

INSIDE CHRO

CONNEX
PARTNERS

ISSUE 1

Revealing the inside track on how CHROs are navigating an increasingly complex world

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be in a better
industry than
we are now.”

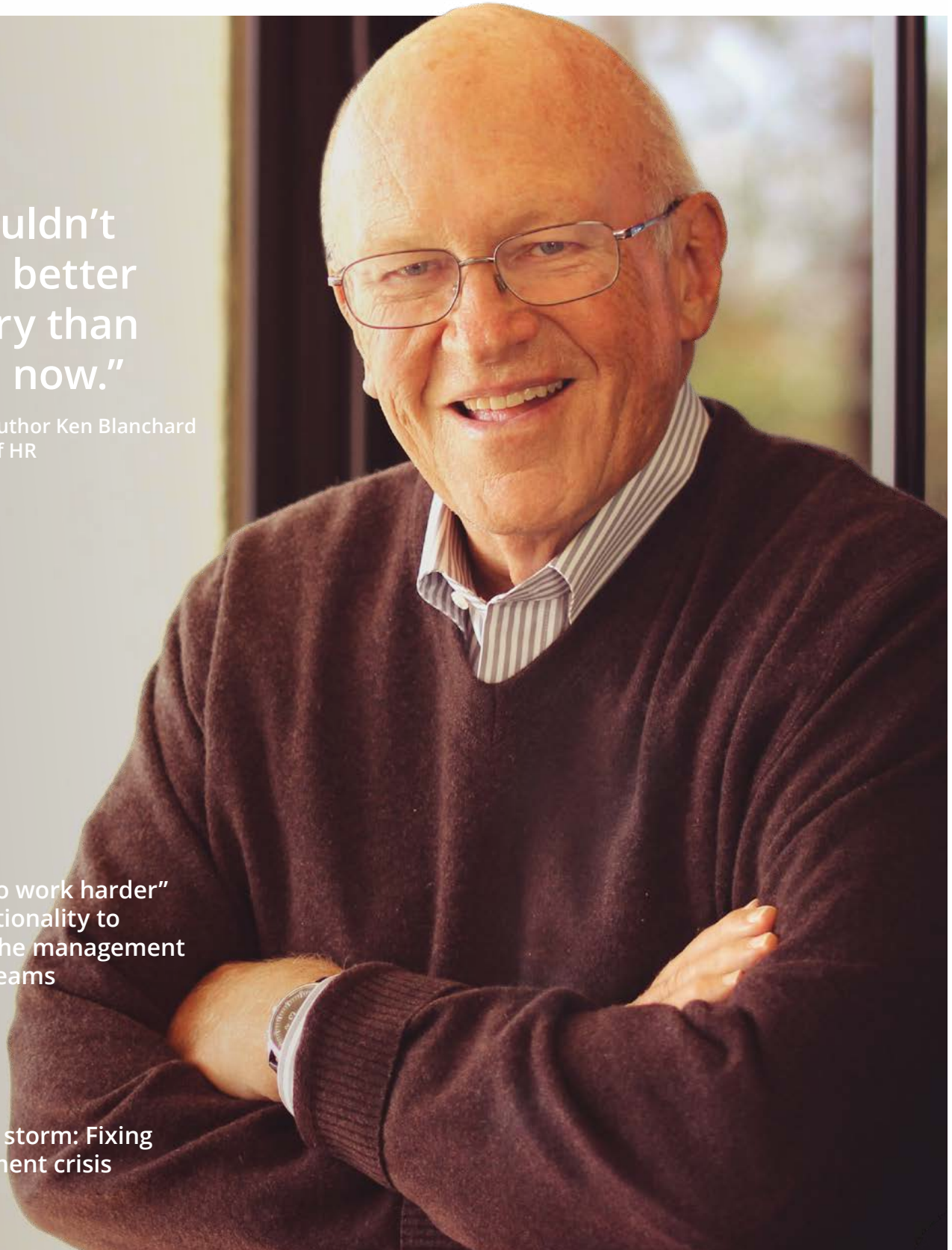
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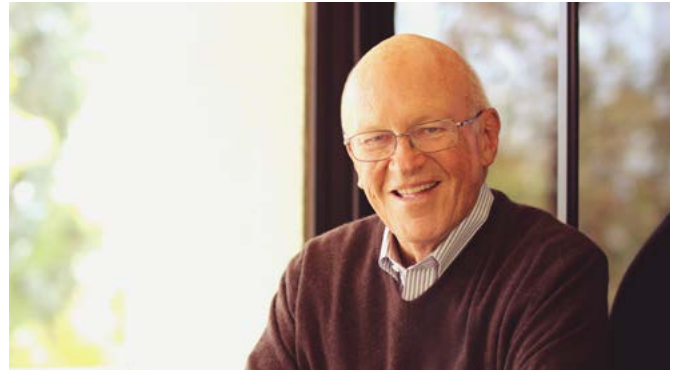


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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first issue of *Inside CHRO*, the only magazine written by – and for – the human capital management community.



The events of the last two years have underscored the strategic importance of human capital management. From guiding companies and their employees through volatile, rapidly changing environments, to shaping a somewhat uncertain future – the role of CHRO has never been so critical.

