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Can HR stop the exodus?

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## HR IN THE FLOW OF WORK

By Josh Bersin/Columnist



# The Need for Human-Centered Leadership



The pandemic has highlighted the need for leaders who are empathetic, inclusive and highly flexible. The old style of management, with its at-all-costs focus on the bottom line isn't working in this new world of

work. Leaders today must embrace new management principles and demonstrate the ability to think creatively, to consider the wellbeing of their teams and to roll up their sleeves and get involved in the actual work.

It may seem silly to use the phrase "human-centered" in a discussion of leadership, since the main function of a leader is to motivate and guide people toward achieving a common goal or purpose. But in reality, often the "people" part of leadership gets lost in the job. For instance, when you think of leadership, do you think of individual and team performance, deadlines, projects, status reports? Or do you think about the needs of the people who make work actually happen?

If honest, most managers would admit they think primarily of the first. Josh Bersin Academy research shows that it's time for a rebalance. Of the hundreds of leadership models in the market, we believe they all fall into one of two main categories:

- **Business-centered leadership:** Leaders focus on how to grow, optimize and improve the business, with a focus on innovation, marketing, growth, operations, R&D, manufacturing, quality and financial results. Companies embracing this style teach leaders about technology, the competitive marketplace, supply chains and competitive advantage.

- **Human-centered leadership:** Leaders focus on hiring, developing, coaching, inspiring and pushing people to grow, innovate, serve customers and improve the company. Companies embracing this style teach leaders to understand what makes people thrive, what

drives creativity and problem-solving in the company, and how to support people during times of disruption.

HR plays a critical role in helping leaders reconcile these two different styles and foster the capabilities needed for authentic human-centered leadership. Going beyond traditional leadership development programs, the most successful HR teams are taking innovative approaches to helping leaders develop new capabilities.

- **Learning from team members:** A leader's team arguably has the best insights into the leader's skills, behaviors and daily actions. 360 reviews have long been part of leadership development programs, but some organizations take this approach in a new direction to accelerate leadership growth and development:

- At Sanofi, employees rate their managers and decide which project to work on in its new internal gig work marketplace.

- **Learning from other leaders:** Senior leaders set the tone for the organization and are important role models for leaders further down in the organizational hierarchy. When these senior leaders demonstrate that a safe environment, trust and empathy are just as important as financials, others follow their example.

- Biogen's extended leadership team was divided into groups of eight to 10; a senior leader was assigned to each group. Groups collaborated on topics such as creating trust, psychological safety and leading through uncertainty.

- **Learning to be better listeners:** Listening is perhaps the No. 1 power skill of all. In our pandemic response study, listening and acting on feedback was identified as the most important practice.

- Target engages senior leaders in facilitating listening sessions with employees on difficult topics like racial inequality. HR provides leaders and employees with ground rules to help guide behaviors and expectations with great success.

- **Learning through reflection:** Human-centered leaders need time and space to sit back, think and consider how to do even better in the future.

- Sabre builds in self-reflection time for leaders. The CEO pulls up calendars to check they're taking time outs, and the company uses Microsoft 365 Insights/Cortana to schedule breaks.

- **Caring about employee wellbeing:** Now more than ever, leaders need to be aware of factors impacting the physical, mental and financial health of employees.

- Zebra Tech's "Managing Your Energy" program encompasses sessions conducted by the company's EAP, during which leaders learn how to recognize symptoms of burnout.

- **Coaching and providing feedback:** The best leaders today act like coaches, not managers.

- Walgreen Boots Alliance shifted from a traditional performance management approach to continuous feedback, listening and coaching. More frequent touchpoints were important for increased connection and engagement of employees.

One of the big lessons learned over the last year is that leaders need to put people before profits if their business is to succeed. I believe 2021 will be an exciting opportunity for transformation, change and innovation. Now is the time for leaders to lead in a human-centered way. HR's role will be to define what this looks like and to put programs and practices in place to cement new behaviors into daily work.

Go to [joshbersin.com](http://joshbersin.com) to download the complimentary Big Reset Playbooks.

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



# Using Workplace Tech Proactively

You likely have seen the recent news about a group of first-year associates at the investment bank Goldman Sachs who circulated a rogue employee pulse survey among themselves and then shared the (not-so-positive) results with management. Among the findings, they reported working an average of 98 hours per week since the beginning of the year and sleeping an average of only five hours per night. Regardless of your opinion on this specific situation, the story pushed work/life balance back to the front page once again.

It got me thinking about how—or really if—existing HR technology provides HR leaders with the tools they need to understand, monitor, influence and improve employee work/life balance. And I determined that overall this is a gap, or possibly a missed opportunity, in HR tech.

Let's take a look at the areas where HR tech typically intersects with work/life balance and speculate on if or how tech could have helped at Goldman Sachs (or similar organizations).

## Understanding How Employees Feel

This is probably the most straightforward application for tech to aid HR leaders in this area. Simply asking employees how they feel and about their experiences using check-ins, pulse surveys or even more expansive engagement surveys can all be useful to better understand work/life balance issues. The market for these types of tools is pretty mature and robust, including such providers as Culture Amp, Reflektive, Lattice and several others. But these types of tools are effective only if they are used—and used properly. At Goldman Sachs, junior staff members had to take it upon themselves to launch their own work/life balance pulse survey. So, I think we can assume Goldman either was not using this kind of HR tech tool or was not using it in a way that was adequately surfacing these issues.

