



BE FUTURE READY

Three experts from the C-TEN share strategies to help navigate the ever-evolving talent landscape.

By Debbie Bolla

According to new research from Gartner, one of the top five priorities for HR leaders in 2021 is the future of work, and having the right talent is a critical piece to the equation. Working environments have changed drastically causing some workforce trends to accelerate rapidly. Gartner points to four, including:

- more employees working remotely;
- increased use of employee data;
- greater role of the employer as a social safety net; and
- wider use of contingent workers.

What are the others? To find out, we spoke to a trio of CHROs to get a pulse of what's happening at their organizations and in the industry. These experts—Linda Nedelcoff, EVP and chief corporate strategy, human resources and employee communications for CUNA

Mutual Group; Aida J. Rosa, CHRO for San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance; and Ginny Angilello, SVP and CHRO for Covanta—are also members of the CHRO Today Executive Network (C-TEN), a networking and professional development society for top HR leaders. From hybrid models to must-have talent grabbers, find out strategies to leverage in order to get ahead in the ever-evolving landscape.

HRO Today: What are your organization's most pressing talent issues?

Linda Nedelcoff, executive vice president, chief corporate strategy, human resources and employee communications, CUNA Mutual Group: We recognize the imperative to evolve the way we think about developing our workforce. In an increasingly competitive business

THE TALENT REPORT

landscape, rising complexity and the digital revolution are reshaping the mix of employees. A multigenerational workforce and a shorter shelf-life for knowledge places an importance on reskilling and upskilling. Talent mobility enables a culture of career development and mobility, encouraging employees to seek new opportunities beyond their current role and team. It can offer personalized learning and development, creates a growth mindset, enhances employee empowerment and sense of belonging, and builds sustainable talent pools.

In this new hybrid working environment, we are exploring ways to seek out feedback more intentionally from our workforce around career growth and development. Utilizing the voice of our employees helps us design and deliver experiences that provide individual growth and have a positive company impact. As part of this, we recognize some of our employees and leaders perceive in-person interactions as essential for career opportunities. We are committed to creating an inclusive approach that supports “face time” in less traditional ways so that all employees (including those based outside where we have physical offices) can engage and invest in their growth and development.

In our organization, we know that a number of our employees have significant tenure and likely will consider retirement in the next few years. Anticipating these changes and designing an employee experience for the future of work is essential. We are on a journey to “Reimagining the Employee Experience” and many of our key learnings from the last year have provided us with the opportunity to test and learn new ways of working, centering around what we refer to as “moments that matter” for our employees.

Aida J. Rosa, CHRO, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance:

There are a few factors that we are keeping our eye on, including employee retention and keeping employees engaged with limitations caused by COVID protocols. Competition is also a serious consideration. We are looking at competition with current salaries being offered while maintaining equity and how to sustain those higher rates once we get past this current state of hiring. And competition with organizations that are offering full-time work-from-home opportunities, especially when the bulk of our staff is front-facing and not able to fully do their jobs offsite.

HROT: What are your thoughts on the so-called Great Resignation? Fact or fiction, and why?

Nedelcoff: In our company, we aren't currently experiencing higher than normal attrition, but we are keeping a close watch as things continue to evolve in the workplace. We believe The Great Resignation could be more a reflection of existing employee experiences in some companies and in some industries. We are very focused on designing experiences that meet the needs of employees across the life cycle. To do this, we are investing in listening to our employees, exploring approaches that position us well now and into the future, learning from customer experience insights, and engaging a cross-functional team to finalize the strategy and prioritize solutions. We believe communication is critical and we are working to provide updates and help to connect the dots as we evolve people processes and practices. And as we continue to bring in new talent, we understand the importance of taking a balanced approach that values hiring for existing skill or relevant experience with potential to grow and contribute more. This commitment to potential can be a differentiator for us as a company and provide exciting and meaningful career opportunities.

Rosa: Fact. The service industry has touted that the customer is always right and pre-COVID, many customers leveraged that and at times treated employees poorly. Since COVID, many customers leveraged that and at times treated employees poorly, which is very draining for those working in this industry, therefore many are seeking a career change. This ties into people and company culture, which is why many companies are standing in support of their employees when they are mistreated and shifting their stance on the customer always being right.