And listening is crucial. As the award-winning author of *The One Minute Manager*, Ken Blanchard, tells us in this Spring issue (page 4): “We’re all in the same storm, but we’re not in the same boat.” For the CHRO, reaching out to employees and recognizing the different boats they’re in will be essential to the survival of some organizations.

Connex has seen a substantial number of changes rock human capital management over the last 20 years, and we get a front row seat on the challenges leaders face. We think it’s high time for our community to take advantage of a unique platform to share their tried

and tested strategies, as well as the lessons they’ve learned in their careers. This is why we invite you to not only read *Inside CHRO* – but take part in future issues. Readers can get in touch [here](#) with any suggestions, feedback and ideas. This is your magazine.

For the inside track on how CHROs navigate an increasingly complex world – with grace, humility and style – please read on. ■



Andrew Johnson

EVP and Founder, Connex Partners
Editor, *Inside CHRO*.



"WE COULDN'T BE IN A BETTER INDUSTRY THAN WE ARE NOW." KEN BLANCHARD ON 40 YEARS OF HR

The author of *The One Minute Manager* reflects on a lifetime preaching the power of love, not the love of power.

*Ken Blanchard was born in New Jersey and raised in New York. In 1982 he and his coauthor, Spencer Johnson, published the seminal management text *The One Minute Manager*, recounting the three techniques of an effective manager: One Minute Goals, One Minute Praisings, and One Minute Reprimands. A new edition revises the One Minute Reprimand to a One Minute Re-Direct, adapting to the rapid pace of change in the modern working environment where everyone must learn as they go.*

“ It’s not about people wanting your job; they just want to be able to express their opinions.

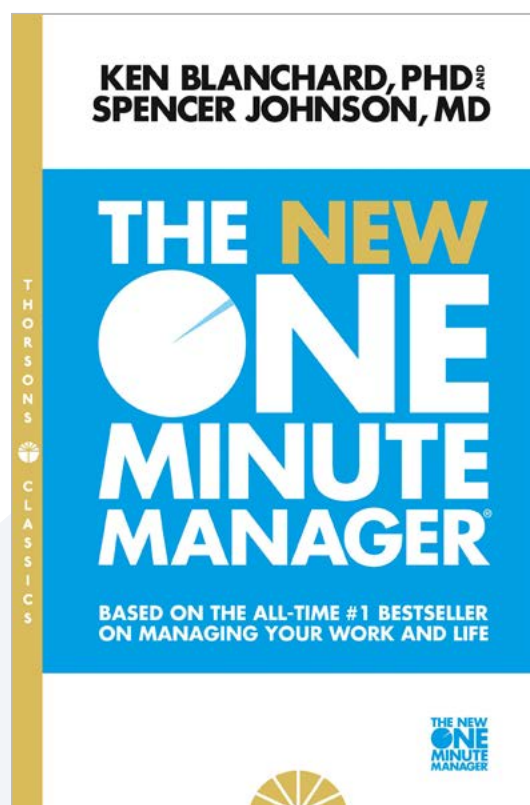
That spirit of constant learning and invention infuses The Ken Blanchard Companies, founded in 1979 and headquartered in California. Blanchard employs over 300 people across the world, offering leadership training and development for managers who want to bring out the best in people. In 2020, Ken’s son, Scott, took the helm as president. Ken continues to send a daily message of hope and understanding to the company’s employees in his role as Chief Spiritual Officer.

Alongside *The One Minute Manager*, Ken’s writing career spans more than 65 published books. Now 82,

he continues to write. His most recent book published this February, is *Simple Truths of Leadership: 52 Ways to Be a Servant Leader and Build Trust*. We find Ken Blanchard at home in San Diego in a handsome book-lined study. He gets up momentarily to let his dog out of the room. The dog is called Joy, he says, after a friend told him the real joy in life is when you can forget about yourself - just like dogs help people to do.

Connex: It’s a pleasure to meet you. I was reading *The New One Minute Manager* earlier today, on its 40th anniversary. It struck me that the biggest change in your thinking has been a shift from top-down people management to more of a participatory or facilitatory approach. Is that right?

Ken: We call it side-by-side management now, not top-down. It’s not about people wanting your job; they just want to be able to express their opinions and be part of the team rather than the hierarchy.



“ We really need to make sure everyone knows that times have changed and leadership needs to be done differently.



Ken Blanchard: “We need to reach out to people.”

Connex: I wonder how that fits into the situation we face now with hybrid work. How do the ideas of flat management structures and home-working intersect?

Ken: With some people working remotely, some coming in once in a while, and some in the workplace all the time, you’ve really got to be with your people. It’s not about them looking up the hierarchy - we’re all in this mess all together. It’s all about servant leadership: listening more than speaking, asking more than telling, supporting rather than demanding. Virtual meeting platforms like Zoom give leaders the capability to stay in touch with their people more often. You can schedule a weekly Zoom meeting without having to travel to get together, or if you have a problem you can call a quick Zoom meeting. It’s about staying in touch with people.

Connex: In this hybrid world, how should companies be thinking intentionally and purposefully about how to maintain or change their culture, particularly when two cultures come together, for example, through mergers?

‘What are you doing that’s purposeful and intentional?’

