

Human Resource Executive®

After George Floyd

One year since the murder,
how have corporate
approaches to DE&I
changed? PAGE 6



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COVER STORY

After George Floyd

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

The murder prompted swift responses from corporations around diversity, equity and inclusion. Now, one year later, how has DE&I changed—and where is it headed? Page 6

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INSIDE HR TECH

By Steve Boese / Columnist



Tech's Role in DE&I

With just a few months to go until the HR Technology Conference this fall, I am in full planning mode. A part of the process is reviewing, rating and, in some cases, selecting session ideas from the hundreds of formal speaking proposals we receive. It takes me quite a long time, but it is time well spent; not only do we receive lots of great ideas

for the conference, I also use the process to get a broad overview of the issues that organizations are facing, as well as how HR technologies are helping meet these challenges. Usually each year some themes emerge, and we receive a number of proposals that speak to similar problems and strategies.

For example, a few years ago when the “get rid of the annual performance review” idea was trending, we received several dozen proposals from organizations that had indeed gone down that path, and highlighted the new HR tech tools to support continuous performance management and coaching. This year, after reviewing the large batch of proposals, I want to call out the increased attention to diversity, equity and inclusion. While not a complete list, here are three main areas where we see HR tech supporting organizational DE&I strategies.

Asking and Listening to Employees

Technologies designed to survey employees have been in place for quite some time, and largely had not changed all that much since they were introduced. Think of all the annual employee engagement surveys you have taken in your career; they probably tend to blend together. More recently, a number of new technologies have revamped the annual survey into shorter, simpler, more frequent check-ins or “pulse” surveys. In the last year or so, another shift is underway to adapt employee survey tools to better understand employee sentiment, specifically on DE&I issues. While this is admittedly not a huge leap in technology—it primarily is a realignment of mostly existing technologies—the RFP data shows that many more organizations are specifically evaluating what employees think of the company's DE&I position and performance.

Reducing, Removing Bias in HR Processes

Another primary objective of HR technology used to support organizational DE&I goals is the reduction or removal of biases in HR processes. For example,

technologies have been developed that support blind screening of job candidates so profiles are assessed fairly and recruiters and hiring managers don't take into account

information that may influence hiring. Another area where I'm seeing increased use and adoption are technologies designed to examine the text of job descriptions, performance reviews and even internal communications like emails to seek out and recommend the removal of potentially biased words. Over time, organizations can use these technologies to expand their recruiting talent pools and ensure that internal processes and communications are more equitable and promote the organization's overall DE&I goals.

Evaluating and Understanding Outcomes

The third trend is the area of HR and people analytics. Again, the use of HR technology to better collect, organize, interpret and communicate information about HR data is not a new idea, but what is newer is how HR tech providers and organizations are adapting these tools for DE&I analysis. Many of the leading providers of HR technology have created specific, purpose-built reports and dashboards for DE&I analyses. These tools are increasingly important for organizations to better understand where they stand in areas like employee demographics, compensation equity, progression, retention and more—but with the specific intention of obtaining a deeper analysis with a DE&I lens. Finally, these analytics technologies can help organizations measure the actual impact of specific DE&I programs. For example, the organization can use analytics to assess whether using more inclusive language in job advertisements actually does improve the diversity of their applicant pools. Particularly in large organizations, having powerful HR analytics tools is a requirement to understand and improve compensation equity.

The importance of DE&I to organizations and HR leaders has likely never been greater. And as we have seen over time, when there is an issue of increasing focus for HR, the HR technology ecosystem reacts with new and adapted solutions to help HR address these challenges. Certainly, we will see many of these technologies and hear from leading organizations on their use at HR Tech this fall. If your organization is currently considering how HR technology can support your DE&I programs, make plans to attend HR Tech!

Steve Boese is chair of HRE's HR Technology Conference & Exposition®. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.



HR IN THE FLOW OF WORK

Josh Bersin/Columnist



Rethinking Recruiting for the New Economy

The unemployment rate remains elevated at 6.1%, but companies are having trouble finding people to fill jobs. This unusual dynamic was underscored by the release of the April labor statistics, which found that 266,000 jobs were created that month, far short of the roughly 1 million new jobs that estimates had predicted.

Some analysts blamed an economic recovery that isn't as strong as it seems, but others have pointed to powerful forces such as ongoing health fears and robust unemployment insurance for keeping people from seeking jobs in some industries.

At the same time, we are grappling with a shrinking workforce. Fertility rates in developed countries have been steadily dropping while baby boomers are retiring at record rates. Many women have left their jobs in order to care for children and other family members.

To cope, HR leaders are radically rethinking recruiting and talent development. For instance, according to the Washington Post, restaurants are offering incentives such as signing bonuses, college tuition payments and even cash just for showing up for job interviews. I recently spoke with leaders from Ashley Furniture Industries, a \$7 billion manufacturer, who told me the company simply cannot find enough skilled people to staff its automated manufacturing plants. To address the shortage, the company is actively recruiting and training students graduating from high school.

It's clear that companies will no longer be able to "hire their way to growth" as they have in the past. Here are some of the short-term changes in recruiting, talent management and development that will be needed to cope with the workforce shortages ahead. I believe companies must:

- **Diversify recruitment efforts.** For decades, we've known that a college pedigree is not the secret to success. Companies are now hiring people from a range of educational backgrounds and investing money in development to bring them along. Bank of America, a company I greatly admire, has grown its consumer banking business by reducing turnover and rethinking its entire process of development. The company recruits at local community colleges, focuses on a strong and enduring brand, and takes great care of new hires.

- **Get very serious about internal mobility.** Much of the top talent you need might already be in your company. But which employees have this potential, and how do you transition them to new roles? Marketing employees can move into sales; finance people can move into IT; HR professionals can move into operations. Identifying such alternative career pathways are essential to company growth. Recruiting teams must include internal headhunters responsible for identifying internal talent suitable for new positions, while tools that can manage internal talent marketplaces will become essential.

- **Focus on retention, employee experience and employee engagement.** Many companies now have employee experience teams charged with taking a holistic look at employee needs and obstacles and bringing together resources from HR, IT, facilities and even legal functions. The massive adoption of employee experience solutions from companies like ServiceNow and recent announcements from Microsoft, Oracle and others point to the importance of creating positive employee experiences and ongoing development.

- **Create candidates through development.** Diverse companies like Ashley Furniture, Kaiser Permanente, Verizon and Chipotle are all training people to fill open jobs—as opposed to focusing solely on finding people with the exact skill sets needed. We have to adopt the mindset of "creating candidates" through development programs.

- **Create diversified talent portfolios.** It's time to strategically incorporate part-time, contract and outsourced workers into your talent portfolio. Doing so will increase your company's ability to adapt to fluctuating needs, and you'll widen your talent pool.

