

PROMPTU

The Official Publication of Chartered Professionals
in Human Resources in Atlantic Canada

La publication officielle des conseillers en
ressources humaines agréés au Canada atlantique

magazine

SUMMER/FALL 2021
ÉTÉ/AUTOMNE 2021

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

RECRUTEMENT ET RÉTENTION

CPHR/CRHA
Atlantic Atlantique



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SHARON ROBINSON, CPHR
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CPHR NOVA SCOTIA




I AM HAPPY TO HAVE the opportunity to connect with CPHR members across Atlantic Canada through the summer/fall edition of *PROMPTU Magazine*.

It's been over a year since we first learned about COVID-19. In that time, the global pandemic has impacted so many aspects of our lives and workplaces.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with a diverse group of experienced HR professionals about the post-pandemic work world. Talent management strategies were top of mind for the group as we shared experiences and learnings from the pandemic. How we attract, recruit, select, engage and retain talent has changed since March 2020 and will continue to evolve as we move into widespread recovery.

In some industries, talent acquisition has shifted to a largely virtual approach over the last year, with many businesses hiring and onboarding new employees remotely. In an economy where job security has been greatly impacted, we see both a talent pool of qualified candidates seeking work as well as others who are cautious about considering new opportunities in an uncertain environment. HR has had to adapt to the evolving candidate market.

Engaging employees has always been a key driver of retention, and its importance is heightened in a remote or hybrid work environment. Providing the opportunity for flexibility, balance and the ability to disconnect are known retention factors and are even more critical now than prior to the pandemic. Engaging employees in your business' "why" and highlighting its social values provides a meaningful connection to your organization. Maintaining a focus on career growth through project work, stretch assignments and mentorship remain important contributors to employee satisfaction and engagement. Leaders are becoming adept in leveraging technology in new and creative ways to keep teams connected on a personal level as well.

As we approach our "next normal," HR professionals are at the forefront in leading innovative and effective recruitment and retention strategies for their organizations. I hope you enjoy the insightful articles from our contributing members. 



JODI MCMACKIN, CPHR
PRESIDENT
CPHR NEW BRUNSWICK

CPHR / CRHA

New Brunswick Nouveau-Brunswick

SINCE THE LAUNCH OF *PROMPTU* Magazine a year and half ago, HR professionals have managed major changes within their organizations. Talent attraction and retention is most certainly one of these areas where we have participated in an obvious shift from the traditional to the innovative. CPHR New Brunswick is pleased to collaborate, once again, with our colleagues across Atlantic Canada on this latest issue focusing on recruitment and retention.

Communities across Atlantic Canada have been analyzing and improving their recruitment and retention efforts for many years. Newcomers continue to be encouraged to plant roots here to allow our region to thrive now and in the coming years. Throughout the last year and half, we have witnessed an influx of interprovincial migration with our family and friends coming home after being away for decades. Just like the efforts put forth to recruit and retain people in this region, organizations are focusing on two key cultural elements when it comes to talent: building genuine connections and aligning values.

Onboarding efforts continue to be designed to foster a sense of belonging for new hires within a virtual environment. For many employees, their closest collaborators are teammates they have never met in person. As HR professionals, we are aware that building strong and genuine connections with employees is key to retaining talent and an important part of successful business leadership. In Atlantic Canada, relationship building and fostering a sense of community has often been viewed as an organic process that shouldn't, necessarily, involve concerted efforts. However, virtual connections have given us the opportunity to connect in more intentional ways where we can focus on having real conversations, face issues head on and dig deeper to resolve issues collaboratively.

The Atlantic Canadian culture is celebrated for the values we hold: humility, gratitude, fortitude and community. Newcomers and other Canadians are coming here to live and raise their families because their values align with our way of life. When it comes to recruitment and retention within the corporate world, the concept is the same. HR professionals appreciate how important attracting candidates who share the company values is. From there, the key to retaining talent is living the values in everything we do while growing, learning and evolving together.

On behalf of CPHR New Brunswick, it is our hope you are living and working in a culture that not only is designed to attract and retain the right talent, but is one you can celebrate. ■



JODI MCMACKIN, CPHR
PRÉSIDENTE
CRHA NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

CPHR / CRHA

New Brunswick Nouveau-Brunswick

DEPUIS LE LANCEMENT DU MAGAZINE *PROMPTU* il y a un an et demi, les conseillers et conseillères en RH ont géré des changements majeurs au sein de leur organisation. L'attraction et le maintien en poste de la main-d'œuvre sont très certainement l'un des domaines dans lequel nous avons effectué un virage évident entre l'approche traditionnelle et l'innovation. CRHA Nouveau-Brunswick se réjouit de collaborer, une fois de plus, avec ses collègues de tout le Canada atlantique pour ce nouveau numéro axé sur le recrutement et le maintien en poste de la main-d'œuvre.