## Time, Attendance, Scheduling and Payroll

As you well know, the entire HR tech industry rests on the foundation of payroll and time and attendance technologies. ADP, UKG, Paychex, Paycom, SAP, Oracle and scores more can provide these capabilities. All organizations have them (at least payroll), and most, if not all, provide adequate reporting and analysis to allow HR leaders to understand trends indicating potential work/life balance problems, such as overtime hours. Such spikes might indicate the organization is working some employees too much, or that employees are eager to take the extra hours and pay. It's hard to say just from a chart of overtime trends.

So, let's look back at our Goldman Sachs example. Could their time, attendance, scheduling or payroll systems have raised any early warning signals? Maybe. These jobs are almost certainly exempt, so Goldman would not need to track their work hours to calculate pay. But, if these associates are required to track their time, whether it is billable or not, to specific projects and/or clients, then Goldman would have been able to run simple reports showing the number of hours being logged each week, and perhaps used that data to take some preemptive actions. And it

seems likely that most existing HR tech or project management tech solutions would have provided much more than raw data.

## Productivity, Collaboration and Communication

These tools are largely relegated to knowledge or “desk” workers, like the associates at Goldman: the now-ubiquitous communication platforms like Slack or Microsoft Teams, video conferencing tools like Zoom or WebEx, and, of course, still likely the single most-used piece of technology in the organization, email. Details vary from organization to organization, but most of the stories boil down to excessive use of video conferencing, “chat” messages flying fast and furious and extending late into the evening and the weekends, and a never-ending stream of email—so much email. Add into this mix the fact that, for many knowledge workers, all of these tools, and their associated and incessant notifications, are being pushed not just to computers, but also to smartphones, and it's clear that, for many, work never is far away.

The data that these systems capture—message volume, traffic patterns, response times, collaboration pods and networks, sentiment data from chat and email text content, and, most importantly, date and time stamps of all of the above—speaks most directly to the work/life balance issue: 10 p.m. Zoom meetings, chat messages being sent at 7 a.m. Saturdays and emails pinging back and forth 24/7 in some cases. Being able to access, analyze, interpret and draw conclusions from this broad data set provides HR and the organization with the best opportunity to flag potential problems as they begin to percolate, or at least before they escalate as at Goldman.

However, the core problem is that these technologies, and the workforce insights they offer, are not usually within HR's purview. These are classic tools provided by, provisioned for and administered through IT, meaning data are largely invisible to HR leaders, and thoughts of changing that are met with a chorus of “privacy” arguments.

But this is the information—not traditional HR data—that has the clues about what is actually happening in the organization as it happens. Pulse surveys, unless you administer them incredibly frequently, are backward-looking. So are time, attendance and payroll reports. The only data that lives in real-time comes from the tools that people use to communicate with each other. Understanding this data could have helped Goldman's HR and business leaders see problems developing before they had to come to light via a user-generated survey.

There's an opportunity here for HR and technology leaders to begin conversations about what data—and in what format—can proactively illuminate issues like the work/life ones at Goldman. While email, Zoom and chat data is incredibly telling, combining that with time, attendance, sick days, and survey and sentiment data would present an even more compelling picture. This kind of capability may not yet exist in the HR tech market, but I bet it could (and should) be on the roadmap of solution providers today.

The Goldman case is an extreme one, but it does offer some useful lessons. Whatever issues with work/life, stress or burnout may be happening in your organization, wouldn't it be better to have an early warning rather than to find out via a PowerPoint presentation from your employees?

*Steve Boese is chair of HRE's HR Technology Conference & Exposition®. Send questions or comments to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).*

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# 2021 Top 100 HR Tech Influencers



Meet this year's Influencers, who share exceptional expertise, deep knowledge, bold ideas and broad influence in HR and, especially, HR technology. Each Influencer consistently makes an impact online and off with their work. For more, visit [HRExecutive.com/Top-100/](https://HRExecutive.com/Top-100/).

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# Tech Tools for a Post-COVID World

Technology is helping HR make smarter, faster, better decisions.

BY TOM STARNER

While the nation's emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic remains a work in progress, the events of the past 18 months clearly have created a need for new approaches to meet the challenges employers—and employees—are facing.

Analyst Stacey Cadigan, a partner at global technology research and advisory firm ISG, says the pandemic reshaped HR priorities, especially when it comes to technology.

“As we come out of a business climate filled with health and economic challenges ... the need for better, smarter and faster decisions has never been more important,” Cadigan says.

Technology is helping employers make those decisions around wellness, compliance, data analytics, learning and more. With that as context, *HRE* checked out tools in these areas that saw strong pandemic-driven growth during 2020. The following five tools are just a handful of the promising solutions primed to help employers meet the evolving needs of their workforces through the pandemic and beyond.

## BrightPlan Total Financial Wellness Solution

Employee wellness comes in more than one dimension, all of which have risen to the forefront for HR leaders. During the pandemic, BrightPlan, which offers an employer-sponsored financial wellness solution, saw a nearly fivefold increase in annual recurring revenue, customer pipeline and number of customers.



According to Marthin De Beer, BrightPlan's founder and CEO, 2020 “put the focus back where it should be: on benefits that really matter to employees.” A BrightPlan survey found that workers rank financial wellness, in fact, as more important than healthcare benefits.

BrightPlan offers Total Financial Wellness Solution, a comprehensive personal finance solution that is real-time, personalized and integrated with employer benefits. The platform provides users with both digital and human financial planning and coaching assistance, enabling employees to

consume financial education, create a personalized financial plan, invest for the future, and track and manage all of their finances in one unified location. It also helps users better understand the investing process and plan for their futures through automated investing, 401(k) investment advice, target date goal investing and investment analysis.