The bottom line for employers is this: Don't think about hiring as the only way to grow. While traditional hiring will never go away, sustainable growth will come from upskilling and redeploying people, redesigning the company for automation and scale, and investing in programs that improve productivity, wellbeing and culture.

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.

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A DE&I Renewal

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, organizations ramped up their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, but have they succeeded in moving the needle on racial injustice?

Photo by: REUTERS / Nick Oxford - stock.adobe.com

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ

Trayvon Martin, Botham Jean, McHale Rose, Jamee Johnson, Michael Dean, Elijah McClain—just a few of the young Black men who have died at the hands of U.S. police officers in recent years. Each of these cases was covered by the media, but none struck as much of a nerve as the murder of George Floyd, the unarmed 46-year-old Black man who died from a lack of oxygen caused by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressing his knee into Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes on May 25, 2020. Throughout the summer, the nation was rocked by mostly peaceful protests. Nearly one year later, Chauvin's long-awaited murder trial concluded in April with guilty verdicts on all three charges.

With so many Black men—and a few women—meeting their fate during police encounters, why was it that Floyd's death galvanized the nation? According to Doug Harris, CEO of the Chicago-based Kaleidoscope Group, a consulting firm specializing in customized diversity and inclusion strategies, the circumstances

surrounding Floyd's murder created the ideal situation for people to see firsthand the unjust nature of his death.

"When these things happen, they're often in alleys or places where someone has stopped someone in a car on the side of the road, but this happened in the middle of the day in public," says Harris. "The overwhelming evidence, the video recording made it very hard to put a spin on it."

Perhaps just as noteworthy as the public response was the response from corporate America. Typically, when tragedy strikes, organizations issue a standard, PR-drafted statement expressing heartbreak and condemnation. This time was different.

According to an HR Policy Association survey this spring of nearly 400 HR leaders representing 11 million employees, 85% said their organizations expanded inclusion activities and increased C-suite involvement in DE&I since Floyd's murder. Seventy percent have started or expanded unconscious bias training, while more than half moved to disaggregate workforce data to provide a better picture of employee demographics. The

survey also found DE&I was the top concern for HR leaders, ranking ahead of strategizing for a post-COVID culture.

In addition to the actions organizations took, the language they are using in the statements relating to Floyd's murder and their ensuing responses has shifted.

"Organizations started using words like 'structural racism' and 'racial injustice' or 'social injustice,' words they were not using before," says Kerrien Suarez, executive director of Equity in the Center in Washington, D.C. "That shift in language is notable, and it resulted in a significant amount of unrest within companies because they were using language that people on their board might not be comfortable with."

Driving Sustainable Change

At Radnor, Pa.-based Lincoln Financial Group, the board of directors was not only comfortable with the language in the company's public statements, it actually led the way, joining Chief Diversity Officer Allison Green Johnson and then-CHRO Lisa Buckingham to

form the Chairman's Diversity Committee during the summer of 2020. With the goal of driving sustainable change, the committee met weekly to address not only diversity, but racial justice as well.

The result was several sustainable, long-term actions to support racial justice and equity, Johnson said. Those include formally tying senior leadership compensation to the company's diversity and inclusion objectives and implementing enhanced practices in recruiting, retention and employee development to increase Black employee populations at Lincoln, especially among officer level leadership, where the company has committed to increasing the minority population by 50% over the next three years.

To ensure diverse representation at all levels of the company, Lincoln hired two dedicated diversity recruiters—one focused on early career talent, the other on executive talent—to source diverse candidates through relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and professional organizations for people of color. Lincoln also adopted several practices designed to remove unconscious bias from the hiring process. Voice-only candidate pre-screening has been employed to eliminate



Kerrien Suarez

appearance-based hiring decisions, while the "balanced slate" approach mandates that every open officer position (assistant vice president and above) must include a woman and a person of color in the interview process.

While removing unconscious bias from hiring, promotion and professional development processes is important to battling racism in

the workplace, it's just one component of "building a race equity culture," according to Suarez. All too often, she says, companies focus on diversity, rather than dismantling structural racism, the ultimate goal.

"Structural racism is not the same as diversity; it's this centuries-old legacy of white supremacy that preferences white Americans over everyone else," says Suarez. "Reckoning with that individually and institutionally is a completely different conversation and process than 'we need to hire more people in this corporation who are not white.'"

According to Suarez, dismantling structural racism is a multi-year process that requires senior leader involvement and a five-step path of:

1. establishing a shared vocabulary,
2. identifying race equity champions at the board and senior leadership levels,
3. naming race equity work as a strategic imperative,
4. opening a continuous dialogue about race equity work and
5. disaggregating data.

A Human Rights Issue

Just one week after Floyd's murder, Antonis Papadourakis, president and CEO of the North American region for specialty chemicals and plastics company Lanxess Corp., openly condemned the ongoing racial inequity in American society, writing "these simple yet sacred ways of humanity are not equally granted to everyone." Papadourakis urged his leadership team to come up with an action plan, which subsequently led to an open call for people from across the organization to serve on an employee task force to advise management on issues of racism and social inequities. Response was overwhelming. Jack VanHoorelbeke, head of HR Americas, was one of the first to volunteer.

"I like to think that Lanxess is a very welcoming place to work, but when something like [the murder of

Floyd] happens, you step back and say, 'What can we do better?'" says VanHoorelbeke. "We took a look and said, 'This is a basic human rights issue and that's how this company is going to look at it.'"

Papadourakis reinforced that message to the organization. However, VanHoorelbeke says the emotionally charged and contentious political environment led to calls from "a lot of people" who considered anti-racism actions to be a political move. Over time, such chatter dissipated, but VanHoorelbeke isn't entirely convinced it's gone. Rather, "we're just not hearing it."

Johnson reports similar pushback at Lincoln Financial after the company launched a series of dialogues around race. Crucial Conversations were held for the officer population, while Meaningful Conversations were essentially "open mic" sessions facilitated by Employee Relations based on a concept initiated by Lincoln's African American Business Resource Group. Unfortunately, some employees didn't grasp the need for such conversations. Consequently, Johnson says, she received comments such as, "I didn't realize Lincoln was so liberal" and "Why are you bringing politics into the office?"

"This is not a partisan issue," says Johnson. "It's not about left or right, liberal or conservative. It's about humanity and what's right or just. We're a microcosm of our country and we remain firmly committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in our workplace and in our communities where we live and serve."

Condemning Racism

At Minnetonka, Minn.-based Cargill Inc., where diversity and inclusion has been "woven into the fabric" since it established its first Office of Equal Opportunity in 1969, Floyd's death "reinforced the sense of urgency and created the environment and momentum to make [the company's commitment to drive] 'meaningful, sustainable, systemic change a reality,'" according to Chief Human Resources Officer Myriam Beatove.

