MAY 2022 • $8.95

Human Resource Executive®

TOP 100

Introducing the 100 most influential and innovative leaders in HR technology for 2022. PAGE 6-7

HR TECH INFLUENCERS

IT'S TIME TO #RETIRE INEQUALITY FOR GOOD.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX, we also acknowledge the work that still needs to be done — even today, women retire with 30% less income for retirement.

TIAA is a mission-based company that believes in the fundamental right of every person to retire with dignity and security.

Scan the QR code to learn more about how TIAA is helping to retire inequality for good.

TIAA

SCAN FOR MORE

Human Resource Executive®

COVER STORY

READ MORE AT HREXECUTIVE.COM

- A Former Google HR Leader Thinks Hybrid Won't Survive. Is He Right?
- Why HR Shouldn't Fear the Great Resignation
- Can the 4-Day Work Week Be a True Game-Changer for Employers?
- The Most-Needed Employee Benefit,' According to Financial Guru Suze Orman

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

INSIDE HR TECH

By Steve Boese/Columnist

3 Payroll Tech Innovations to Boost EX

A few months ago, I encouraged readers to start 2022 with an eye toward reviewing and assessing "core" HR technologies for their capability and their potential to improve the quality of essential HR services. And there is no more "core" HR and workplace technology than payroll—probably the first HR technology solution the organization implements (or outsources) and the one that is arguably the most important.

As I learned many years ago when implementing new payroll systems as a consultant, payroll is the only HR technology that must be "right" the first time—and, by the way, every time after that as well. In fact, with all the HR time spent over the last few years focusing on employee experience, it is useful to remember that the surest way to ruin that experience is to pay employees incorrectly or late. According to 2017 research from Kronos (now UKG), 49% of employees in the U.S. will begin a new job search after experiencing only two paycheck errors. And with so many employees living paycheck to paycheck (as many as 63% according to CNBC), accuracy and timeliness of payroll has never been more important.

So, before you consider implementing some of the newer innovations in payroll I will outline below, make sure the basics of your payroll function are operating effectively and accurately. However, several interesting and innovative advances in payroll technology have been made in the last few years that you may have missed and which present opportunities to elevate your payroll service delivery. Here are three areas of recent payroll innovation.

1. More frequent employee access to earnings

First launched about five years ago, employee access to earned pay either on demand or at some point before their scheduled pay date is now a core capability of most mature payroll technology providers and has become almost a "must-have" employee benefit. Most of us have spent our professional careers being paid either on set dates or on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. And most of us never questioned this practice; it was just the way payroll worked at most organizations.

In truth, this was the practice mainly because of payroll technology limitations—these older systems were not designed to allow more frequent and flexible pay schedules. Plus, running payroll on specific dates allowed the HR and payroll teams to schedule and plan their work consistently. This helped HR but did nothing for employees.

Today, payroll technology has advanced so employees can be paid on a much more frequent basis—even every day—with just a few clicks in their mobile payroll app. This ability to access earned pay on their schedule, not that of HR or the payroll team, provides employees with much greater flexibility to manage their finances and is more fair than having them wait up to three weeks after they earned their pay to receive compensation. On-demand access to pay has emerged as an important and valued employee benefit, all made possible by payroll technology innovation.

2. Employee visibility and approval of pay

A more recent innovation, and one that is an extension of employee access to earned pay, lets employees review and approve their payroll results before their scheduled pay date. In traditional payroll processing, employees only have access to their pay information and net pay for the pay period after the payroll has been processed and completed. For most salaried employees, this is not an issue since pay information and net pay remain consistent. But for hourly employees, pay is subject to changes in hours worked, overtime, shift differentials, etc., meaning that their net pay often can't be predicted with certainty ahead of the pay date.

The innovation, delivered in 2021 for the first time (to my knowledge), by Paycom and Paychex, allows employees to view their pay information, and expected net pay, several days before the pay date. This helps employees' financial planning and allows them to report potential errors to HR/payroll before the payroll is completed. An added benefit for HR/payroll is that correcting errors before the payroll is committed saves time and expense and avoids the "bad" employee experience caused by payroll errors.

3. Employee financial wellbeing

The final innovation affects wellbeing. While on-demand pay and early visibility into net pay provide employees with some baseline tools, employers can do more to support employee financial wellbeing. Specifically, workers want access to educational resources and tools for budgeting and saving to help them manage their finances and financial plans. These can all be delivered in concert with payroll from your payroll technology provider or through a dedicated technology integrated into the payroll technology.

While these technologies have been in the market for a few years, it seems unlikely they—like on-demand access to pay—will see mainstream adoption until they are delivered within the standard payroll platforms. But regardless of how they're delivered, employees value these benefits and will increasingly expect them to be offered. And it makes sense: If you have implemented on-demand access to pay, extending your offerings to more robust financial wellbeing programs and technologies strengthens your level of service to employees and enhances their employee experience.

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

Josh Bersin/Columnist

The Evolution of the Employee Listening Market

Earlier this year, we saw two interesting moves that will surely impact the employee listening segment of the HR tech market.

On Feb. 17, Microsoft announced its plan to expand Viva, its employee experience platform, by adding Glint tools to the suite. Glint helps executives get detailed insights on employee engagement and skills that can be used for resolving issues and making better decisions. Two days earlier, Perceptyx, a leading platform provider for employee listening and data analytics, announced the acquisition of Cultivate, a pioneer in AI-powered leadership development.

These two announcements demonstrate the importance of the employee listening market and its rapid evolution. First, some background.

Once considered the domain of industrial psychologists and survey tools, employee listening is now one of the hottest spaces in HR tech. Pretty much every single company on the planet is trying to figure out how to better attract, develop, retain and engage its employees. I estimate that approximately 40% of companies now use some sort of pulse survey or open feedback system.

Over recent years, we've also seen significant innovations in employee listening solutions. In particular, I've seen the market move through three stages:

- Employee listening 1.0: Tools were designed to administer employee surveys at fixed, regular intervals (think annual surveys). The same questions were often asked since the primary purpose was to provide benchmark data for managers.
- Employee listening 2.0: Next came pulse survey tools, deployable via mobile devices, that could be administered as needed and provide immediate feedback.
- Employee listening 3.0: Now, we're seeing employee solutions that not only provide real-time employee feedback and sentiment analysis, sometimes from multiple sources, but they also "translate" this information into nudges, suggestions, and recommendations for actions and behavior changes for managers.

I see this market continuing to evolve in three ways:

- Solutions will collect data (what I call "signals") from multiple sources and in different formats. In addition to survey data, solutions will be able to analyze voice, text and email messages; website activity; and calendars. We're starting to see the ability to analyze mood and sentiment and highlight possible burnout.
- Solutions are relying more and more on advanced analytics and AI to provide real-time responses, such as alerts, suggested actions and recommended microlearning. These innovations are all about reducing the time from "signal to action" and offering paths for immediate improvements.
- Finally, corporate buyers are seeing a flood of employee listening options, ranging from add-on solutions to new features being added to legacy solutions. As always, HR leaders will need to consider their options carefully, balancing their goals with available budget and compatibility with their existing tech infrastructure.

Now that I've set the stage, here is my view about the two recent announcements.

Microsoft Viva and Glint

Microsoft Viva, a suite of tools designed to help employees connect, collaborate, learn and share, became generally available just last year. According to Microsoft, it already has 10 million paid users, 1,000 customers and more than 300 enterprise-class integrated applications. Viva is especially attractive for those companies already using Microsoft Office or Teams. The addition of Glint, which was acquired by Microsoft in 2018, gives Microsoft shops the ability to get an integrated enterprise survey and analytics platform without adding yet another vendor to their tech stack.

