HR Daily Advisor

FACES OF HR PRESENTS: PUTTING A FACE ON HR

PROFILING HR PROFESSIONALS
Human Resources is sometimes viewed as the department behind an organization’s “people.” But HR goes beyond just that! Sure, HR is responsible for administering paychecks and leave requests, but these hardworking individuals are more than meets the eye.

HR professionals are sympathetic, enthusiastic, and impassioned and care about their organization as a whole. These individuals take their work seriously while having fun doing so and strive to be successful not only in their careers but also in their personal lives.

We’re taking a look at the faces that make up HR professionals. Using snippets from the *HR Daily Advisor* series “Faces of HR,” this special report profiles what makes HR so special: the people in the role.
PEOPLE STRATEGIES OF HR

HR professionals focus heavily on people practices in their organization, which include administering compensation, leaves of absences, coordinating benefits, and more! Our “Faces of HR” guests weigh in on some important people strategies that have worked for their organizations.

AMY ROY
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, NAMELY

Roy explains how cultural fit plays an important role in an organization’s makeup.

I think for sure it’s about the people and the attitudes those people are bringing in to make the business successful. And it’s about the people who are there for the right reasons—not just to have a job but also to have that job with that company because they support what that organization does and get up every day and want to be there.

We look at lots of things around engagement and the correlation between engagement and productivity—how if people really start to drive productivity, they’re happy to be at work. And, being happy to be at work means knowing that employees are bringing their best selves to work.

They bring in the attitude that they want to be there, and that comes from lots of different inspirations.

People can’t just have the strength to be successful in any organization; they have to have the fit. So, I think that if they have the fit and if they have the skills, then it’s all about the people.
Gill explains that employers need to be flexible when it comes to child care and uses Vivvi as an example of how the company has adapted its culture to be more family-friendly.

As HR professionals, we should be looking to support employees by providing the resources they need, such as flexible paid time off (PTO) and work-from-home arrangements, as well as supplementing things like child care and elder care.

In our initial conversation about parental leave [at Vivvi], I proposed what I thought was a generous (and maybe unfeasible, again because of the demographic of much of our faculty) set of parameters. The immediate response from our founders, Charlie and Ben, was that we have to do more than that.

And that was a really, really pleasant surprise. They were like, basically, we’ll make it work. It’s one of the reasons I’m really proud to be part of this team—we are truly living the mission. It’s so important to Charlie and Ben and to the whole Vivvi team that we put our neck out a little as a company to take care of our people.

We try that right before or around open enrollment. At any time, people can call us and request a meeting with a benefits analyst if they have issues they need to talk about or questions about a particular benefit. They can call our HR direct line at any time also and talk to someone who can answer any questions and provide information.
Morehead understands the importance of having a diverse frame of mind, and she shares how her company sustains its diverse hiring strategies with a focus on long-term retention.

We want to ensure that when developing programs, we are considering all perspectives and setting people from all different backgrounds up to thrive.

It’s critically important as we think about inclusion of our team members and really taking care of our internal team members.

At One Medical, we are expected to be able to provide that great unconditional acceptance and meet our patients where they’re at so it comes full circle for us.

Hreczuck shares the types of people analytics her company collects and how CultureIQ makes decisions based on these data.

At CultureIQ, we basically partner with our clients to collect data in the form of employee feedback. That includes indicators of how well any organization is doing in terms of hiring the right people, like turnover rates and how quickly somebody decides to move on or how long employees decide to stay. That’s one key piece of data I always like to look at in full.

Then we look at compensation data all year. That means looking at our current alignment of compensation internally and then looking externally to see what the market looks like so when we hire people, we know what we want to pay them—then also internally making sure we have alignment from a compensation perspective for the people in our role so we can continue to keep them engaged and incentivize them to want to stay with our company.

We also look at performance data. When we do talent reviews, we pull in all kinds of data about people’s performance—whether they have the potential to move on within the organization in different roles and higher-level roles—and then take those data and figure out how to create development paths for them so they want to continue to work with the organization; that way, we can ensure we have people getting the right skills they need to take the next step in their role.
**CHESTER LANTIN**

**HR DIRECTOR, WALKER SANDS**

*Lantin uses data to make informed decisions, which is also one of his secrets for retaining talent.*

I think the secret is having great leadership who finds that as important as I do. I’ve seen companies that feel like turnover is just the nature of the beast and that there’s really nothing that can be done about it. To an extent, that’s true. But there’s a lot that’s controllable. I try to understand the reason people leave. I approach it from two directions. I think HR analytics data help a lot. But a lot of understanding why people leave comes from just regular, people-to-people conversations.