“BrightPlan's focus in 2021 will be on continuing to partner with employers to support their employees' financial wellbeing, advancing equity with their DE&I efforts and empowering companies to attract, retain and engage top talent,” De Beer says.

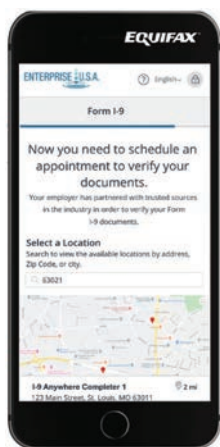
## Equifax I-9 Anywhere

With a recent Conference Board survey showing that a robust 36% of companies are willing to hire workers who are 100% remote, innovative remote hiring processes will be critical post-pandemic. Considering a correctly completed Form I-9 is required of every new hire, Equifax now offers its I-9 Anywhere® to help employers meet that objective.

The tool uses guided experiences and a network of trained I-9 completers to help employers get Forms I-9 done more accurately, on time and in person (as required by law); with I-9 Anywhere, employees can meet up with a trained completer to review the documents before submitting. In response to increasing demand during the pandemic, the company expanded its trained Form I-9 completer network and Employment Eligibility Verification Section 2 and 3 capabilities to help accommodate more remote new hires and rehires nationwide.

A new module for I-9 Anywhere now delivers digital Section 3 options through the completer network. It is designed to more seamlessly help employers manage Form I-9 requirements for employees who are rehired within three years of the date that a Form I-9 was originally completed, and when employment authorization documentation has expired.

“The current guidelines require that every Form I-9 is essentially reviewed by a human, which logically runs a bit counter to the idea of remote onboarding,” says Jason Fry, AVP, Equifax Workforce Solutions. “So, mobile-first software like I-9 Anywhere that connects new hires to a national network is the best way to help future-proof a critical part of new employee onboarding.”



## Sprout At Work

According to a LinkedIn survey, employee burnout has already increased by 33% in 2021, while the American Institute of Stress estimates that employee stress is costing U.S. employers



\$300 billion annually. Brea Giffin, director of partnerships for Sprout at Work, says this illustrates the need for tech solutions to manage work/life integration.

And that's why Sprout At Work sees itself in growth mode.

“When we feel well, we perform well,” says Giffin. “Our results happen because our digital platform removes barriers and users can enjoy accessibility from anywhere.”

Sprout At Work allows employers to create gamified challenges to engage and inspire employees: from personalized health programs to rewards like product and gift card redemptions, vacation days, premium reductions, charitable giving and more. Employees can connect a wearable device or app for a seamless, secure tracking experience.

Based on Sprout At Work's growth potential (on track for 25% growth in 2021, with higher sales in the first quarter of 2021 than in any other full year on record), it's clear that wellness tools that connect employees regardless of location will be a “need-to-have,” not a “nice-to-have” solution, Giffin says.

## ZeroedIn

ZeroedIn workforce analytics software automates artificial intelligence inside HR, monetizes HR's data science activities and provides employers with predictive talent and business indicators to help build budgets and business cases with fact-based evidence, according to Chris Moore, the company's founder and CEO.

The company's revenues and income were up more than 40% in 2020 from the prior year, and it saw new multi-year



contracts with customers like the city of Detroit, Dollar Tree and Family Dollar.

ZeroedIn's goal is empowering HR professionals with the workforce analytics

software tools they need to make accurate and timely HR decisions, Moore explains, including integrated surveys, among other advanced features.

Moore says that in 2020, for example, the platform offered COVID risk mitigation dashboards for clients, helping the C-suite identify threats and ensure the proper allocation of resources to adapt to the COVID environment.

“We see a lot of opportunity for growth—for us and our clients—in this unprecedented business environment,” Moore says.

## IBM SkillsBuild

In what can be considered a win-win for employers and job seekers, IBM recently opened up its workforce training platform, SkillsBuild, to the public—at no cost. This move comes on the heels of an eye-opening IBM study that found nearly a quarter (24%) of U.S. workers plan to change employers in 2021, and more than a third (36%) plan to seek additional skills through online courses.

The more than 1,000 SkillsBuild classes are designed to empower job seekers with workplace readiness and technical skills—even outside the tech space. SkillsBuild also offers a new mentoring platform to help aspiring tech professionals complete portfolio-building projects. Users can take a self-assessment that helps them identify and connect with a personalized learning experience that fits their interests and skill set.



The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with rapid technological developments, is profoundly changing the

workplace, says Justina Nixon-Saintil, IBM vice president and global head of corporate social responsibility. With that change, employers and HR leaders are increasingly seeking to build stronger and more diverse talent pipelines.

“Think of IBM SkillsBuild as an investment in the community, especially for those without affordable access to traditional education who also may come from vulnerable populations,” says Nixon-Saintil.

Resources like IBM SkillsBuild are increasingly essential as technologies including hybrid, cloud and AI change job roles within organizations, Nixon-Saintil says.

“For the HR space, this increases the chance for upskilling or reskilling necessary in all industries as we move out of the pandemic,” she adds.

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

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# Ending the Women's Exodus

**The pandemic led to record job losses for women. Now, bold employer action is needed to address the underlying factors driving women out of the workforce.**

BY JEN COLLETTA

**S**he-cession. Pink Collar Recession. No matter what you call it, it's happening. The statistics are stark: More than 5 million payroll jobs held by women were lost in 2020. Of those women, nearly 2.5 million left the workforce entirely in the last year. Just in the month of December, women accounted for a stunning 100% of job losses. Women of color are reflected disproportionately in all of these numbers.