Ken: The key words in this question are purposeful and intentional. What are you doing that’s purposeful and intentional? Because we’re all being impacted by the many dramatic changes that are going on. We really need to make sure everyone knows that times have changed and leadership needs to be done differently. So we need to reach out to people and let them know what we’re doing.

Our son, Scott, took over the presidency of The Ken Blanchard Companies two months before Covid. We teach leaders to share their leadership point of view with their people, which includes who impacted your life? What did you learn from them? What are your values? What does this mean in terms of what you expect from people? In his opening remarks to the company, Scott said: “Forthrightness is my number one value. I’m going to tell you what I know, what I don’t know, and what I wish I knew.” For 83 weeks now, he’s been putting out a weekly email to everybody in the company, basically saying what he knows, what he doesn’t know, and what he wishes he knew, praising people, and keeping everyone informed. Because people really want to know they’re still part of the team, even though they might be remote.



Scott Blanchard, President of The Ken Blanchard Companies.

Connex: It sounds like you're advocating for quite radical transparency between leaders and workers there. Is that right?

“ Effective change is when you involve your people. Do not do it to them, do it with them.

Ken: Yes! If you act like you have all the answers now, people will know you don't. I wrote a book with Colleen Barrett called *Lead with LUV: A Different Way to Create Real Success*. Colleen Barrett became the president of Southwest Airlines after its founder, Herb Kelleher, stepped down. She said people admire your skills, but they really love your vulnerability. When you admit to your people that you don't have all the answers, they don't say, "Well, how come you don't?" or, "How did she get that job?" They say, "Wow, it looks like we're going to be a team."

I think that's really what's important, because we're all being impacted by this craziness. And it's not going to be over right away. Effective change is when you involve your people. Do not do it to them, do it with them.

'People don't leave great bosses'

Connex: How might that idea of doing with, not to, manifest at the moment?

Ken: One example would be Scott's weekly emails to the company. People just love them. Then at least once a month, he has an open all-company meeting where people can come and ask him all kinds of questions in terms of what's happening in the company and what they think about this or that.



Ken Blanchard: "It's time for real transparency from leaders."

I do a daily email message to the company. I got my title Chief Spiritual Officer when my wife, Margie, headed up the office of the future, a department studying what creates spirit in the workplace. I said, "That's one of my jobs." As Chief Spiritual Officer, I leave a message for everybody every day. I praise people for their good work, keep them informed of things, and then write what I happen to be thinking about.

Once I met a guy in an airport from New Zealand. I sent him some of my books and he sent me a message back that said, "Ken, the business you're in is teaching people the power of love rather than the love of power." I think that's a really powerful concept in these times, because you can't control everything. It's got to be mutual and evolving.

Connex: How does that transpose when companies are really struggling? We've seen a drastic impact on people's ability to hire the necessary staff.

“ A lot of people are leaving companies, but people don't leave great bosses or good companies.

Ken: In the beginning of Covid, we needed to do some downsizing of our own, because our business was down 40 to 50 percent. Slowly, we have been building back up, and that's why I think that concept of transparency is really important: to really make sure you're sharing with your people what's going on from your standpoint as leaders, including what you need from them, how you're going to communicate with them, and how important they are in the whole context. A lot of people are leaving companies, but what we have found is that people don't leave great bosses or good companies. If they feel like they're involved and they're an important part of the scheme, they will hang around.

'Catch people doing things right'

Connex: How can a company navigate the challenge of having part of its workforce on the frontline in factories, shops, and service roles, and part of its workforce, including leaders, in office-based jobs where they are now able to work from home?

Ken: That's a really interesting one. We have a maintenance lead named Ricardo. He can't do his job at home, of course, so he's at the office all the time. When hybrid workers go to the office, they connect with him and tell him they appreciate his efforts. That's a real morale booster. I have a new book coming out in February called *Simple Truths of Leadership: 52 Ways to Be a Servant Leader and Build Trust* that I'm coauthoring with my colleague Randy Conley, who is one of the top experts on trust. We have a concept: the key to developing a great, healthy organization is to catch people doing things right. A lot of the time, when I have asked people how they know they're doing a good job, they say: "Nobody has yelled at me lately. No news is good news." Instead, we feel that it's important to wander around and catch people doing things right, whether it's on Zoom or face-to-face. The book has 26 simple truths about

servant leadership and 26 simple truths about trust. People really like it because they can read one of the simple truths and go and talk with their people about it. It gives some context for good conversations. I think it's interesting when I hear people saying, "We're all in the same boat." Actually, that's not true. We're all in the same storm, but we're not in the same boat. Recognizing the different boats your people are in and reaching out to them is important. We offer a program on dealing with change. Some of the companies in our industry can come in and process-map change to the nth degree. But how do you deal with the human case of managing change? You've got to give people information, you've got to deal with their personal concerns. That's just a whole other level of dealing with change that helps people get through it. You just have to deal with their concerns one at a time.



Ken Blanchard: "Help them understand why they have their job and the role they play."

'Make priorities: Take your vacation. Spend time with family'

Connex: Recently, The Ken Blanchard Companies put out a fascinating piece of research on learning and development. The number one finding was that people felt overloaded, tired, and "too busy to learn." Are there any short or long-term strategies leaders can use to help the workforce at this time?