I also look at how people are doing on the engagement surveys and what people are saying on our exit surveys to understand the problem. Someone’s always going to tell you, “I’m leaving because of this.” Of course, that might not be the true reason. If someone tells you he or she is leaving because of compensation, I like to ask follow-up questions. Most people don’t just chase money; there is likely an underlying problem. The approach I take is finding what’s being given on the surface and trying to find out what’s underneath that.

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**TIFFANY DORSEY**

**HR MANAGER AND GLOBAL HR PROJECT MANAGER, PULCRA CHEMICALS**

*Dorsey explains the biggest challenge she is facing as an HR manager and how her company is overcoming this challenge.*

I would say lately, it has definitely been in recruiting. The talent pool just isn’t what it used to be. The vast majority of people we’re trying to reach and attract are already employed, so trying to entice them is more and more difficult.

Some positions are easier than others, and it depends on the company where they currently work.

At a free Employers Association event, an expert negotiator came in to give us tips and ideas on how to negotiate with potential candidates. So that way, you hopefully try to get [the talent] to come over without giving away the bank. I have found that it has helped.

One of the biggest things the Employers Association recommended was to do an in-depth market analysis of all our positions to know exactly what the market is paying. Candidates have a number in their head, and it may or may not be based on the actual market data. And then, you have a budget, and you have a number you’d like them to start at based on the position and its educational and experience requirements.

We put together the market data, which let us know where candidates fall. That has been one of the biggest things that has helped us—actually knowing what other companies are paying these same types of positions and knowing what our standing is in the market.
LINDSAY DAGIANTIS
VP OF HR, ENVOY

Dagliantis touches on the immigration challenges employers are facing and how this is unique to HR.

The [Envoy] platform and our service team are both our employees and our partners, but it doesn’t make us immune to the reality of the immigration process, and we take the experience and emotions of the individuals seriously.

In my previous role before Envoy, we ultimately had to terminate an employee because she was no longer in status. At that time, I actually worked with Envoy team members, attorneys at our affiliated law firm, and internal experts in Canada to see if there was a loop around it, but there wasn’t. We had to terminate her, and she understood, but it’s not fun knowing that I’m losing talent because of some of the stipulations.

TAMMY PERKINS
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, PMI WORLDWIDE

Perkins describes how employer branding is important to not only your company’s talent but also the customers your company serves.

There are two sides to your brand. I see that as two work streams; for the employee, experience is your external brand, which is how you build your employment brand and strategy. Then there is the internal side of that, which includes the employee experience and culture.

I believe it’s essential to approach employee experience with the same diligence and dedication companies approach customer experience. Employees need more than birthday cake or Ping-Pong tables; no one ever quit over birthday cake or Ping-Pong tables. You’ll retain them if they feel like they have an experience where they are valued and they can contribute and grow their careers.
PEARLIE ONI

SENIOR MANAGER OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE, REDPEG MARKETING

Oni shares her best practices for HR professionals who may find themselves involved in workplace investigations.

I’m a very fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants type of gal. I wing a lot of stuff. It’s like my strong suit and my Achilles heel. But when it comes to workplace investigations, I’m telling you right now: You cannot wing it. It is impossible. If there were a way to do it, I would have done it.

You have to be very regimented. You have to do it the same way every single time. You have to have all of your ducks in a row.

You have to have your notes meticulous. You need to talk about the day and the time you talked to this person and put in your notes what the person’s demeanor was like and how he or she seemed to be feeling.

HR is very risk-averse—sometimes for a very good reason. And one of them is because if you end up in court, all you’re going to have is the notes from your investigation. So just being very regimented and then trying not to become emotionally involved and trying to leave your biases at the door are important. When you’re done, take a look at your data, and listen to what they’re telling you, not what your emotions are telling you.

SHARON EDMONDSON

VP OF HR, IWG

Edmondson explains how virtual work shouldn’t stand in the way of employees’ interactions. Edmondson explains how often she interacts with her employees, even if they aren’t all on-site.

I don’t see all of them all the time, but I do interact with employees in the field every day. It’s one of my big things. I’m a big believer in an open door. I don’t want to create the perception that because you have an executive title, your office is off limits.