The global food giant issued a formal statement two weeks after Floyd's death that read, in part: "... Our resolve is stronger than ever to defeat the racial violence, hatred and discrimination that have no place in our world." The statement went on to "condemn anti-Black racism" and, like Lincoln, to focus on removing bias from hiring processes and talent selection. In the weeks that followed, Beatove says, Cargill shifted its strategy to include equity alongside diversity and inclusion.

"It's good to talk about representation, which is diversity, and it's good to talk about inclusion, which is making our current workforce feel valued and welcomed and heard, but at the end of the day, we had a huge population of underrepresented people that didn't even have access to the opportunity of being recruited or being part of that inclusive environment," says Beatove. "That's a significant part of our shift in strategy. We need to address equity. We need to address fair treatment and access to opportunity to even access the representative group and make them part of our company."

According to Beatove, the other major shift in Cargill's strategy—the specific call-out of anti-Black racism—was the result of a realization that the

company could not be truly serious about diversity and inclusion without addressing racism as one of the key root causes of the need for it. In line with that acknowledgment, Cargill engaged employees in "courageous conversations" that Beatove characterizes as "essential to learning what it feels like to be a person of color today."

While she agrees it's good that organizations are finally acknowledging "structural racism is a thing," Suarez is concerned that workplace conversations often consist mostly of Black employees standing up and sharing their experiences of racism in society, rather than focusing on identifying ways to counteract racial inequities both internally and externally.

"Often, the nature of these conversations is to bring white colleagues up to speed on structural racism, but it's not the responsibility of folks of color to explain structural racism and white privilege to their colleagues," she explains. "Those conversations



Myriam Beatove

should not be mistaken for transformational change to dismantle institutional racism within corporations and structural racism in broader society."

Not so at Cargill, says Beatove, where the company has not only expanded the involvement of its Ebony Council in supporting the participation of Black, African American and Pan-African

employees to reach their full potential at Cargill, but has also joined together with 30 other companies in the OneTen coalition. The group aims to leverage its collective strength to drive meaningful, sustainable and systemic change to address one of the root causes of the racial divide in the U.S.: economic opportunity.

"Engaging and leveraging the entire system of Cargill, looking at our processes with rigor to address potential bias, and improving and including innovation in how we address racial inequality will really have a huge impact for us," says Beatove. "I'd like to believe we will win the fight for DEI with a combination of inspirational and transformational actions."

As for Suarez, she acknowledges that Floyd's death led to an increased awareness of systemic racism and a greater number of employers moving beyond static statements of condemnation. However, she remains cautiously optimistic that organizations are truly committed to living the values they've professed.

"There's absolutely been a spike in awareness and a spike in action in terms of people signing up for trainings on structural racism or engaging with consultants to facilitate conversations on race and racism," says Suarez. "We'll just have to wait and see how many of these organizations will make the true, deep commitment to the years' long work of dismantling white supremacy within their institutions."

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

HR Leadership

Meet the 2021 HR's Rising Stars

The COVID-19 pandemic redefined how people work, where they work and even what work itself is. Central to all of those transformations have been HR professionals, who provided guidance, direction, support and a lot of creativity when it came to navigating the fluid crises of the last year. Through these challenges, the next generation of HR leaders—

including those selected as *Human Resource Executive*®'s 2021 HR's Rising Stars—stepped up to the plate and proved why this is HR's moment.

HRE received a record number of nominations for the 2021 competition, with a pool of candidates who were pivotal to helping their organizations not just survive, but thrive, through the pandemic. Ultimately, six emerged as

the most innovative, accomplished and promising talent: Erik Alicea, Acacia Network; Judy Huie, Freddie Mac; John Klein, Maxim Integrated; Jennifer Singman, Kapsch TrafficCom USA Inc.; Carrie Wadman, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin; and Angie Wideman-Powell, ClearCompany.

We congratulate the winners on the impressive contributions they've

already made to their respective organizations and are eager to see how they, and all of this year's nominees, will continue to shape the HR industry. For each winner's full story, visit HRExecutive.com.

Judges for the competition were former Rising Stars winner Ben Brooks, founder and CEO of PILOT; Jen Colletta, managing editor of *HRE*; Gregory Hessel, partner, HR Practice at Korn Ferry International; former Rising Stars winner Leslie Mikus, VP, talent at Merge; and *HRE* Honor Roll winner Ruth Stricklen Pullins, CHRO of Truman Medical Centers.

Erik Alicea

Acacia Network
Director of HR
New York City

Greatest HR Challenge:

There was little time for Alicea to acclimate to his new job last year as director of HR. COVID began changing nearly everything about the HR landscape at the social services agency. Alicea had to operate at full speed while creating policies and practices that ensured the safety of the organization's 3,000 employees, many of whom worked at either the organization's nursing home or client sites across the country.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: Over the past 10 years, Alicea has climbed up the ranks at the organization, holding numerous HR jobs, before stepping into his current role. He worked smart and hard to earn the respect of his former co-workers as a progressive leader who is evolving the organization's culture into one that's more welcoming, inclusive and engaging.



Judy Huie

Freddie Mac
Senior Director and Chief of Staff to the CHRO and Chief Diversity Officer
Washington, D.C.
-Baltimore Area

Greatest HR Challenge:

Building two new HR operations from the ground up: the strategic communications group, which develops and delivers messages that tie back to Freddie Mac's corporate strategy, and the shared services team.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: Watching people on her team grow as professionals and move into jobs with ever-greater responsibility. Examples include moving interns into HR's full-time risk and control team, supporting an admin staffer to earn a CPA and become a finance division manager, and seeing a relocation manager in the shared services operation go on to head international relocations for a defense contracting firm.



John Klein

Maxim Integrated
Talent Acquisition & Staffing Manager
San Jose, Calif.

Greatest HR Challenge:

Differentiating between what is urgent and what is truly important. Klein says it's too easy for HR professionals to slip into a reactive state, with an endless cycle of urgent tasks. He aims to take time to step back and consider the strategic landscape, and identify what is truly important, which he says allows him to invest in automating and optimizing processes that end up reducing the need to constantly put out fires.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: Building a global network of relationships within HR and across Maxim's employee services team, the business and other functions. The enabling factor in those relationships has been his passion for helping others succeed, empathetic approach to partnering and genuine curiosity about the products, work and people with which he interacts globally.



Jennifer Singman

Kapsch TrafficCom USA Inc.
Manager, Learning & Talent
McLean, Va.

Greatest HR Challenge:

Breaking into the "HR club" without specific HR experience. Once she stepped into the field, she had to change her thinking and slow down her reaction time, which often meant biting her tongue and honing her ability to look at all angles of a situation, including legal, disparate impact and other risks. In the past, she would default to standing on the people side, but now stands in the middle, considering all aspects equally.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: After just over a year with Kapsch, Singman's role was expanded to include talent management. She inherited a Climate Assessment project that was partially completed. Despite a steep learning curve for both the process and technology used to capture and analyze data, she led the initiative to completion, including through extensive employee interviews. The last step, in particular, was an arduous undertaking but produced a compelling analysis that provided a clear path and actionable intel for business leaders.