And it's not letting up: A recent report from McKinsey found that women are 1.3 times more likely than men to consider leaving the workforce, with about one in four women on the brink.

The trend has turned back the clock on women's labor force participation more than 30 years—but, despite the stunning turn, it's not an entirely unforeseen crisis.

## How we got here

There were a host of issues already at play that bubbled up to the surface once the pandemic started, says Lexy Martin, principal of research and customer value at Visier.

Expectations that women are primary caregivers, women taking time off for motherhood during ages when workers may see promotions, male-oriented work cultures, performance assessments skewed toward in-office workers—"all of these factors cause frictions for women more than for men," Martin says.

Layer in wider, male-dominated cultural norms that put the onus on mothers, when pandemic shutdowns

started, to handle children's remote schooling, shopping, cooking, cleaning and other household tasks, and the female turnover rates started ticking up. On top of that, the type of jobs more likely to be held by women—service-oriented positions such as teachers, childcare workers, social workers, often called "pink collar" jobs—were among the hardest-hit by closures.

A story in The Washington Post described that one out of four American women who became unemployed during the pandemic cited a lack of childcare—twice the rate of men who said childcare issues caused their job loss.

"The pandemic exacerbated the difficult choice women have had to make between paying for childcare or sacrificing their career to be a full-time caregiver," says Star Carter, co-founder, chief operating officer and general counsel at diversity, equity and inclusion platform Kanarys. "As a mother myself of young, school-aged children, I've also felt the burden of childcare even before the pandemic, and now, I have had to adapt to juggling work, children's schooling and other household needs all within the confines of my home."

Many mothers were placed in untenable situations, said Abby Haynes, senior research associate at The Mom Project, a digital talent marketplace for women. Through research over the last year on the effect of the pandemic on working moms, Haynes says, the organization connected with many whose employers simply told them to "take a leave or step away from the workforce for a bit" if the new demands were too much.

On top of fears of their career stalling, many weren't able to take a step back because they were the main or sole provider, she says, "and that resulted in a lot of families putting kids back in childcare earlier than they would have felt comfortable. They were forced into this tradeoff position."

## What women want

While numerous vaccines have put a potential end date on the pandemic, the impact on working women persists. Even among those who have been able to stay in their positions thus far, stress and burnout are driving up their status as flight risks; a recent report from accounting software firm Xero found that, while about half of employees without kids reported the pandemic has had an extremely or very negative impact on their mental health, that figure stood at 62% for parents. Research from Eagle Hill Consulting also painted a bleak picture, with more than one-third of parents surveyed saying they plan to leave their current job after the pandemic.

So, how can employers stem the tide and keep their working parents, particularly women?

It all comes back to flexibility.

A Perceptyx study recently found that nearly half of women have become either much less or somewhat less likely to want to return fulltime to the physical workplace, compared to six months ago. While about a quarter of both men and women reported to Perceptyx they preferred a hybrid arrangement, men





Amber Joiner-Hill

said they would ideally work in-office three to four days, while women hoped to be there two to three days.

Jana Galbraith, director of people experience at Xero, says her company has prioritized flexibility in the last year—allowing employees to work traditional hours, in blocks of time throughout the day and in the evening—and that has helped keep

working mothers engaged and retained.

That idea extends throughout the culture, she says.

“They know it’s OK to bow out of meetings or to turn off their cameras or to ask for help—there’s no scrutiny or judgment,” she says. “Over the past year, we’ve seen kids on laps during meetings and dogs jumping on desks, and that’s totally accepted—and welcomed. It gives people a lot of comfort that they don’t have to pretend there’s nothing going on in the background.”

Dr. Pam Cohen, chief research and analytics officer at The Mom Project and president of its research arm Werklabs, says the organization sees more companies reframing how they think about flexibility—and its consequences on women’s careers.

women comprised all of the job losses for women. While women of color are more likely to work in industries hard hit by the pandemic, and also less able to work from home—making a lack of childcare a definitive reason for decisions to leave the workforce—logistics alone aren’t driving the job losses.

“Two times as many women of color in our studies reported feeling as though their workplace was testing employees to see who persists, who remains resilient; that’s pretty huge,” Cohen says. About 20% more women of color say that their workplace assumes that, when they’re working from home, that means they have more time to work—despite competing responsibilities.

With women of color less represented in leadership than white women or certainly men, and structural racism a reality in many workplaces, some women of color have been facing significant pressure to “prove” themselves throughout the challenges of the pandemic—all while projecting a positive, resilient façade.

“It’s a feeling of always being on trial,” Cohen adds.

That’s certainly not a new phenomenon, says Amber Joiner-Hill, owner and principal consultant at Magnolia Detroit Consulting, who spoke on the topic of women of color leaving the workforce during Augsburg University’s Forum on Workplace Inclusion this spring.

Joiner-Hill conducted a study of Black women who left the traditional workplace to start their own businesses—a demographic that has grown by 164% since 2007—and

None of these ideas are “outlandish,” she notes. “But the consequence [of not taking action] is the loss of Black female employees who are ready to share innovative ideas and an unwavering work ethic to sustain your company.”

### ‘From challenge comes change’

While employers should be focused on retaining their female talent, they also need to think about inviting back those who’ve left in the last year.