Les collectivités du Canada atlantique analysent et améliorent leurs efforts de recrutement et de maintien en poste depuis de nombreuses années. On continue d'encourager les nouveaux arrivants à s'enraciner ici pour permettre à notre région de prospérer dès maintenant et dans les années à venir. Au cours de la dernière année et demie, nous avons été témoins d'une migration inter-provinciale importante, nos familles et nos amis revenant au berceau après des décennies d'absence. Les organismes qui ont déployé des efforts pour recruter et garder les gens dans la région, se concentrent sur deux éléments culturels clés lorsqu'il s'agit de talents : établir des liens authentiques et aligner les valeurs.

Les efforts d'intégration continuent de viser à favoriser le sentiment d'appartenance des nouvelles recrues dans un environnement virtuel. Pour de nombreux employés, leurs collaborateurs les plus proches sont des coéquipiers qu'ils n'ont jamais rencontrés en personne. En tant que conseillers et conseillères en RH, nous sommes conscients que l'établissement de liens solides et authentiques avec les employés est essentiel pour garder les talents ici et qu'il constitue un élément important d'un leadership couronné de succès. Au Canada atlantique, l'établissement de relations et le développement d'un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté ont souvent été considérés comme un processus organique ne nécessitant pas nécessairement d'efforts concertés. Cependant, les échanges virtuels nous ont donné l'occasion d'établir des liens de façon plus intentionnelle, ce qui nous permet d'avoir de vraies conversations, d'affronter les problèmes de front et de creuser davantage pour les résoudre en collaboration.

On fait l'éloge de la culture du Canada atlantique pour ses valeurs d'humilité, de gratitude, de force d'âme et d'esprit communautaire. Les nouveaux arrivants et les autres Canadiens viennent ici pour vivre et élever leur famille parce que leurs valeurs correspondent à notre mode de vie. Lorsqu'il s'agit de recrutement et de maintien en poste dans le monde des affaires, le concept est le même. Les conseillers et conseillères en RH savent combien il est important d'attirer des candidats qui partagent les valeurs de l'entreprise. À partir de là, la clé pour retenir les talents est de vivre les valeurs dans tout ce que nous faisons tout en grandissant, en apprenant et en évoluant ensemble.

CRHA Nouveau-Brunswick espère que vous vivez et travaillez dans une culture qui a été conçue non seulement pour attirer et conserver les bons talents, mais qui vous permettent de célébrer.

MESSAGE FROM CPHR NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR




LEROY MURPHY, CPHR
PRESIDENT
CPHR NEWFOUNDLAND &
LABRADOR



I'M VERY PROUD TO BE part of another edition of *PROMPTU*. This edition's theme is near and dear to my heart, as I spent quite a number of years working in recruitment and selection and have taught this subject a number of times at Memorial University. Recruitment and selection is one of our bread and butter tasks in HR. While the attention given to some themes in HR rise and fall as they come into focus and then wane, the need for quality recruitment and selection has not changed for decades.

While COVID-19 has not changed the need for great recruitment and selection procedures, it has led to some adjustments in the tools we use. With more employees working remotely, organizations have recognized that recruitment need not be local. This has increased reliance on various digital tools and methods to enhance the process. We will likely never turn back.

I look forward to reading the articles in this edition and I hope readers find them useful to their own organizations. 


MESSAGE FROM CPHR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



KELLY DRUMMOND, CPHR
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CPHR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT, "People are an organization's most valuable asset." The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how true that statement really is. As HR professionals, we need to reflect on the past year and have a renewed focus on the human element of our work. Many staff have persevered; they have shown resilience and tremendous work ethic throughout the pandemic. However, there are still many people who are vulnerable. How do we re-engage and build them back up? How do we help them recalibrate their mindset and skill set? We do this by supporting and preparing our people through change, highlighting new opportunities, adapting to post-COVID norms and caring.

Organizations need to make a choice to capitalize on post-COVID opportunities such as flexible work environments, virtual platforms and technological advancements. Their decisions will have a significant impact on their ability to recruit and retain talent. HR teams can help support their leaders and staff adjust to the disruption that COVID has caused, however we too will need to revisit our practices and move away from some of our prescribed approaches. This edition of *PROMPTU* will open our minds to new strategies regarding recruitment and retention, a timely topic as we rebuild post-COVID. 

The Human Approach to Leadership

The leader you need to attract and retain employees in the new era of work

By Erin Steele, Human Resources Analyst, City of Moncton

THE PANDEMIC HAS FUNDAMENTALLY changed the way we view our lives. The uncertainty of the past year has unexpectedly provided many of us with a new perspective as we re-evaluate our priorities and determine what is most important to us, both personally and professionally. This mindset shift has a direct impact on employment and human resource professionals are facing unprecedented retention issues. Organizations are seeing long-term absences and employees want more fulfilling and rewarding career opportunities. The boomers have finally pulled the pin and early retirements are on the rise. And why not? If the current state of social injustices have taught us anything, things need to change. Humanity is at stake.