Many colleges were offering free certifications and classes during the shutdown that allowed those who normally wouldn't have been able to afford it or those who may have already been considering exploring career choices to do so to a greater extent. This in conjunction with the flexibility of working remotely has opened up more opportunities.

Anyone who was already unsatisfied with their manager or organization reprioritized what matters the most and holds more value during COVID. For many, that meant putting their families first as well as seizing the day. This year some of our departments have seen an increase in seasonal hires leaving earlier than normal so that they could take some time to travel before returning to their

65%

of HR leaders report improving operational excellence as a business priority for 2021.

Source: Gartner

year-round employment or school. Some parents opted to just stay home with their kids or sought out work-from-home opportunities to spend more time with their families.

And don't forget about COVID burnout. During the shutdown many employees were deemed essential and continued working. This created a strain as they had to take on additional work.

Ginny Angilello, SVP and CHRO, Covanta: How we bring office-based employees back to the office and how we shift to a more flexible model is critical to get it right. More than 90% of our headquartered employees have been working fully remote for more than one year. We want more people in the office, but we don't want to lose employees either. We have developed a steering committee of our business leaders to align with the HR team on policy development and the move to the future of flexible work. Our leadership recognizes both needs: managing employee expectations of more flexibility and reopening the office to allow for more collaboration and development.

HROT: What offerings do you think are critical to attracting

and retaining today's talent?

Nedelcoff: There are several factors that come to mind.

- **Flexible/hybrid work options.** The key is choice. We believe in providing employees with the ability to choose a workplace that best supports their ability to deliver strong results. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach and transparent communication that acknowledges the importance of individual choice and that is supportive of company needs will help us to enjoy a more empowered work environment.

- **Work/life fit.** The last year has illustrated the importance of wellness and has shown us the positive impact that comes when the company sees and invests in the "whole" employee. We saw clear benefits in providing solutions so our employees could better manage the demands of virtual school as well as care for their mental and physical well-being during a very difficult time. This recognition of critical experiences and moments that matter has helped to move us forward in our commitment to a reimagined employee experience.

- **Continuous learning opportunities.** Employees want

to have opportunities to grow and learn new things, building their skill sets and capabilities. In a distributed workforce, we must deliver inclusive solutions that employees can utilize.

- **Continued commitment to company purpose, promise, and values.** Employees want to feel connected to the mission of the company and have a clear understanding of how the work they do makes a positive impact.

Rosa: Candidates will be taking a closer look at benefits. Insurance continues to be important, but not just for full-time workers, but mini plans for part-time staff as well. Even after years of hearing about medical health for all, many prioritized their health and need for insurance during this time. With the shift for more mental healthcare options, providing low-cost counseling for employees whenever possible would be great. Normally counselors are brought in if there is a death or traumatic event at the workplace, but how many organizations provided this to their employees, even if virtually, during the last 18 months?

Salary will play a larger role if other offerings are subpar. Providing time-off to employees so that they may recharge and spend time with their loved ones is a priority for many job seekers. Aside from offering it, organizations should also promote and encourage their employees to use it.

Development plans and succession planning are key. We need to provide employees with tools to grow their knowledge base and gain experience so that they may move up within the organization. This will help with retention, which is important as employee tenure has increasingly decreased. We went from folks working until they retired to working an average of three to five years among the younger generations. They want to feel challenged and like they are continually learning so they are more willing to leave positions for newer opportunities. This is where creating internal opportunities will help keep talent in house longer.

Angilello: Suffice it to say that our employees have demanded more from leadership in how we approach DEI and we have been working to develop meaningful changes in our approach. Even as we have had a CEO change and are going through a strategic business review, DEI remains at the forefront of our leadership and HR agenda. Last year, we developed a 10-year strategic road map with the goal of our diversity

