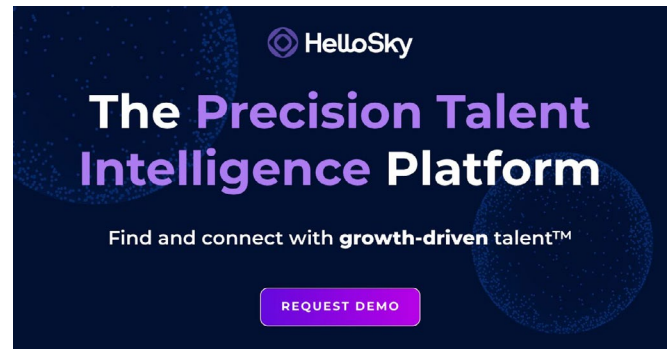




Standing on the Shoulders of the CHRO: Shaping the Modern Workforce Era



As organizations confront rapid technological change, workforce disruption, and mounting pressure to build stronger leadership pipelines, the role of the chief human resources officer continues to expand. Today's CHRO is expected to help shape business strategy, guide organizational transformation, and ensure companies develop the talent, culture, and leadership needed for long-term success.

At the same time, CEOs and boards are placing renewed emphasis on building more diverse leadership teams, recognizing that broadening candidate pools and challenging traditional hiring assumptions can strengthen decision-making and business performance. **Hunt Scanlon Media** spoke with executive search leaders from across the industry about how the CHRO role is evolving, the impact of AI on human resources, and the strategies organizations are using to identify and develop the next generation of leadership.

A New Imperative

As AI is embedded in everyday decisions and workflows, outcomes are shaped as much by leadership choices and people as by technology, according to a new report from **Egon Zehnder's** Kristen Burke. "Every serious AI conversation eventually becomes a people conversation about trust, skills-building, and how leaders show up," the study said. "Human resources leaders sit at the center of that reality."

"These dynamics mark a defining moment for the CHRO. As one CHRO characterized it, it's a once in a generation opportunity," the Egon Zehnder report said. "While AI is often referred to as a technology challenge, organizations making real progress understand that AI success hinges on people: skills, culture, trust, and everyday leadership behavior. Organizations seeing traction

are aligning HR, technology, and finance from the outset, ensuring that questions of skills, ethics, trust, and accountability are built into decisions rather than addressed after the fact."

"Just as important is clarity around what must remain human," the report stressed. "As AI absorbs more routine tasks, leadership will shine in high-stakes decisions, use of judgment, building relationships, and navigating uncertainty. This places HR at the center of intentionally shaping how work evolves. For CHROs, the choice is not whether AI will reshape work, but whether they will actively shape how it does."

Expanding Leadership Pools

AI is rapidly and broadly impacting every function at multiple levels, Dwain Celistan, managing partner and leader of the global inclusive leadership practice at **DHR Global**, explained. "The future of most organizations will evolve/transform due to increasingly greater adoption of AI," he said. "The HR leaders will need to aid organizations during this period for the benefits of the organization and how leaders/employees will need to adjust."

BY THE NUMBERS

The AI Consensus

90% of CHROs believe AI will become significantly more prevalent in the workplace...

...and **87%** expect it to improve workforce productivity.

Source: SHRM

Mr. Celistan said that the typical organization has inadequate panels of diverse talent from which to select leaders and separately, there is a built-in bias for the status quo. "Historically, diverse candidates who have been included in senior roles were less qualified than the balance of the pool," he said. "For example, if the organization were looking for a CFO, in several cases, the diverse person might be a treasurer or comptroller while the other candidates were sitting CFOs. Thus, the panel would include a diverse person but not someone who has a strong likelihood of being selected for the role."

"By contrast, when comparable diverse talent is included, they perform very well and are many times selected for the role," Mr. Celistan added. "Thus, the key is to present diverse talent who meet/exceed the position specification requirements/expectations. In fact, over the past 20 years, this has proven to be true for my clients across industries and functions. (cont'd. to page 2)

“On the bias front, the demographics for senior leadership are significantly skewed versus those in middle of the organization or college graduates from 20-plus years ago,” Mr. Celistan said. “Interestingly, one demographic consistently dominates at senior levels that was not seen in earlier peer group comparisons. It isn’t because of outsized talent or capability improvements over time.”

Mr. Celistan urges HR leaders to challenge their internal team and search partners to present diverse slates of candidates who meet their expectations. “Choose search partners who have a demonstrated track record versus statements of intention,” he said. “The numbers tell the story. As a firm, nearly half of our placements are women and/or people of color. Personally, my placement rate is 70 percent. This addresses the notion of availability of the talent.”

“Last, the CEO/board should know that the data is overwhelmingly positive about the value added by diverse senior leadership,” Mr. Celistan continued. “They should not be swayed by an assortment of social media posts versus high-quality evaluations done by McKinsey and others.”

“One of the more notable trends we have observed in recent years is the continued expansion of the human resources function beyond its traditional responsibilities,” said Shawn M. Hartman, SVP and COO of **Academic Search**. “While this evolution is not occurring uniformly across higher education—and is often more visible at larger institutions with the infrastructure to support it—we are seeing an increasing number of organizations broaden the scope of these roles to include talent strategy, leadership development, employee engagement, and institutional culture.”

“In some cases, this shift is reflected in position titles that emphasize people, talent, or culture,” Mr. Hartman said. “More often, however, it is evident in the expectations institutions have for their senior HR leaders. Search committees frequently seek individuals who can serve as strategic partners, help navigate organizational change, and support efforts to attract, develop, and retain talented employees in a highly competitive environment.”

Diversifying Their Leadership Teams

CEOs and boards should view these efforts as a leadership and talent strategy rather than simply a recruiting initiative, according to Mr. Hartman. “Organizations that make the greatest progress tend to examine not only who they are hiring, but also how leadership opportunities are defined, how talent is developed internally, how succession planning is approached, and whether the organizational culture supports a broad range of leaders and leadership styles,” he said. “Attracting diverse candidates is only part of the equation. Organizations must also create environments where talented leaders can see themselves succeeding, feel welcomed and supported, and have opportunities to contribute and advance. Without that foundation, even the most well-intentioned recruitment efforts can fall short.”