Carrie Wadman

Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin
Director, HR Operations
Greendale, Wisc.

Greatest HR Challenge:

Making HR support accessible to all of Goodwill employees, especially since the organization has a relatively broad geographical reach—with 70 stores and the headquarters spread out between Southeastern Wisconsin and Northern to Mid-Illinois. Given that all employees would need HR support in some form, it has been a challenge, and a focus, to ensure everyone could easily access HR's support services.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: Getting the new Employee Service Center up and running—in a very accelerated timeframe of three weeks—and receiving positive feedback from employees and senior management. Wadman and her team had to triage the demand for help in a very quick turnaround, and the effort has made a real difference for employees.



Angie Wideman-Powell

ClearCompany
VP of People
Boston, Mass.

Greatest HR Challenge:

Breaking into the HR profession. For years, Wideman-Powell had operated on the peripheral of HR, handling some HR matters as an account manager and office manager. Although she obtained both SCP and PHR certifications from SHRM and a master's degree in HR management, she had never held a full-time HR job. Then, one year after joining ClearCompany as a customer success manager, CEO Andre Lavoie asked her to fill a vacant HR position because of her HR background and academic credentials.

Greatest HR Accomplishment: Helping the company survive COVID. Last year, Wideman-Powell successfully shifted the company's 165 employees from office workers to remote workers. At the time, only eight worked remotely. She also developed strategies and programs to train, engage and onboard remote employees while also expanding the company's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.



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Abby Wambach

*Soccer Icon and Activist for
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*World-renowned Industry Analyst and
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Benefits Priorities for a Post-Pandemic World

HRE's Health & Benefits Leadership Conference explored how COVID has reshaped employee benefits.

BY KATHRYN MAYER

Benefits have always been a vital company strategy. But in the age of COVID-19—when health and safety were the biggest priorities, employees struggled with caregiving responsibilities, mental health issues rose and so much more—the importance of benefits has reached new heights. Smart employers and HR leaders turned to benefits as one of their biggest COVID-19 strategies to help struggling employees—a focus that will only continue during the pandemic and beyond.

“We had to be responsive, be agile and be able to look around and anticipate and make decisions on the basis of what’s in the best interest of our associates,” TIAA CHRO Sean Woodroffe said during a keynote session at HRE’s 2021 Health & Benefits Leadership Conference last month. The virtual three-day event, which drew more than 4,500 attendees and 63 exhibitors, went in-depth on COVID-19: what employers have learned, the steps they took to use benefits to address the short-term effects of the crisis, and what changes the pandemic will make on the industry long-term.

Here are some of the biggest takeaways from the event.

1. The pandemic has forced employers to get creative with benefits—and leadership. Although the past year has been difficult, it also brought new opportunities for better serving employees and rethinking leadership, experts said during the event. “As human resources executives, we were in the thick of everything, which is appropriate because the pandemic, at its heart, is a human crisis,” Kristin Johnson, chief human resources officer at Edward Jones, said during a session. “It made us more aware than ever how much value we place on human connection and relationships.”

For Edward Jones, that focus on connection and employee relationships came in the form of new benefits and programs and a heightened focus on employee health and wellness. Among the changes the company made due to the pandemic were 10 extra COVID days off, because, Johnson said, “we didn’t want any of our colleagues to

choose between their careers and their families”; waived deductibles for the testing and treatment of COVID-19; added programs for emotional and mental health; and more free mental health visits, made available for all employees. For parents, the company also provided tips and resources to navigate virtual learning and homeschooling. “We had to step up our game when the pandemic struck,” Johnson said.

TIAA also leaned on benefits as its biggest COVID-19 strategy, Woodroffe explained during a keynote address Thursday. Among the many benefits enhancements the financial services firm made over the last year were expanded mental health and telehealth



Sean Woodroffe

programs, work from home stipends, backup child and elder care support and even free at-home COVID testing. “Treating associates with respect, dignity, care and compassion is the best approach an employer can take,” he said. “It’s a welcoming approach in great times, and it’s the only approach in challenging times.”

2. Employers need to make moves to help caregivers. Although a number of states have passed their own comprehensive paid leave policies and more companies are offering versions themselves, “the vast majority of families in the U.S. still don’t have access to paid leave and medical leave,” Joan Lunden—former *Good Morning America* host and caregiving advocate—said during the event’s opening keynote. She called that a huge problem.

“The lack of access to paid leave or the ability to work flex schedules or from home—of course, the pandemic has changed all that—but these are the factors that can force terrific, talented, hard-working employees to drop right out of the labor force entirely. And it

makes no sense. It makes no sense for the employees and the employer.

“We are in the middle of a caregiving crisis, and it’s a problem that’s only going to grow,” Lunden said. “We need to support families, and we need people to stay engaged in the workforce.”

3. Emergency savings is a rising benefit trend. The statistics painting a picture of employees’ financial situation were bad before COVID: 40% of Americans couldn’t afford a \$400 unexpected expense; about two-thirds of Americans lived paycheck to paycheck, and “short-term money matters” were the top source of stress for Americans. The pandemic worsened these statistics and exacerbated financial problems for scores of employees. “The day has come where we need workplace savings to have more than just a single option,” Devin Miller, CEO and co-founder of Secure, an emergency savings fintech platform, said during a session. “You need to have variation to support different employees in different stages of life. You can’t be using your 401(k) as an emergency fund.”

Expect employers to offer emergency savings programs as an employee benefit, keynoter Melissa Gopnik, senior vice president at financial security nonprofit Commonwealth, said during a keynote. Split deposits—which can put some of a worker’s paycheck directly into a savings account—are an especially low-hanging opportunity for employers to embrace, she said.

Meanwhile, Suze Orman, personal finance expert, Secure co-founder and podcast host, said during the conference that employers have an obligation to help employees save and feel financially secure. “An emergency fund offers hope,” she said. “The one

word—besides secure—that I hope you want to give to all your employees is hope. Without hope, it’s like you’re asphyxiated; you can’t breathe. And sometimes, just a little action instills hope.”

4. Mental health is in the spotlight. Mental health issues also were already a massive issue before COVID-19: “Before this pandemic, there was a pandemic called the mental health crisis,” Louis Gagnon, CEO of Total Brain, said during a panel discussion. But a year-plus of social distancing, lockdowns and dramatic shifts to remote work upended the day-to-day realities for many employees. Workplace mental health has moved from conversations in the C-suite to a pandemic within a pandemic. “We all know mental health has been an issue; the pandemic just completely ripped the Band-Aid off and made this front and center for employers,” said Colleen McHugh, executive vice president of the American Health Policy Institute, noting that improving employee mental health is going to be a strategic imperative going forward.