Hybrid setups, enhanced flexibility and strong leave plans are good tools to attract new female employees, but organizations also need to communicate transparently about expectations—from recruiting to onboarding and throughout the employee lifecycle, Cohen says.

“We hear all the time that women simply won’t try to reenter the workforce until they know they’ll have a flexible schedule and be supported and that they can make it all work,” she says. “If they’re coming back to work parttime versus fulltime, they need the full assurance of the company that 20 hours means 20 hours. And they need to be told along the way, ‘We want to retain you for the long haul so we’re willing to work with you.’”

That’s a huge step toward luring women back.”

Rooting out unconscious bias and systemic barriers—particularly those faced by women of color—also needs to be part of the strategy, says Whitney Benner, chief people officer at real-time information discovery platform Dataminr.

“There is no one solution for the

macroeconomic factors that contribute to this dilemma, but HR teams can start with combating structural sexism and developing equitable benefits and support for all working parents,” she says. “We cannot make meaningful progress until we acknowledge that we need to ‘level the playing field’ and lift everyone up. Only then can we all collectively thrive and reach our full potential.”

That was among the aims of this month’s International Women’s Day, the theme of which encapsulated the new environment facing many working mothers, and their employers: “A challenged world is an alert world, and from challenge comes change.”

Consulting firm Accenture is looking to transform the challenges of the last year into innovation with a new program announced last month in which it will hire 150 mothers for technology, strategy and consulting jobs in its Midwest division. Flexibility—along with mentorship and development opportunities—will be key to the positions.

“With more than 5 million women being forced to leave the workforce due to the pandemic,” says Allison Robinson, founder and CEO of The Mom Project, “it’s critical that companies step up and follow through. It’s not just ‘nice,’ it’s a business and economic imperative that will propel organizations forward.”

While organizational actions like Accenture’s could encourage other companies to follow suit, there are other causes for optimism, Cohen says: from the number of employers that have announced permanent remote policies to a federal administration that has pledged support for working women to increasing cognizance on the part of company leadership about the value of diversity.

“It’s not going to work anymore to just have a homogenous group thinking together,” Cohen says. “Companies are realizing they need fresh ideas and energy and you have to accommodate women, and especially women of color, to do that—and, if you can, you’ll be far better off.”

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

## “There is no one solution for the macroeconomic factors that contribute to this dilemma, but HR teams can start with combating structural sexism and developing equitable benefits and support for all working parents.”

—WHITNEY BENNER, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, DATAMINR

“For women, previously having some flexibility meant oftentimes that they were sidelined on opportunities or thought of as less of an employee. Even in places where flexibility had been encouraged before, it’s becoming more of the norm now,” Cohen says. However, as we get closer to some in-office work resuming, there is a risk for companies retreating back to traditional practices, she says.

“There needs to be a lot of effort taken on the part of companies to continue that trajectory [toward flexibility] and realize that, with some combination of in-office and remote work, they can really better support women who need flexible schedules—and that that doesn’t mean they can’t progress on the career ladder,” she says.

Many women who’ve worked with The Mom Project, Haynes says, have expressed a desire for more employer support in the way of mentorship and development opportunities. In particular, they want to feel like they can continue to further their career even if they’re not moving at lightspeed because of external conditions.

“It’s a difficult time to push the pedal to the metal; a lot of moms just don’t feel like they have the capacity to do that right now. They need to press pause in order to manage work and home dynamics,” she says, noting that employers shouldn’t view a step back as a step down. “There are times in your career where you can jog or run or sprint—and a lot of moms feel that right now is a time to just walk.”

### ‘Something’s got to give’

While women have borne the brunt of the pandemic-driven job losses over the last year, women of color in particular have been disproportionately impacted. For instance, in December, Black, Hispanic and Asian

found that the gender wage gap and glass ceiling were just the start of what pushed them out of predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Altering dialect, demeanor or dress to fit into an environment that doesn’t represent Black individuals; pressure to be a “good representative” of Black workers; and micro-aggressions like being told to be “nicer and less assertive” are all frequent sources of frustration, she says.

One woman recalled a colleague touching her natural hairstyle and calling it “cute.”

“She can’t file a report because of how it made her feel so she had to put those feelings on a shelf,” Joiner-Hill says. “Eventually, this shelf gets full of feelings and experiences that are exceptionally difficult to describe to someone

who never has been treated or perceived differently because of their racial identity. So, something’s got to give: Either the work suffers or they leave.”

Employers looking to avoid those consequences have work to do, she says. White leaders and employees need to educate themselves on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism; don’t expect Black people to do the emotional labor of teaching these lessons. Provide Black women mentors to connect them with career development, sponsorship and advocacy. Create transparent and equal pay scales. And recognize that not all supervisors are true leaders, she says.



Abby Haynes



Star Carter



# Case Studies

## IN HR EFFECTIVENESS

### Automating Healthcare Reform with ADP Health Compliance

#### Before ADP: Time-consuming, manual compliance processes

With the labor-intensive requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Elwyn Inc.—a health and human services nonprofit serving children and adults with disabilities—found itself struggling to manage healthcare compliance in-house.

“When you think about having to capture hours manually for 5,000 employees with a very small staff, it doesn’t make any sense at all,” said Irene Stewart, executive director, benefits compensation and HR operations at Elwyn.

That’s when she turned to ADP.

#### After ADP: Streamlined compliance that saves time and money

To mitigate compliance challenges and automate the formerly manual processes, Stewart worked with ADP to implement the ADP SmartCompliance® Health Compliance.