Mr. Hartman explained that for boards and CEOs, that often begins with asking a few foundational questions: Does our leadership team reflect the perspectives and experiences needed to serve our stakeholders and achieve our strategic

(cont'd. to page 3)

It becomes a small world when you are connected to the right people.

A global firm with award-winning service and culture, DHR helps best-in-class organizations hire and develop top talent through executive search, emerging leader search and leadership consulting services.

Always Connected.

DHR
GLOBAL

JOBPLEX
A DHR COMPANY



Executive Search | Leadership Consulting | Emerging Leaders Search



Inc. Best Workplaces
2022 - 2026

goals? Are we creating opportunities for talented individuals to advance within the organization? Are our recruitment and evaluation processes helping them identify the broadest possible range of qualified candidates?

In their work, Academic Search has found that clarity around leadership competencies is particularly important. “When organizations focus first on the qualities, skills, and experiences needed for success—and then conduct broad, intentional outreach—they are often able to build stronger and more diverse candidate pools,” Mr. Hartman said. “Perhaps most importantly, diversifying leadership is rarely the result of a single hire or a single search. The organizations that have been most successful tend to view it as a long-term commitment that includes recruitment, leadership development, succession planning, and organizational culture. Over time, those efforts help create a stronger pipeline of leaders and position organizations to make more informed choices when opportunities arise.”

The CHRO role has evolved from a traditional HR leadership position to that of a strategic business partner and enterprise leader, according to Kelly Griffin, chief operating officer of **Kincannon & Reed**. “Several factors have accelerated this evolution, including changing workforce expectations, hybrid work models, AI and technology adoption, an increased focus on leadership and culture, and the need for organizations to build resilient and adaptable talent strategies,” she said. “As a result, today’s CHROs are expected to advise CEOs and Boards on talent strategy, organizational design, leadership development, culture, and business transformation while balancing traditional HR expertise with broader business and operational capabilities.”

“When recruiting for the role, organizations are prioritizing strategic business acumen, change leadership, executive presence, talent management expertise, and the ability to influence across complex organizations,” Ms. Griffin added. “Ultimately, organizations are seeking CHROs who can effectively align people strategy with business strategy to drive long-term organizational success.”

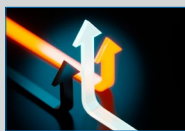
Ms. Griffin also agreed that AI is transforming the HR function by automating administrative tasks, enhancing talent acquisition and workforce analytics, improving employee experience, and enabling more data-driven decision-making. “As a result, organizations are increasingly seeking HR leaders who are technologically savvy, adaptable, and capable of leveraging AI and analytics while maintaining a strong focus on leadership, culture, and the human aspects of organizational effectiveness,” she explained. “The most successful HR leaders will be those who can balance technological innovation with strategic business and people leadership.”

Building Diverse Candidate Pipelines

One of the biggest challenges organizations face when building diverse leadership teams is developing sufficiently broad and diverse candidate pipelines while balancing experience requirements, cultural fit, and business needs, Ms. Griffin noted. “Additional challenges include unconscious bias, limited internal succession pipelines, and competition for top talent,” she said. “We help clients navigate these obstacles by encouraging a broad and

IN THE NEWS

Bespoke Partners Appoints Leader of People and HR Practice



San Diego, CA-headquartered **Bespoke Partners** recently named Dani Pfeiffer as a partner leading the people and human resources leader recruiting practice serving both software and industrials sector

companies. She will lead dedicated recruiting teams on searches for talent executives for private equity portfolio companies for the software and SaaS clients served by Bespoke Partners and industrial clients served by Industra Talent Partners, Bespoke’s affiliate.

“HR and people leaders are mission critical for execution of the value creation plan for a sponsor-backed company,” said Eric Walczykowski, CEO of Bespoke Partners and Industra. “Dani offers clients a rare combination of strategic human capital insight, private equity sector experience, and deep expertise in recruiting transformational talent leaders.”

inclusive search strategy, challenging traditional candidate profiles when appropriate, and ensuring the evaluation process remains focused on competencies, leadership capabilities, and long-term potential. Ultimately, successful diversity efforts require intentionality, commitment, and a willingness to consider talent from a wider range of backgrounds and experiences.”

Ms. Griffin’s advice to any CEO or board that is serious about diversifying its leadership team is to first broaden its definition of diversity. “Diversity certainly includes gender, race, and ethnicity, but it also encompasses diversity of thought, experiences, career paths, industries, geographies, and leadership styles,” she said. “Organizations often unintentionally limit themselves by repeatedly recruiting leaders with similar backgrounds and experiences.”

“The CHRO seat used to be about compliance and process,” said Mar Hernandez, co-founder of **NU Advisory Partners**. “Today it’s a business seat. The CHROs I place sit at the table for M&A decisions, workforce planning tied to strategy, and increasingly, technology adoption. Boards and CEOs want someone who understands the P&L, not just headcount. What I hear most from clients now: they want a CHRO who can translate business strategy into talent strategy, who’s comfortable with data, and who can hold their own in a room with the CFO. Change management skills matter more than ever too, especially with AI reshaping roles across the company.”

Ms. Hernandez also explained that AI is forcing HR to move faster than it’s used to. “Workforce planning now has to account for which roles shrink, which grow, and which transform entirely,” she said. “I’m seeing clients ask for CHROs who can lead reskilling efforts at scale, not just approve a training budget. The HR leaders in demand today are the ones who see AI as a talent and culture issue, not just a tech rollout. They need enough fluency to have a real conversation with the CTO, and enough judgment to know where human oversight still matters, especially in areas like hiring and performance management.”