So, how can organizations adapt to this change? How can organizations expect to retain and attract candidates that have become increasingly selective? How can they better connect with their existing employees? **Through leadership.** The retention of employees is going to be reflected by the leaders they support. One of the most important connections employees have to their organization and its culture is through their leaders. It is through leadership that employees experience their workplaces. Leaders demonstrate the values and set the tone of

Continued on page 10



L'approche humaine du leadership

Le dirigeant qu'il faut être pour attirer et garder les employés en cette nouvelle ère du travail

Par Erin Steele, Analyste en ressources humaines, Ville de Moncton

LA PANDÉMIE A FONDAMENTALE-ment changé notre façon de voir la vie. L'incertitude de l'année écoulée a, de manière inattendue, offert à nombre d'entre nous une nouvelle perspective en nous amenant à réévaluer nos priorités et à déterminer ce qui est le plus important pour nous sur les plans personnel et professionnel. Cette volte-face a des répercussions directes sur l'emploi, et les conseillers et conseillères en ressources humaines sont confrontés à des problèmes de maintien en poste sans précédent. Les organisations voient les absences se prolonger, et les employés veulent des possibilités de carrière plus satisfaisantes et plus gratifiantes. Les baby-boomers ont finalement décidé de lâcher prise, et les retraites anticipées sont en hausse. Et pourquoi pas ? L'état actuel des injustices sociales nous a appris que les choses doivent changer. L'humanité est en jeu.

Alors comment les organisations peuvent-elles s'adapter à ce changement ? Comment les organisations peuvent-elles espérer retenir et attirer des candidats devenus de plus en plus sélectifs ? Comment peuvent-elles mieux se rapprocher de leurs employés actuels ? **C'est par leur leadership.** La fidélisation des employés va se refléter dans les

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an organization. Human resources professionals are keenly aware of what happens to poorly managed employees. The adage still rings true today: people leave managers, not organizations.

In the face of uncertainty, it has become abundantly clear that technical aptitudes have taken a backseat and the need for a more **human approach** to management is required. The soft skills (the more human-focused skills) that employees are demanding of their leaders are adaptability, self-awareness and empathy. These skills should be at the forefront of all talent acquisition and succession planning strategies to help attract and retain the right individuals to your organization.

Adaptability is flexibility. Having the ability to adapt to changing environments, perspectives and personalities can make or break trust with employees. One of the most difficult aspects of being a leader is adapting our styles to meet that of our employees. Too often, it is employees that find themselves adapting their style to meet that of their leaders, hindering their full potential. Leaders who can understand individual

needs and personal work styles will provide employees with opportunities to demonstrate their strengths.

Self-awareness is “how clearly we see our own values, passions, aspirations, fit with our environment, reactions (including thoughts, feelings, behaviours, strengths, and weaknesses) and [our] impact on others.”¹ If a leader better understands themselves and their impact on others, they are better equipped to respond to situations and people. Employees will look to (unconsciously or not) their leaders on how they respond to failure, stress and negative emotions. The ability to recognize our impact on others can make the difference between a positive and negative work environment.

Empathy and understanding is the gateway to buy-in and trust with employees. Employees more than ever want to be seen, valued and heard. A leader who is able to acknowledge and understand different ideas, perspectives and circumstances will create an environment of trust. In turn, employees will feel valued, opening the door for real, honest and tough conversations.

Demands of the workforce are changing, and recruitment and retention strategies need to adapt. While education and experience are imperative, the need for a more human-centred approach to leadership is emerging. Human resources professionals need to look beyond typical technical aptitudes and toward the skills sets that will allow for better connections to employees. Employees are facing unprecedented uncertainties and need leaders who can connect and face the uncertainties along with them. ■



Erin Steele, CPHR, RPR is a human resources analyst for the City of Moncton with a passion for recruitment, forward thinking and maximizing individual strengths. You can reach Erin at erin.steele@moncton.ca.

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dirigeants qu'ils soutiennent. L'un des liens les plus importants que les employés entretiennent avec leur organisation et sa culture passe par ses dirigeants. C'est le leadership qui détermine l'expérience que chaque employé a de son milieu de travail. Les dirigeants incarnent les valeurs et donnent le ton d'une organisation. Les conseillers et conseillères en ressources humaines sont parfaitement conscients de ce qui arrive aux employés mal gérés. L'adage reste vrai aujourd'hui : les employés quittent les gestionnaires plus souvent qu'ils ne quittent l'entreprise.