OUR EXPERTS



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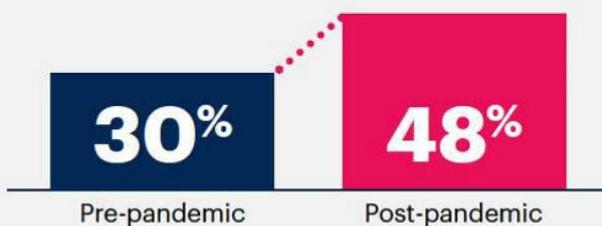
Percentage of the Workforce That Has to Use New Skills as a Result of COVID-19



n = 113 learning & development (L&D) professionals
Source: Gartner Coronavirus Polling on L&D

representation throughout the company aligning to U.S. representation overall, and specifically like the communities we serve. We aligned our strategy with the employee life cycle: recruitment, attraction, development, and retention, and developed both strategic goals and near-term goals in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Our CEO is a signatory on “CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion,” and we have dedicated a fellow to work on the “CEO Action for Racial Equity” for one year, in a mostly full-time role. We have seen the formation of three new ERGs in 2020 including “Black Professionals,” “LatinX,” and “Sustainability,” and we

Nearly half of employees will work remotely at least some of the time.



Source: 2020 Gartner Workforce Responsiveness Survey

have committed to a partnership with the Congressional Black Caucus to engage with HBCUs on recruiting for internships and early career development programs, as well as sharing resources for training and learning in lean, six sigma, and safety excellence.

HROT: How has COVID-19 shaped talent acquisition?

Nedelcoff: COVID-19 has opened opportunities for talent outside of our physical locations. Access to a broader talent pool has helped our hiring managers to shift their thinking of the perceived importance of being in the office to work. Candidate experience has always been important, but COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of how we engage and stay in contact throughout the hiring process. It has also highlighted the importance of the onboarding experience and the need to find ways to engage new employees more effectively as they learn their new role and understand all parts of the company, especially in a virtual environment. A key strength for us has been our ability to leverage our company’s strong and visible commitment to employees during the pandemic as a part of our employee value proposition.

Rosa: I think that job seekers are more empowered to ask for what they feel they deserve when it comes to offer negotiations (think salary, having time-off front loaded, incentive plans). This means that organizations must be more proactive when deciding comp packages during the position approval stage. Again, it’s not always the money being offered but the people, culture, and how employees are valued. Communication and transparency are also key because that is how you earn and maintain trust. If your employees do not trust you, it will impact morale negatively. DEI was important before—after last summer, it moved up higher on the list. Across the board, many organizations hired DEI leaders and implemented philosophies along with clear strategic action plans.

Angiello: We have updated our recruiting practices in the last year for corporate jobs; we don’t require in-person interviews and for operations/facility roles, we do everything through Zoom until we are ready to make an offer. Then we make sure the candidate gets to a plant, either the one they will be working at or a similar one. Quarantine requirements in many states posed challenges, but as travel restrictions lift, I imagine many managers may want to revert to in-person interviews. However, there is real dollar savings and employee productivity associated with these types of process changes, and I expect us to carry this forward to our future.

Where do HR leaders go for advice, support, and best practices?



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In perhaps no other role does this phrase describe daily life as well as it does for a CHRO.

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For more information contact Renee Preston at Renee.Preston@SharedXpertise.com or 215-606-9562.

hrotoday.com/c-ten

Re-Recruit to Retain



With The Great Resignation looming, organizations can avoid losing talent by following these best practices.

By Karen Crone

Recruiting and retaining the best employees are two sides of the same coin. In today's post-pandemic workplace, where millions are quitting their jobs amidst [The Great Resignation](#), it's more critical than ever for business leaders to retain their top talent. It's well-known that the cost of acquiring a new customer is up to [five times more than retaining an existing customer](#). The same premise applies to the workplace. Today's employees seek meaningful work, growth opportunities, and most importantly, a sense of being appreciated. Re-recruiting is the vital link between attracting and maintaining talent, and if an organization doesn't have a proactive approach, it has a major risk of losing top employees.

Re-Recruiting: What It Means

An employee's first day on the job can mean swag gifts, friendly greetings, special training sessions, and plenty of excitement about upcoming projects. Of course, all of this can come after that employee was courted for—and then accepted—a specific position. How can employers help

workers sustain this feeling? Re-recruiting, or performing some of these original recruiting approaches for an already tenured employee, will help deepen an employee's connection with their manager and the company. HR plays a critical role in ensuring this is done successfully. When employees understand the culture and inner workings of the organization, there is more invested in the overall relationship. Re-recruiting serves to cement the contract between the employee and the business, ensuring the organization continues to derive value from each employee.