(cont’d. to page 4)

When trying to build a diverse leadership team, Ms. Hernandez said that the most common obstacle is pipeline, or rather, the excuse of pipeline. “Companies say the diverse talent isn’t out there,” she noted. “It is, but you have to search harder and look in different places than the usual networks. The second challenge is what happens after you make the hire. Diverse leaders often get placed into roles without the sponsorship or support to succeed, and then people point to that as proof it didn’t work. My approach is to widen the search net deliberately, and to push clients on what support structure exists once someone’s hired. A search isn’t done when someone accepts the offer.

“Start with an honest audit of where you are now and why,” Ms. Hernandez said. “Not a vague statement of values, real numbers. Then look at your succession pipeline two or three levels down, not just the open seat. If you’re not developing diverse talent internally, no single external hire fixes that. And be patient but not passive. This is a multi-year commitment, not a search you run once and check off.”

“Diversity should be connected to the organization’s broader strategy rather than treated as a separate hiring initiative.”

“The last 18 months, which have been extremely difficult for our non-profit clients, have reshaped the CHRO role,” said Michelle Kristel, managing partner at **McCormack + Kristel**. “Organizations are navigating an incredibly uncertain funding environment, particularly those that relied on federal support. We’ve watched the dismantling of USAID, the termination of grants for anti-violence, climate, and mental health programs, and federal funding increasingly conditioned on organizations eliminating their DEI programs. The result has been program sunseting and, in far too many cases, reductions in force.”

“That reality has fundamentally changed what we look for in a CHRO,” Ms. Kristel noted. “Today’s nonprofit HR leaders need a deep, working knowledge of employment law as it relates to terminations and furloughs—this isn’t theoretical anymore; it’s part of the day-to-day work. They need real strategic and business planning skills, because they’re being asked to support organizational effectiveness with fewer people and fewer resources. And maybe most importantly, they need the emotional intelligence and change management skills to shepherd culture through reductions in force, mergers, acquisitions, and sometimes full organizational wind-downs. That’s heavy, human work, and it takes a particular kind of leader to do it well.”

“At the same time, we’re seeing significant legal and regulatory pressure on DEI programs, which has led many organizations to eliminate or dramatically scale back chief diversity officer roles,” Ms. Kristel explained. “Where often diminished versions of those positions still exist, we’re seeing them shifted under the HR umbrella,” she said. “The CHROs we work with understand the business case for diversity—they know

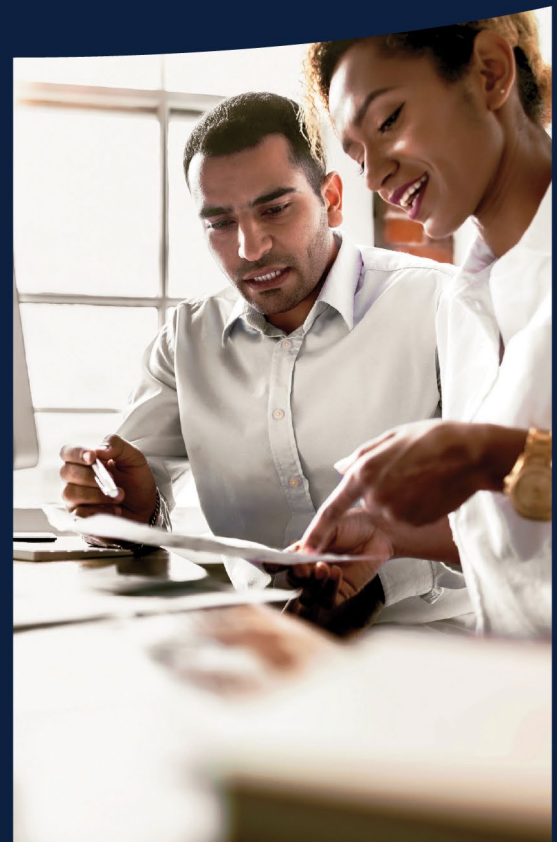
(cont’d. to page 5)



The AI platform for people, money, and agents.

The key to driving your business forward? One powerful AI platform that keeps your most important assets on track, every decision on point, and your fleet of AI agents at peak performance.

That’s Workday.



McDERMOTT + BULL

WE'RE PRO YOU.



Your Trusted Partner in
Nonprofit, Arts + Culture, and
Education Leadership.

Executive Search | Interim Leaders
High-Performance Coaching

MBEXEC.COM
917.680.6778

a diverse workforce builds stronger, more innovative teams. But something important gets lost when the CDO role disappears. When that position matured, CHROs had a peer at the C-level, someone to collaborate with and, honestly, sometimes push against, in service of the organization's DEI goals. That healthy tension drove better outcomes. Now, with the CDO role eliminated or watered down in so many organizations, the CHRO is left holding that responsibility alone."

"So the qualities we prioritize now go beyond traditional HR competencies," Ms. Kristel continued. "We're looking for leaders who can navigate legal complexity, financial constraints, and cultural stewardship all at once, who can carry the DEI mandate forward without a dedicated partner in that work, and who can do so in a way that keeps their organization's mission and its people intact. That's a rare combination, and it's exactly where we spend most of our search time today: finding the CHRO who can be both the steady hand in a crisis and the long-term architect of a healthier, more resilient culture on the other side."

"I'd push any CEO or board to be honest about whether the motivation is rooted in a genuine valuing of diversity, or whether it's more reactive—pressure from funders, optics, a moment in the news cycle," Ms. Kristel said. "That distinction matters enormously, because it shapes everything that follows. Diversity efforts that come from genuine conviction tend to stick. Efforts that come from external pressure alone tend to fade the moment that pressure lifts."

Over the past few years, the role of the CHRO has expanded well beyond the traditional oversight of talent programs, employee relations, compensation, and organizational policy, according to Michael Henry, managing partner of **Massey Henry**. "While these responsibilities remain important, today's CHRO is increasingly expected to serve as an enterprise-wide strategic partner, helping the organization anticipate change, build the workforce capabilities required for future growth, and translate business strategy into decisions about people, structure, and leadership," he said. "Several forces have accelerated this evolution. AI and automation are reshaping how work is performed, talent shortages are making critical capabilities more difficult to secure, and changing employee expectations are challenging traditional approaches to careers, leadership, and workplace design. At the same time, organizations are facing heightened pressure to improve productivity, manage transformation, and prepare for skills that may not yet exist at scale within the business."