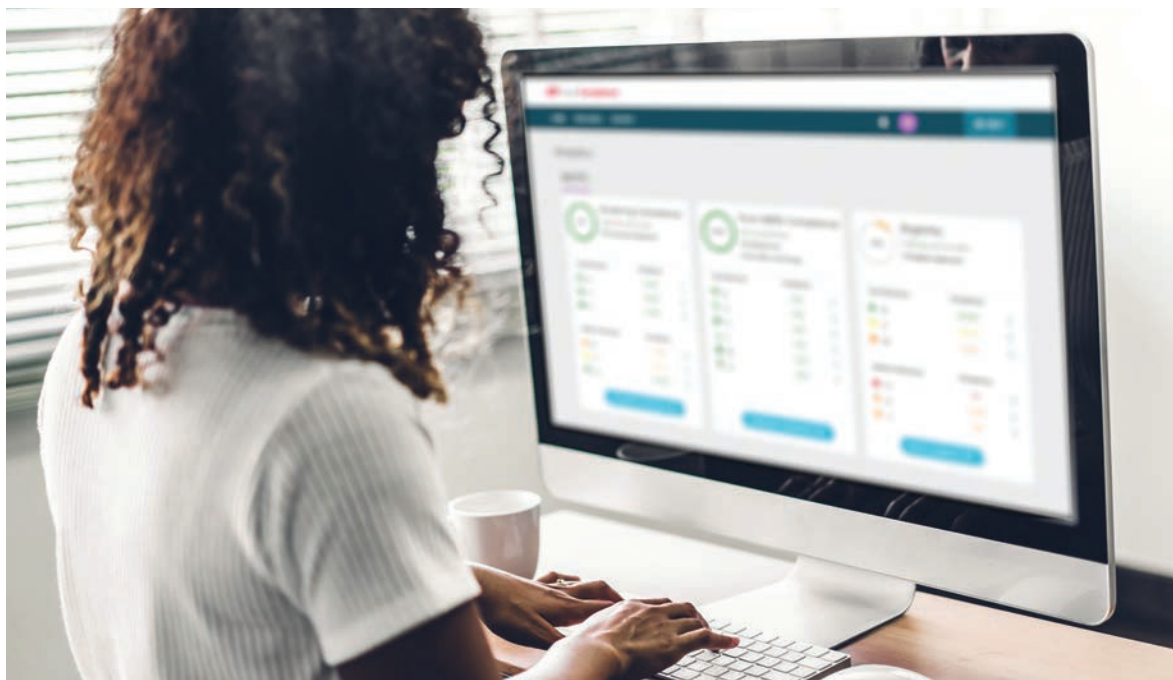
“Automating the process with all the required form coding and calculating the various employee hours has been a nice, seamless process,” Stewart said.

The ADP SmartCompliance tools and relationship with ADP have also helped Elwyn save money and time. With ADP’s help, Elwyn was able to eliminate two incorrect IRS penalties totaling \$10,000—a significant savings for the nonprofit.

“Time is money, so from an ROI perspective, [working with ADP] is a huge time-saver. And with that time savings, we’re able to focus on higher-value work,” Stewart said.

#### With ADP: An incomparable level of service

Elwyn has also realized the benefit of having a dedicated ADP account representative managing compliance. Because their account representative understands the nuances of the business, she can help Elwyn stay ahead of potential problems and keep them seamlessly compliant.



“Our account representative, Stephanie, was on top of things for us right from the beginning and that gives her a unique perspective on Elwyn’s needs. She understands our business,” Stewart said.

#### The easy choice: ADP SmartCompliance®

When asked if she would recommend ADP SmartCompliance to her peers, Stewart is unequivocal.

“There’s no reason to spend a department’s time manually performing all the ACA employer mandate and reporting requirements,” Stewart said. “I’m always willing to be a positive reference. I think [ADP SmartCompliance] is a very good solution, and it was easy to implement.”

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

**Client name:** Elwyn Inc.

**Headquarters:** Media, Pa.

**Industry:** Nonprofit

**Problem solved:** ADP SmartCompliance® helped Elwyn automate healthcare compliance tasks and mitigate challenges—saving time and money.





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# Case Studies

## IN HR EFFECTIVENESS

## JChef Uses PTO Genius to Boost Engagement and Reduce Costs

### The Challenge

2020 brought explosive growth for Miami-based JChef. During the height of the pandemic, the No. 1 kosher meal kit in the U.S. experienced a 400% growth in subscriptions and a 3X increase in reorders. “Business was booming. We were very fortunate to be in business and thriving,” said Gabriel Saul, founder and CEO of JChef.

To meet the demand, JChef doubled service staff and invested in new systems and equipment to improve operational efficiency. “We had to hire fast and arm them with the tools they needed to be successful. But even with that, the demand was too high.” Logistical staff at JChef soon found themselves working more hours than ever to meet the demand for meal kits. “I rolled up my sleeves and packed boxes myself. We were excited about helping our customers through the pandemic, but you could see the team was burning out as the year went on,” said Saul.

The problems started to mount as 2020 progressed, and demands on employees increased:

- High burnout
- High PTO balances
- Low retention
- Low engagement
- Low employee happiness

“It was starting to get bad. In the beginning, employees couldn’t take time off, so employees started to burn out. That snowballed into disengaged users before it took a turn for the worse when we started to lose some key hires. We pushed PTO, but no one was taking it. We needed a fix. Fast!” continued Saul.