Viva users will be able to match Viva Insights data (showing, for instance, how much time an employee is spending in meetings) against direct employee feedback, engagement and suggestion data. The data scientists who analyze Glint data will be sitting next to the data scientists who access Viva Insights data. They'll start to see what behaviors, meetings and other activities drive employee retention, improve diversity and contribute to wellbeing.

The addition of Glint will also vastly improve Microsoft Viva's learning capabilities. Glint is not only a survey and listening system, it also delivers action plans and developmental recommendations. I expect that we'll see Viva Learning making it easier than ever to "learn what you need to know."

Perceptyx and Cultivate

Perceptyx, a long-time leader in this market, has been cranking. A few months ago, it acquired Waggl and CultureIQ, which brought with them capabilities for crowdsourcing and pulse survey management. The acquisition of Cultivate adds AI-enabled text and sentiment analysis, coaching, nudges and proactive feedback (sometimes called passive listening) to the company's existing flagship products for enterprise surveys, real-time analytics and 360 feedback.

In recent years, our analysts have interviewed many Cultivate customers who have used the employee feedback collected by its solution to help managers improve. Essentially, Cultivate is an AI-enabled leadership coach, something we all could use in these times. For example, leaders can see how often they give recognition or provide feedback, whether they make too many ad-hoc meeting requests, or if they communicate or share opinions equally across their team.

This acquisition clearly positions Perceptyx as a company to watch in the employee listening and EX market segments. It has more than 600 Global 2000 customers, revenue growth of over 50%, and a staggeringly high net promoter score of 73.

The deal also lays down the gauntlet for the emergence of action platforms, systems that not only listen but actually respond. As more employees work remotely, online or in deskless environments, we can't rely solely on feedback from surveys or text comments. We need passive (AI-enabled) listening systems that give us feedback in the flow of work. Perceptyx now has an offering that does just this, making the company more relevant and interesting than ever.

With today's current talent challenges and the political and economic uncertainties, employee listening has never been more important. I'm sure we'll be seeing more innovation from vendors such as ServiceNow, Workday, Qualtrics, Medallia and many others as this market segment continues to heat.

As they say in the construction business, "watch this space."

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. Hear Bersin debut his initial findings from his extensive annual report on the HR tech market at the HR Technology Conference, Sept. 13-16, 2022, in Las Vegas. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.

Human Resource Executive®

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 2

Kenneth F. Kahn
President

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

Rebecca McKenna
Vice President Global Events and Publisher

Elizabeth Clarke
Executive Editor

David Shadovitz
Editor Emeritus

Jen Colletta
Managing Editor

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

Phil Albinus
HR Technology Editor

Nick Otto
Senior Editor, Digital

Jason Averbook, Josh Bersin, Steve Boese, Peter Cappelli, Kimberly Carroll, Mary Faulkner, Stacey Harris, Mark Stelzner
Contributing Columnists

GRAPHIC SERVICES

Joseph Ciocca
Production Director

Rebecca Eller
Art Director

Rebekah Galy-Davis
Media Production Specialist/Team Lead

Jerry Criner
Media Production Specialist

Dianna Zisman
Media Production Coordinator

CIRCULATION

Dana Kubicko
Director of Audience Development

ADVERTISING HEADQUARTERS

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

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

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

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

For subscription information, please call (800) 279-8428, email human_resource_executive@omeda.com, or fax to (800) 661-5127.

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

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

LRP CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

Kenneth F. Kahn
President

Todd Lutz
Chief Financial Officer

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

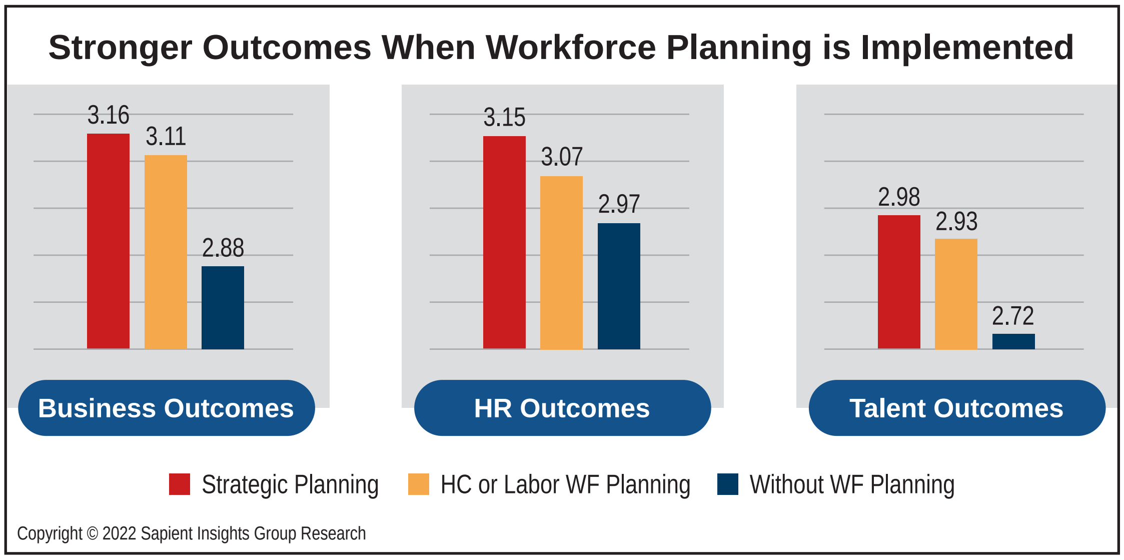
Emanuel Cotronakis
Executive Vice President and General Counsel

Stacey Harris/Columnist

Workforce Planning Beyond the Great Resignation

If there was any skepticism that we are in the clutches of a full-on labor shortage in the U.S., recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data confirmed that fewer than 7 million unemployed workers were available to fill 11 million jobs posted in December of last year—1.7 openings for every available worker. Other highlights included multiple months of increasing voluntary job quits, the lowest level of seasonal worker layoffs on record and a 4.5% increase in wages and salaries over the last three months of the year. And this isn't just a U.S.-based issue: Sapient Insights' *2021-2022 Annual HR Systems Survey* of over 2,000 organizations found that the ability to attract top talent was 10% lower than last year for EMEA and Asia-Pacific headquartered organizations—pointing to a global talent shortage. This means organizations must work to address the ever-ethereal workforce planning.

Whether you call it the Great Resignation, Great Reset or simply a calibration of what workers value and want from today's work environments, the outcome is the same: an abundance of uncertainty and change concerning the workforce. Exhausted HR teams that have spent the last two years making a herculean effort to sustain our organizations amid a global pandemic are on the front lines of addressing these challenges. Is it even possible to plan for tomorrow in this environment? Can we take the time to look forward when every day we face urgent needs right in front of us? Well, yes—and I'd say it is essential.



Organizations continue to increase investments in mental health and digital wellness platforms hoping these investments will help address rising levels of worker dissatisfaction and burnout. These are positive steps, but organizations cannot ignore the hard work required to change the causes of organizational stress, such as silos, uncertainty and workloads. For the HR function, this crucial path leads to workforce planning: Regardless of what products we make or services we offer, people are at the center of our achievements.

According to Sapient Insights' annual HR research, 48% of organizations participated in some workforce planning efforts last year—and achieved better HR, talent and business outcomes through this work. Only 28% of organizations conducted strategic workforce planning efforts that created data-driven and proactive enterprise-level human capital strategies, achieving the greatest outcomes—so there's a lot of opportunity for improvement. That said, even investments in more operational workforce planning, such as headcount or labor budgeting, aligned with some improvement over organizations that made no investment.