“ Our survey found that people feel overloaded, tired, and too busy to learn.

Ken: One of the big ways to acknowledge and address people’s exhaustion is to help them understand why they have their job and what role they play in the company. And then ask: How can we help you? Would you like us to get you a coach or somebody to listen to you so you don’t burn out? Also, one of the things Scott emphasizes: “Take your vacation. Make sure you’re spending your weekends with your family. Don’t turn your back on what is really important.”



People used to ask the great Dallas Cowboys football coach, Tom Landry, how he was so calm on the sidelines. He told them he found it easy because he had his priorities in order: “First comes God, second comes my wife, third comes my family and fourth comes my job. So if I lose on a Sunday, I still have a lot left over.” That’s what we want to say to people: Your job is important, but you need to keep a good balance in your life.

Connex: That seems like an interesting approach. Plenty of companies out there have valued workers who gave everything to their careers and their jobs. And you’re saying, actually, we need to advocate for people to reevaluate the order of priorities in their lives. Is that right?

Ken: Yes. This approach gets really powerful when we really need people for a project, and they can say to their families: “Next week is going to be a little crazy.” People are willing to go the extra mile when things get tough because we haven’t burned them out along the way. If you consider your people to be your number one most important customer, they’ll go out of their way, when it’s necessary, to take care of your number two most important customer – the people who buy your products and services – so that they become raving fans. Some of our clients have had a leader go to another company and take us with them. It’s all because we’re not doing it to them, we’re doing it with them. We have hired some folks with the title of solutions architects, who are all about taking care of customers in a way that makes a difference to them. We have really enhanced our customer experience. In the year 2019 we were doing maybe 20 online sessions a month, and now we do maybe 800-900 a month. We were able to transfer all of our curriculum online. When face-to-face training comes back, it will be a combination of different approaches.

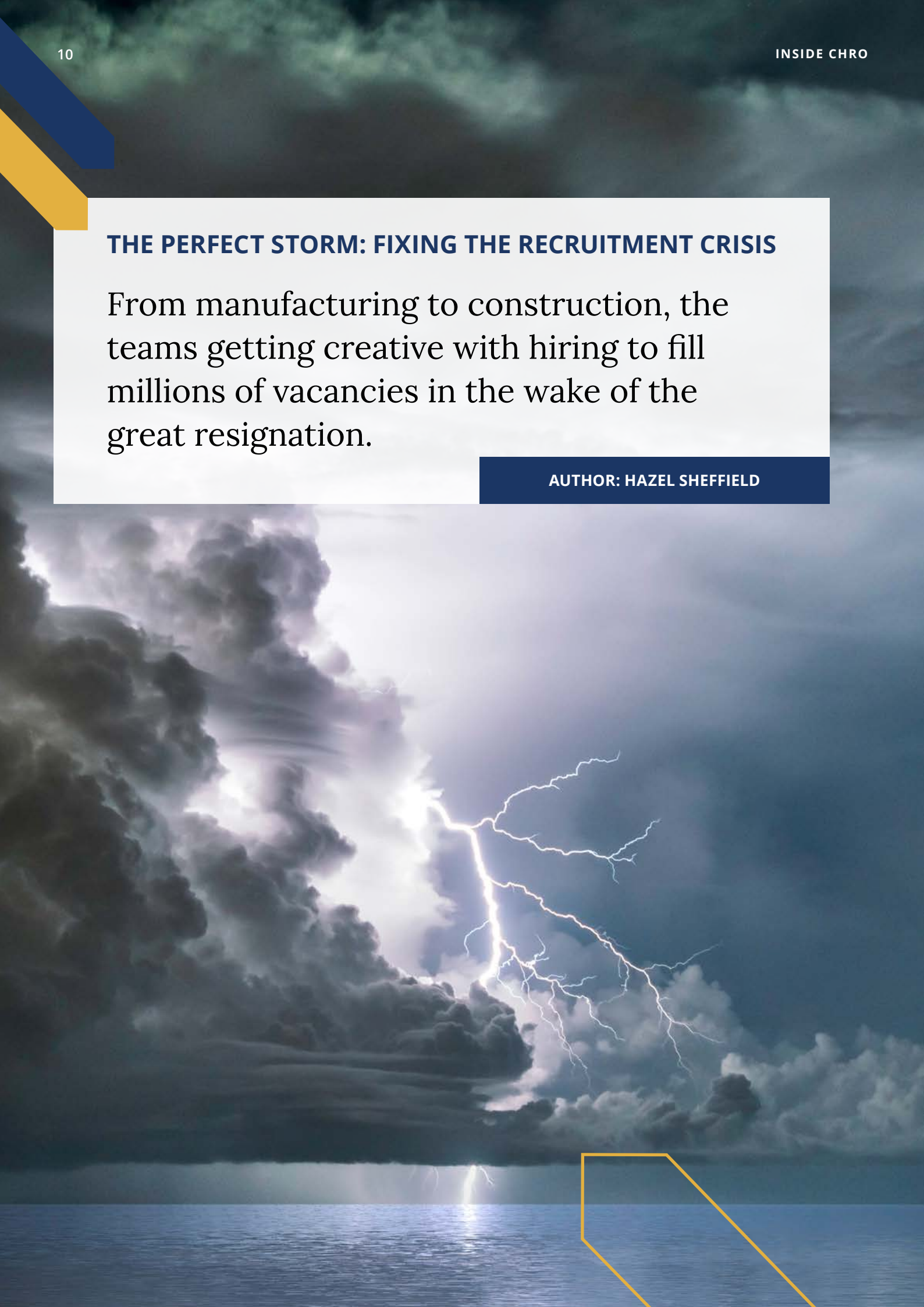
Connex: Do you think it’s possible to have the same quality of interaction on Zoom as face-to-face?