Face à l'incertitude, il est devenu tout à fait clair que les aptitudes techniques sont passées au second plan et qu'il est nécessaire d'adopter **une approche plus humaine** de la gestion. Les compétences non techniques (les compétences plus humaines) que les employés exigent de leurs dirigeants sont l'adaptabilité, la conscience de soi et l'empathie. Ces compétences devraient figurer au premier plan de toutes les stratégies de recrutement de talents et de planification de la relève

afin d'attirer et de retenir les bonnes personnes dans votre organisation.

L'adaptabilité est synonyme de flexibilité. La capacité à s'adapter à des perspectives, des personnalités et des environnements changeants peut favoriser la confiance des employés ou la détruire. L'un des aspects les plus difficiles du rôle de dirigeant consiste à adapter son style à celui de ses employés. Trop souvent, ce sont les employés qui doivent adapter leur style à celui de leurs dirigeants, ce qui entrave leur plein potentiel. Les dirigeants capables de comprendre les besoins individuels et les styles de travail personnels donneront aux employés l'occasion de mettre en évidence leurs points forts.

La conscience de soi est la clarté avec laquelle nous percevons nos propres valeurs, passions, aspirations, adéquations avec notre environnement, réactions (y compris les pensées, sentiments, comportements, forces et faiblesses) et [notre] impact sur les autres.¹ Si un dirigeant se comprend mieux et comprend son impact sur les autres, il est mieux équipé

pour réagir aux situations et aux personnes. Les employés se tourneront (inconsciemment ou non) vers leurs dirigeants pour savoir comment réagir à l'échec, au stress et aux émotions négatives. La capacité à reconnaître notre impact sur les autres peut être l'élément charnière entre un environnement de travail positif et un environnement de travail négatif.

L'empathie et la compréhension favorisent l'appui et la confiance des employés. Plus que jamais, les employés veulent être vus, valorisés et entendus. Un dirigeant capable de reconnaître et de comprendre les différentes idées, perspectives et circonstances créera un environnement de confiance. Pour leur part, les employés se sentiront valorisés, ce qui favorisera les conversations réelles, franches et difficiles.

Les exigences de la main-d'œuvre évoluent, et les stratégies de recrutement et de maintien en poste des employés doivent s'adapter. Si la formation et l'expérience sont impératives, le besoin d'une approche plus humaine du leadership se fait sentir. Les conseillers et conseillères en ressources humaines doivent regarder au-delà des aptitudes techniques habituelles et s'intéresser aux compétences qui permettront d'établir de meilleurs liens avec les employés. Les employés sont confrontés à des incertitudes sans précédent et ont besoin de dirigeants capables d'établir des liens et d'affronter ces incertitudes avec eux. ■



Erin Steele, CRHA, RPR, travaille comme analyste en ressources humaines pour la ville de Moncton. Passionnée de recrutement, soucieuse de toujours être à l'avant garde des pratiques, elle croit fortement au développement du potentiel humain. Vous pouvez joindre Erin à erin.steele@moncton.ca.

SOURCE:

1. Eurich, T. "What Self-Awareness Really Is (and how to cultivate it)." *Harvard Business Review*. 4 January 2018. hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it

FEATURE

Adapting Retention Strategies in 2021

By Gillian A. Pendlebury, CPHR, Partner & Senior Recruitment Consultant, JMS Accountant & Administrative Staffing



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YOU IDENTIFIED A NEED

- ✓ Defined the role and requirements
- ✓ Posted the opportunity
- ✓ Sourced, screened, and interviewed applicants
- ✓ Completed a successful hiring process

GREAT! NOW WHAT?

In the previous issue of *PROMPTU*, we explored the importance and value in hiring diverse teams and accessing broader talent pools. But once we have those hiring practices in place, how do we retain that talent?

Atlantic Canada continues to experience challenges, such as the retention of immigrants, rural development, unique industry needs, seasonal fluctuations and an aging population. The global pandemic has also placed significant constraints on our local economy. Now more than ever, companies are focusing on their people. So, what are best practices in retention and how do we adapt? The cost of turnover is a key reason to focus on retention strategies. While the impact of losing an employee can vary, it is estimated to cost anywhere from 20 to 40 per cent of an annual salary.^{1,2} This quantification – while very helpful when HR is emphasizing the financial burden to management – certainly does not encompass the full impact of turnover. A constant revolving door of staff can significantly affect morale, inspire gossip, impact the reputation of the organization and ultimately lead to a reduced applicant pool.

Some popular retention strategies include ensuring competitive compensation packages (stay familiar with local market and connect with industry professionals), having a thorough and complete orientation process, providing flexible environments that create fair and realistic working conditions, offering professional development opportunities and delivering continuous feedback (i.e., not simply annual reviews).³

In the wake of COVID-19, companies have had to implement new onboarding processes, work-from-home accommodations and remote work technology, as well as offer more creative and competitive benefits. These adaptations happened swiftly and the response from local organizations has been nothing less than impressive.