Why is workforce planning so elusive?

We are collecting more data than ever on employees and their work, and still, over half of organizations struggle to conduct even the most basic level of workforce planning efforts, and just 46% of organizations feel their HR technology is being used to inform their business or enterprise strategy.

Given the positive impact, what is holding organizations back from investing in workforce planning? It is easy to blame a lack of time, data or technology, but for most organizations, the challenge is more fundamental. One of the biggest issues is that organizations are experienced in standardizing HR processes but, here, workforce planning is not simply an HR process—it's an approach to developing a strategy. The approach requires multiple data inputs and cross-functional collaboration that eventually leads to solid options and more questions, which can be frustrating for those with decisive leadership styles looking for a specific answer.

Adding to the challenge of constant change, organizations spend a lot of time on analyzing the data and configuring the tools surrounding the planning efforts. These are critical for getting the decision-level data we need, but the most important factor is bringing key people asking important questions together with the data they need to either make a decision or ask more questions. That last mile of bringing people together and telling the story of the data is often left unfinished because organizations aren't willing to invest the time and energy of their senior leadership. This is a critical missed step.

Executive buy-in is the No. 1 requirement for successful workforce planning efforts. Leaders must trust the approach and the data and, most importantly, they must hold the organization accountable to executing on the agreed-upon strategy. HR may oversee the workforce planning efforts and process, but ownership is at the top of the organization.

Practical application

Research has shown that some stress and uncertainty is good, as it keeps us focused and diligent in assessing risks—but an overabundance impacts both our personal health and our ability to perform at work. When done effectively, workforce planning is a continuous feedback loop that uses both internal and external metrics to alert us to upcoming risks and stressors. If we think of workforce planning as a valuable coping mechanism—a tool we use to decrease the tension and anxiety in stressful or uncertain situations, which is essential for optimum survival—for the constant change and uncertainty inherent in our work environments, then it becomes just as necessary as any personal wellness solution our organizations have adopted. Workforce planning becomes as critical as breathing.

Central to every organization's survival and ability to manage the onslaught of change is immediate access to critical workforce data. This can include: employee locations, skills, job roles, engagement levels, compensation ranges, health records and even accessible technology in work-from-anywhere environments.

As soon as your organization starts to use data to influence work-related questions, it is practicing HR analytics and planning. If you are budgeting for future workforce and recruiting efforts based on historical data or expected increases in client demands, then you have begun operational levels of workforce planning.

Once your organization begins to build out enterprise processes, functions and metrics to inform business outcomes, you are leveraging HR or workforce business intelligence and should be able to conduct solid financial headcount planning based on future revenue and profit targets.

As data becomes more accessible across HR, finance and operations platforms, joint planning efforts become achievable. Organizations can analyze, forecast and plan talent and workforce requirements to meet business outcomes based on critical job roles and skills, while assessing available internal and external supplies of talent.

In all cases, technology and internal planning skills play a major role in an organization's journey to reach full workforce planning capacity—as do data management and ethics. The most important thing to remember is that getting started is 80% of the battle. You will never have enough time, or all the necessary skills or the perfect software—but like all things in a system focused on continuous improvement, the first investment is just the start. Start small, ask your executive leadership what workforce data would be most helpful in their next meeting, and expect challenges. Workforce planning can initially be a series of failures before you achieve an ideal approach that works for your organization—but don't let fear keep you from starting.

HR and finance technology vendors are making large investments in workforce planning modules as they help their customers realize the last mile with their products. Even greater investments are being made by consulting firms, anticipating opportunities to consult on workforce optimization and upskilling needs typically unearthed during these efforts. If you are looking for a place to get started, ask the resources you are already working with for HR advice. You might be surprised how quickly they can support you in getting workforce planning off the ground.

Stacey Harris is the Chief Research Officer, Managing Partner, of Sapient Insights Group, where she oversees their industry research work, including the Annual HR Systems Survey and White Paper, now in its 24th year. Results of the survey debut exclusively at the HR Tech Conference each year. Send questions or comments to hreletters@lrp.com.

Cover Story

Preparing for the workforce of the future

An influx of flexible workers and organizations' growing need for skills are poised to shatter the workplace as we know it. What HR needs to know now, according to some of *HRE*'s Top 100 HR Tech Influencers for 2022.

BY PHIL ALBINUS

The workforce of the future will be more agile, more focused on projects and will thrive in an environment where employees are given opportunities to be creative, inspired and fulfilled.

These are the predictions shared by a selection of the Top 100 HR Technology Influencers of 2022, *HRE*'s annual listing of the innovators who research, create, select, purchase or implement innovative HR solutions inside forward-thinking firms, which is being released today. These experts know firsthand that change is not just coming—in some cases it's already here.

Ultimately, the basic structure of work is poised to change thanks to the fallout from COVID-19, particularly the remote and hybrid work models that were implemented over the last two years and the Great Resignation that became a reality last summer, according to Influencer Ravin Jesuthasan, author of *Work Without Jobs: How to Reboot Your Organization's Work Operating System*, which he co-wrote with Influencer John Boudreau.

Finding success in this new world comes down to flexibility and agility, says Jesuthasan, a futurist and global thought leader at Mercer.

"Companies are starting to implement a plurality of means that connect talent to work," he says. "We'll continue to have jobs, but more and more work is going to be freed from that construct of a job."

Boudreau, senior research scientist and professor emeritus at University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, believes that jobs will be what he calls "atomized" or broken down into a set of skills. This allows HR and supervisors to create assignments on a project basis for employees eager to move away from their repetitive work duties. In turn, he says, "businesses will be agile, empowered and then boundary-less in the sense that the boundaries of the organization, employment contracts, job descriptions and the degrees needed, will become a gray area."

In seeking clarity in this gray area, Jesuthasan predicts employment in the workforce of the future will fall into one of three categories: fixed, flex or flow.

Fixed jobs will resemble traditional jobs: Employees are hired for a specific role with little room for advancement, like most positions today. Flex or flexible jobs will offer opportunities to use or, as Jesuthasan says, "express" their skills in other parts of the company.

"The third dimension is where the talent is free from a job," he says. "They may still be employees, but they increasingly flow to work assignments and gigs as they become available."

The days of mapping one person to one static job description are over, agrees Influencer Katy Tynan, principal analyst, EX and future of work, at market research firm Forrester. "Employees will become more peripatetic, taking their skills to contribute to project-based work and swarm teams, rather than sitting still in a fixed role," she writes in her blog.

The workforce of the future is here

This workforce transformation is already happening.

In their book, Boudreau and Jesuthasan write about the steps IBM, DHL and Unilever are taking to prepare their organizations for the post-pandemic future. IBM, in fact, began considering and hiring for so-called "new-collar jobs"—tech roles that did not require college degrees—as early as 2017. Since then, efforts to move to a skills-first approach have grown and work to uncouple jobs from tasks is ongoing, driven by IBM's Global Workforce Initiative. That work began with developing common skills taxonomies for dozens of roles to enable talent to move easily across business units and projects.

Another company in the book is Providence Health Systems, a Catholic, not-for-profit health system based in Renton, Wash. According to Influencer Greg Till, its chief people officer, Providence has implemented a workplace strategy he calls "the 4 Ds:" The healthcare firm looks to deconstruct the work, digitize the experience, deploy talent effectively, and diversify its sources of talent.

It's put the healthcare organization on the road "to significant transformation in this area," says Till.