Ken: You can do a lot on Zoom. Particularly because you can see someone and watch their expressions. Periodically, you do need to be face-to-face – there’s nothing like a good hug or a handshake. But the big thing about this pandemic is that we need to communicate more rather than less, and Zooming really does permit us to do that. Because more than ever, people really want to be heard. It’s a crazy time, but it’s also an exciting time. We couldn’t be in a better industry than we are now. And we really need that now: to be with each other. ■

THE PERFECT STORM: FIXING THE RECRUITMENT CRISIS

From manufacturing to construction, the teams getting creative with hiring to fill millions of vacancies in the wake of the great resignation.

AUTHOR: HAZEL SHEFFIELD



When the sink and faucet manufacturer Elkay was faced with a labor shortage in October last year, the HR team at the group's major plant in Savanna, Illinois, came up with an ingenious idea: get volunteers from across the group to come and work in the plant to help ease the backlog.

"It was just the perfect storm," says Tonie Lyubelsky, Senior Director of Total Rewards. "We had open positions that we were having a hard time filling. And then we had an increase in orders."

Elkay prides itself on the delivery of its products in a timely manner and on its relationships with customers. Lyubelsky said the company had to think innovatively to address what she calls a "horrendous backlog" and stop loyal customers from going elsewhere to buy competitors' products. It was the HR team in Savanna who came up with the idea to ask others from across the company to come and help out on the manufacturing side. At first it was just magical thinking, she says. But then they started wondering if it could actually work. They began to figure out how to adjust pay, compensate for overtime hours and comply with employment law.

In the end, they had 15 volunteers come to the plant for two weeks, with paid room and board. Those who volunteered got time and half, plus a bonus, in addition to their expenses. Some staff made some extra special requests: someone wanted a motorcycle shipped out there, while someone else wanted a pet sitter while they were away. "We obliged each of those demands because they helped

us break that backlog," Lyubelsky said. "And they certainly did."

At first, some people working in the plant were skeptical about having corporate people getting involved with manufacturing. They thought they would botch things up, or slow them down. But in the end, those same people said they felt that for the first time, people in the offices got to share in their frustrations and understand what life is like in the plant. Lyubelsky says: "We got so much more out of it, other than just breaking the backlog. It was a pretty neat experience."

“ The company had to think innovatively to address the horrendous backlog.

Elkay wasn't alone in needing drastic measures to meet demand around October. More than nine in ten small business owners trying to hire workers said they had few or no qualified people applying to their job openings in September 2021, according to a survey by the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

Blurring the lines between blue and white-collar

It took the pandemic for HR directors at Elkay to figure out how to make working in the plant attractive enough for someone from a non-traditional background to want to do it.

Many more companies are going to have to follow Elkay's lead and get creative to fill 2.1 million vacancies in manufacturing by 2030. Deloitte found that a hole this size in the labor force will cost the US economy \$1 trillion in 2030 alone. It surveyed more than 800 US-based manufacturing leaders and

“ It’s no longer enough to look at college education when hiring – recruiters need to look for people with potential.

found that the pandemic had worsened the situation for employers, erasing 1.4 million jobs and undoing more than a decade of job gains. This has compounded an already worsening skills gap in construction and manufacturing – thanks to the galloping pace of technology acceleration.



Tonie Lyubelsky, Senior Director of Total Rewards.

In this environment, recruiters need to change tack. Scholley Bubenik, president of Premier HR Solutions, an HR consulting company based in Austin, Texas, told *Forbes* that it’s no longer enough to look at college education and prior experience when hiring – recruiters need to look for people with potential. She says hiring managers should make a list of traits and skills necessary for success on the job and develop interview questions to assess them. In addition to the interview, hiring managers need to look for previous school and work experience where candidates have utilized these traits in a different role. “Begin by contacting the local community colleges, vocation programs, high schools and other training programs in your community,” she advised. “Collaborate with these programs to create training programs within your company such as internships and apprenticeships where job candidates can develop their skills and demonstrate their abilities.”

Innovating to fill the gaps

For industries experiencing vast growth, such as engineering and construction company Cupertino Electric, the great resignation presents challenges beyond retention – and this is the need to recruit rapidly at scale. As Chief People Officer Estrella Parker explains, the talent pool is finite and there is a risk everyone is after the same people. This means innovation is essential in workforce planning for 2022.

“You start looking at more innovative strategies to build, buy and borrow the resources that you will need,” she says. “The growth that’s happening to us [as a company] is happening across the industry. And so everybody wants the same resources and there’s just not going to be enough to fulfill that need. So we have to be smarter about how we utilize resources and not be so heavily dependent on experience and then also figure out how we can develop talent faster.”

Organizations also need to look at job roles differently, Parker says, because some roles are more “fluid than constant.”