1. Onboarding processes have had to be largely self led and virtual. New hire training has migrated from the traditional in-person format to self-directed learning where the new employee reviews prepared manuals and navigates systems independently. Ensuring procedures are



The cost of turnover is a key reason to focus on retention strategies.

current and detailed will alleviate questions and allow for hands-on, practical learning. Consistent and timely check-ins with other staff creates a sense of camaraderie and can allow for an increased sense of trust from management.

2. Supporting remote work was perhaps the most significant challenge organizations adapted to in 2020, and the response has been notable. While there were companies that had existing processes in place to accommodate the occasional need for an employee to work from home, most were catapulted into this new normal.⁴ As a result of the new remote work environment, employers could access a broader pool of candidates and hire outside their traditional geographic boundaries. By providing staff with the required resources and clearly defined goals/expectations, employees enjoy new levels of autonomy. Both employers and employees have proven they are able to thrive and adapt in an unprecedented climate.

3. While building technical capabilities and infrastructure can be a costly task upfront, it can lead to increased productivity, improved efficiencies and an enhanced sense of autonomy among staff.⁵ Companies have explored their documentation processes, meeting requirements and even communication styles, allowing for more streamlined operations and the elimination of redundant practices.

4. Although it has always been a major component of attracting talent, offering creative compensation packages now has an even greater influence on an employee's decision to stay. It is no longer simply about offering an attractive salary – although ensuring market relevance is paramount – rather, employers also need to offer benefits that support work-life balance and overall health and wellness.

The Globe & Mail's list of Canada's Top Employers for 2021 showcases organizations that prioritize the safety and well-being of their employees by way of enhanced benefits including access to virtual health care, increases in expense subsidizations, mental health initiatives and various other creative ways to reimburse employees for health and wellness expenses.⁶

Turnover can be one of the most significant financial strains on an organization, and it can also impact morale, reputation and organizational culture. Hiring methods will continue to change and evolve, but nothing can replace that fundamental human connection and building those relationships from the beginning. It remains a priority to examine the totality of what sets a company apart – not just from its direct competitors, but also from organizations offering similar opportunities within various local industries. Atlantic Canada certainly has endless qualities to entice people to come and visit including hospitality, experiences and sheer beauty. It is creating awareness for those that reside here, and for those that hope to build a life here, that will showcase exactly what our businesses have to offer. ■



Gillian A. Pendlebury, CPHR, is partner and senior recruitment consultant at JMS Accountant Staffing and Administrative Staffing. With a bachelor of commerce degree and a certificate in human resource management (2005) from Saint Mary's University, Gillian gained experience in administrative, client service and human resource support roles before joining Accountant Staffing and Administrative Staffing in 2007. As a senior recruitment consultant, Gillian manages all the recruitment for administrative and office management roles plus entry-level accounting and finance

positions. Having completed her CPHR designation in 2013 and becoming a partner in 2016, she is a key contributor to the ongoing success and will continue to lead and grow her division by providing local clients with high professional standards.

Accountant Staffing is the only specialist recruitment firm in Atlantic Canada focusing on accounting and finance positions. We assist employers with junior to senior level and temporary or permanent staffing requirements. Established in 2002, Accountant Staffing is based in Halifax and offers recruitment services throughout Nova Scotia. Our consultants have knowledge in every aspect of the accounting market and have developed relationships with accounting professionals throughout our province and beyond. Over time, we recognized the need for an administrative staffing division that held the same, high standards of service and a specialized focus and began Administrative Staffing in 2006.

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Three Areas HR Can Influence Talent Decisions

By Amanda Penney

OVER THE LAST YEAR, IT HAS become clear that HR professionals are at the heart of responding to crisis and act as a guiding compass for decision makers. This experience of being deeply rooted in the trenches gives HR professionals a unique lens into what works and what does not, identifying the systemic organizational flaws that often become magnified during a crisis.

The profile and credibility of HR has been elevated as organizational leaders tasked them to manage temporary layoffs, navigate government funding, transition employees to remote working and ensure new and current health and safety protocols are implemented, all while putting employee mental well-being at the forefront.

The events of the last 12 months have also accelerated too long delayed, necessary responses to addressing both social and organizational diversity, equity and inclusion inequities and shortcomings. There is no tolerance for postponement and equally, organizations require the best and brightest of all talent to succeed in the realities of the current and likely future environment.

Pre-pandemic, boards and organizations were shifting their focus to culture and talent as a means of competitive advantage. COVID-19 and the necessity to address equity and inclusion creditably have acted as powerful catalysts for these conversations to become front and centre at the executive table. The perspective of our HR professionals is invaluable when it comes to influencing these critically important strategic talent decisions that deliver on organizational priorities.