Re-Recruit Rather than Replace

The pandemic has not only changed our physical workspace; it has also forced the hand of HR leaders to uncover new ways to conduct performance discussions and drive the employee career development process. As has been widely reported, the virtual office is not going anywhere, as [recent Pew Research cites](#) more than half (54%) of currently remote professionals now prefer to

continue to work from home.

Clearly, the employer-employee contract—what the employer gives and the employee gets—has changed. Employees are no longer traveling to the office daily, managers are no longer having face-to-face meetings with employees, and even the traditional onboarding process has become virtual. Given these workplace transformations, forward-looking companies must update their relationship with their employees. Every organization has people who are its future leaders, and those people are in demand more now than ever before. Organizations never want to find themselves in a position to save employees from leaving; top performers should already know they are valued.

Consider this: The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that on average it costs a company between six and nine months of an employee's salary to replace him or her. For each employee lost, the cost to the company could be between [50% and 250% of his/her annual salary](#). The Great Resignation has underscored the scarcity of talent available to organizations, and there's now overinflation in the labor force. It's an employee's market: Employees have more choices than ever when it comes to the salary they command or where they live as the remote workplace removed the location barrier.

Re-Recruiting in Action: What Have You Done for Me Lately?

How can organizations re-recruit top employees? First, look for “hot spots” or departments where you notice more turnover. Test for “weak spots” by having regular conversations with employees. Is an employee struggling with project overload? Not challenged? Are employer and employee expectations in balance?

Also, pay attention when a “beacon” person resigns. This employee is often considered a change agent or high performer, meaning that when they leave, others will wonder if they should follow suit. Then, think about ways current and long-time employees are being recognized.

Here are other best practices to take to re-recruit and retain.

- Facilitate targeted retention conversations with follow-up actions.
- Provide personalized recognition, including investing in

Every employee lost costs a company between **50%** and **250%** of their annual salary.

Source: LinkedIn Learning

skills and career development.

- Provide stretch assignments for employees that will inspire and challenge them, while helping them plan a targeted career road map.
- Identify and remove obstacles that an employee may encounter. What can empower them to best contribute to the organization?

HR: An Integral Part of the Re-Recruitment Process

HR can help facilitate the aforementioned steps while holding up a mirror to managers. Are managers recognizing the right people? Are they accessible to their people? HR can coach managers about who the potential flight risks may be. HR can also help coach leadership about identifying critical talent as well as promotions and compensation guidelines. A study of more than 400,000 people published in *Harvard Business Review* discovered that when employees believe promotions are managed effectively, [employee turnover rates are half that of other companies](#) in the same industry. And while money matters, there are intangibles that are equally important: Are people connected to their work? Are they invested in the company?

Re-recruiting is not a new concept. An employee should always be able to answer why they work there they work. The choice is simple: Re-recruit now or recruit, interview, and hire when someone resigns. Re-recruiting puts organizations in a proactive rather than reactive stance, and there's no time not to do it. This is a viable way to prevent The Great Resignation from landing at the office door.

Karen Crone is CHRO of Paycor.

The Great Resignation?

How HR can get ahead of employee turnover caused by changing worker preferences.

By Nirit Peled-Muntz

As daily life gets back to normal, companies must prepare for a different storm ahead—what pundits are calling The Great Resignation. In April, nearly 4 million people quit their jobs, with predictions of millions of more resignations to come as people across all industries consider their next moves. To combat this, companies must understand what's driving this shift: Why are people quitting, and what are they looking for instead?

Employees feel very productive working outside of the office. Research from Hibob shows that over 60% of employees feel productive working from home or in a hybrid work model (see Figure 1 on page 45). Employees want to continue to work remotely, as they have demonstrated they can do so while remaining productive.

Employees today are also looking for flexibility. The

move to remote work gave people plenty of space to think about priorities and what they value. For many, that means more flexibility, time with family and friends, perhaps a new career path, and the freedom to leave commuting behind. Companies are asking—or in some cases, demanding—that employees come back to the office, but many people refuse to go back to the way things were.