Providence Health's workforce strategy includes offering debt-free education and technology—such as voice recognition to enter patient notes into electronic medical records, delegating administrative roles to other personnel and streamlining drug distribution—to simplify employees' work duties. "I don't know of an organization that has deconstructed everything and moved completely to a skills-based talent system," he says. "But several organizations, including Providence, are on the path to significant transformation in this area."

Upskilling's moment has arrived

Drafting a flexible workforce of the future on paper is one thing, but putting it into reality will take a new mindset for the C-suite, managers and employees. In their book, Boudreau and Jesuthasan provide four principles for the "new work operating system," as they call it. 1. Start with the work or tasks, not current jobs. 2. Combine people and automation. 3. Consider all types of work "engagements," including traditional employment, gig, freelance, project-based, etc. 4. Allow employees to "flow" where they are needed, releasing them from fixed roles.

As much as executives and supervisors must embrace a new way of interacting with workers, employees must also have the skills that will allow them to enter new roles—and recruiters must look for those skills when hiring new employees.

The typical job description is outdated, subjective, unrealistic and focused on a single purpose, according to Influencer Stacia Garr, principal analyst and co-founder of RedThread Research. "Skills, on the other hand, are current, objective, specific and relevant, and simple," she says, describing how job descriptions should instead be focused. "Skills are also multi-purpose, in that they can be used to inform decisions around compensation, training, internal mobility, as well as hiring."

Influencer Hicham Zahr, head of insights and analytics at Eightfold, agrees that organizations will become more skills-based as they future-proof their workforces. Specifically, the focus on digital-related skills will increase across organizations, not just in such typically digital domains as engineering. This includes a greater emphasis on enabling HR departments with people analytics skills, he says.

"While most people are aware of the benefits, upskilling and reskilling programs will become not only the norm, but their effectiveness will make or break an organization's ability to adapt," says Zahr, adding that upskilling programs soon will broaden. "As organizations implement technology to scale their skilling initiatives, skills acquisition will be democratized, with everyone in the organization able to develop their skill sets on a regular basis."

Influencer Al Adamsen, founder and CEO of People Analytics & Future of Work, agrees that upskilling will accelerate in the coming months. Employees will be learning and adapting at a pace that will normalize what is now perceived as disruptive, such as changes in hardware, software and related processes, he says.

"In other words, jobs will be less about static responsibilities and more about the contributions necessary to achieve micro goals," says Adamsen.

Such technologies as AI and talent marketplace solutions also will fuel this new fluid workforce, Tynan says, by absorbing workers' most repetitive tasks.

This means that getting an accurate picture of employees and their skill sets has never been more important. But it's also a challenge since HR leaders and managers are unaware of the talent in their workforce.

Jesuthasan recalls a statistic by the World Forum: Typical employees say they have about seven, mostly technical, skills, but when algorithm-driven talent marketplace tools examine an employee's experience, past projects and education, that skill set grows to 22.

"By moving to a skills-based ecosystem, or a capability-based architecture," says Jesuthasan, "talent is able to more easily flow to where the demand is, based on technology that matches their skills to work as opposed to their job titles."

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


Ravin Jesuthasan


John Boudreau


Katy Tynan


Greg Till


Stacia Garr


Hicham Zahr


Al Adamsen

Our 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.

Name/Title	Company
Jeanne Achille, Chair; Founder and CEO	*HRE*'s HR Tech Virtual and Women in HR Tech at HR Tech Conference; The Devon Group
Al Adamsen, Founder and CEO	People Analytics & Future of Work
Aron Ain, Chairman and CEO	UKG
Gretchen Alarcon, Vice President and General Manager	ServiceNow
Cecile Alper-Leroux, Group Vice President, Research and Innovation	UKG
Jason Averbook, CEO and Co-Founder	Leapgen
Meg Bear, Chief Product Officer	SAP SuccessFactors
Jen Benz, Senior Vice President	Segal Benz
Josh Bersin, Global Industry Analyst and CEO	The Josh Bersin Company
Abha Bhaskar, Chief Technology Officer, Employer Services	Experian
Kim Billeter, Principal, Americas People Advisory Services Leader	EY
Steve Boese, Chair; Columnist	*HRE*'s HR Technology Conference; Inside HR Tech for *Human Resource Executive*
John Boudreau, Senior Research Scientist and Professor Emeritus; Author	University of Southern California - Marshall School of Business
Dimitri Boylan, Founder and CEO	Avature
Erika Broadwater, National President; EATA Manager/COE	National Academy of African Americans in Human Resources; Essity
Ben Brooks, Founder and CEO	Pilot, Inc.
Marcus Buckingham, New York Times Best-Selling Author, Researcher and Founder of the Strengths Revolution; Head of Research, People + Performance	ADP Research Institute
Yvette Cameron, Senior Vice President, Global HCM Product Strategy	Oracle
Jacqui Canney, Chief People Officer	ServiceNow
Heidi Capozzi, EVP and Global Chief People Officer	McDonald's
Kimberly Carroll, Managing Principal	IA
Karen S. Carter, Chief Human Resources Officer and Chief Inclusion Officer	The Dow Chemical Company
Star Carter, Co-founder, Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel	Kanarys
Potoula Chresomales, SVP Product Management	Skillsoft
Jackye Clayton, Vice President, Talent Acquisition and DEI	Textio
Mervyn Dinnen, Analyst, Author, Commentator on HR, talent and work tech trends	Two Heads Consulting
Gianna Driver, Chief Human Resources Officer	Exabeam
Amy Dufrane, CEO	HR Certification Institute
Debasis Dutta, Vice President and General Manager, Products and Design	SumTotal Systems
Torin Ellis, Principal	The Torin Ellis Brand;
Carmen Fernandez, Chief People Officer	Marsh McLennan
Alexis Fink, Vice President, People Analytics and Workforce Strategy	Meta
Beth Galetti, SVP, People eXperience and Technology	Amazon
Ashutosh Garg, CEO and Co-founder	Eightfold
Stacia Garr, Co-founder and Principal Analyst	RedThread Research
Mike Gioja, CIO/SVP-IT, Product Management and Development	Paychex
Adam Grant, Author and organizational psychologist	Wharton
David Green, Managing Partner and Executive Director	Insight222
Jacqueline Guichelaar, Group Chief Information Officer	Cisco
Ron Hanscome, Research Vice President, HCM Technology Transformation	Gartner
Stacey Harris, Chief Research Officer and Managing Partner	Sapient Insights Group
Kathleen Hogan, Chief People Officer and EVP, HR	Microsoft
Jim Holincheck, Vice President, Advisory Services	Leapgen
Ravin Jesuthasan, Global Leader for Transformation Services; Author and Futurist	Mercer
Francine Katsoudas, Chief Human Resources Officer	Cisco
Dawn Klinghoffer, Head of People Analytics	Microsoft
Brian Kropp, Group Vice President and Chief of HR Research	Gartner
Nickle LaMoreaux, Chief Human Resources Officer	IBM
George LaRocque, Founder and Principal Analyst	WorkTech
Kyle Lagunas, Head of Talent Attraction, Sourcing and Insight	General Motors
Madeline Laurano, Founder	Aptitude Research
Charise LE, Chief Human Resources Officer and member of the Executive Committee	Schneider Electric
Jessica Lee, SVP, Global Talent Development	Marriott International
Anita Lettink, Partner	Strategic Management Centre
Chris Leone, SVP and GM Oracle HCM Cloud	Oracle
Melanie Lougee, Head of Employee Workflow Strategy	ServiceNow
Lexy Martin, Principal, Research and Customer Value; Chair	Visier; People Intelligence Alliance Council
Sara Martin, CEO	WELCOA (Wellness Council of America)
Monique Matheson, EVP, Chief Human Resources Officer	Nike
Aaron Matos, Founder and CEO	Paradox.ai
Trish McFarlane, Founder and Principal Analyst, consultant	H3 HR Advisors
Rebecca McKenna, Vice President of Global Events and publisher, *Human Resource Executive*	LRP Media Group
Karl Mehta, Founder	EdCast
Jeanne Meister, Executive Vice President	Executive Networks
Lavonne Monroe, Vice President of Talent Acquisition and Onboarding	Hewlett Packard Enterprise
Donna Morris, EVP, Chief People Officer	Walmart
Holger Mueller, Vice President and Principal Analyst	Constellation Research
Kevin Oakes, CEO and Founder	Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp)
David Ossip, Chairman and Co-CEO	Ceridian
Himanshu Palsule, CEO	Cornerstone OnDemand
Christy Pambianchi, EVP and Chief People Officer	Intel Corp.
Seth Patton, General Manager, Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Viva Product Marketing	Microsoft
Joey Price, CEO	Jumpstart:HR
Allison Robinson, Founder	The Mom Project
DeRetta Rhodes, EVP and Chief Culture Officer	Atlanta Braves
Laurie Ruettiman, Author, Speaker, Consultant	Punk Rock HR
Tim Sackett, President	HRU Technical Resources
Mariana Santiago, General Manager, Workforce	Workday
Prasad Setty, Vice President, Digital Work Experience	Google Workspace
Mala Singh, Chief People Officer	Electronic Arts
Al Smith, Chief Technology Officer	iCIMS
Mark Smith, CEO and Chief Research Officer	Ventana Research
Brian Sommer, Founder and President	TechVentive
Erin Spencer, Senior Research Analyst and Senior Consultant	Deloitte Consulting
Heidi Spirgi, Chief Strategy and Growth Officer	Cornerstone OnDemand
Dan Staley, Principal	PwC
Marc Starfield, Group Head of HR Programs and Systems	Vodafone
Mark Stelzner, Founder and Managing Principal	IA
John Sumser, Principal Analyst	HRExaminer
Greg Till, Chief People Officer	Providence Health System
Bonnie Tinder, Founder and CEO	Raven Intelligence
Katy Tynan, Principal Analyst, Employee Experience and Future of Work	Forrester
Anilu Vazquez-Ubarri, Chief Human Resources Officer	TPG Global
R "Ray" Wang, Principal Analyst, Founder and Chairman	Constellation Research
Don Weinstein, Chief Product and Technology Officer	ADP
Rebecca Wettemann, Principal	Valoir
Sarah White, CEO	Aspect 43
Amy Wilson, Senior Vice President, Products and Design	SAP SuccessFactors
Hicham Zahr, Head of Insights and Analytics	Eightfold
Stacy Donovan Zapar, Founder and Principal	The Talent Agency