“A person might be in a job for two years, right? But companies think of jobs or roles as being constant – but they’re more fluid.”

To combat the risk of a lack of engagement in a longer term role, Parker says we need to think beyond skills and experience.

“We have to go another layer down and understand that people have interests. They go through different

cycles in their lives of what they're motivated to do and what they're motivated to learn."



Estrella Parker, Chief People Officer of Cupertino Electric.

Taking a long-term approach

A long-term approach may be essential in a world in which labor shortages are the norm. According to the US Chamber of Commerce, the ratio between the number of available workers and the number of job openings is now 1.4 available workers per job. This has actually improved since the pandemic: in 2018-2019 it reached parity, with one worker available per US job. The ratio has been falling for years, a consequence of the working-age population shrinking as the birth rate falls.

In that environment, Lyubelsky says companies that require a physical presence, such as retail and manufacturing, will have to change not just how they recruit and train staff, but the very nature of the jobs themselves. First, she says they're going to have to think about how to automate – not necessarily the entire job, but certainly pieces of it. "I believe this labor shortage, especially with retail and production, is going to be an issue for a while," she says. "So there's the innovation of how the work gets done and automating the work. Then, I think job sharing is going to come into play." Where jobs cannot be automated, Lyubelsky says that two people might do the job of one so that a single worker doesn't have to commit to an eight-

hour shift, but two people commit to four-hour shifts. "Employees have had a taste of flexibility. And they're going to want that going forward."

In addition, Lyubelsky predicts wage inflation as more employees hold back their services to get more money. "What we've seen is desperation from a lot of retailers and small restaurants because employees won't go to work in those locations anymore," she says. In response, employers have had to come back and offer more money and bonuses. "We're going to see more of these concerted efforts of people to hold back their services in an effort to increase their wages," Lyubelsky says.

Communicating values and creating meaning

For Parker, who at the time of writing had been at Cupertino Electric for five months, the challenge has been meeting the demands of rapid growth and balancing the need to retain staff as well as recruit. This has led to a fresh look at how Cupertino Electric communicates its values and benefits.

"It's really about telling a story. Our benefits tell a story about who we are as an organization and what we believe in."



Companies may need to change the very nature of jobs to address shortages.

Parker, who brings more than two decades of experience in executive management and HR leadership to the role, says it all hinges on the organization's ability to communicate its core vision and mission with its people. This in turn allows its employees to forge their own connection with the vision, galvanizing them to be proud of where they work.

"Storytelling is a powerful connector for that inspiration and meaning. You have to create environments within your organization that allow that.

"When I walk through the halls or the places on the buildings that we've created and think about what we've made possible in those buildings – it goes

“ Storytelling is a powerful connector for that inspiration and meaning.

beyond just one life. It's so meaningful for me in terms of the impact not only of what we've created but the pride of the tradespeople whose hands were part of that building. That's my story, but someone else's story might be different.

"It's allowing people to make that connection. It's not me telling you that you should be inspired because of what we're doing – it's allowing people to find that for themselves." ■



Hazel Sheffield

Hazel Sheffield, former business editor of the Independent, writes about economics and business for publications including the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Atlantic*.

“YOU HAVE TO WORK HARDER.” USING INTENTIONALITY TO TRANSFORM THE MANAGEMENT OF REMOTE TEAMS

Nine out of ten workers want to continue to work remotely. Here’s how the Connex community is managing them with trust, transparency and new kinds of training.

AUTHOR: HAZEL SHEFFIELD

After Patrick Felder became Vice President of Employee Success at Salesforce in October 2020, he did not meet any of the business leaders that he works with, nor any other colleagues, for six and a half months. From onboarding to meeting his teams, learning the business, and building out strategy – everything was done remotely. In his new unit, Felder was looking after the HR function for some 3,500 employees at a critical moment, when Salesforce, which has a global workforce of 55,000, was growing upwards of 25 percent annually, and putting a big emphasis on hiring, retention, and leadership development.

“It was a different experience,” Felder says. “But it was also, in some ways, good. Because you have to work a little bit harder. You have to be more intentional about the time you spend and making connections with folks.”

That notion of intentionality has been the key takeaway for HR personnel managing a remote workforce since the onset of the pandemic. Almost half, or 45 percent, of full-time US employees have been working from home either all or part of the pandemic, according to a Gallup poll in September 2021, while two-thirds of white-collar workers said they were working from home some or all of the time. Perhaps even more significantly, 91 percent of US employees working at least some of their hours remotely said they hoped the ability to work from home continued after the pandemic, with around half saying they would prefer to split their time between

working at home or in the office – a so-called hybrid arrangement.

That isn't always easy to manage. At a recent panel discussion hosted by the *Financial Times* on whether hybrid working could really work, the chief executive of a UK insurer said that remote can function for business meetings “at a certain level”, but that worker freedoms have to be limited in some roles – especially when working from home. Neville Koopowitz, chief executive of Vitality UK, said he had been trialing a hybrid work model where staff were expected to work a minimum of two days a week: “The reality check is that when you're running these big organizations you have a responsibility to your customers... it's not as simple as just having carte blanche flexibility.”



Patrick Felder, Vice President of Employee Success at Salesforce.