[Recent data from Hibob](#) shows that only 10% of employees want to return to the office full-time and more than a third of the workforce is very likely to quit if forced to do so. Overall, about 80% of employees prefer various hybrid work solutions (see Figure 2 on page 46).

As companies announce their return-to-office policies, employees are looking for jobs that suit their needs and working styles—whether part-time employment,

Figure 1

How productive is working from home?



remote work, or freelance projects that provide more autonomy. Employees who don't feel like their job is accommodating them are ready to see what else is out there. In April, 6 million new jobs were added, indicating a high demand for talent. Employees know this and are willing to seek out the better opportunities they know are out there.

After more than a year to think about what they want out of life, many people are considering new career paths, especially if they can leverage new skills acquired during the pandemic. For some, months spent in lockdown have revived old passions, and side gigs are becoming the main focus. Others are looking for more flexibility and a better work-life balance in the same industry.

How can companies get people to stay around? Employees want the autonomy to choose whether to work from home or the office: 79% feel a hybrid working model is the best solution. By offering employees the flexibility to work the way they see fit, companies support work-life balance while sending the message that they trust their teams. Employees feel they have proven themselves as worthy of that trust and realize many organizations saw significant growth while remote.

Organizations must also invest in company culture. Happy employees will be more loyal, even when a recruiter calls. They will talk about why they are happy, and a positive reputation will help bring in top talent. The responsibility falls on HR teams to find ways to foster and build a company culture that's no longer office-centric.

Make collaboration and community a priority and invest in team-building activities so that all employees feel like a vital part of the organization. Consider redesigning the office so it facilitates collaboration and teamwork. Turn the office into a destination that employees want to visit, one that offers added value to their own work and professional relationships, rather than somewhere they are forced to visit. Prioritize employee well-being by offering employees extra benefits, such as mental healthcare and more time off to relax and unplug.

Companies must demonstrate that they offer support. When employees feel valued, they'll know that if an issue arises, they have someone in their corner to help find a solution.

Flexibility is the key to employee happiness and retention. When asked what their ideal working model would be, employees overwhelmingly chose a

Figure 2

Preferred work arrangement post-pandemic

	Individual contributor	Middle management	Senior management	Total
Various hybrid arrangements	73%	83%	82%	79%
Work from home five days a week	11%	5%	8%	8%
Work from the office five days a week	16%	11%	10%	13%

remote or "at-will" model. The office is still beneficial in employees' minds, but the emphasis is on choice. Regardless of the pre-pandemic office working arrangement, 82% of employees believe that hybrid/remote work benefits outweigh the cons. Many employees feel that spending two hours commuting is not a priority, but rather work has to accommodate life. If one must be sacrificed for the other, The Great Resignation proves that people are willing to step away from work to make more time for life.

Forcing employees to return to the office will encourage The Great Resignation. The majority of U.S. workers' job satisfaction is very close to pre-pandemic levels.

Ongoing remote work, flexible work schedules, the ability to be autonomously productive, and the time saved by eliminating the daily commute are contributing and shaping the next wave of work where a hybrid working model is leading the way.

While it may have taken a few months to adjust, the past year has shown that a combination of in-person and remote work has a broad appeal to all employees. Companies need to realize that the next normal is here and make sure their policies put people first and help them perform at their best.

Nirit Peled-Muntz is chief people officer at Hilob.

LEAVING ZIP CODES BEHIND

Hiring in a digital world is expanding opportunities for employers and employees alike, but certain challenges remain.

By Debra Lopez

Home offices, kitchen tables, living room couches, an occasional parked car: As people across the globe spent the last year logging on to work from wherever they could, an interesting thing happened. Productivity increased.

In a [recent survey](#) conducted by Enterprise Technology Research, executives across several industries worldwide were asked to report changes in productivity and remote work during the pandemic and predict the status of those factors in 2021. With 49% of respondents reporting improved productivity over the last year, decision-makers surveyed said they expect permanent remote work to double to 34% in the coming year. Permanent remote work, they said, will prompt an estimated 2% budget

increase for the technology needed to support that scenario.