2 Ways to Save Serious $$$ on HR Tech 2022

Get Nearly 45% OFF Passes for Your Team

Buy One, Get All Others for just $950 each starting May 24.

Get More Than 35% OFF Your Individual Pass

Use Code SINGLE300 to save an EXTRA $300.00 on top of $550.00 Super Savings.

Offers valid for All-Access Premium Passes through July 11, 2022.

Visit **www.HRTechConference.com** to claim your savings before they are gone!

10 Learning Tracks

- Core HR
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Employee Experience
- HR Digital Transformation
- Learning/ Reskilling
- People Analytics
- Talent Acquisition
- Talent Management
- The New World of Work
- Well-Being & Mental Health

Women in HR TECHNOLOGY®

Join us in debunking myths about gender diversity and inclusion and shine a light on technology-enabled pathways that will help you foster belonging in your organi-zation at this popular half-day summit.

SPONSORS

DIAMOND
visier, eightfold.ai, servicenow, UKG, Microsoft, cornerstone, PARADOX, workhuman, workday, PTOGENIUS

PLATINUM
experian employer services, pwc, Penumbra, crunchr, upwork, SkyHive, isolved

GOLD
Medallia, infor, go1

SILVER
lumapps, Clarity Benefit Solutions, Fidelity, Symphony Talent

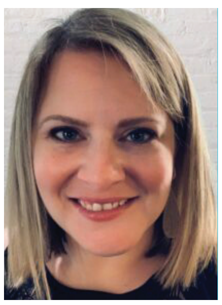
Produced and Presented by:
Human Resource Executive Conferences™

Requiring College Degrees: Sign of a 'Lazy Employer'?

Leading organizations like IBM and Google are rethinking what makes a standout candidate

BY WILL BUNCH

Just a few years ago, Tony was a young man who, in many ways, typified the under-30 generation in the American workforce. One of the 63% of American youth who leaves school before earning a college bachelor's degree—even with a diploma seen as the ticket for admission to the corporate workforce—Tony took a job after high school as a barista. Fortunately for him, it happened to be in the coffee shop of the office lobby for a leading high-tech company, IBM.


Kelli Jordan

"He talked to one of the IBM-ers and asked him to mentor him," recalls Kelli Jordan, director of IBM Career, Skills and Performance. "So, you'd find them in the coffee shop every afternoon, working on different computer science and coding problems."

The young man, who also enrolled in computer courses at a local community college, had very good timing. Led by Jordan, IBM had just launched a program, the New Collar Initiative, that looked to identify and train skilled workers without a college degree and remove barriers to their hiring.

The program was designed with job candidates like Tony in mind. He joined the second cohort of an IBM-wide apprenticeship program in 2018, and today the former barista is a full-time software developer.

Both IBM and some of its newer hires like Tony are on the cutting edge of a movement that could radically change corporate hiring practices, while bolstering diversity in the workplace. The idea is to rethink the necessity of university degrees and look increasingly toward certification through shorter, more focused training around specific skills. The greatest reinvention around educational credentials and the workforce since World War II's G.I. Bill, which launched America's surge in college enrollment, is well underway.

"The skills-first approach really came about because we realized that the way that companies traditionally hired—that really strong linkage between educational attainment and employment—wasn't necessarily the most inclusive method of hiring," says Jordan of IBM, one of the first firms to start dropping degree requirements for some key jobs five years ago. Given that nearly two-thirds of Americans don't hold a bachelor's degree, "if you're requiring that on your job postings," she says, "you're automatically excluding a huge portion of the population that may actually have the qualifications."

A changing context

The idea of moving away from an overreliance on college credentials was already underway—especially at bellwether tech firms like Google, Apple and Tesla—when two giant shockwaves struck the American labor market in 2020. Suddenly, the COVID-19 pandemic—which radically changed the dynamics of hiring and retention, with job seekers gaining clout—and the racial reckoning that accompanied the massive George Floyd protests brought a realization: Many HR leaders said that a different mindset around college credentials could both widen the pool of skilled applicants and help firms reach ambitious goals for diversity and equity.


Sean Gallagher

Sean Gallagher, founder and executive director of Northeastern University's Center for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy, who wrote 2016's *The Future of University Credentials*, said it's not surprising that Big Tech was a little quicker to rethink educational attainment than other types of businesses.

"A small part of this story has been Silicon Valley investors and disruptors and different

policy leaders saying, 'Let's tear down the college system and build something cheaper and more innovative,'" Gallagher says. This led to a small flurry of start-up ventures—often riding rapid advances in online learning technology—whose success in skills-based courses convinced more traditional institutions, from community colleges to ivy-draped private universities, that they needed similar offerings to keep pace.

