. Zip. Nothing. It’s all made up. No demographers ever made these claims about generations in the first place. It was consultants. The story kept getting repeated, and now it is one of those “touchstones” that many people just assume.

If younger employees are job hoppers, it is not because they are from a different “generation.” They are just younger, and younger people have always changed jobs more frequently. Yes, they do everything on their cell phones now. That’s because we could not do everything on cell phones when we were their age.

If it was true, say, that “millennials” were a real generation, what would that mean? It is only that they have values *on average* that are different at the same age from those born before and those born after. It does not mean that everyone in that cohort has identical values or that those values are particularly distinct. If you are hiring 100 people out of an age group of 10 million, just find the 100 who fit what you want. Thinking about all of them as all having identical values would be absurd in any case.

If you wanted to see if there really are generational differences, you wouldn’t compare 25-year-olds to 50-year-olds. You would compare 25-year-olds today to those who were 25 a decade ago. When the National Academy committee did that, they found no real differences. Young people today are more or less the same in their fundamental values and interests to those of the same age all the way back to the baby boomers, which is the last, clear generation.

The generational claim is that those attitudes and values that they have now will persist. But if we actually adapted the workplace to young people, we would just irritate them when they are older: They don’t care that much about health insurance and retirement accounts, but I guarantee they will when they hit 55.

OK, a generation advocate might say, so this is really just about age differences. They are useful labels. It’s not a useful label, and the reason is because

we will age out of those categories. We think about millennials as young people, for example, but they are already age 40 at the upper end. For the purpose of managing them, is there really a lot in common between 40-year-olds and 24-year-olds, which is the age range claimed for millennials? Virtually no millennials are new entrants to the workplace, yet we seem to describe them that way.

It seems to me that we never really did anything with these generational claims other than produce reports and hold seminars to tell managers how to relate to them, which the managers quickly ignored. What these claims did do, however, is waste time and energy in already stretched human resource departments.

So here is my question: How did it happen that something for which there never was any evidence became an article of faith in the HR community? A partial explanation is that the demographers didn’t bother to try to shoot it down because most of them are not interested in what is going on in business, but that does not explain why it caught on.

Here’s the second question: I strongly suspect that this report will make no difference, that we will still be talking about how to appeal to millennials and the challenge of having all these generations in the workplace at the same time. Why is it that evidence doesn’t matter?

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.

employees' polite conversations from escalating into arguments that could damage working relationships, create a toxic work environment and potentially turn off clients or customers? While some employers may be tempted to ban political discussions outright, Kauffman advises against doing so.

"If you say, 'You can't discuss politics in the workplace,' you're going to find that hard to enforce and it's going to be difficult to single out politics from other personal things," says Kauffman. "It could also be damaging from a public relations standpoint if the company is seen as trying to stifle people from expressing their personal views."

That said, Kauffman cautions employers not to fall for employee claims that the First Amendment guarantees them the right to discuss anything—including politics—in the workplace. The constitutional right to free speech applies only to government workplaces, he says, not to the private sector.

While a private company could legally discourage political talk, McDonald says, it's far more advisable to provide basic guidance to prevent conversations from growing too contentious. He recommends employers provide workers with three tips for navigating political discussions with colleagues:

- **Tread lightly:** If you choose to participate in a political conversation, keep it light and constructive. If the discussion becomes confrontational, move on to another subject.

- **Decline politely:** If you are not comfortable sharing your political views, simply bow out of the conversation and let others know you prefer not to chime in.

- **Speak up:** If a colleague says or does something that makes you uncomfortable, pull them aside and explain what's bothering you. For more serious matters, consult your manager or HR.

With many people still working remotely, there are fewer opportunities to share idle chit-chat around the watercooler. However, much like social media often brings out a more argumentative, even rude temperament from people essentially "hiding behind a computer keyboard," a similar phenomenon comes into play here.

"Sometimes, people are more brazen when typing things out because they don't have to say it to the person's face," says Kauffman. "At some point, HR has to be ready to say, 'That's turned into unwelcome conduct and it's just not appropriate for the workplace because it's too divisive.'"

Providing a respectful pathway for discussing the election and other hot topics is key to developing a healthy modern workplace culture, says Ali Fazal, senior director for New York-based people management platform Hibob. He suggests creating discussion groups or viewing parties, not necessarily sanctioned by HR, but "above board, so people are not doing them in secret." HR should be in attendance

to monitor conversations and observe where conflicts seem to arise.