As a result, Mr. Henry said that the CHRO is increasingly becoming a workforce architect. "Rather than focusing primarily on filling existing roles, the CHRO must help determine how work should be organized, which capabilities should be developed internally, where external expertise is required, and how technology can enable stronger performance," he added. "This includes rethinking job design, career pathways, succession planning, talent assessment, leadership development, and organizational structures. It also requires creating environments in which expertise and leadership can emerge at multiple levels, rather than relying solely on position or tenure."

(cont'd. to page 6)

"When recruiting for the CHRO seat, organizations are prioritizing a broader and more commercially oriented leadership profile," Mr. Henry said. "Strong functional HR expertise remains foundational, but it is no longer sufficient on its own. Boards and executive teams are looking for leaders who understand the business model, can connect workforce decisions to financial and strategic outcomes, and are comfortable operating alongside the CEO and other enterprise leaders. The role has shifted from managing the people function to actively shaping the future of the enterprise."

Mr. Henry said he would give this advice to a CEO or board that is serious about diversifying their leadership team but doesn't know where to start: "The first step is to understand the organization's current position," he said. "Before beginning a search, CEOs and boards should take an inventory of the leadership team and the succession bench beneath it. That includes examining not only demographic representation, but also diversity of professional experience, perspective, geography, industry background, and leadership style."

This assessment can help an organization identify where representation is limited, where succession pipelines may be too narrow, and which capabilities or perspectives will be increasingly important to the business, Mr. Henry explained. "Diversity should be connected to the organization's broader strategy rather than treated as a separate hiring initiative," he said. "It is also important to establish what success will look like. A general intention to improve diversity is difficult to translate into action. Boards and executive teams should agree on the gaps they are trying to address, how those gaps relate to the organization's future needs, and how progress will be measured over time."

Engaging an executive search or leadership advisory firm can be valuable at this stage, Mr. Henry pointed out. "The right partner can bring an external perspective, challenge assumptions embedded in the role profile, and help the organization understand how its requirements may be affecting the available candidate pool," he said. "The search process itself should also be designed deliberately. Organizations should review whether the role criteria are genuinely essential, ensure the candidate pool is developed through more than personal referrals, and use consistent assessment criteria across all candidates. A structured process helps decision-makers focus on leadership capability and potential rather than familiarity."

"Finally, organizations should think beyond a single appointment," Mr. Henry added. "Diversifying leadership is a long-term process that includes succession planning, internal development, and ongoing relationship-building with prospective talent."

The CHRO role has moved well beyond the traditional HR remit, according to Ted Moore, managing director, global HR practice leader with **Russell Reynolds Associates**. "The best CHROs today are not only stewards of talent and culture; they are enterprise leaders helping shape how work gets done, how organizations transform, and how leadership teams build the capabilities required for the future," he said. "Since the pandemic, the role has become more central to questions

(cont'd. to page 7)

YOU CAN'T BUILD THE FUTURE WITH YESTERDAY'S MODEL.



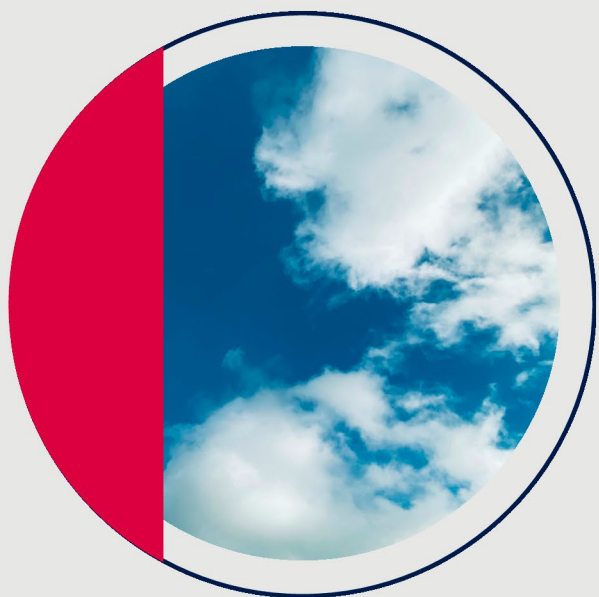
In a world moving faster than ever, leadership, scale, and transformation demand more than a placement. They demand a partner.

The race is on.

Who's running with you?

ZRGpartners.com

AMERICAS | EMEA | APAC



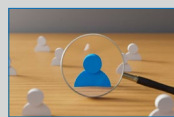
It takes talent to see
what's ahead and move
missions forward.

For three decades, Lindauer has
partnered with nonprofit
organizations to turn
transitional moments into
transformational opportunities.

Learn more at
lindauerglobal.com.

IN THE NEWS

Massey Henry Assists Kindred Credit Union with Chief People and Culture Officer Search



Toronto-based executive search firm **Massey Henry** has assisted in the recruitment of Andrea Vrbanc as chief people and culture officer of Kindred Credit Union. "We're thrilled to have served as a trusted partner of Kindred Credit

Union in the appointment of Andrea Vrbanc as chief people and culture officer," Massey Henry said in a LinkedIn post. "With deep experience strengthening culture and employee experience, Andrea is well positioned to align Kindred's people and culture with its purpose-driven ambitions. Congratulations, Andrea! Wishing you all the best in your new role."

"Andrea is a strategic, people-centered leader who anchors her work in values, transparency, trust, and care for others," Kindred Credit Union said. "Her thoughtful approach to leadership and organizational initiatives emphasizes psychological safety, strong leader alignment, clear communication, and structured employee engagement and pacing to sustain momentum."

of resilience, operating model design, succession, workforce transformation, and now AI adoption. As a result, organizations are prioritizing CHROs who bring broader business acumen, systems thinking, comfort with ambiguity, and the ability to operate across HR, technology, operations, and strategy. Functional HR depth still matters, but it is increasingly table stakes."