The recent numbers—swelled in the pandemic by job-changing, mid-career workers—have been impressive. Digital badges, the most popular form of learning certification, nearly doubled from 24 million in 2018 to 43 million in 2020, and that growth likely accelerated after COVID-19 arrived. Experts say as many as 40% of working adults now have a non-degree skills certification. But the greatest growth potential remains younger workers looking to enter the labor market without a four-year degree. While decades of rising tuition—triggering an astronomical $1.7 trillion U.S. college debt crisis—has made more families wary of expensive four-year curricula, getting corporate America to change its hiring requirements has been a tougher nut to crack.

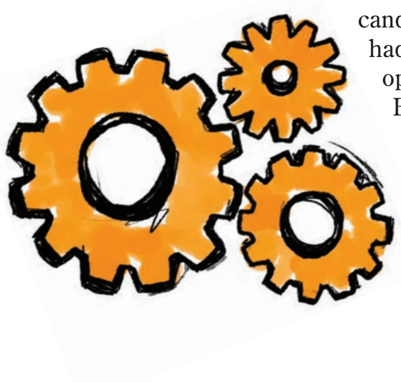
This challenge was driven home by a survey of some 750 HR executives conducted and released in late 2021 by the 1EdTech Foundation, a non-profit trying to enhance connections between educators and employers around training. The survey found that a significant number of the leaders—some 36%—have recently relaxed or even eliminated college-degree requirements for some entry-level positions, a phenomenon that accelerated under the COVID-19 recruitment woes.

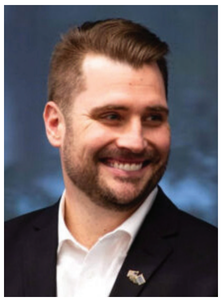
Interestingly, nearly a third of the survey respondents said a key reason for change was growing frustration with the types of job candidates emerging from colleges and universities, raising a disconnect that existed before the pandemic. That said, the proverbial glass remains half-empty, with more than half of people managers still expressing a lack of awareness about alternative credentials such as digital badges.

Rob Abel, the president of the 1EdTech Foundation, says he expects employer knowledge about these non-degree pathways will grow rapidly in the near future because such a diverse array of educational institutions is launching and promoting new programs. "Most people think of the university as one of the top 100 schools like Harvard," he says. "But there are another 3,800 that are more consumer-focused and that are more focused on going where the student needs to go." Abel's outfit has already targeted the next level of integration—developing a common language and agreed-on standards for these new skills certifications that will be universally recognized—when a worker changes jobs, for example.

A workforce for all at Google

The deep involvement of high-tech firms like Google is leading the revolution forward. For some time, the Silicon Valley search-engine icon has drilled into the need to find exceptional job candidates who had lacked college opportunities. Brendan Castle, vice president of Google Recruiting, said the company's ideas about building its workforce have evolved over two decades. "Early on, our focus was on finding anyone with the right technical skills to to do the job," Castle says. "The goal was to hire fast to build a workforce. Now, 20 years later, our processes have evolved to ensure we build the right workforce—one that represents every person using our products."





Brendan Castle

So, Google ditched a college-degree requirement for most job openings, weighing other factors such as relevant experience. When the firm experienced some struggles in recruiting candidates for IT support jobs, it partnered with a non-profit called Year Up to create a skills-based training program targeting disadvantaged youth. The success of its in-house effort convinced management that Google Career Certificates could both add more job categories—such as project management—and also scale up dramatically, serving the broader U.S. job market.

By the start of 2022, the program had already trained some 50,000 graduates in fields such as data analytics—the most popular—when Google announced it was funding a massive, $100 million expansion. It also hoped to make the program self-sufficient through no-interest loans that would only be paid back when certificate holders landed jobs paying more than $40,000. Google and its non-profit partners such as Year Up and Merit America hope to produce thousands of additional graduates.

Google's Castle explains that the company believes hiring should be less about the name of the college on a degree and more about both the worker's skills and something he called the growth mindset. "When we hire at Google, we're not just thinking about filling the immediate role," he says. "We want someone who is going to meet new challenges as they come and grow into new responsibilities over time."

An opportunity to 'widen the aperture'

Since May 2020, the promises that many corporations made around increasing diversity and equity in hiring after millions took to the streets of America to protest the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd have helped to widen the conversation around college credentials beyond the giants of Big Tech. A year later, Kenneth Frazier—the leader of the pharmaceutical company Merck and one of a handful of Black CEOs of Fortune 500 companies—told the *Wall Street Journal*'s CEO Council Summit that eliminating college credentialing could open the door for more hiring of skilled Black workers, and thus compensate for education inequities that had knocked some off the path to a bachelor's degree.

"It's really important for us to recognize that, because people haven't had an opportunity early in their lives, it doesn't mean that they can't make a real contribution to your company," Frazier told the forum. Frazier is currently co-chair of a new initiative called the OneTen Coalition, through which 35 firms have pledged to hire 1 million Black Americans, including those who lack opportunities to earn a four-year diploma, over the next decade. The coalition plans to work with, and strengthen, the new universe of schools and organizations offering shorter-term skills credentials.

At IBM, Jordan says, the company was thinking about a broader kind of diversity in the workforce—not only around racial equity, but a wider range of perspectives and life experiences—when the tech giant launched its New Collar initiative in 2017. "Diverse perspectives are really important when you think about technology," she explains. "When you're building a project with a homogeneous team, you're not thinking of all those perspectives. You're not thinking about how somebody could come in and hack your product or how to meet the needs of all consumers."

In seeking to, in Jordan's words, "widen the aperture of our pipeline" to attract job candidates that its other tech rivals were missing, one of IBM's first steps was to look at which jobs didn't necessarily call for a bachelor's degree. Since the initiative launched, more than 50% of the job categories at IBM—in areas like cloud computing or cybersecurity—no longer require four years of college.

But like Google and other companies on the cutting edge of this change, IBM has also played an active role on the educational side of the equation, with a variety of programs to create the kind of candidates it could hire without a college sheepskin. The firm's IBM Skills Build is a massive global array of free training opportunities that range from bricks-and-mortar high school classes to online learning, offering digital badges to students with the ambitious goal of reaching 20 million people by 2030.

Most learners from the program will take their talents elsewhere in the job market, but IBM is also advancing its in-house diversity goals through an apprentice program that has opened up 25 career pathways to about 1,000 students, paid to take part in the 12-to-24-month program. In one sense, the many overlapping initiatives around job training—IBM has also been funding a Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) program over the last decade—point to the challenges in disrupting the deeply entrenched, conventional paths of educational attainment.

"The college degree is a blunt mechanism that lazy employers require," Northeastern's Gallagher says, noting that the supply and demand upheaval of the so-called Great Resignation in the job market as well as the challenge of sifting through so many online resumes is finally accelerating the demand for change. He hoped the rapid changes would inspire HR leaders to play a more aggressive role in recognizing and standardizing the new skills credentials. "Some of it does start with technology, with the HR executive who is the validator of some of these new commercial platforms," Gallagher explains.

IBM's Jordan agrees that—perhaps counterintuitively—cooperation among HR leaders is critical for the skills-first approach to gain widespread acceptance. She encourages executives to join nascent alliances like the OneTen Coalition to learn best practices from others also looking to expand their talent pool. She notes that IBM, for example, shares the playbooks and key materials from its apprenticeship program with other members of the Consumer Technology Association.

"Having so many people talking about hiring and this concept of 'New Collar,' " she says, "really makes it much easier for a company to start down this path than it would have been five years ago."