According to Fazal, it's too late to go back to the "emperor has no clothes, the workplace is sacred, we don't talk about politics here" concept of working relationships. Today's employees are more open about their political affiliation. That trend is likely to continue, as nearly one-third (32%) of employees age 25 to

40 believe workplace conversations about politics are acceptable, compared to 13% of those age 41 to 54 and 9% of those 55 and older, according to the Robert Half survey. That desire to discuss politics is likely to extend beyond Election Night, as employees are going to want time to process the results.

"This election is very meaningful in determining what's next for a lot of

people and how our country and the world will shape and evolve," he says. "You can expect a lot of people to be very disappointed by the outcome, so giving them the space to process that without it being viewed as unprofessional is going to be really important."

Send questions or comments about this story to hreletters@lrp.com.

Attract, engage and retain with a voluntary benefit that's a breed apart

HR professionals report a **32% boost in employee attraction, engagement and retention** from offering pet health insurance as a voluntary benefit.*



Adding Nationwide® pet insurance to your company's benefits package is an easy, no-cost way to stand out in a competitive job market. See the paw-sitive employee impact for yourself.

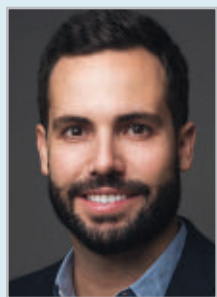
Start offering Nationwide pet insurance today.
petinsurance.com/hrexec • 877-263-5995



Nationwide®
is on your side

*Source: 2018 Nationwide/Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) study

Underwritten by Veterinary Pet Insurance Company (CA), Columbus, OH, an A.M. Best A+ rated company (2018); National Casualty Company (all other states), Columbus, OH, an A.M. Best A+ rated company (2018). Agency of Record: DVM Insurance Agency. Nationwide, the Nationwide N and Eagle, and Nationwide is on your side are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. ©2020 Nationwide. 20GRP7411_HREXEC



What Do I Owe Myself?

Oftentimes, I'll find myself feeling as if I have the weight of the world on my shoulders—an experience in life that is equal parts daunting and overwhelming. And this year, that weight has felt even heavier than usual, as I would end each long workday feeling completely exhausted and with seemingly more to do than when the day started.

During COVID-19, my weekly therapy appointments have had to take place outside of the pristine and comforting walls of my psychologist's Flatiron office, and instead, they are happening through the computer screen in my living room. Ultimately, I think it was the sea of Post-it notes covering the desk below the monitor, scribbled and covered with to-do's in my signature "encrypted" handwriting that really served to reinforce and amplify my sense of angst. I went on and on and on about how I "am behind on this and that," and "I owe this person X and this person Y and this person Z, and I can't get it all done." And after I'd gotten all of that off my chest, I paused and noticed my therapist, who slices through my challenges with the precision of a 3-D printer and the speed of a boxer's punch—paired with all the compassion of a funeral home director—musing. After a few healthy moments of silence, he suggested that I ask myself one simple—yet powerful—question ...

"What do I owe myself?"

Owe myself? Was he even serious? I'm so in over my head, how the hell does he think I'll possibly have time for something else?! I had an immediate visceral reaction, which we both recognized as a ping that we were onto something powerful. So, after releasing the tension from my jaw, I started to answer the question—and there was a lot there.

I'm not alone in being primarily concerned with what I'm doing for others. From my experience, this is a thread that runs through the entire HR community, as we are leaned on to be nimble, unwavering and compassionate service providers—both operationally and emotionally. So many of us have witnessed the strong bond between a senior executive and an HR head, which—while deeply connected—is also equally one-sided. When I was leading an event last summer, I asked each participant to make a rough drawing of their unmet needs. One bighearted HR leader was stymied, sharing that her mind was preoccupied with the unmet needs of her colleagues, clients and family, rather than her own. She, like me, hadn't allowed herself to consider what she needed.

Within an organization, there are many ways to wield power and influence, and many HR professionals will rely upon a combination of referent and connection power. On the referent side, we generally seek to be likeable and get along with our clients and colleagues, as a way of earning and protecting our own seat at the table. We stand on

our connections to high-ranking executives—the invitations we receive to key meetings and sensitive conversations—as another major way to get things done. It's easy to see why this is effective, but this coach had never really assessed the cost of this dynamic.