### The Solution

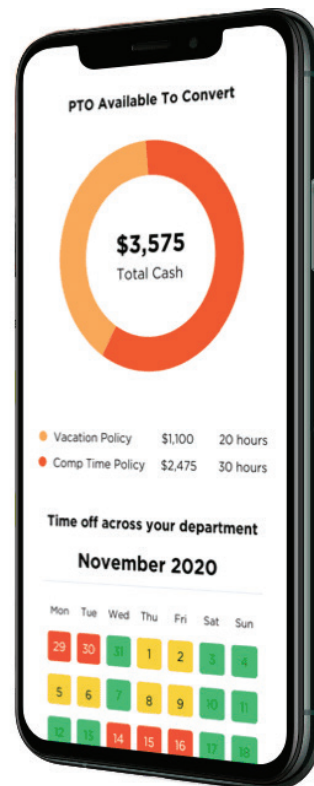
JChef reached out to PTO Genius in the fourth quarter of 2020, looking for a solution to their PTO problem. “No one had taken PTO. Everyone maxed out their PTO, and a lot of employees were going to lose it. That was the first problem we needed to solve,” Saul noted. Genius quickly enabled time-to-cash conversion of up to 25% of accrued PTO, which allowed employees to cash out PTO for retirement, student loans or college savings. “The team appreciated that. They worked hard all year; we wanted to give them options,” added Saul.

JChef immediately saw a reduction in PTO liability and an increase in employee happiness and peace of mind. “I was getting emails every day with employees thanking us for giving them the option to do more with their PTO before losing it. It was great for morale and goodwill,” said Saul.

Other solutions JChef implemented also generated tangible results for the young company:

#### PTO Optimizer

JChef uses the AI-enabled PTO optimizer to proactively notify employees of company-friendly times for them to take PTO—removing ambiguity and minimizing disruptions to workflow.



### Employee Pulse

Retaining key employees is key to JChef’s growth. Using the PTO Genius employee pulse allows them to track employees at risk of burning out and nudge them to take time off before it’s too late.

### Vacation Assistant

JChef uses the Vacation Assistant to encourage employees to disconnect from work as PTO approaches methodically—reducing disruptions in workflow and maximizing the effectiveness of PTO.

### Travel & Experiences

JChef likes to actively promote PTO. They use PTO Genius’ travel and experiences features to inspire employees to take time off and connect with the things that make them happy.

### The Ongoing Benefits

After 90 days of PTO Genius, JChef has managed to generate ongoing ROI on the platform, reporting higher company KPIs:

- 100% reduction in churn
- 51% reduction in workplace accidents
- 38% increase in profitability
- Higher employee engagement
- Higher reported employee happiness
- Lower average employee balance
- Better reported sleep

### HIGHLIGHTS

**Organization:** JChef

**Headquarters:** Miami, Fla.

**Industry:** Ecommerce

**About JChef:** JChef is the No. 1 kosher meal kit. They offer fresh ingredients and delicious, easy-to-follow recipes delivered weekly all across the U.S.



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# How Joan Lunden Became a Caregiving Advocate

The author and TV personality will share her story at the Health & Benefits Leadership Conference.

BY KATHRYN MAYER

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

"I was fortunate," says Lunden, who will share her caregiving story during this month's free, virtual Health & Benefits Leadership Conference. "I worked for a company that not only gave me time off when my daughters were born, but when I returned to work, I was privileged to be one of the first working women in this country to be allowed to bring my infant daughter to work with me."

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

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

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

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

lived, to help take care of them until both of their deaths.

"As part of what has become known as the sandwich generation, I found myself caring for my children—ranging in age from young babies to teens and young adults—at the same time I was caring for my aging mom and brother, all while working full time," says Lunden.

Decades after Lunden paved the way at ABC, many more employees are on a similar journey—parenting, taking care of older family members or both. Those challenges have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many daycares, schools and eldercare facilities closed, leaving many employees juggling homeschooling or taking care of an elderly relative while working from home. As a result, many female workers in particular have already exited the workforce, with many more considering doing so.

It's just one reason it's a group that Lunden is passionate about helping.

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

She's also taken her advocacy efforts to lawmakers. Early last year, Lunden testified during a House Ways and Means Committee hearing in support of the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act. The legislation would provide 12 weeks of partial income for family leave. Funding would come through a payroll tax.

"The number of American workers who will need personal medical leave for themselves or a family member

is only going to increase," Lunden said, citing statistics from the Department of Health and Human Services that about half of Americans turning 65 will develop a disability "serious enough that they will require care."

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

That legislation wasn't passed last year, but it was reintroduced again this year, giving some advocates hope for a permanent national paid leave law. In March, nearly 200 employers—including Etsy, Levi Strauss & Co. and Pinterest—wrote to House and Senate leaders asking them to pass permanent paid family and medical leave through the Biden-Harris administration's recovery package.

"We cannot emerge from this pandemic and remain one of only two countries in the world with no form of national paid leave," the letter read. "We need a policy that is inclusive and that protects all workers equally, regardless of what kind of work they do, where they live or whom they love."

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

And although some states offer paid caregiving leave and employers are beginning to zero in on caregiving and parental efforts—a recent survey of 113 large employers by the Business Group on Health found 40% of respondents



expanded paid-leave benefits in 2019, for instance—gaps still remain. While larger employers are more likely to offer competitive benefits like caregiving and parental leave, most mid-size and smaller companies are less likely to. Part-time workers are even less likely to receive such benefits. And though the federal Family and Medical Leave Act allows many employees to take off up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year without risk of losing their jobs, it doesn't provide any financial assistance for employees.