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

5 Strategies to Build a Sustainable Talent Pool With Outbound Recruiting

Recruiters have to be smart and strategic in today's candidate-driven market. On top of reviewing resumes and applications, scheduling phone screens and meeting hiring managers – recruiting tasks can sometimes go haywire without the right strategy. That's why recruiters need to build a talent pool to streamline the process and build relationships with candidates to keep them interested throughout the process.

What is a talent pool and why is it important?

A talent pool is a database of candidates interested in working for your organization. It is a hub with a mix of applicants, including passive candidates, past applicants and even former employees. A talent pool is a starting point for every sourcing effort and serves as a safety net by providing backup candidates.

Outbound recruiting and your talent pool

Given today's candidate-driven talent market, inbound recruiting isn't as feasible as it was a decade ago. That's why recruiters need to switch to outbound recruiting to stay ahead of the competition. Here are five strategies that can help you build a sustainable talent pool.

Strategy 1: Revisit existing data and set new expectations

The first approach in maximizing your outbound recruiting efforts to build a sustainable talent pool is to review all existing data to evaluate potential problems and take action to set new expectations.

For example, reviewing existing data allows recruiters to redefine their sourcing and recruiting strategy. This process clarifies which channels and strategies are working and which aren't. Based on the data, set new expectations and goals to allow recruiting teams to leverage a more feasible approach to create a more solid talent pool.

Strategy 2: Integrate your ATS platform and enrich candidate profiles

Recruiters often rely on their Applicant Tracking System (ATS) platform. An ATS platform is designed to help recruiters and employers track candidates throughout the recruiting and hiring process. By integrating your ATS platform and enriching your candidate profiles, you can build a more sustainable and manageable talent pool with updated candidate information to source from.

Learn more about hireEZ's Integration and integrate your current ATS for updated candidate profiles.

Strategy 3: Only target candidates who fit the role

However, here's the trick, to avoid mass emailing candidates or spamming unqualified candidates, it is best to target candidates who fit the role. Targeting suitable candidates will help improve the quality of your overall talent pool and even improve candidate relationships.

Strategy 4: Quality over quantity

Mass emailing candidates does not increase the quality of candidates sourced, as a matter of fact, the quality of candidates decreases with the wrong targeting. If the quality of candidates that you find is not up to your needs and expectations, then you're back to square one. Hence, choosing suitable candidates to reach out to is essential to build a sustainable talent pool.

Strategy 5: Personalize everything

Lastly, keep candidates engaged and make your pitch personal and memorable. Include personal information that you found about the candidate such as prior experience and accomplishments.

For example, have they been out of work for some time but you're impressed with their past experiences? Utilize your research and make an effort to craft a memorable message.

Building a sustainable talent pool requires effort

Using these five strategies, you can maximize your outbound recruiting efforts to create and manage a sustainable talent pool.

Want to learn more? Talk to our sales team today to learn more about how hireEZ can help you streamline your hiring process and recruitment efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS

Client Name: Eric Gong & Company
https://hireez.com/resources/case-studies/eric-gong-company-case-study/
Website: Ericgong.com
Headquarters: New York, New York
Industry: Recruiting Services
Problem Solved: Prior to using hireEZ, the team at Eric Gong & Company had difficulties sourcing technical roles for startup clients.
Since implementing hireEZ, Eric Gong & Company has grown exponentially as a recognized leader in recruiting and has been able to:

- Access a larger tech talent pool that goes behind LinkedIn
- Boost response rates with streamlined email automation and direct access to personal email addresses
- Hire hard-to-fill roles more quickly and easily for early-stage tech startups

Client Name: Diversant
https://hireez.com/resources/case-studies/diversant-case-study/
Website: Diversant.com
Headquarters: Red Bank, New Jersey
Problem Solved: Prior to using hireEZ, DIVERSANT leveraged a variety of sourcing tools, job boards, referrals and networking opportunities to identify prospective candidates but faced issues finding candidates with niche skill sets. After implementing hireEZ, the DIVERSANT team immediately realized that hireEZ could help their clients uncover candidates that they could not easily find using traditional solutions. Today, 20% of the DIVERSANT Direct Hire Practice revenue is generated by hireEZ and they have experienced a 35% reduction in the time spent sourcing and a 7% increase in placement revenue.

hireEZ

OUTBOUND RECRUITING MADE EASY

hireEZ: The #1 AI-Powered Outbound Recruiting Platform
With hireEZ, you can execute a strategically scalable approach to build your workforce of the future, access 800M+ candidates from 45+ open web platforms and discover previously hidden, hard-to-find and diverse candidates

- **EZ Sourcing:** Unleash Access to Untapped Talent Pools
- **EZ Engagement:** Direct and Scalable Candidate Engagement & Interview Scheduling
- **EZ Rediscovery:** Dedupe, Enrich and Rediscover Profiles in Your ATS
- **EZ Insights:** Data-Driven Recruiting With Critical Benchmarking Insights
- **EZ Integration:** Seamlessly Integrated With Your Tech Stack
- **EZ Collaboration:** Access a Centralized Workspace to Collaborate With and Manage Your Recruiting Teams

The #1 Platform for Outbound Recruiting

For more details please contact us at sales@hireez.com

A Solution for Education Debt Relief, Forgiveness Eases a Burden for Our Pandemic Front-Line Staff

By Frederick Berger
VP, Benefits and Retirement Administration
Temple University Health System

Every day, the healthcare professionals at Temple University Health System do truly heroic duty—and at no time was that truer than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With our people giving their all to meet a crushing public health crisis, we have wanted to do everything we can, as an employer, to help ease their other burdens—like management of the education debt that many of our workers have incurred to earn the degrees and certifications required to provide expert care.

That's a big reason why, as the pandemic took hold, we implemented an innovative program offered by our retirement benefits provider, TIAA, and a social impact technology firm, Savi, to provide some relief to our team members with student loans. It's a benefit we hoped would make a true difference for them in an extraordinarily stressful time.

Education debt: A staggering burden

According to the Education Data Initiative, borrowers across the country now owe a staggering *$1.749 trillion* in student loans. More than 43 million borrowers have federal student loan debt, and the average balance is more than $37,000. For many professionals with particularly rigorous academic credentials, like healthcare providers, loan balances can be much higher. And borrowers at all levels report that they're struggling to repay their loans or that their debt has hindered their ability to pursue other, essential financial and life goals.

When the pandemic hit, the federal government did provide some help. Since March 2020, federal student loan borrowers haven't been required to make any loan payments (payments are scheduled to restart after Aug. 31 this year). However, recent research by TIAA indicates that once the relief program ends, the vast majority of nonprofit and public sector employees will struggle to keep up with their payments.

Over the longer-term, many people who work in public service, including those at healthcare institutions such as ours, have been eligible to take part in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. Initiated in 2007, the program permits some borrowers who make 120 consecutive monthly payments to have the remainder of their balance forgiven.

Unfortunately, PSLF has had a very low forgiveness rate—partly because borrowers have had trouble understanding program rules and managing all the paperwork involved. The U.S. Department of Education reported in October 2021 that only 2.1% of nonprofit and public service worker applications were successfully approved.

We wanted to make the PSLF program really work for our own borrowers—so we enlisted the help of TIAA and Savi. Together, they offer to TIAA's plan sponsors an easily used tool that helps borrowers enter and successfully complete the PSLF program—and get the relief they've rightfully earned through their service.

Helping individuals comply with program requirements

Individuals sign up by answering some simple questions. From there, the Savi software devises an income-driven, money-saving loan repayment plan and determines whether the person qualifies for debt forgiveness. The solution acts as a "concierge," helping borrowers stay compliant with PSLF's many, ongoing paperwork requirements and avoid errors.