When we ignore or consistently deprioritize our own needs and concerns for the sake of others, we are wreaking havoc and harm on our own ability to both have an impact and to be satisfied. This is often easier to recognize in others who are vibrating in a constant state of anxiety, exhaustion or burnout. If we subordinate our needs, this can breed resentment between us and those who are close to us—even if we are the ones who are putting ourselves last, and not them. Most people I know who get into the field of HR do so to have an impact—something that is very hard to achieve if you never level up beyond the reactive transactional frenzy that has you logging off at the end of the day feeling more like a survivor than a triumphant victor.

The poetic irony of my situation, though, is that I know better! My company helps coach others on how to prioritize themselves, set boundaries, self-advocate and get their needs met, all of which are mission-critical inputs to achieving a satisfying career and life. But anyone who's ever worked with a coach before will surely realize that *knowing* doesn't make a difference ... it's the *doing* that does.

So I'm getting busy doing what I know works. Saying "no" or "not now" to new opportunities when I'm over capacity. Setting realistic deadlines. Starting my day by taking care of the most important things to me, before I serve others. Establishing better boundaries. Asking for help and delegating more. Speaking up for myself—often with myself—whenever something is out of joint. Showing myself grace and compassion whenever I inevitably turn out to be less than perfect. And stopping myself frequently to reflect, pull up and apply my scarce time, energy and mindshare to the things that are most important to me—the things that I owe myself.

There's never been a bigger moment for HR and its professionals to rise than right now. It can be tempting to fall into old roles of abandoning our own needs, priorities and wellbeing to deliver for others, but we must remember that taking care of ourselves is a courageous act, and one that also creates permission for others to do the same. Putting on our oxygen masks first helps us to take care of so many others. So, I encourage you to prioritize yourself. To truly own your satisfaction at work and integration with your life beyond your job. This is, in fact, your most important job. You can start right now by asking yourself the same question: What do I owe myself?

Ben Brooks is the founder and CEO of the career development platform PILOT. Share your reactions to this column on LinkedIn or @benbrooksnny.



Reopening Your Workplace? Here's How to Tell Employees

When sharing the news, HR leaders should focus on the data-driven steps they took to protect worker safety. BY CAROL PATTON

As more organizations bring employees back into the workplace during the pandemic, HR professionals face a big hurdle: convincing employees that it's safe to return.

Many HR professionals are relying on analytics to help prove their case and create workplace policies and practices that keep workers safe. They know which office locations are hot spots for COVID-19, which communities are experiencing outbreaks and which employees are more vulnerable to contracting a serious form of the virus based on their health status. But instead of communicating raw data to employees, leaders are sharing outcomes—what's being done based on the numbers—to instill trust and confidence in their data-driven decisions.

When communicating reopening plans, tell employees in an honest and straightforward way how you reached the decision, says John Johnson, CEO of Edgeworth Analytics, a national analytics consulting firm that created a dashboard of data about COVID-19 for the National Football League Players Association.

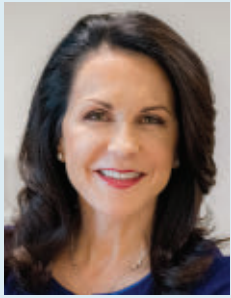
"Explain the thought process backed up by data," he says, adding that it can minimize employee fears. "Effectively, give them the information and inform them there's a plan in place that's partially data-driven. In the event there's a COVID flare-up, tell them, 'Here are the steps we're going to take.' It's more about being prepared

with your protocol in advance than necessarily daily reporting to give people comfort."

Just be careful about what you communicate or report, he says. Releasing too much or too little data, or offering an overwhelming amount of statistics, can confuse workers and lead them to wrong conclusions.

Start the process by identifying data that reveals why reopening now is safe, says Johnson, and explain the type of data HR analyzed to reach this conclusion.

"You can also say, 'Here are things where we had to make a judgment call,'" he says. "Guide them about how to think about [data]. Once you do that, people can make their own assessments and ask questions."



The Making of a Culture-Maker

I've never seen more people feel the call to courage. Turbulent times tend to bring forth change-makers. And, they bring forth culture-makers. Who are these leaders, and what can we learn from them?

CHROs Lisa Buckingham (Lincoln Financial Group), Christy Pambianchi (Verizon), Ellyn Shook (Accenture) and Pat Wadors (ServiceNow) come to mind. They designed and launched People + Work Connect in just 14 days to help companies keep people employed during COVID-19, free of charge to participating organizations. Since launching, People + Work Connect has engaged 1,400-plus organizations and more than 418,000 roles across 87 countries.