Mr. Moore also said that AI is already having a very real impact on the HR function itself. "In many organizations, HR is one of the functions where AI use cases are becoming tangible fastest—from recruiting and candidate engagement, to learning, employee service, workforce analytics, performance insights, and HR operations," he explained. "At a practical level, HR teams are being asked to do more with less: improve speed, personalization, and quality of service while also managing cost and complexity. AI can help automate transactional work, surface better talent insights, and free HR teams to focus more time on judgment-based, advisory, and strategic work. That means organizations are looking for HR leaders who are AI-fluent, commercially minded, and able to partner credibly with technology and business leaders—while keeping culture, leadership, capability, and accountability at the center."

One of the biggest challenges is that organizations often define leadership potential too narrowly, Mr. Moore explained. "They may say they want diverse leadership, but still assess candidates against a familiar model: similar backgrounds, similar career paths, similar leadership styles, and similar experiences," he said. "That can unintentionally screen out leaders who bring different capabilities, perspectives, or ways of solving problems."

Russell Reynolds encourages clients to think about diversity broadly, including diversity of lived experience, but also diversity of skills, leadership competencies, industry exposure, functional background, and problem-solving style. "As the CHRO role shows, the future leadership profile is changing: organizations increasingly need leaders who can operate

(cont'd. to page 8)

across functions, navigate ambiguity, lead transformation, and think in systems,” Mr. Moore said. “The first thing to get clear on is what the business will need in the future, rather than relying on what has worked in the past. From there, we help clients pressure-test role specifications, broaden candidate pools, challenge assumptions about “fit,” and assess candidates against future potential as well as past experience.”

Dramatically Impacting Success

“Increasingly, the CHRO is a critical part of the executive business strategy, versus being seen as an enabler for an organization with an acknowledgement that the right CHRO can dramatically impact the success of an organization,” said Sam Wallace, technology partner with **Wilton & Bain**. “CHROs are increasingly bringing a long term vision that touches, technology, strategy, people, communication and talent.”

“Today’s CHROs are expected to advise CEOs and Boards on talent strategy, organizational design, leadership development, culture, and business transformation while balancing traditional HR expertise with broader business and operational capabilities.”

“AI is an incredible tool for HR teams, to improve efficiency, reporting and data management, supporting data driven decision making,” Ms. Wallace said. “Every HR leader has to have a curiosity around how AI can support the function, and a clear collaboration with technology to ensure ethical and compliant use across the business.”

Ms. Wallace also told Hunt Scanlon organizations have always faced challenges when trying to build diverse leadership teams but in recent months this has been compounded by the dismantling and delegitimizing of global DEI initiatives. “The value of diverse leadership teams is well documented (cultural and financial) and companies need to take an honest look at their boards and executive as part of this process,” she said. “Understanding the starting point, can highlight institutional behaviors that exclude diverse leaders, in which case, external advisory work is needed.”

The goal isn’t simply diversify, that suggests a process for its own sake, rather than a meaningful and long term impact on the business, according to Ms. Wallace. “If there is an opportunity to bring in new talent or develop internal talent from within, the CEO and board need to establish a plan for the business impact and work into a talent strategy from there,” she said. “This creates a structure for roles that drive change and deliver results. As this plan evolves, the talent strategy has to be intentional about identifying diverse leaders who can fulfil the role. There has to be a process acknowledgement that diverse leaders engage differently and need to be managed accordingly. Old habits of network and referrals need to be critically assessed to ensure the easy, more of the same doesn’t win over the harder intentional change.”

TM² EXECUTIVE SEARCH



TM2 Executive Search partners with higher education institutions to identify and develop exceptional leaders who drive institutional excellence.

Our deep expertise working with HBCUs, PBIs, and HBCCs enables us to connect institutions with transformational executives who align with their mission, culture, and strategic vision.