The program has been especially critical during the loan relief period in effect since May 2020. That's because even months when payments have not been required can count toward the 120 total payment months that qualify a borrower for loan forgiveness—making it as important as ever for borrowers to follow all the other program requirements.

Importantly, the program has required no IT involvement on our part, making implementation trouble-free, and TIAA and Savi have provided helpful guidance and support on communicating the program to our employees.

Since September 2020, nearly 400 Temple Health team members have received personalized assessments of their options and support. We estimate they will achieve, on average, more than $53,000 in loan forgiveness.

We can't overstate just how much dedicated healthcare professionals, here and elsewhere, have done for all of us over the past two years—often while risking their own health and wellbeing. It's critical that we help them in return—and at Temple University Health System, we're enormously grateful for a way to do just that.

HIGHLIGHTS

Client name: Temple University Health System

Headquarters: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Industry: Temple Health is a major Philadelphia-based academic health system that is driving medical advances through clinical innovation, pioneering research and world-class education.

Problem solved: Temple University Health System was trying to find a product that would help employees manage their student loans and navigate the complex PSLF process.

Benefits

Human Resource Executive HEALTH & BENEFITS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

5 Themes for the Future

From mental health to more openness in the office, these highlights from the recent Health & Benefits Leadership Conference are shaping what's next in the industry.

BY KATHRYN MAYER

Three days, dozens of sessions, 100 exhibitors—our 2022 Health & Benefits Leadership Conference is in the books, and what a whirlwind it was.

After a hiatus in 2020 (and a virtual event last year), it was nice to see so many innovators, HR leaders, and benefits and healthcare firms gathered in person to talk about winning strategies, gaps in care and the biggest trends in the industry. There's no argument that the world—and the workplace—has changed significantly over the past two-plus years, and many of those lessons were on full display at this year's event.

So what were some of the biggest themes of the conference? Here are five:

Mental health, mental health. Mental health was on everyone's lips during the event, and for good reason. Rates of depression, anxiety, burnout and stress have soared over the past two years. And that is showing up heavily in the workplace creating a mandate for employers to get aggressive in helping employees.

ABC News chief meteorologist and mental health advocate Ginger Zee opened the event by discussing her own struggles, drawing on her journey through suicide attempts, hospitalization, diagnosis and treatment. Many employees are suffering from issues like hers, she said, but others (and their employers) don't know it.

She called on HR leaders to help remove the stigma around employees being vocal about their struggles—and seeking and utilizing treatment. "I think we've gotten better, but the stigma is now on the action," she said. "Therapy is cool now; everyone is on board with getting therapy. But when you have to get hospitalized, eyebrows go up. But that's when you get help [if] therapy can't do it."

Employers not only have to provide comprehensive benefits to address and improve mental health, but they also need to do a better job communicating those benefits to employees. That's because too many workers are not aware of what's available through their employer, said Missy Plohr-Memming of MetLife.

"We know it's not because [employees] don't have the support; it's that employees don't know how to access it," she said. "They don't know how to utilize and activate the benefits; or, as Ginger Zee said, they're too afraid to ask."

COVID-19 has caused new issues that will need to be addressed. It's not just longtime problems like mental and financial health that are a challenge. There are a number of new problems. Think addiction issues, which are on the rise among employees and causing a new mandate for employers to act, said Cheryl Brown Merriwether, HR veteran and vice president and executive director of the International Center for Addiction and Recovery Education. And long-haul COVID is an emerging workplace epidemic that's causing an uptick in disability claims, said Dr. Charles Glassman, associate medical director at The Standard, and Dan Jolivet, a workplace possibilities practice consultant at The Standard.

Additionally, employees who suffered through COVID-19 may experience heart inflammation months or years after having the virus, said Jenn Roberts of Hello Heart, a tech solution that allows people to record and share their blood pressure with their medical provider via Bluetooth connection.

Meanwhile, the pandemic is also causing huge surges in late-diagnosed cancers, chronic illnesses and other ailments because so many employees delayed preventive care, doctor's appointments and tests. That's a huge issue that employers will need to be aware of and help address in the coming years, said Dana Baker and Cheryl Nienhuis, directors of the Complex Care Program at Mayo Clinic.

COVID-19 lessons are vast (and we shouldn't waste the opportunity). During our panel addressing the COVID-19 benefits revolution, Dave Pilson, vice president for total rewards at Upwork, told me that his firm's biggest lesson was to "have your playbook down, have a crisis leadership team queued up and ready to go." Not only has it helped with the pandemic, but it has helped with other crises as well.

Pilson recalled that the talent marketplace solution provider recently deployed the crisis playbook it wrote during the COVID outbreak to address a new issue: the war in Ukraine. Upwork had 4% of its operations in Russia and Belarus, and the company decided to stop operations after the invasion of Ukraine.

Likewise, remote work is undoubtedly one of the biggest COVID trends: Employers, where they could, overwhelmingly embraced the model as they tried to minimize interactions and keep employees safe. But now company leaders should embrace the lessons of remote work—namely that it worked and that most employees are happier with the model than having to be in the office all day. That was a lesson cited by Pilson as well as Chris Dyer, founder and CEO of PeopleG2, who has embraced remote setups for his employees since 2009. Both said employers should rethink trying to force employees back into offices. Dyer said remote can, and does, work and actually improves business.

Employees are being more open about their needs. A perfect storm of issues over the past several years—the pandemic, calls for social justice, humanitarian crises, record-high inflation rates, work-life balance issues and more—is weighing heavily on employees. And those stresses are making workers more vocal about the help and benefits they desire from their employer.

What does that mean for employers? It means they need to do a better job talking to employees, pulsing them and listening. "We all think we know what's going on because we're experiencing it, but honestly, we're all experiencing it differently," said Kimberly Paris, regional HR strategic director for Penn State Behrend. "So as HR professionals, I think we just need to take a breath and listen."

…But workplaces should still be more open about struggles. Yes, struggles are being brought to light in a way they haven't in years past. That's a good thing. But are topics like financial health, mental health, and diversity and inclusion being discussed enough and openly in the workplace? That's a different story. Several speakers said there is still much work to do in opening up the dialogue to address employee problems (and needs).

When I asked personal finance expert Suze Orman during our panel if she thought financial health was being discussed enough in the workplace, she told me it wasn't yet, but she hopes it will be eventually. Devin Miller, CEO of emergency savings fintech platform SecureSave, agreed that financial wellness isn't being discussed at work right now, even though employees are "getting crushed" as rent increases 25% year-over-year and fuel and other costs are skyrocketing. "Everything is so different than it was before," he said.

The same goes for mental health, financial health, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and more, speakers said throughout the event. We simply need to do a better job. Step one? To make significant and meaningful changes, we need to get more comfortable talking about what we need.

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

The ulti-mutt voluntary benefit

Pet-friendly benefits are a meaningful way for companies to support employees with pets, and to boost employee engagement at the same time.

- Use any vet, anywhere, with no networks
- Two levels of reimbursement: 50% or 70%*
- Mobile-friendly claims processing
- 24/7 advice from pet health experts at **vet***helpline*®
- Preferred pricing on pet meds at select pharmacies with **PetRx***Express*℠
- And more!

Go to **petinsurance.com/HRexec** or **call 877-263-5995** to start offering Nationwide pet insurance.

*Some exclusions may apply. Certain coverages may be excluded due to pre-existing conditions. See policy documents for a complete list of exclusions.

Nationwide®