These leaders strive to better the work world for people and their organizations—across industries and geographies. They are true culture-makers.

And, there is room to join them. Research shows only six out of every 100 executives are culture-makers—leaders who see profit and culture as tightly interdependent goals, equally crucial to success. I consider these leaders the very best in moving the needle on positive change in organizations.

Portrait of a Culture-Maker

Culture-makers are advocates: They are more likely to speak out on a range of issues, including gender equality (52% versus 35% of all leaders) and sexual harassment and discrimination (51% versus 30%).

Simply put, culture-makers get it: They are more in tune with the workforce. They recognize the importance of cultural factors like pay transparency, the availability of family leave and the freedom to be creative in helping employees thrive.

These leaders are the same people inside and outside of work. They are truly authentic; 85% believe senior leaders, who talk openly about personal hardships and challenges, are more influential.

It's not surprising that they lead organizations that are growing more than twice as fast as those of their peers. They report their sales are 2.2 times higher, and their profits are 3.2 times higher.

Interestingly, they skew female and younger. They are a more gender-balanced group, since 45% are women, whereas women comprise just 32% of all the leaders we surveyed. A full 68% of them are millennials, compared to 59% of all leaders.

Let's pause for a moment on the skewing female statistic. It does not surprise me at all and only seems fitting, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing women the right to vote.

Culture-makers know differences make an organization better if they can be celebrated in a culture of inclusivity. Without that culture of inclusivity, differences are, well, just differences. Their inherent value is easily lost, as it has been so many times in companies worldwide for whom culture was an overlooked issue.

One Company, Two Cultures?

The research shows most leaders say a culture of equality is essential, and they think their organizations are inclusive. But workers feel differently.

For the past three years, Accenture asked survey participants from companies worldwide to share their perceptions of leaders' actions around building more inclusive

cultures. Out of a score of 100, rankings have remained desultory in the mid-50s for three years running.

The perception gap becomes more apparent as we dig deeper. Two-thirds of leaders (68%) feel they create empowering environments in which, for example, their people can be themselves, raise concerns and innovate without fear of failure. Just one-third (36%) of employees agree.

As a former CHRO and now an advisor to the C-suite, I empathize with leading people's challenges. But I am also a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusivity.

Dr. Kelly Monahan, a social scientist I partner with, gave an excellent TEDx talk in which she reminded leaders that many times, whether we inherit or "grow up" in an organizational culture, we become accustomed to it. After some time, as we attend to what seem to be more pressing issues, we fail to see certain practices are no longer serving our people—or our organization—well. Many leaders try to "fix the human" instead of fixing a broken work culture in those times. It's no surprise that culture-makers don't do this. They address the root issue—creating an inclusive culture that works well for people and the business.

Channeling Your Inner Culture-Maker

Beyond inclusion, culture-makers share the traits outlined by global nonprofit Catalyst for a cross-cultural leader:

Accountability. They hold team members responsible for their behavior, development and work processes. They set expectations for ongoing, constructive, *two-way* feedback. Culture-makers seek feedback as much as they give it.

Ownership. They guide team members to solve their problems and make their own decisions. They share the broader purpose and context of the work, creating a clear line of sight, to empower their people to make wise choices.

Allyship. They actively support people from underrepresented groups. This means amplifying the voices of underrepresented or marginalized groups, as well as interrupting biased behaviors.

Curiosity. They proactively seek to understand different points of view. When questioned or challenged, culture-makers allow for the possibility that it will make them and their business outcomes much better.

Humility. They take ownership of mistakes, learn from missteps, talk to their team about their failures and model how to use them for good.

Courage. They act by their principles, even when it involves personal risk-taking or is uncomfortable.

Culture-makers know who they are. They also know what they say and do, and how they drive change, matter. Like Buckingham, Pambianchi, Shook and Wadors, they take concrete steps to enable positive, profound change. They're the kind of people who make me proud and honored to do what I do. Here's to culture-makers, past, present and future. Our people and our businesses are better because of them.

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.

What Do the Numbers Tell You to Do?