Currently, many companies are finding themselves in need of skilled employees who can fill the gaps left by a sudden shift in the marketplace. Small businesses that swiftly made the switch to remote during the stay-at-home order, for example, now require digital experts who can help them sustain that presence effectively. For job-seeking individuals whose skills fit today's changing landscape, the market is wide open.

How can businesses find and hire the right employees? With new ways to recruit, interview, and onboard, the hiring process has gone through a transformation. There



are upsides for both employers and employees when these new methods are maximized.

Reaping the Benefits

The upsides are plentiful when it comes to remote work. For employees, the flexibility to structure their day can lead to increased productivity while also contributing to a better work-life scenario. Companies looking to hire talent benefit from the ability to draw from an expansive candidate pool—one without the limitations of a commutable radius. The ability to cast a wider net regardless of geography also enables hiring managers to be more selective as they seek the best overall fit for a position. At a time when specific skills are in high

demand, that flexibility is a tremendous advantage.

That said, businesses must support their dispersed workforce with the technology and resources to contribute productively and achieve success. When reflecting on the business challenges of 2020, a PWC study [found](#) that when employees didn't have the tools to fully support collaboration, creativity, and communication, a lack of standardized technology impeded productivity.

A Step Ahead

Prior to 2020, the conversation around digital disruption was focused on long-range strategies for a shifting

Business leaders say they expect the permanent remote workforce to double to **34%** in the coming year.



Source: Enterprise Technology Research

marketplace. Businesses took a measured approach to upskilling their employees with critical skills and competencies, allowing them to bring the right talent and technology into their organization. The pandemic changed all of that, precipitating several years of digital transformation to take shape in a matter of months.

Today, companies are focused on bringing in specialists who are already up to speed on those competencies, and [rethinking their hiring strategies](#) to focus on relevant skills needed to drive their business forward. To successfully grow a skills-based team, businesses need to think strategically long before seeking candidates.

Analyzing job posts from traditional and nontraditional competitors can offer a glimpse into the emerging skills landscape, while breaking key roles into their required critical skills and competencies can indicate where internal gaps exist. Looking forward, leadership must study the horizon to determine what future talents will be in demand as their organizations move forward in order to create a robust talent pipeline.

Onboarding and Communication

Amid the rapid changes in today's workforce dynamic, one giant elephant remains in the room. Human connection, arguably taken for granted before 2020, is now an element that companies struggle to substitute in a virtual world. There is something to be said about the energy in a room when meeting in person.

Hiring managers can find some success reading body language and tone with the help of video platforms during the interview process, but training and orientation continue to present a challenge. Therefore, what can't be conveyed in person must be built into a well-thought-out, interactive onboarding plan.