Get in Touch

Hunt Scanlon HR/Diversity Recruiting Power 70

Academic Search Jay Lemons, President	(202) 332-4049	Heidrick & Struggles Lyndon A. Taylor, Managing Partner	(312) 496-1000
Acertitude Kevin O'Neill, Co-Founder & Managing Partner	(212) 861-0002	Herbert Mines Associates Brenda Malloy, CEO	(212) 355-0909
AGB Search Roderick (Rod) McDavis, Ph.D., CEO	(202) 776-0856	Isaacson, Miller Ericka Miller, President & CEO	(617) 262-6500
August Leadership Umrán Beba, Partner	(914) 319-3116	JM Search Phil Menzel, Managing Partner; Troy Vincent, Partner	(312) 619-3910
Bespoke Partners Eric Walczykowski, CEO	(858) 356-6731	Kincannon & Reed David Turner, President	(540) 941-3460
Blue Rock Human Capital Ruben Moreno, Founder & CEO	(941) 952-9555	Kingsley Gate Mike Bergen, Sr. Partner, Head of Global Markets & Global HR Practice Leader	(972) 726-5550
BoardWalk Consulting Sam Pettway, Founding Director	(404) 262-7392	Korn Ferry Alina Polonskaia, Global Leader D&I	(416) 365-4001
Bowdoin Group Dave Melville, Founder & CEO	(781) 263-5200	Leathwaite Chris Smith, Global Sector Leader	+44 20 7151 5151
BRYANT GROUP Sally Bryant, President & CEO	(972) 739-6030	Lindauer Deb Taft, CEO	(617) 262-1102
Buffkin / Baker Craig Buffkin, CEO	(615) 417-4383	Massey Henry Michael Henry, Managing Partner	(416) 705-0193
CAA Executive Search Jason Hanold, CEO & Managing Partner	(847) 332-1333	McCormack + Kristel Michelle Kristel, Managing Partner	(212) 531-5003
Caldwell Chris Beck, President; Elizabeth Bernich, Partner	(212) 652-6176	McDermott + Bull Sue Waterbury, Partner; Alex Verdecchia, Principal	(347) 923-7087
Calibre One Tom Barnes, Managing Partner	(415) 794-9952	Minority Executive Search Eral Burks, President & CEO	(216) 932-2022
Carrington & Carrington Willie E. Carrington, Principal & Founder	(312) 606-0015	N2Growth Tony Morales, Chairman	(800) 944-4662
CarterBaldwin David Clapp, CEO	(678) 448-0000	NGS Global David Nosal, Chairman; Paula Elmore, Managing Partner	(415) 369-2222
ChapmanCG Stefanie Cross-Wilson, President & COO	(818) 703-0446	NU Advisory Partners Mar Hernandez, Partner & Co-Founder; Ben Dewar, Partner	(786) 325-6681
The Christopher Group Nat Schiffer, Chief Executive Officer	(440) 588-8242	Odgers Kennon Kincaid, CEO	(212) 972-7287
Comhar Partners Bernard Layton, Managing Director	(312) 724-4000	ON Partners Lynda Robey, Partner	(214) 240-2178
Cook Silverman Search Victoria Silverman, CEO	(415) 342-2444	Riviera Partners Michael A. Morell, Co-Founder & Managing Partner	(631) 873-5789
Cornerstone International Larry Shoemaker, Vice Chairman	(770) 395-7225	Russell Reynolds Associates Jim Bagley, Managing Director, Global HR Practice	(415) 352-3300
Daversa Partners Joe Patalano, Director	(646) 490-4604	Shelli Herman Associates Shelli Herman, Founder & President	(800) 396-0595
DHR Global Christine Greybe, President, Leadership Consulting	(818) 216-6133	Slayton Search Partners Richard Slayton, Managing Partner & CEO	(312) 456-0080
DirectRecruiters Dan Charney, President & CEO	(440) 207-9678	Slone Partners Leslie Loveless, CEO and Managing Partner	(317) 727-5050
Diversified Search Group Aileen Alexander, CEO	(215) 732-6666	Solomon Page Lloyd Solomon/Scott Page, Managing Directors	(212) 403-6100
Diversity Recruiters Tony Wright, Founder	(877) 998-9092	Spencer Stuart Stephen G. Patscot, Practice Leader	(312) 822-0080
DRG Talent Lori Clement, Partner	(646) 237-5946	Steven Douglas Matthew Shore, CEO	(954) 385-8595
DRiWaterstone Doug Trout, CEO	(703) 294-6684	TriSearch Tony Gilliard, Managing Director, DEI Practice	(833) 258-0909
Egon Zehnder Cynthia Soledad, Global Head, DEI Practice	(312) 260-8865	True Keri Gavin, Managing Director, Head of Diversity Practice	(646) 741-2585
Ellig Group Janice Ellig, CEO	(212) 688-8671	Versique Tony Sorensen, CEO & Co-Founder	(952) 260-0930
Ethos Consulting Hang Bower, CEO	(281) 222-8967	Vetted Solutions Jim Zaniello, President	(202) 544-4749
FaithSearch Partners, Inc. Ed Fry, CEO	(713) 304-6870	WB&B Executive Search Kenneth Roldan, CEO & Managing Partner	(516) 743-3000
Frazer Jones Brad Law, Managing Director, Head of North America	(646) 717-9839	Wilton & Bain Tim Baker, Managing Partner; Chloe Watts, Partner	+44 207 621 3570
Furst Group Bob Clarke, Chairman; Sherrie Barch, CEO	(800) 642-9940	WilsonHCG Jean-Francois Vezina, CEO	(813) 600-4303
Glocap Annette Krasner, CEO	(212) 333-6400	WittKieffer Andrew P. Chastain, President & CEO	(630) 990-1370
Greenwood Asher & Associates Dr. Lili Rodriguez, Vice President & Managing Director	(850) 337-1525	ZRG Partners Kelly Lewis, Vice President, People Culture & Inclusion	(856) 685-1450

SPOTLIGHT

The New Playbook for HR Leadership



Chloe Watts co-leads **Wilton & Bain's** people & culture practice focusing on supporting clients with HR interim appointments. She joined Interim Management as a partner in September 2015, bringing multi-sectoral experience with a real depth of expertise in resourcing specialists in people strategy, HR, OD, change, reward, talent, learning & talent acquisition.

Ms. Watts recently sat down with **Hunt Scanlon Media** to discuss the evolving role of today's HR leaders, the growing influence of AI on the profession, the future of diversity in executive leadership, and the qualities organizations are seeking as they recruit the next generation of CHROs.

Chloe, what are some current issues facing HR executives today?

All executives in both the U.S. and U.K. continue to navigate a complex landscape shaped by accelerated technological change, shifting workforce expectations, and macro political and economic uncertainty. The biggest topic, AI adoption, is both an opportunity and a concern, requiring leaders to balance more automation with ethical working practices, to say nothing of how to value the human elements of work. Attracting and retaining talent remains critical, especially as younger generations entering the workplace prioritize purpose, flexibility, and development over traditional, linear career models. In this environment, developing career paths premised on skills development and broadening is still new ground. Across all levels, skills frameworks involving teaching, upskilling and reskilling are urgent priorities, with many organizations struggling to close capability gaps quickly enough for rapidly evolving job requirements. In addition, there is a big focus on performance management. During and immediately post-lockdown, organizations focused heavily on employee experience and wellbeing. Now employers are asking for something in return, namely performance. This shift in culture and expectations is creating tension.

What are some things expected from HR leaders today?

HR leaders today are expected to demonstrate strategic value, moving beyond compliance and people services administration (which is not to underestimate these core foundations) to drive culture, innovation, and business outcomes which create enterprise value. The role is increasingly cross-functional, requiring fluency in data analytics, change management, and apolitical stakeholder engagement. Meanwhile, DEI efforts, once central, are facing scrutiny and budget cuts, challenging HR functions to maintain momentum without executive-level sponsorship and/or investment. Mental health and well-being support are critical to combat the ever-increasing rise in burnout and disengagement. Left unchecked the cost of unproductivity becomes punitive.