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

It's a fight Lunden refuses to give up.

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

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

**Catch Joan Lunden's keynote address during the free, virtual Health & Benefits Leadership Conference, May 11-13. Visit [benefitsconf.com](https://benefitsconf.com) to register.**



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## Talent Management

# Recruitment's Post-COVID Facelift

BY CAROL PATTON

It took a global pandemic for some employers to overcome their biggest fear when it came to their recruiting function: change.

In the wake of COVID, HR professionals have been forced to re-examine their talent acquisition strategies, resources and technology. Many of these changes have raised the bar for the recruitment process and candidate experience.

Adriana Bokel Herde, chief people officer at Pega—a global software company that streamlines customer engagement and operations—says COVID has accelerated all people processes at the organization.

For instance, before the pandemic, Pega was eager to reduce the cost and time constraints of traditional hiring by pivoting to virtual hiring. Given



Adriana Bokel Herde

what they saw as potential risks associated with hiring candidates without in-person interviews, the company introduced a program to allow virtual hires to leave after 30 or 60 days with two months' salary, or for bosses to let them go with the same arrangement—without being penalized for high turnover.

However, the number of managers who took advantage of the program was in the single digits. Since COVID, it has doubled.

"I don't think we've ever had this much trust with virtual recruitment as we've had in the past," says Bokel Herde, adding that even the company's CEO, Alan Treffer, virtually hired a chief sales officer.

Bokel Herde says COVID's footprint is all over recruiting. The recruitment process at Pega, which was 35% paperless pre-COVID, is now 100% paperless. Almost all (98%) of the company's 900 managers have completed empathy training to better understand the challenges facing job candidates applying for remote or hybrid jobs.

In the past, Pega Academy, which offers free, online classes to employees, was rarely mentioned to candidates. But last year, recruiters started promoting it early on in the interview process. Last June, the company selected employees as talent ambassadors to help candidates navigate the interview process and understand Pega's culture. HR is also now considering giving candidates interview questions in advance so they can record their answers. She says this will allow hiring managers to compare responses to the same questions.

"If you don't change, the change will come to you," Bokel Herde says. "It's much more fun to be able to

drive that change and try to proactively understand your industry as it evolves. You have to be in focus on the employee and candidate experience; otherwise, you will very quickly become obsolete."

### Rise of automation

Technology has been key to helping employers keep up with employee and candidate expectations.

COVID has accelerated the creation and adoption of recruiting automation tools by at least several years, says Matt Alder, producer and host of *The Recruiting Future Podcast* and one of *HRE's* Top 100 HR Tech Influencers for 2020.

"Recruiting in the post-COVID world is likely to be very different," he says. "Some of the common themes I'm seeing are more automation and the reinvention of recruiting processes—particularly when it comes to interviews, assessments and candidate experience—as vital tools to sell the employer brand."

Alder says that these new recruiting tools offer greater speed, efficiency, better quality recruiting and an enhanced experience for hiring managers and candidates.

Consider retailers. They now have the ability to automate a shortlist of candidates, which enables a faster recruitment process and more streamlined experience. HR is not only doing more with fewer resources, he says, but also meeting, if not exceeding, job candidate expectations.



Matt Alder

"We are on the cusp of big changes in recruitment marketing," says Alder. "There's an increased use of data, the rise of programmatic marketing [software that buys digital advertising in a highly targeted way], and software or other tech tools that source candidates."

As examples, he points to new technology like Metaview, which provides interview intelligence and analytics, and the growth of career site systems, such as Attrax, that bring the science and technology of e-commerce and e-tailing to company career pages. He believes such tools will "fundamentally change the way employers connect with target audiences of talent."

### Be flexible and innovate

COVID has also influenced how recruiters are hired. Many are independent contractors, says Sara Luther, general manager, HR practice, at Lucas Group, a national recruitment firm.

"[Companies] are still hesitant to make permanent decisions [about retaining in-house recruiters]," she says, explaining that they want the ability to



Sara Luther

flex up or down according to market demands. "So, we often suggest hiring contract recruiters who can be easily pulled off assignments if things slow down and brought back on [as needed]."

Luther explains that the more creative organizations are with the recruitment process, the more progressive they will appear to job candidates.

Many HR professionals now conduct live tours of their office or facility via FaceTime to give job candidates a taste of their physical environment and company's culture, she adds. Others produce interactive podcasts, similar to live radio shows, for employee training or onboarding. That same level of creativity can extend to areas like benefits that can be touted during the recruitment process. For instance, some employers are loaning company laptops to employees' children to help them complete their schoolwork, or allowing them to use the organization's helpdesk for free.

For many years, Luther says, her company has hosted an annual, four-day, on-site employee conference where workers brainstormed ideas, re-energized and addressed important business issues or challenges. Last year, instead of canceling the meeting, Lucas Group hired consulting firms to develop an online platform that converted the meeting into an engaging, two-day, virtual conference. The company even hired a professional trivia host.

She says COVID has demanded a new way of thinking, and HR leaders need to demonstrate to job candidates the lengths they've gone to pivot for their employees.

"These are all things that attract talent during the interview process," says Luther, explaining that job seekers prefer employers that are flexible and creative. "That's the sizzle."

She says one common question candidates are asking is, "What has changed at your organization during COVID?"

"You have to be able to sell that now," Luther says. "That's critical. The best way to sell it is to speak to what you've done. Otherwise, it's all theory."

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