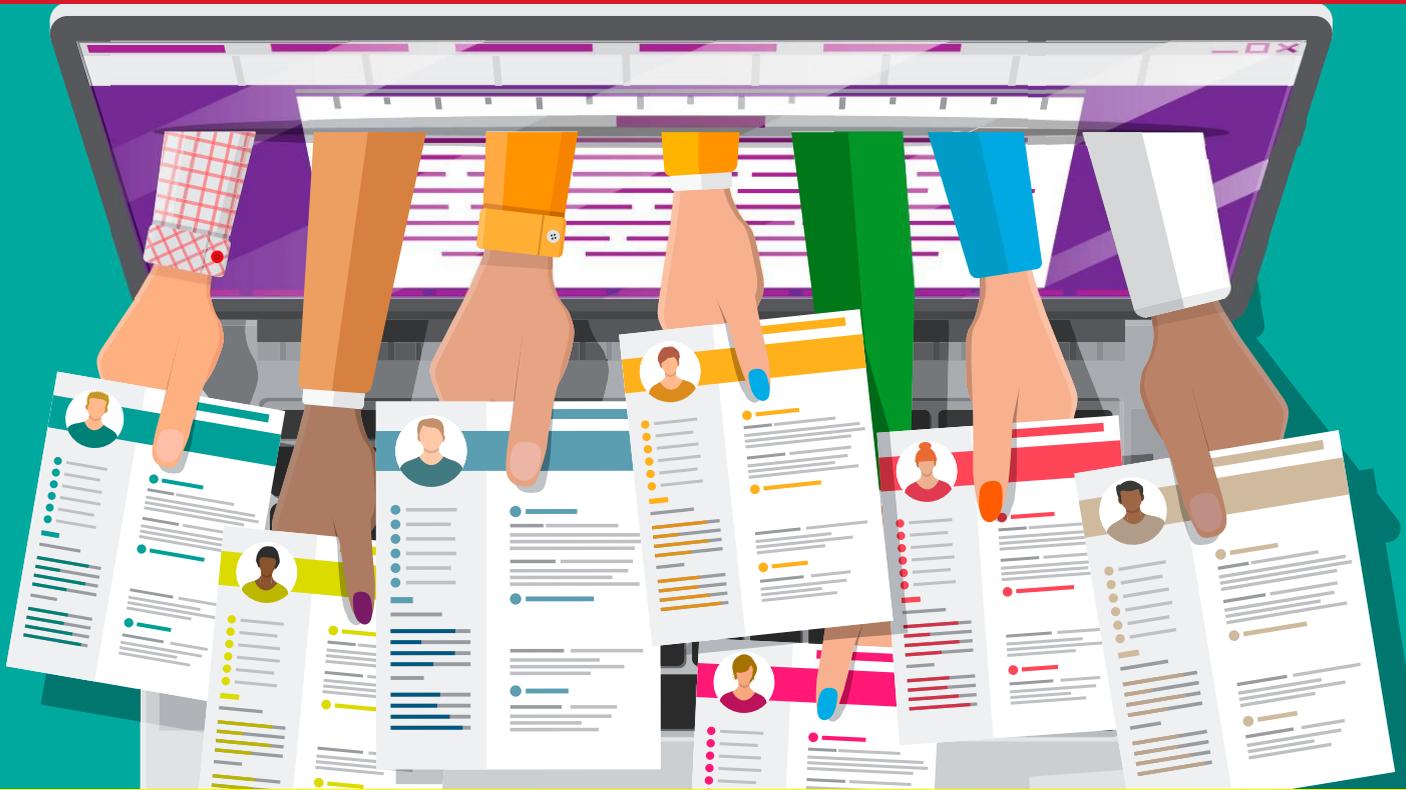
Employees need to feel an immediate connection when joining a virtual team. In preparation for day one, businesses can create that sense by ensuring new hires are set up for success. Sending any supplies or equipment in advance, making sure all logins and passwords have been sent ahead; these small steps go a long way in supporting a positive experience. When live video introductions aren't possible, senior leadership can record video addresses, welcome new employees, and describe their role in the organization, stressing the importance of the new hire's contributions to the team.

Beyond day one, an intentional communication plan that includes [frequent check-ins](#) is critical to maintaining communication within a distributed workforce. Team meetings and one-on-one sessions need to be prioritized to encourage dialogue around projects, challenges, and resource requests.

Mental and emotional health is a crucial consideration as well; taking the time to ask an employee how they are faring in their remote environment can foster a sense of compassion, while virtual team building activities can offer a needed boost to morale.

As business leaders reimagine the future of their companies post-pandemic, the hiring process is evolving to meet the moment. Building on the strengths of available platforms and methodologies, hiring managers have an opportunity to build a skills-based staff that benefits their business and workforce, fortifying both for the opportunities ahead.

Debra Lopez is the senior vice president of employee experience at Vensure HR.



Equitable Hiring Practices

By identifying strengths and pitfalls of technology and people, companies can reduce bias and improve their hiring processes.

By Portia Kibble Smith

Interviews are incredibly intimate and vulnerable moments in the hiring process. They are stressful for candidates and can be time-consuming for hiring managers across all industries. With today's renewed focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, companies are looking for ways to reduce biases and make their hiring processes more inclusive.

It's easy to look at artificial intelligence (AI) as a silver bullet or an "easy button." But will making interviews and recruiting processes less human help organizations eliminate human bias?

Not exactly. When looking at [industries like insurance or mortgage lending](#), there are examples of some

companies blindly utilizing AI without a human-centered lens. Dropping data into a black box of AI algorithms has been problematic because the equations can actually directly or indirectly discriminate against demographics of people based on specific characteristics like gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

If these tools are utilized without responsible human oversight, AI can codify bias and bake centuries of systemic racism and discrimination into the hiring process by amplifying pedigree bias. For example, if a candidate went to a top 10 computer science program and performed well, companies then optimize their hiring funnel by only recruiting software developers from that specific school.