As outlined in the McLean & Company HR Trends Report for 2021, "Over the last decade, organizational priorities and business models have shifted. People have increasingly been acknowledged as the driving force behind value creation, thrusting HR into the spotlight. This has only been accelerated by changes brought on by the pandemic. Employees are expecting more from their organizations, and HR's role is consequentially more far-reaching, more meaningful, and more stressful than ever."¹

The following are three areas where HR professionals are equipped to influence mission critical priorities.

1. INFLUENCING CULTURE AND TALENT STRATEGY

According to an Ernst & Young (EY) article called "Five ways to enhance board oversight of culture," "regulators and investors across the globe are interested in how companies are better leveraging talent strategy and culture to accelerate long-term success and enhance viability. Effectively governing

HR professionals act as the expert in their many areas of expertise giving sound advice.

culture calls for boards to understand and monitor the metrics that best reflect the health and strength of a company's culture."²

The McLean & Company HR Trends Report for 2021 shows that 50 per cent of HR departments have an overarching talent strategy. "After years of plateaued involvement in strategy, the upheaval of 2020 has thrust HR into its most strategic role ever. More organizations are acting on their people-first promise and involving HR in strategy. Where that happens, organizations have higher effectiveness in quickly changing to capitalize on new opportunities and are therefore more likely to be resilient in uncertain times."¹

Does your organization have a culture and talent strategy aligned to business goals? Are you a major contributor to this strategy? In fact, are you leading the development of this strategy? How do you get the attention of your executive team and board with clear and concise culture and talent reporting tied to overall strategic priorities? It is easy to lose this audience if you get into the HR jargon and tactical details.

- Keep it high-level strategy – keep the report brief with clear and concise quantitative and qualitative measurements directly tied to business goals.
- Tell a compelling story making the direct connection between culture/talent and organizational success.

Boards are required to understand the purpose-driving strategic initiatives, the resources and systems in place to successfully execute them, and how their impact will be measured. When it comes to reporting on culture and talent, consider answering these questions for your board and/or executive:

- How is the culture/talent initiative tied to the business goals?
- Do you have the right resources and

systems in place to achieve these objectives?

- Where does the accountability sit?
- How are you measuring progress?
- When and how often will reporting be done?
- What are the risk factors?
- What data do you have to support what you are reporting? EY's article "Five ways to enhance board oversight of culture" suggests that "boards should expect data that provide insights when it comes to culture and talent. The collected data should be interpreted in the context of the purpose and strategy of the company."

2. OWNING AND FACILITATING THE PROCESS

The role of HR is to ensure there is a robust and effective process for managers to make educated decisions about their talent and to support the facilitation of those processes. The values, behaviours, policies, processes and procedures are the infrastructure to our talent strategy and need to be in alignment with where the organization is headed. Sometimes the best processes can be created but end up not being followed. "Committed line leaders and gifted HR managers together create an organizational climate of spirit and energy – a magnet for the very best professionals. Their talent policies are built to last but are constantly under review, to ensure that they can respond to changing conditions on the ground and to cultural differences across the globe."³

How do you ensure that the process created is successfully implemented and consistently used?

- Gain support from leaders to ensure accountability for following the process.
- Ensure you have a deep understanding of the business/industry internal

and external factors that impact the ability to achieve results.

- Build relationships with those stakeholders within all levels of the organization.
- Highlight champions and share success stories.
- Measure the success of the process, be open to feedback and ensure the process is ever evolving.
- Regularly report progress at the leadership table.

3. BE THE TRUSTED ADVISOR

Even with the best culture/talent strategy and processes in place, decision-makers benefit from having an objective sounding board. Helping managers focus on the facts, asking the right questions and unraveling any assumptions can play a key role in ensuring the right people land in the right places at the right time. HR professionals wear many hats, one being trusted advisor. In *The Trusted Advisor*, David Maister outlines four professional relationships that can operate at different levels.⁴ Here are two that stand out:

1. Expertise based – giving answers:

HR professionals act as the expert in their many areas of expertise giving sound advice. Having strong knowledge and providing credible advice consistently helps build the trusted advisor relationship at all levels of the organization. More importantly, know what you do not know. Seek to understand and anticipate the issues and build a resource network. Often, HR professionals are a one-person department and connecting to peers and sharing resources is invaluable.