Employers made many moves to help struggling employees in the last year, helping to mitigate some issues, but there is still much work to be done. Looking ahead, the new mantra for employers will be helping employees disconnect, said Michael Thompson, president and CEO of the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions. “This whole issue of continuously ‘being on’ is burning people out.”

5. The workplace after the pandemic is coming into focus. For more than a year, employers have been laboring through the pandemic transition—adjusting employees to remote work, adapting benefits



to meet their evolving needs and revamping policies to provide needed support. Now, the focus is starting to shift to the long-term. “We need to think about creating the model of the future, not the model any longer in reaction to the pandemic,” said Viq Pervaaz, partner and health sciences leader at EY, in a session with Fernando Salinas, global senior vice president of HR, R&D, robotics, digital solutions and external innovation at Johnson & Johnson. The pair recommended employers rely on a structured framework—informed by guiding principles and taking into consideration all potential variables—to move from transition to transformation, in everything from benefits offerings to workplace technology.

“We are severing our ties with the pandemic and saying, ‘How do we build for the future in a sustainable capacity, one that engages employees?’” Pervaaz said.

That question also was addressed by John Sumser, founder and editor of *HRExaminer*, who explored during his session how the very goal of benefits has changed in the last year and what’s to come.

The pandemic upended the social contract between employees and employers, he said. The flexibility extended over the past year will likely become more permanent, and both employees and organizations saw that innovation can happen quickly—prompting a new relationship where employees have more voice in benefits design. Driven by an upcoming surge in new benefits software, Sumser envisions benefits targeted to helping lower-income workers overcome inequities, a continued rise in telemedicine, and a focus on health and safety, among other areas.

“The golden age of benefits is coming,” he said. “All of these new circumstances are going to create an explosion in the kinds of benefits employers can extend to employees.”

6. Organizations need to work on creating cultures of resilience. Resilience is the word of 2020 and 2021, said Arianna Huffington, founder and CEO of Thrive Global and founder of *The Huffington Post*. Particularly after the challenges of the last year, Huffington said during a keynote, nearly all C-suites recognize the connection between stressed, anxious employees and a halt in productivity. Now, it’s time for employers to take that awareness “upstream,” Huffington said, helping workers identify the triggers of mental health challenges and incorporate behaviors to build resilience into their daily routines. For instance, “micro-steps”—such as taking short breaks of just 60-90 seconds for deep breathing or reflection throughout the day—can

help employees start to course-correct from stress, Huffington said.

That’s the approach that Michael



Arianna Huffington

Fracarro, CHRO of Mastercard, said leadership took at the credit card company, a partner of behavior change platform Thrive.

Last year, Mastercard conducted a series of pulse surveys and found that “Zoom fatigue” was common among employees. In response, the company rolled out new meeting guidelines to ensure employees have at least 15-minute breaks between meetings and that no meetings last longer than 30-45 minutes. It also instituted “meeting-free days” and “summer Fridays,” where employees are encouraged to take time for themselves and their families.

Tara Scott, medical director of integrative medicine at Summa Health and chief medical officer at Revitalize Medical Group, echoed that sentiment in another session, likening the need for preventative stress-reduction to a six-month oil change, regular dental appointments and retirement savings. None is mandatory, but if you’re proactive, you’ll see better outcomes eventually.

“Let’s treat our health this way,” Scott said. “There’s never a time like the present to cultivate resilience.”

7. Don’t fear remote work. COVID-19 prompted a massive shift to remote work, with the vast majority of employers moving their workers home when the pandemic began. Industry insiders say with the experiment going well, we won’t be going back to a full in-office experience even post-pandemic—and employers shouldn’t try to.

“The good news is that many companies have come to realize their worst fears about remote work have not come true, and there are many things about remote work that improved engagement, productivity and more,” Zoë Harte, chief people officer at Upwork, said during a session. Remote and hybrid workforces made up of full-time employees, some of whom may be in the office, plus remote employees and independent or freelance talent, Harte said, have many benefits for employers—if managed correctly. The arrangement can offer employers the ability to scale up and down when they need to, it can spark innovation, and it can improve diversity and inclusion efforts.

8. Employers should lean on benefits to address racial inequities. There has never been

more momentum for employers to take action in helping underserved populations. But that help needs to go beyond “clickbait” anti-racism initiatives launched only in response to the national reckoning on racial injustice, experts said during the conference. Jennifer Benz, senior vice president and communications leader of Segal Benz, said during a panel that there is “tremendous opportunity, desire and pressure” for employers to play a significant role in driving change around racial inequities in healthcare and benefits design. Such issues have gone unaddressed for too long, speakers said, in part because people of color were not centered in corporate DE&I strategies—leading to a dearth of data, including related to health, and ultimately to a lack of momentum.

Among the actions that benefits and HR leaders can take include strategically redesigning benefits to directly respond to healthcare disparities facing certain populations. For instance, with higher rates of breast cancer among Black women, does plan design allow for earlier screening? Is the co-pay a barrier? Consider that people of color are also dealing with pay inequities, and that can influence healthcare outcomes as well.

Accountability is another key factor. Work with benefits brokers, vendors and consultants who adhere to anti-racism principles; even sit through anti-racism training with them and work together to create culturally competent strategies, said Jessica Brooks, president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health.

Look at racial inequality from a broader lens as well, she added, noting that employers need to “be visible” on all the drivers of public health disparities. “There’s so much that we can do that if we don’t do something,” Brooks said, “we’re choosing to be part of the problem.”

9. COVID-19 vaccination is one of employers’ biggest priorities—and challenges. After more than a year of social distancing, remote work, lockdowns and more, COVID-19 vaccinations have represented a crucial key to overcoming the pandemic and restoring safe interactions. But, said Carol Morrison, senior research analyst at the Institute for Corporate Productivity, vaccines also represent a top concern for employers. “While they represent great hope, vaccinations also demand close attention from business leaders. It’s one of the biggest



Jessica Brooks

challenges employers have right now,” she said during a keynote session Tuesday.

Morrison noted that i4cp research finds that encouragement—through education efforts or incentives like paid time off—is the top COVID vaccine strategy for employers. Education is the vaccine strategy being embraced by Elka Manufacturing. Although the company took time to decide whether to require, encourage or stay silent on vaccines, it “ultimately decided that encouraging our employees to take the vaccine aligned best with our culture of respecting the individuality of our employees,” Tonie Lyubelsky, senior director, total rewards at Elka, said during the keynote. Elka regularly educates employees on vaccination, with its CEO discussing the merits of the vaccine in weekly video meetings and other company leaders regularly talking about the efficacy and safety of the shots.

American Benefits Council President Jim Klein, meanwhile, said during the event’s closing keynote that employers contemplating their vaccination plans—whether it’s incentivizing workers to get vaccinated or requiring them to do so—should consult with legal counsel.

10. Use crisis as an opportunity. Silver linings to a tumultuous year? You bet. Optimism over how the pandemic, and social and racial unrest, will change things for the better was a common theme throughout the event, with industry insiders pointing to several positives.