42%

of respondents report interviewer bias as a reason why interviews are not an effective method of employee selection.

Source: LinkedIn



By identifying the places where technology and people are most useful and the areas most prone to potential bias, companies can create more equitable hiring processes. A good place to start, especially for hiring technical talent, is to look at how a human interviewer's presence impacts the inclusiveness of technical assessments. As more companies build diverse talent pipelines from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs), [Grace Hopper Conference](#), and organizations like the [National Society of Black Engineers](#), hiring teams should ask: Are code tests preventing the hiring process from being as inclusive as it should be? Should there be alternative ways to evaluate talent during the hiring process?

Organizations can analyze their hiring process and look for places where underrepresented candidates may be falling through the cracks. Below are some key considerations that recruiting and hiring managers should keep in mind when implementing hiring strategies to reduce pedigree bias.

- **Streamline talent pipelines.** Evaluating the hiring process by examining how companies build a talent pipeline and assess candidates' skills can offer valuable insight. Hiring diverse talent begins with deepening and widening the talent pool to represent the demographics an organization would like to hire, then ushering them through an equitable interviewing process.

Another critical step is ensuring all candidates are prepared. Make sure they understand what is being assessed and how, so they become familiar with the process. This can prevent a candidate who has an inside connection from having an unfair advantage and can better prepare neurodiverse candidates for a successful outcome. Programs like [Brilliant Black Minds](#) help to unlock opportunities for underrepresented software engineers by providing free practice interviews, feedback, and professional development opportunities.

This evenly levels the playing field and delivers on the belief that real-life human technical interviews are a step toward reducing biases regarding inclusive hiring efforts, especially for underrepresented communities.

- **Ensure bias isn't baked into the job descriptions.** To structure an efficient and equitable hiring program, analyze the open role and create a list of relevant competencies. The job description is the first opportunity to formalize the attributes that businesses want to find in a successful team member, so ensure these traits are measurable and inclusive. For example, when hiring for a typical engineering role, attributes could include project discussions, algorithms, or code reviews. These competencies are clearly defined and can be measured in an objective and structured way.

- **Don't overwhelm job candidates.** Be considerate of candidates' time: Don't load them up with too many assignments during the hiring process. For example, time-consuming coding assignments for a software programming position could discriminate against time-crunched candidates like those who have two jobs.

With the help of an inclusive job description, talent acquisition leaders should be looking for three to five core competencies at the interviewing stage. Once interviewees have been identified, hiring managers can examine other core competencies as the candidate field is narrowed down.

Train interviewers to deliver questions consistently and clearly to gain solid predictive insights. A 60-minute, in-depth interview to assess competencies should be all a hiring manager needs, especially if a structured rubric is in place to evaluate and compare candidates.

- **Measure the candidate's experience to monitor the interview drop-off rate.** It's crucial that hiring managers measure and track the candidate's entire interview

Keys to a Structured Rubric

A structured rubric is an excellent way to fairly evaluate and compare candidates. Keep in mind each scoring rubric will be unique, depending on the job's roles and responsibilities, but here are steps for building a rubric that interviewers can easily fill out during the interview.

- Identify what competencies are both relevant and important to assess during the interview.
- For each competency, list observable behavior and results as checkboxes (select all) and/or radio buttons (choose one).
- Write down an "algorithm" to help interviewers summarize a completed rubric into a single conclusion.

experience. Companies can do this by collecting candidate feedback after the fact. Another measurable indicator of how candidates feel about the interview process is the drop-off rate by stage.

If there are concerns about the drop-off rate of a specific interviewer, work with the executive until the issue can be addressed—not just for the sake of compliance, but also for the preservation of employer brand, because candidates will share their experience in some form or fashion.

A human and technology-driven approach is essential to making tech hiring more equitable and inclusive. However, keep in mind there is no "fast track" to building an inclusive hiring process. That's why it's up to companies to take the time to ensure they are thoroughly vetting the technology they use to recruit along with utilizing and training all parties to aid the process.

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