2. Needs based – helping them come to a solution: Supporting employees and leaders to problem solve builds trust and connection. The key to having success here is listening and asking good questions – provoking thought, helping weigh all the options and being the objective

Supporting employees and leaders to problem solve builds trust and connection.

observer – much like coaching. There is a time to give advice, and there is a time to help a person find their own solution. It is a fine balance for HR professionals. For example, you know the organization's talent strategy, you have facilitated the recruitment process and you are now sitting in a meeting with a hiring manager who needs to decide between candidates. How can you help them make the best decision for their team's future success? A great tool often seen in the coaching space is Dr. Argyris's theory of inference, also known as the ladder of inference. This tool effectively helps us ask ourselves and others the right questions to unravel assumption and bias – getting to the objective right decision. As humans, we can easily receive the same set of information differently. Therefore, being the sounding board and objective lens for a hiring manager increases their odds of making good talent decisions and thus strengthening the trusting relationship.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, human resources professionals have stepped up and become the heart and soul of organizations by giving critical guidance to organizational leaders and employees. Now, more than ever, comes a time where culture and talent strategy are the focus for organizations. The need to recruit and retain the right talent for your organization is at an all-time high and being intentional with your talent strategies will streamline the process and influence the creation of a positive and engaging workplace culture. HR professionals can influence organizations through shaping culture and talent, owning and facilitating the process, and being reliable and knowledgeable trusted advisors. Having HR skills, experience

and knowledge has never been more needed and valued. There is a significant opportunity to be at the leadership table and drive truly meaningful and substantive short- and long-term outcomes for organizations and their most valued resource – the people. ■



Amanda Penney brings 20 years of experience in organizational performance and career transition to

Royer Thompson. She works with a diverse client base and has deep knowledge and understanding of and a holistic approach to performance assessment, talent management, succession and workforce planning. She also works as a coach in talent journey, career pathing and transition. Amanda's entire career has been focused on helping companies achieve the full potential of people across organizations. Amanda is a Chartered Human Resources Professional and a member of the CPHR Nova Scotia. She also holds a graduate certificate in strategic human resource management with Royal Roads University. In her spare time, Amanda is an active fundraiser and participant of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and is a board member for the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation.

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Data Analytics in Health Recruitment and Retention: Creating a Competitive Advantage

By Rebecca Gill and Kari Barnes



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TODAY'S LABOUR MARKET IS incredibly competitive, and the recruitment and retention of health professionals is top of mind for many Canadian organizations, including those in Prince Edward Island. The global pandemic has exacerbated existing labour shortages and challenges with the supply of, and growing demand for, health care workers. The Recruitment and Retention Secretariat, a division within the Department of Health and Wellness with the Province of PEI, provides health human resource planning and undertakes recruitment and retention efforts on behalf of the province's

single health authority, Health PEI. The secretariat aims to meet the current and future needs for physicians, nurses and allied health professionals by planning for and sourcing quality health care talent. In order to be effective in this work, the secretariat relies heavily on data analytics to inform the way they forecast, structure, implement and perform their recruitment efforts. Workforce data analytics, also known as talent analytics, play a pivotal role in the overall strategy and implementation of recruitment and retention work performed by the secretariat.

Kaur and Fink (2017) define talent analytics as the attempt to understand patterns in an organization's workforce through analysis of employee-related data. Understanding this need to strengthen the secretariat's talent analytics abilities to create a competitive advantage, the manager of the secretariat hired a health human resources advisor in the spring of 2019. The HR advisor's skill set needed to consist of a penchant for data analysis, a foundational understanding of all aspects of HR, including recruitment and retention combined with a passion for delivering high quality evidence-based work. This skill set would help make talent analytics a crucial and strategic part of the way the secretariat fulfilled its mandate.

Almost two years in, the manager and HR advisor work closely to plan, strategize and execute on Health PEI's talent analytics work, which is completed using a systematic, evidence-informed approach. The most successful companies ensure the use of workforce analytics, or talent analytics, is connected closely to the HR leadership groups (Kaur & Fink, 2017). Recognizing this need to be closely connected, the HR advisor works collaboratively with Health PEI's HR analytics team to access employee-related data sets. The data sets are then organized, analyzed, interpreted, synthesized and visualized to provide meaningful insight and recommendations to the organization's leadership groups. Labour trends, pressure points, predicted

The future of recruitment and retention is digital.

future health human resources gaps, success stories and priority areas are highlighted. Essentially, the talent analytics are used to inform leaders and give them a clear picture of the overall health of the organization, while also informing the recruitment and retention program priorities of the secretariat. While extremely important in informing the secretariat's work, it has been the experience of the team that talent analytics makes its biggest impact when it is presented in a clear, concise and accurate manner.

An identified challenge for the manager and HR advisor was to make talent analytics a normalized and accepted approach in PEI to create a competitive advantage in health recruitment and retention. The idea of evidence-based decision making was not new to their partners in the health system, however, building a culture where data was at the forefront of recruitment activities and program design required some dedicated focus and attention. Several meetings were held with various stakeholders in the health system to help educate and inform on the ways data could be used in the recruitment work and identify priority areas for future health professional talent acquisition. Obtaining buy-in was not difficult once partners understood the benefits and advantages of using talent analytics in program design and overall establishment of strategic priorities.