Before returning to the worksite, employees generally expect three pieces of information, says Matt Stevenson, partner and leader of Mercer's workforce strategy and analytics practice:

1. Share your plan for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
2. Reveal how you're identifying external or community risk factors.
3. Tell them about new policies or practices that eliminate internal risk factors, such as capping the number of employees who can meet in each conference room.

"Don't give employees statistics. Tell them what you learned from the statistics," he says, pointing to examples like the need to create social distancing practices. "By the time you communicate a numerical risk factor, it's probably wrong, not accurate in some cases and [serves as] an alarmist."

It's no different than when patients visit their doctor for blood test results. Oftentimes, says Stevenson, experienced physicians can quantify the likelihood

of someone dying within the next five years just by looking at the numbers. But no doctor would ever tell patients that they have a 45% chance of dying next year. Instead, the doctor would tell them to lose weight, stop smoking or lower their blood pressure.

Opportunity to Brand, Strengthen Culture

Wrong or misinterpreted numbers can create fear, anxiety or even panic in the workplace. But employee communications that are too casual or blasé can produce unintended, even dangerous consequences. Stevenson says some employees may not take wearing a mask, social distancing or washing their hands seriously and then relax their behavior, which could increase their risk, both at work and home.

"Some organizations are looking at their internal analytics to identify risk factors and staging their opening based on that," Stevenson says. "Tell employees you have a flexible opening plan [and identify] who's vulnerable, like people who have diabetes or are overweight. Give people the option of

staying home with the hope that people at high risk will self-select to stay home."

Meanwhile, consider that each time you communicate with employees is an opportunity for HR to further define the organization, strengthen its culture and emphasize that employee safety is top of mind as return-to-workplace strategies are being considered and implemented, says Annie Dean, vice president of workforce transformation at Deloitte, a global consultancy.

She says employees need to receive many messages before returning to the workplace, ranging from the local positivity rate to new operational changes that ensure employee safety. However, some leaders have taken a deep, data-driven look and determined that now isn't the right time to reopen.

"They're really going deep in understanding the needs of their people," Dean says, adding that many are analyzing the risk of the virus infecting their employee population. "Those who are successfully navigating their return-to-work process have instilled confidence by relying on analytics as the key part of their employee messaging."

Marketplace

Below is a listing of products, services and solutions for human resource executives and their organizations. To receive more information, please contact them directly.



Workday is a leading provider of enterprise cloud applications for finance and human resources. Founded in 2005, Workday delivers financial management, planning, human capital management, and analytics applications designed for the world's largest companies, educational institutions, and government agencies. Organizations ranging from medium-sized businesses to Fortune 50 enterprises, have selected Workday. www.workday.com



More than half of pet owners want their employers to offer pet insurance as a benefit. Offering Nationwide pet insurance will differentiate and add value to your total benefits package, helping to attract and retain quality employees. There's no cost to your company and no administrative hassles, plus employees receive preferred pricing. Learn more at petinsurance.com/hrexec or (877) 263-5995.



We help companies develop the world's most productive and admired workforces.

With the most comprehensive catalog of elearning courses from the world's top publishers, we are here to help you every step of the way, from finding courses, mapping them to your core competencies, syncing them with your LMS to increasing utilization and improving your L&D programs. www.opensesame.com



E*TRADE Financial Corporate Services, Inc. is a premier provider of equity compensation administration management tools. We offer flexible, easy-to-use and powerful solutions for complete equity compensation management, including support for most equity vehicles, and seamless access to stock plan participant services and education. To learn more: www.etrade.com/corporateservices.

People

Compiled by Jen Colletta

Jennifer Palmieri was recently hired as the chief people officer for property and casualty company *Westfield*. She is tasked with leading the company's talent management strategy, people practices and the HR team, with a focus on organizational alignment and building a diverse and inclusive culture.



Palmieri has more than 20 years of experience in HR, including 18 at Cigna, most recently as vice president of HR in its global technology team.

She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, HR and marketing from Drexel University, a master's degree in HR development from Villanova University and completed the Modern CHRO Program at Cornell University's ILR School.

Construction management company *STO Building Group* announced **Claudia Healy** as its chief HR officer. She will oversee the global HR program and partner on mergers and acquisitions and diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Healy spent the last 18 years with Verizon, serving in a number of HR leadership roles, most recently as senior vice president of HR transformation. In this role, she established the HR Transformation Office to power digital HR, people



analytics and process excellence across the global HR function.