Battling management burnout

It's not just customer service that can be affected. More than half of respondents to a December survey by the Ken Blanchard Companies said their virtual or digital working environments were less effective than face-to-face, with a greater proportion expressing dissatisfaction than in the same survey a year earlier. In their comments, respondents said the hybrid work environment was harming perceptions of wellbeing, with burned-out leaders struggling to manage hybrid teams effectively. “One respondent

“ People seem busier than ever and it’s hard to catch their attention in the virtual environment.



Salesforce Tower, San Francisco, USA.

said, “People seem busier than ever and it’s hard to catch their attention for development in the virtual environment.”

John Hess, director of client solutions at the Ken Blanchard Companies, says leaders and other team members need to take extra effort to make sure they are making contact, regardless of whether a company’s employees have switched from the office to remote working from home, or whether they are still having to go into manufacturing plants, workshops or factories. This can be done with regular one-on-one meetings – something the company calls “one-minute praisings” – but also by increasing levels of openness, honesty, and transparency across all areas of the business. At the Ken Blanchard Companies, they do this in part with open meetings where anyone can show up online. “There are 11 people in our eastern sales business unit, yet we have almost 50 show up every other Monday morning for 9 am eastern. That’s got to be half a dozen folks from California getting up at 6 am to listen in, and we have some really terrific dialogues and problem-solving that takes place,” Hess says.

Vendors have flooded into the market for hybrid working. These include startups like Rock, an all-in-one suite of productivity tools addressing the main technological challenges of home working: messaging, task creation and video calls. Rock is designed to replace the hodge-podge of software some companies employ, much of which isn’t necessarily made to work together. Then there’s Hofy, founded by Sami Bouremoum, a former Bain management consultant, which offers logistics and supplier network technology as a subscription service to corporations where staff are working from home. That includes renting out hardware like laptops and printers – but also, according to Bouremoum, simply inviting a colleague to Slack.

Bouremoum’s admission hits on a truth that the switch to managing a workforce remotely has not, in many cases, required a massive investment in new technology. After the initial rush to supply staff with equipment, many companies found they already had tools for connectivity and collaboration that could be harnessed for home working.



Many companies found they already had tools for home working.

A more substantial challenge for companies has been in workers not being able to stick their heads around an office door for a quick catch up. Leaders are instead thinking more intentionally about scheduling meetings. The best managers of remote teams take this deliberate approach, according to Rebecca Downes, a lecturer in management at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of New Zealand. Downes has been studying the intentional management of remote teams, looking in particular at how managers gain confidence that their team is not only working but working on the right thing, including how engaged and productive they are. “Management literature for a long time has assumed you can eyeball people. And that’s different when you don’t see each other in the office day to day,” she told *BW People*. “Good remote managers understand the context of work is different. One thing that came up repeatedly in the research is the need to be intentional, and be thoughtful and deliberate in engaging with your team and generating the connection, maintaining open lines of communication.”

“ The switch to managing a workforce remotely has not required a massive investment in new technology.

Prioritizing physical and mental wellbeing

HR leaders need to prioritize employee wellbeing as remote and hybrid working increasingly blurs the line between work and life. Almost 70 percent of senior HR leaders, of which 40 percent were CHROs, rated employee wellbeing and mental health as a top priority in the Future Workplace 2021 HR

Sentiment survey. That includes not only looking after the mental health and the emotional wellbeing of staff working remotely, but the long-term impacts of home-working on physical health. Seven in 10 of 2,000 employees working from home said they felt more isolated compared to being in the office, while more than six in ten said they felt less engaged with their team by August 2020, according to a survey by OnePoll on behalf of Volley, an app that describes itself as filling the gap between Slack and Zoom.



Angelique Hamilton, Chief People Officer at Refresh Mental Health.

Angelique Hamilton, Chief People Officer at Refresh Mental Health, a national network of locally focussed mental health providers, describes home-working as a wellbeing issue. “When our employees are in the office, they are tasked with a lot of administrative work on top of their caseload,” she says. “They’re able to balance that out when they are working from home. They’re not having multiple interruptions like they were in the office, so they can really focus and dedicate that time to our clients.” When the pandemic struck, Refresh Mental Health switched many of its in-patient services to telehealth, giving patients the opportunity to connect to a practitioner via video link. Not all practitioners are able to connect with their clients remotely, she says, but for those that can, the opportunity has been a game-changer. “They actually love it,” Hamilton says. “This is truly a benefit for them.” For Hamilton, the firm’s employee

portfolio is balanced more evenly between people who are working remotely and people who are located in the office.

Nonetheless, Refresh Mental Health has been careful to combine the opportunity for home working with enhanced benefits to look after its team. Hamilton says demand for mental health services has increased by 50 percent at Refresh Mental Health since the start of the pandemic, which puts its own strain on staff. She says that while the stress on employees is now more acute, staff have also become experts in this space. Rather than seek separate providers, Refresh Mental health gives its staff the opportunity to get support from in-house providers, the same trained experts it provides to universities and colleges, alongside employee assistance programs and training through seminars and webinars. "That slightly takes the edge of some of the things that they're dealing with: how to manage crises and how to cope with that kind of stress."