Health care generated data accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the world's data (Vest et al., 2020). Health care workforce talent data makes up a portion of this information, which is why it is so crucial to have an organized, systematic and clearly defined approach to analyzing health workforce data. Workforce analytics has been shown to improve the execution of strategy, organizational effectiveness and employee engagement practices. It

can also increase cost savings, streamline operations and enable more effective decision making (Levenson, 2018).

Vest et al. (2020) outline the need for organizational leadership to support and invest in data analytics. The prioritization and use of workforce or talent analytics has been a journey for both the secretariat and Health PEI over the past few years. Mindsets have shifted. What was once a need to inform the system on the importance of talent analytics (push) from the secretariat at the onset, when discussing recruitment efforts, health workforce planning and labour market conditions, has now become a tenfold increase (pull) in the current demand from the health system. Strong, reliable data now forms the foundation of all recruitment and retention conversations between the secretariat and Health PEI. While there is significant opportunity to continue to strengthen the data-driven culture emerging, the benchmark has been established to continue to move this important work forward.

With the utilization of workforce analytics also comes a note of caution. Data cannot be provided without meaningful context. The ongoing communication, transparency and collaborative relationship between the recruitment team and Health PEI builds trust and is vital to ensuring confidence that the workforce analytics data is accurate. This occurs through full disclosure of assumptions made and context, as well as clarity about the process used to generate the


Data cannot be provided without meaningful context.


workforce analytics. To ensure success, it is important to facilitate the validation of information presented with the end user and allow for ongoing feedback among the groups to make any data report refinements.

Now that talent analytics is at the forefront of all recruitment and retention initiatives driven by the secretariat, there has been a significant competitive advantage gained by the team. Data is used in every meeting to inform and confirm the priority work for team members; many of the secretariat's partners in the health system have now come to rely on workforce demographics and other HR indicators such as attrition rates, time to recruit and exit surveys, to measure, adjust and plan their important work initiatives. This competitive advantage has positioned the secretariat to respond and react to recruitment and retention challenges in a way that is forward thinking, proactive and informed.

As of today, the secretariat bases all of its program design on datasets from various sources including, but not limited to, program evaluation metrics, comprehensive jurisdiction scans, relevant and rigorous academic evidence, and health talent analytics. While the recruitment and retention of health professionals remains highly competitive and challenging, the secretariat is well positioned to continue its important and rewarding work guided by solid evidence and detailed analytics.

The future of recruitment and retention is digital. Leveraging automation and reducing manual work through use of software programs and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as harnessing data from internal databases, external job boards and social sites, will be needed to propel this important work forward. The pandemic has been a major disruptive event, forcing many organizations to go virtual, and it has challenged the secretariat to leverage technology to redefine how and where the recruitment work is done. Only by questioning our assumptions and challenging each other to think differently, can we continue to create a competitive advantage through insights from data analytics in recruitment and retention. ■




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Rebecca Gill has worked in financial and human resource systems leadership roles for more than 18 years. Rebecca holds a bachelor of commerce degree from Saint Mary's University and a master of business administration degree from UPEI. She has completed various professional development courses in human resources and labour relations, as well as certification in facilitation and collaborative leadership. Rebecca is the manager of the Recruitment and Retention Secretariat with the Department of Health and Wellness in P.E.I.

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PROFILE

LAURA KILLAM, CPHR

DIRECTOR OF HR, HEALTH PEI

WHAT INSPIRES YOU MOST?

The energy from positive people inspires and motivates me to navigate through this crazy life!

ADVICE TO YOUR 20-YEAR-OLD SELF?

Never, ever underestimate the power of friendships/relationships.

FAVOURITE THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I work with some incredibly passionate people who put their hearts and souls into their work every single day despite what life throws at them!

WHAT'S YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT AND HOW HAS IT SHAPED YOU?

My children – they test me and challenge me, they propel me to work hard, to take chances, to uphold my morals and ethics, and to always make time for fun along the way.

FAVOURITE WEEKEND GETAWAY?

Camping – just a fantastic way to escape and find balance away from work, weekday routine and responsibilities.

FAVOURITE QUOTE?

"Bloom where you are planted." –The Bishop of Geneva, Saint Francis de Sales

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Kari Barnes, CPHR, has over 16 years of leadership, business and human resources-related private and public

sector experience. She has a passion for learning and development, and making evidence-based and data-driven decisions. Kari holds a bachelor of arts degree from Mount Allison University, an HR management certificate, and a master of business administration degree from UPEI. After working with the Recruitment and Retention Secretariat for two years, Kari recently joined Health PEI as the organizational and leadership development manager.

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