She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration

and HR and a master's in business administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Brokerage firm *B6 Real Estate Advisors* appointed **Robin Solow** as its vice president of people. She is tasked with creating and leading all aspects of the recruiting and people operations.

Solow spent the last 13 years with Ralph Lauren, most recently as senior director of talent acquisition and development for North America.

She earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a master's in higher education administration from New York University.

Eric Feinstein is the new senior vice president of HR and CHRO at *Navitus Health Solutions*. Feinstein will focus on recruitment, retention and engagement at the pharmacy benefit manager.

He previously was vice president of total rewards at SSM Health, Navitus'



majority owner. Before that, he held HR leadership roles at Ascension Healthcare and was principal at a healthcare consulting firm.

Feinstein earned a bachelor's degree in actuarial science from the University of Iowa.

Global logistics provider *DB Schenker* named **Stacey J. Brown** its new CHRO for the Americas, where she will develop and execute the region's HR strategy. She will focus on organizational development, talent acquisition and career development.

She brings more than 20 years of experience in the HR and legal fields, most recently as vice president of HR and labor relations for Walgreens. Brown has also held HR leadership roles at Safeway and Jewel-Osco.

Brown earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a law degree from the University of Dayton.

Jim Fight was recently hired as the new HR director for the *Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority*.

Fight has held a number of roles in the transit industry, including most recently as director of HR at Baton Rouge, La.'s Capital Area Transit System. He has also helmed HR departments for systems in Kansas

City, Mo., and San Francisco.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Columbia College and a master's degree in business administration from the University of St. Mary.



Tracy Gee was appointed as chief people officer of the *National Association of Corporate Directors*.

Gee has more than 30 years of experience in the HR field, most recently at Raytheon Corp., where she served as vice president of HR for the Global Business Development and Security division. She spent 15 years with Raytheon and previously worked at companies including Liberty Mutual Insurance and Fidelity Investments.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College.

WSFS Bank recently hired **Michael L. Conklin** as its executive vice president and CHRO.

Conklin spent the last seven years as senior vice president of global HR at US Bank and also held HR leadership roles at Pentair, ConAgra Foods and Dean Foods.

He earned bachelor's degrees in political science and psychology from Augsburg University and a master's in business administration from Regis University.

Two-thirds



The approximate number of working parents surveyed who said they have had to compromise their careers to accommodate their children's at-home learning.

Source: Credit Karma

54%

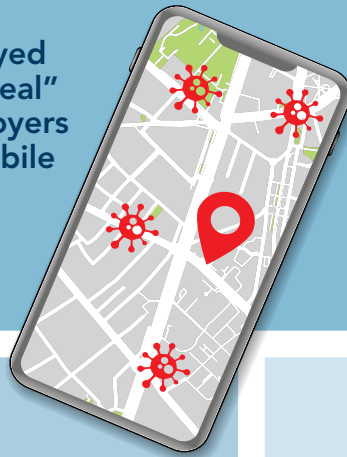
Percentage increase in the number of employees at risk for depressive disorder when comparing data from February, before the pandemic, and June.

Source: Total Brain

2 in 5

Number of employees surveyed who are "very" or "a great deal" comfortable with their employers leveraging their personal mobile devices to enable COVID-19 contact tracing.

Source: Workplace Intelligence



13%

Percentage of employers that had workers who voluntarily returned to a physical workplace by the end of July.

Source: Institute for Corporate Productivity

1/2

Proportion of HR professionals surveyed who said their organizations plan to invest more in technology before the end of the year.

Source: Paychex

64%

Percentage of employees surveyed who said employee recognition and appreciation are more important while working from home.

Source: Snappy Gifts



One-quarter

Proportion of surveyed employees who said their current savings wouldn't last one month.

Source: FlexJobs



\$197

Amount that the total cost of per-employee annual healthcare is expected to increase by 2021, for a total of \$14,769.

Source: Business Group on Health

Diversity is a journey. We can help you find your way.



We all want to foster greater belonging and diversity in our workplaces. If you're wondering where to start, we can help. Real-time insights in Workday allow you to measure your diversity journey throughout your organization. Our VIBE™ (Value Inclusion, Belonging, and Equity) approach to diversity lets you gauge everything from hiring and promotions to your employees' sense of belonging. You can see at a glance where improvement is needed and take action fast. Diversity can be a long road. We can help keep you moving in the right direction.

Workday. For a changing world.™

Find out more at workday.com/vibe