Edward Jones’ Johnson said although the last year has been the toughest of her career, it’s also been a rewarding one that helped reinforce HR’s commitment to meeting the needs of employees and being agile with benefits strategies. “To succeed during COVID, we need to display qualities that aren’t always associated with leadership—empathy and vulnerability,” she said, noting that her company will take these lessons and let employee feedback and employee engagement survey results help guide them on benefit and program changes.

Huffington said employers and HR leaders have an opportunity to create a thriving workplace culture and help employees with their mental wellbeing and resilience. “This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine productivity, how we work and live,” she said. “We’ve stopped assuming we have to continue living in a breathless, frenetic way to achieve great results.”

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

WHITE PAPERS

WORDS OF AUTHORITY

Back to Work: How to Prepare for Mental Health Challenges Facing Returning Workers

Americans are going back to work. With roughly half of adults vaccinated and pandemic numbers dropping, company leaders are beginning to discuss “when,” not “if,” that shift will occur. In one survey of executives at 56 Fortune 500 companies, more than half predicted their employees will return to the workplace between July and December 2021. A third of respondents (and 78% of those in the hospitality and retail industries) said they would open workplaces even earlier, by June.

What this means for workers is another major shift in schedules and practices just as they had adjusted to working remotely. Mental health, already challenged by stress, anxiety and depression during the pandemic, as tracked by our Mental Health Index, will take another hit as workers reshuffle priorities and acclimate to a familiar-yet-unfamiliar work environment that will likely have COVID-19 guidelines and requirements in place.

In a recent opinion survey by Total Brain, 50% of respondents said their employer has not done enough to address the mental impacts of COVID-19 on employees, and 86% want their employer to build a corporate culture that encourages open dialogue about mental health challenges.

As workplaces reopen, employers will have to contend with the fact that employees will feel stressed and anxious as they navigate competing priorities.

Three in four Americans say working remotely has had a positive effect on their mental health, and two-thirds say they feel somewhat or extremely anxious about returning to work, according to the Total Brain survey. Why? At the top of the list (50% for both men and women) is the anticipation of having less flexibility or freedom with their schedules.

That’s especially true for those who have caretaking responsibilities at home. One in five of those with children say they feel stressed over how they will manage their kids’ remote learning schedules; 9% say they are concerned about leaving a pet at home; and 8% worry about having less time to care for elderly parents.

Some companies are preemptively addressing this concern by offering creative scheduling to



workers who want it. For instance, Google has announced it will test a “flexible work week” starting in September, which allows employees to combine three “collaboration days” in the office with two days working from home, in hopes that this “will lead to greater productivity, collaboration and wellbeing,” reported the *New York Times*.

These measures are likely to hit the right notes with American workers, 55% of whom say they would feel better about returning to work if they had a hybrid option, according to the Total Brain survey. Other companies are initiating or expanding flextime or part-time scheduling for employees who need or desire it.

For employers who require full-time, on-site work, it will be especially critical that employers provide additional mental health support around managing and reducing stress. That can take many forms, from having managers do weekly one-on-

one or team check-ins to make sure workers are managing well to offering childcare or eldercare referral programs for caregivers.

Companies should also utilize mobile technology tools that can help workers address stress in the moment—either at work or at home. Total Brain’s Resonant Breathing exercise is an excellent place to start.

Takeaway: Employers must prepare now to anticipate their workers’ stress and anxiety pain points as they return to work, or risk losing workers to overload. They must develop comprehensive and creative solutions that include work schedule adjustments, on-site mental health support and online tools that promote stress management both on the job and at home. An emphasis on empathetic management is important so workers know they can turn to their leaders for support if needed.

To read the full report visit totalbrain.com.



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WHITE PAPERS

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Compassion, Compliance and Consumer-Grade Technology

The legacy of 2020 is immense disruption; yet, after disruption comes the opportunity to refocus and reinvent. In the annual predictions from The Workforce Institute at UKG, we proclaimed 2021 as the year of recovery, rebuilding and reimagining what the future of work can—and perhaps should—look like.

Now at the mid-point of the year, our global advisory board members joined together to reassess our original 2021 workplace predictions to identify areas where we are collectively succeeding—as well as those that should remain top of mind in the months ahead.

1. Work will be (re)shaped in real time as organizations reexamine pandemic-era practices.

As we strive to regain a semblance of normalcy, organizations must continue to determine which pandemic-era policies were a temporary invention of necessity and which have become inextricably fundamental to their people and their company culture, such as schedule flexibility, remote-friendly roles and workplace safety.

“One thing I’d like organizations to remember is how capable they are of making dramatic changes in a crisis,” said David Creelman, CEO of Creelman Research, based in Toronto. “We are capable of doing things we thought we weren’t capable of doing in short order, and we might want to apply that to other areas that are important to us.”

2. Trust will become a foundational imperative.

Businesses are struggling to find and hire talent—despite high unemployment. As people balance pandemic-induced lifestyle adjustments, trust will be an important foundational steppingstone.

“Trust is the currency that employees and leaders exchange on,” according to Dan Schawbel, managing partner at Workplace Intelligence, based in Boston. “Trust is what keeps you wanting to be part of the culture, showing up every day and being productive whether at home or in a physical location.”

Organizations must incorporate trust into every aspect of their culture. In fact, recent research

reveals that when employees feel trusted, it has a direct impact on their sense of belonging in their workplace.

3. Compassionate and inclusive management will become a leadership mainstay.

After a year defined by isolation, burnout and depression and altered by global social unrest and political turmoil, the importance of physical, emotional and financial safety is paramount. While many organizations quickly established robust holistic wellness programs in 2020, there is still work to do to ensure *all* employees feel cared for.

“For more than a decade, we talked about it as the panacea—but work/life balance isn’t linear,” said Natalie Bickford, executive vice president and chief people officer at Sanofi, based in London. “You’re not living your life only between 6 o’clock in the evening and 7 o’clock the next morning. We need to allow employees to be their best selves through a flexible and inclusive work culture.”

As we approach 2022, organizations must continue to strategically and intentionally invest in wellness. Otherwise, we risk letting empathy fade away as a pandemic-era practice.

4. Outside forces will push businesses to the brink.

There’s no denying the economic and operational toll that the pandemic has had on businesses across all sectors, sizes and geographies. Unfortunately, for many, this has led to indefinite closure: The Workforce Activity Report by UKG suggests 15% of businesses across the U.S. have shuttered since March 2020, with grueling economic conditions hitting small businesses the hardest.

As organizations find their footing, ramping up operations for the first time in more than a year, they should incorporate compliance into their employee engagement strategy in order to boost trust, drive retention and ultimately strengthen their bottom line.



After all, meeting the needs of employees will ensure they meet the needs of the customer—despite future challenges that will certainly come their way.