What makes the best HR leaders?

Exceptional HR leaders must first and foremost be business leaders. They must read a P&L as readily as an engagement survey. They represent their core discipline at the top table and bring this perspective to commercial and strategic decisions but they cannot only be HR specialists. Indeed, there is an emerging trend to appoint other business leaders into the HR seat who shore up a lack of specialist expertise with strong practitioners at C-1 level. Bringing a blend of strategic foresight, emotional intelligence, and operational agility, the best HR leaders are business partners aligning people initiatives with organizational goals while championing values and culture. The CHRO shouldn't be different to any other member of the C-suite in being data-driven. They must lead functions who collate and deploy people analytics to inform decisions on talent, performance, engagement and reward. We are in the midst of digital evolution and there is no excuse for manual processes run off a spreadsheet. Proving the commercial value of strong people data is entry level stakes for the best HR leaders.

Anything else?

They are also change agents, adept at navigating and directing organization transformation -whether through digital disruption, cultural shifts, growth or restructuring. They add value in understanding how to manage both the process and communication through these disorienting periods. Crucially, top HR leaders are inclusive and empathetic, fostering environments where commercial rationale and positive culture co-exist. This is most tested during periods of change so they must use strong communication skills, enabling them to influence across the C-suite and build trust throughout the organization. Ultimately, the best HR leaders are those who can balance people and performance, creating cultures that are both compassionate and competitive.

Recently we have heard people say that diversity efforts at companies have not been in the forefront recently. Have you seen this or has this reverted in recent months?

There has been a noticeable recalibration of corporate diversity efforts in recent months. While some organizations have deprioritized DEI amid economic pressures and political scrutiny, others are doubling down with more strategic and integrated approaches. In both the U.S. and U.K., companies are shifting from statements of intent to measurable outcomes, embedding inclusion principles into core people functions like talent management, leadership development, and commercial programs such as supplier diversity and ESG credentials. Disclosure practices are evolving, with more firms electing to report workforce demographics and board diversity metrics even where it is not mandated. Importantly, intersectionality and belonging are gaining traction, moving beyond specific characteristics such as race and gender to encompass neurodiversity, socio-economic background, and multiple generations. AI is being

(cont'd. to page 11)

leveraged to reduce bias in recruitment and performance reviews, though it introduces new ethical considerations around the inclusive nature of the baseline algorithms. While the pace of progress varies, the overall trend suggests there isn't a full-scale roll-back on sustainable DEI practices. Instead, there is still a desire and belief in the benefits of embracing breadth of perspective, driven by stakeholder expectations, ESG frameworks, and the clear link between diversity and innovation. Executive Search professionals can play a pivotal role by advocating for diverse shortlists and inclusive hiring practices.

Discuss the lack of diversity at the C-suite level.

The lack of diversity at the C-suite level remains a persistent challenge due to structural barriers, historically narrow succession pipelines, and bias in leadership selection. Many organizations have relied on traditional networks and criteria that favor homogeneity, limiting access for underrepresented talent. Moreover, board-level inertia and risk aversion often slow progress, especially when diversity is viewed as a compliance issue rather than a strategic imperative. The result is a leadership landscape that fails to reflect the diversity of the broader workforce and customer base. It is taking time to dismantle these frameworks in favor of identifying potential over tenure and providing opportunity for greater visibility and exposure.

Why is it persistent and what is being done to add more balance?

However, change is underway. Companies are increasingly tying executive compensation to DEI metrics, expanding leadership development programs for diverse talent (including replacing exclusive programs for specific pools of employees which unintentionally shone a light on 'difference' rather than promoting 'equity'), and partnering with executive search firms to broaden candidate pools. Formal and informal mentorship and sponsorship initiatives are also highly effective and personalized experiences to help high-potential individuals navigate the path to senior roles. In the U.K., regulatory frameworks like the Parker Review are pushing for ethnic diversity on boards, while in the U.S., shareholder activism and Nasdaq's listing rules are driving transparency. The shift from tokenism to inclusive leadership models is gaining momentum.

What are the biggest advantages of hiring diverse talent?

Hiring diverse talent delivers measurable business benefits that go far beyond compliance. Diverse teams bring broader perspectives, leading to more creative problem-solving and innovation. Studies from the MBB and World Economic Forum consistently show that companies with above-average diversity generate significantly more revenue from new products and services. Diversity also enhances decision-making, as varied viewpoints challenge groupthink and foster more robust debate. The critical factor here is to create a psychologically safe environment where challenge is encouraged rather than vilified. From a talent perspective, inclusive organizations are better positioned to attract and retain top candidates, especially among younger generations who prioritize values alignment. Moreover, diverse teams improve customer insight and market reach, particularly in global or multicultural markets. They also

contribute to stronger employer branding, signaling a commitment to equity and belonging. Financially, inclusive companies outperform peers in profitability and resilience. For Executive Search professionals, promoting diversity is not just ethical—it's promoting competitive advantage that aligns with enterprise success.

"Companies are increasingly tying executive compensation to DEI metrics, expanding leadership development programs for diverse talent (including replacing exclusive programs for specific pools of employees which unintentionally shone a light on 'difference' rather than promoting 'equity'), and partnering with executive search firms to broaden candidate pools."

How are HR executives adapting their strategies to address challenges like hybrid work, employee well-being, and evolving workplace expectations?

Top teams have reimagined their workforce strategies to meet the demands of a transformed workplace. Hybrid work shifted the focus from presenteeism to performance and outcomes, prompting investment in digital collaboration tools, flexible policies, and inclusive remote onboarding. The rollback on hybrid policies particularly prevalent in the U.S. is creating some tension and potential competitive advantage for firms with more flexibility. While these global institutions typically cite productivity, collaboration and culture as key drivers for this decision, employees may disagree. HR leaders who direct more nuanced approaches by maintaining flexible hybrid models, especially among SMEs and knowledge-based sectors, could become more appealing as employers of choice.

Anything else a core expectation for HR leaders?