I play basketball with a co-ed league once a year with people from various parts of our organization. I’m very ingrained into the day to day. I don’t think you can be successful, personally, in the job if you are too removed from the business. If you told me I couldn’t go out to the centers and see the teams and meet the people and I had to still be successful in my job, I’d have to leave. I don’t think it’s possible.
PUTTING A FACE ON HR

LORI DIPPREY

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, PARIVEDA SOLUTIONS

Dipprey is a lifelong learner and explains how developing your workforce into lifelong learners will help benefit your organization in the long run.

Learning doesn’t just happen in a classroom. It doesn’t just happen when you’re taking in information. Learning and development happen through practice and application and reflection on the job while you’re working and while you’re just doing life. Be thoughtful about what you learn, and then craft what I call learning moments.

These make me reflect and kind of integrate what I’m learning. What is working? This isn’t working in how I do my job. What am I going to do differently next time? Just trying to capture those as frequently as possible has really changed how I now answer the question, “How do you accelerate your career?”

TERESITA QUINONES

TALENT MANAGER OF NORTH LATIN AMERICA OPERATIONS, KIMBERLY-CLARK

Quinones shares how her company has developed an approach to attracting and retaining diverse talent.

First, listen. Second, have empathy. Third, build trust among the team and among the team members. For me, it was worth it to have a lot of one-on-one conversations with the employees and also to have team meetings.

So, we work on different communication ideas and make sure we can work together in a team leader/team member relationship, as well as make sure we can work together as a whole team.

It’s challenging, but I also mentioned empathy. It’s important to understand the culture, the country where they are, their jokes, how they have conversations, and the specific words and the meaning of those words because even though we speak Spanish or Portuguese or English when we use a word, the meaning can be different in every country. It’s important to understand those differences so we can correctly use those words. Then, they feel comfortable when they speak to us.

But most of all, understand the person. Understand the person’s needs. Understand that as a leader, you need to be a facilitator for his or her job and development in the company. For me, that’s really important, and that’s just the basic part of my role leading a team, being with them, facilitating their job, and being part of their development process in the company.

It is intentional, deliberate practice throughout your day that can help you accelerate your own development regardless of the work you are performing.

Having a diverse workforce is more important than ever before, as younger generations drive diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives.
HR ARE PEOPLE, TOO

You may view your HR staff as the gatekeepers to your organization’s people needs, but your HR personnel are people, too! And just like your other employees, HR pros have unique needs and aspirations, as well.

CHERYL JOHNSON
CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, PAYLOCITY

Johnson explains that HR pros are people, too, and employees sometimes fail to remember this.

People forget we are employees. I think a lot of times, they think we are immune to the frustrations or the stresses because we’re the ones who sometimes help design or uphold them. They don’t realize that we also have to consume the employee experience we’re designing.

Also, we are in a very challenging spot where we have to uphold the perspective and the care for the employee, for the company, for the leadership, and for all the stakeholders. I think sometimes, if you talk to employees, they can get frustrated because they feel like HR should be there as the employee advocate first and foremost.

The reality is that we have to find a balance among all the stakeholders, which can be pretty challenging.
JESSICA PFISTERER
HEAD OF PEOPLE, LIVELY

Pfisterer explains how her professional experiences have helped shape her personal life.

I’ve recently gotten more into business partnering and philosophies around feedback. I’ve also spent more time looking at the bigger picture, and I’ve learned the different kinds of strategies for feedback folks use. I personally like Radical Candor by Kim Scott—a lot of folks might be familiar with that. I actually try to use that in my personal life, as well. I trained employees on it, and then I realized that I should use it all the time because it’s a really great way to communicate. It’s proven to be fantastic. Because my job is a people function, it’s really all about how people communicate with each other. Most of that also translates well to life outside of work. I tell employees when I’m training them, “Hey, you can use this in your regular life, and that can also be practice for when you use it at work with your manager or with a coworker.”

JILL FELSKA
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE, LIMELIGHT HEALTH

Felska explains how it’s difficult to step out of the day-to-day role and focus on strategies for improving people practices and company culture.

There are all these little daily interactions that I think it’s sometimes hard for any of us to step back and take a look at them.

I think that’s especially true with HR, and I’m guessing anyone who’s in an HR position would probably agree to some extent. It’s hard to get above the day-to-day stuff because there are so many moving pieces, and you never know what employee issue or concern or need is going to come up on any given day.

HR professionals across the globe have many unique strategies in play, but one thing is certain: Employees are top of mind. Stay tuned for our next volume in this series, in which we’ll be profiling HR professionals and how they manage times of crisis and change and getting the C-suite onboard with their decisions.