5. Expectations of technology will be higher than ever.

Organizations have gone through a decade’s worth of digital transformation over the past year as employees propelled workplace innovation, expecting to be able to swap shifts, request time off and enroll for benefits as easily as they can video chat with friends and order same-day grocery delivery.

The pandemic has proven that organizations with a consumer-grade technology experience can better serve employees regardless of circumstances. As the future of work continues to evolve, the value of easy-to-use workplace technology that automates redundant tasks and enhances the lives of employees will grow more urgent.

The organizations that will succeed in 2022 and beyond are those that empower their people. By remaining focused on people-centric success, organizations can continue to build an engaged workforce and culture that will help them evolve—and evolve alongside them—in the next era of work.

Dr. Chris Mullen, Ph.D., SPHR, SHRM-SCP is executive director of The Workforce Institute at UKG. Visit ukg.com for more information.



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TALENT MANAGEMENT

Virtual Onboarding is Failing Employees

In a hybrid workforce, connecting new hires to your organization's culture is more important—and also more difficult.

BY JAMIE KOHN

Employees today are experiencing a crisis of connection. According to Gartner research, only 40% of employees feel a sense of belonging at their organization. The problem is even worse for new employees; just 32% of employees hired in the past 12 months feel a sense of belonging to their organization.

Remote work makes it harder to create connection. While most companies implemented remote work out of necessity at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will outlast the pandemic. According to Gartner analysis, business leaders project that nearly half of all employees will continue working remotely at least part-time after the pandemic.

HR leaders report that the biggest challenge with expanding remote work isn't sustaining productivity; it's maintaining the organization's culture. With less meaningful connection, HR leaders tell us some employees feel like they could be working for any company. If existing employees—people with ties to, and an understanding of, the organizational culture—feel disconnected, what hope do new hires have to develop a sense of belonging?

Typically, HR leaders have used onboarding to help new hires understand, acclimate to and connect with the organization's culture. But traditional onboarding methods have not been delivering for new hires. Pre-pandemic, only 44% of recruiting staff said their organization's onboarding process integrates new hires with the company culture. Further, only 33% of employees are satisfied with their organization's culture and education training.

Though traditional onboarding often missed the mark in connecting new hires to company culture, HR leaders largely assumed new employees would absorb corporate values and ways of working organically. But these opportunities are far more limited today—it's harder to pick up on norms from virtual meetings or to connect

with peers when you don't know who to reach out or how receptive they will be.

HR leaders need to create intentional connections with company culture, starting on day one of onboarding. HR leaders should shape their onboarding programs to:

- Reinforce values and purpose
- Show your real-world impact
- Teach values through action

Reinforce Values and Purpose

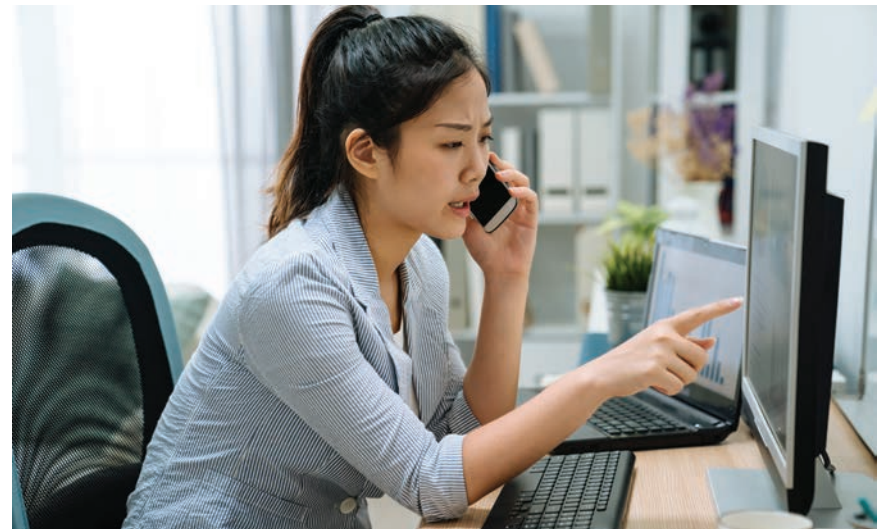
Employees feel a stronger connection to organizations that communicate their values and purpose, particularly if the organization's values mirror their own. Gartner's February 2021 *Post-Election Survey* of 3,000 employees revealed that 68% of employees would consider quitting their current job and working with an organization with a stronger viewpoint on the social issues that matter most to them. The same survey found that employees whose employer has taken a strong stance on current social and cultural issues are twice as likely to report high job satisfaction.

Messages about organizational values and purpose are common in employment branding. Unfortunately, according to Gartner's 2019 *Candidate Survey*, only 60% of new hires say an organization's branding matches the experience they had once they joined the organization. This mismatch can disillusion new hires and lead them to seek another job.

To create a strong connection, HR leaders must be intentional in communicating and reinforcing messages about the organization's purpose throughout onboarding. This goes beyond a brief online learning module. Values should be shared by HR and by hiring managers through personalized onboarding programs and values-aligned trainings that help new hires connect the organization's values to their own.

Show Your Real-World Impact

While purpose and values sound nice, they must also guide the organization's actions. Increasingly, employees look for



their organization to go beyond making statements and take action. In fact, a June 2020 Gartner survey of 600 employees revealed that employee engagement declined when their employer simply made a statement with no action behind it. When a company took action on a social issue, employee engagement increased by 20 percentage points.

Tenured employees may know how organizational purpose translates into business impact through network connections and lived experiences, but new hires don't have the same visibility into the organization. HR leaders must carve out opportunities for new hires to learn how the organization creates impact through its mission and purpose.

HR leaders should share live or video testimonials, impact highlights in newsletters and internal social platforms. Onboarding programs should also highlight volunteer opportunities, mentoring opportunities and other ways new hires can act on their shared purpose with the organization.

Teach Values Through Action

Even when new hires understand what the organization's values are and why they matter, it's not always clear what behaviors actually align with those values. Gartner research finds only

one-quarter of employees know how to translate cultural values into what they should do in their day-to-day jobs. Even when they do know, 77% of employees report encountering cultural tensions that create confusion about the right behaviors. It may be harder for new hires to see how they should "live" the organization's values in their everyday behavior, especially with so little visibility into others' actions.

Leaders and managers must explicitly demonstrate what the organization's values look like in action. In a virtual environment, progressive organizations are utilizing simulations that allow new hires to team up and work through real-life business scenarios, discuss their responses and receive constructive feedback on how the responses aligned with business values and ideal behaviors.

With reduced opportunities to build organic cultural connections, it is on HR leaders to create intentional connections for new hires. HR must guide new hires to connect with the organization's purpose and values, see their real-world impact and translate organizational values to day-to-day behaviors.

Jamie Kohn is a director in Gartner's HR practice, developing research and best practices focused on recruiting.