Employee well-being is now a core expectation from any people strategy. It is usual for companies to have mental health support, physical, emotional and financial wellness programs, and holistic benefits. The extent to which employees feel safe to take up these options is down to the lived experience of the culture. HR leaders would be wise to ensure well-intentioned policies and programs go beyond tokenism to build engagement, trust and, ultimately, productivity. Regulatory changes and social expectations are driving more transparent and equitable practices. Digital tools enable continuous listening—via pulse surveys and engagement platforms so there is no excuse for leadership to be detached from the culture. Acting early and proactively on feedback, goes a long way to increase the bond between employer and employee. HR leaders have a significant role to play on the executive team to curate an empathic culture focused on enterprise outcomes, optimizing productivity in a cost-effective yet psychologically engaging way. It is no small ask but intellectual dexterity, emotional intelligence and pragmatism separate the best from the good. Executive search professionals can support this evolution by identifying people leaders who thrive in ambiguity, champion inclusive cultures, and deliver tangible outcomes.

Top Searches Making News...

The Christopher Group Retained by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education for CHRO Search



The Christopher Group (TCG), a boutique HR executive search and business solutions recruiting firm, has been selected by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)

to lead in its search for a chief human resources officer. Managing partner, Pam Noble, and Partner Jeff Wilbanks are leading the assignment. "The ACGME plays a vital role in shaping the future of healthcare by advancing excellence in graduate medical education," said Ms. Noble. "This search represents an important opportunity to identify a chief human resources officer who can strengthen the organization's people strategy while supporting its mission, culture, and long-term impact. We're proud to partner with The ACGME on this significant leadership search."

Blue Rock Human Capital Recruits Chief People Officer for Michelli Weighing & Measurement

Blue Rock Human Capital has placed Rick Angeli as chief people officer of Michelli Weighing & Measurement. "Rick is a seasoned HR leader with a strong track record of building high-performing cultures, developing talent strategies, and aligning people initiatives with business growth," Blue Rock Human Capital said. "In this role, he will lead the company's people strategy, helping to drive organizational effectiveness and support continued expansion. Michelli Weighing & Measurement continues to invest in leadership that strengthens both its culture and long-term success. Congratulations to Rick and the entire Michelli team on this exciting milestone." Mr. Angeli is an accomplished human resources executive with over 25 years of leadership experience driving strategic growth and organizational excellence.



AGB Search Recruits CHRO for the University of Colorado System



AGB Search has helped to recruit Tony Gherardini as CHRO at the University of Colorado System (CU). Roderick McDavis and Margaret Plympton led the assignment. "We are thrilled Tony is joining our team,"

said CU president Todd Saliman. "He has a long track record as a public servant, deep expertise and has demonstrated that he is a thoughtful leader. And the added bonus, that he is a CU Denver alumnus, make him the perfect fit for our team in the CU system office. Tony is taking on a critical role and I have no doubt that his skill set makes him perfect for the university." Mr. Gherardini most recently served as executive director of the Colorado Department of Personnel & Administration.



BLUE ROCK
HUMAN CAPITAL

We Are In The Business of You

People are the heart of every successful organization. At Blue Rock Search, we match forward-thinking companies with top-tier HR talent. With decades of experience and a vast network, we don't just fill positions—we build partnerships that drive success. Let us help you land your next transformational HR leader.

YOUR VISION IS OUR MISSION



Ruben Moreno, Founder & CEO
ruben@bluerockhumancapital.com
865.562.2943 (o) | 865.805.9555 (m)

bluerockhumancapital.com

Hunt Scanlon Media Presents

PRIVATE EQUITY RECRUITING

Return on Investment: Creating Value with Talent

SEPTEMBER 29, 2026 | HILTON | CHICAGO

PREMIER SPONSOR **MINTZ
GROUP**

Listen to over 20
private equity talent
and recruiting experts.

Hundreds of private equity
leaders have already
signed up!

Tickets on Sale Now!

SIGN UP TODAY!

...More Searches Making News

Preng & Associates Recruits CHRO for Caturus Energy



Preng & Associates has recruited Mary Kenner as CHRO at Caturus Energy LLC. The completion of the executive search comes at a pivotal moment for Caturus, as the company advances its ambition to build

the nation's leading independent integrated natural gas and LNG business through its differentiated wellhead-to-water strategy. Preng & Associates partnered with Caturus to identify and secure a senior human resources leader with deep experience across large-scale energy organizations and complex workforce environments. Ms. Kenner brings more than 25 years of HR leadership experience across the energy sector. "We are proud to have supported Caturus in securing a leader of Mary's caliber at such a transformational stage in the company's growth," said David Preng, partner at Preng & Associates.

Lochlin Partners Recruits SVP of HR for the National Association of Corporate Directors

Lochlin Partners has placed Marian Stevens as senior vice president, human resources of the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) in Washington, D.C. "Marian's deep experience in talent development, organizational effectiveness, and culture will help NACD to continue building the internal capabilities needed to support our growth and deliver on our mission," said Peter Gleason, president and CEO of NACD. Ms. Stevens brings more than 30 years of human resources leadership experience spanning financial services, technology, and professional services organizations. Most recently, she served as chief human resources officer for the Federal Home Loan Banks Office of Finance. The National Association of Corporate Directors is the leading member organization for corporate directors who want to expand their knowledge, grow their network, and maximize their potential.



TM² Executive Search Assists Fort Valley State University with CHRO Search



TM² Executive Search (TM²) has assisted in the recruitment of Sean Lyn as the new chief human resources officer of Fort Valley State University (FVSU). President Amanda Washington Lockett and associate principals

Jessica Horton and Ndeh Anyu led the assignment. Mr. Lyn brings more than a decade of progressive human resources leadership experience in higher education. Before joining Fort Valley State University, he held a series of increasingly senior HR positions at Bethune-Cookman University, where he served as interim director of human resources, associate director of human resources, and director of human resources information systems. Fort Valley State University is a public land-grant historically black university in Fort Valley, GA.