AI, the EU and HR's New Relationship with Tech

The number of agencies that regulate HR is about to grow—and the accompanying penalties facing employers can make EEO compliance look tame.

If you find compliance requirements burdensome, wait until you see what's coming with the European Union's proposed regulation governing artificial intelligence, which is making waves in HR circles. In short, within a year, you will need access to employment attorneys who understand technology, AI, and the new and existing EU tech and privacy regulations. Then, you'll need the same kind of help and advice, but this time focused on all the new U.S. state and federal laws that will inevitably follow.

And guess what?

Employment lawyers and technology go together like oysters and cupcakes. There are about as many employment lawyers who really understand technology as there are chimpanzees in New York City (apologies to the chimps—and my wife).

And get this: The proposed regulation implies that both the vendors of AI systems and their customers need to be fully competent to manage and override AI in HR. It would be quite a feat to bring the profession up to speed as fast as the technology is proliferating, especially since many of the advantages of technology are that it takes care of stuff so you don't have to.

That's about to change.

In late April, the EU published the first draft of a regulation defining its approach to governing AI, which focuses heavily on HR and recruiting technologies. Like the General Data Protection Regulation before it, the EU regulation will become the definitive baseline for global entities. And the internet makes us all global players, more or less, since tech programs do not know the citizenship of users, employees or their data.

Because the law changes slowly, tech companies have been able to run ahead of it for over 40 years. In fact, many big companies depend on staying ahead of regulators. Technology evolves quickly, and the time between invention and regulation is very high profit.

Software, in particular, usually works on this model and is often given a boost by the same governments regulating them. Take software product liability—there is currently no such thing. The organizations making the employment decisions carry all liability for those decisions, both by contract with the vendors and under anti-discrimination laws. But as software becomes a ubiquitous part of recruiting and hiring, performance management and monitoring (surveillance) of employees, we are going to see more legal oversight, including potential liability for solution providers.

At the heart of the EU's proposed regulation are some familiar themes from GDPR: fairness—including preventing discrimination against individuals and classes; transparency—vendors must be able to explain the logic involved in the AI system; and the right of individuals to participate in their future—people will be able to challenge the automated decisions and have more control over who has and uses data about them.

GDPR imposes legal requirements on whomever uses an AI system for profiling and/or automated decision-making purposes; that's even if they acquired the system from a third party. Compared to GDPR, the new regulation introduces additional obligations for AI vendors, prohibits certain high-risk AI systems and defines more precise requirements for high-risk AI systems and their users.

The category of "high-risk AI system" includes a distinct focus on HR technology systems and tools, including in the area of recruitment and selection, as well as tools that make decisions about promotions, work task allocation and monitoring/assessing performance and behavior.

The new regulations require that vendors and users of high-risk AI systems:

- Can understand its output and use it fairly and appropriately (not let the systems make decisions without interrogating both the decision/prediction/ranking and how it was made);
- Can ensure accuracy, robustness and cybersecurity to foster resilience regarding errors, faults, inconsistencies, technical faults, unauthorized use or exploitation of vulnerabilities;

- Can provide training, validation and testing data, including relevance, representativeness, accuracy, completeness and bias monitoring and correction;
- Can establish a risk-management system and maintain it continuously throughout the offering's lifetime; identify and analyze known and foreseeable risks; estimate and evaluate those risks; and adopt risk management measures;
- Can create automatic logs that ensure traceability of the system's workings;
- Can enable human oversight of the AI system by someone who understands its capabilities and limitations and can decide not to use it or its output to minimize risks to health, safety or rights; and
- Can register the system and document compliance before taking it to market.

The goals are to prevent users from mindlessly following the machine's recommendations, to demand that systems and training are kept up to date, and to make sure that system performance is documented, monitored and evaluated.

Most organizations use HR software tools that include some level of intelligent recommendations or predictions. Over the past five years, the functionality crept into the office through the periodic updates of existing tools; that's how SaaS software works.

Unlike GDPR, local American municipalities are busy developing their own set of AI regulations. Travesties such as facial recognition systems that misgender or don't recognize people with darker skin as human create a compelling sense of urgency.

As an HR leader, it's imperative you understand where the AI is in your organization, how it works, how to turn it off and where it is likely to make errors. AI-based programs can offer insights we would not normally have, but they do not provide answers. They hopefully give us better questions and opportunities to pay attention to what is actually going on in our organizations.

John Sumser, principal analyst at HRExaminer, researches the impact of data, analytics, AI and ethics on the workplace. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.

Learn more about AI, reskilling and other HR technology and strategies in person this fall at the HR Technology Conference in Las Vegas. Visit HRTechConference.com for more information and to register.

What the 2030 Workforce Could Look Like Without Reskilling

The role of automation is continuing to reshape what the American workforce could look like in the near future.

According to a new report on the impact of automation and technology adoption, employers seeking architectural, engineering, computer and tech workers in a variety of industries will face a real challenge within the next few years, while there will be a surplus of candidates for office support and administrative-type jobs.

The Future of Jobs in the Era of AI, from Faethm AI and Boston Consulting Group, found that the U.S. will likely experience a shortfall in its workforce of 600,000 to 12.5 million people—between 0.9% and 4.2%—by 2030. By that year, for instance, the organizations predict that the deficit in architecture and engineering workers is set to rise from 60,000 in 2020 to 1.3 million, while computers and mathematics will soar from 571,000 in 2020 to 6.1 million. The deficit for healthcare practitioners and technical

support will rise to 1.1 million and to nearly 1.7 million, respectively, in that eight-year time frame.

On the flip side, for office and administrative support roles across the U.S., the surplus of workers will rise from 1.4 million in 2020 to 3.0 million in 2030.

"Automation of mundane, repetitive tasks in legal, accounting, administrative and similar professions will mean that core human abilities—such as empathy, imagination, creativity and emotional intelligence, which cannot be replicated by technology—will become more valuable," explains Stephen Farrell, vice president at Faethm. "The U.S. needs a labor force that has the right composition of skills to meet the needs of the digital age, which demands public and private sector actors to upskill and reskill on a large scale."

"Understanding the future of jobs is a tall order, but the groundbreaking analysis we have conducted with Faethm helps governments, companies and individuals

take the critical first step to prepare for what is to come," adds Kelsey Clark, managing director and partner at Boston Consulting Group.

The report also offers steps all stakeholders can take to prepare for a digitized future. For example, governments should hone their predictions of workforce changes through predictive analytics and develop training programs to give displaced workers new skills. For their part, employers should anticipate the skills they need to succeed in the future, improve their recruiting and retention programs, and build a culture of lifelong learning. And individuals can help themselves by proactively learning new skills and being flexible about changes over time.

"Successfully managing the transition to a future workforce will minimize the economic and social friction associated with the misalignment of supply and demand," says Clark.

—Tom Starnner

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