What next for the office

In Austin, Texas, there is a Salesforce office, not far from where Patrick Felder lives. But when he speaks to Connex in November, he's still never been – just as there are two members of his team that he has not met. For him and many other HR leaders, working with people remotely is not necessarily new or surprising. Before he joined Salesforce in September 2020, Felder spent 20 years at Dell, latterly directing global talent management and looking after strategy for the company's largest sales operation, with 6,000 sales staff. Remote working gives companies the opportunity to think differently about hiring, since employees are not tethered to one spot. "Having people geographically dispersed and having a lot of people working remotely was not something that was unfamiliar to me, coming in," he says.

“ The idea is that we use our offices differently. We use them to bring employees together intentionally.

Salesforce, he says, has a strategy of "success from anywhere", which means HR works to enable team members to be successful from anywhere they choose to be. That strategy has been fuelled by the response from employees: Felder says HR asked staff multiple times throughout the pandemic how they felt about remote working and found that a very small number wanted to go back to the office full time. "The idea is that we use our offices and spaces differently: we use them to bring employees together intentionally," Felder says. This means coming together for all-hands meetings, customer visits or information sessions. "But in terms of requiring a lot of our team members to be back or to come back to the office – that's at a minimum."

In all cases, HR leaders have to work a little bit harder to create a company culture, he says. At Salesforce they do that by talking openly at company-wide meetings and in Slack posts about tough topics, whether that's vaccines or the racial reckoning that swept the US in 2020 and 2021. In response to these discussions, Salesforce took steps to identify underrepresented groups in the workforce and put processes to improve accountability measures and bring in new talent. That's also what Felder means about intentionality: putting structures in place within the company to address shortcomings – whether that's contact time with remote staff members or filling gaps in diversity in the workforce. "You see the problem, you talk about the problem," he says. "And then you build in mechanisms to tackle the problem when it comes up again." ■



FIVE MINUTES WITH...ALICE YOO LECLAIR

We grab a virtual coffee with an HR leader to talk about passions, inspirations and life lessons.

In this issue, we caught up with Alice Yoo LeClair, Divisional CHRO at Euromoney Institutional Investor PLC. From digital mentors to sapien evolution, Alice provides plenty of food for thought – and some laughs along the way.

What is your best leadership advice?

It's your aptitude plus your attitude that sets you apart as a leader. These two things build the story of your personal brand and can accelerate your development over your peer group. This advice applies whether you have worked at an organization for two months or 25 years, whether you're a senior leader or just taking the lead as a contributor in a meeting.

“It's your aptitude plus your attitude that sets you apart.”

If you could go back in time and meet your sixteen year-old self, what would you tell them?

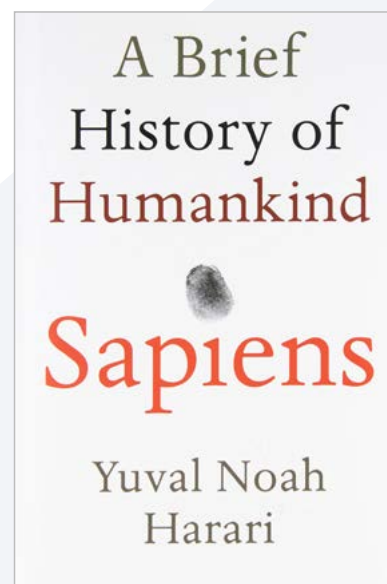
Firstly, when you hear about this thing called 'Bitcoin' that goes for sale, buy it immediately in mass quantities! The second thing I would tell myself is 'chin up'. Over the course of time, you will see a material shift when it comes to Asian inclusion and representation. There will even be an Asian superhero, Shang-Chi, brought to life on the big screen, in mainstream culture. It's really tough now – but know that the world is going to learn faster, collaborate more and come together as a global community in the very near future.

“I would tell my sixteen year-old self to buy Bitcoin immediately in mass quantities!”

What is the most-read book on your shelf?

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari. I discovered this book through Bill Gates' book blog, [Gates Notes](#), and he cited it in a [New York Times article](#) as one of his favorite reads. The theories the author presents about why sapiens, of all the species that have inhabited this planet, have been able to develop enormous infrastructure, technologies, religions, governments and currencies are fascinating.

One of his theories is that as a species, our ability to imagine and apply our imagination to our real life circumstances is what enabled our brains to create all of these institutions. I recommend it to anyone who is curious as to how we went from hunter gatherers to doing things like cryptocurrency in the present day.



“It was through a digital mentor that I discovered my aspiration to become a Chief Experience Officer.”

What’s the one film, TV show or podcast you would urge every CHRO to check out, and why?



Julie Larson-Green, former Chief Experience Officer at Microsoft.

I have a different approach on this. I don’t actually have an HR industry-specific magazine or podcast that I regularly turn to. What I have curated for myself instead are ‘digital mentors’. In the HR and business worlds there are incredible leaders who, through their public content, answer questions and give advice on topics I would have asked them to elaborate on through those mentorship coffee sessions. It was through this curation of digital mentorship that I discovered my career aspiration to become a Chief Experience Officer. I got there from the online presence of an executive named Julie Larson-Green who held the role at Microsoft and Qualtrics.

What has the pandemic taught you?

The importance of taking a step back. The pandemic has taught me to think about short-term priorities and bite-sized wins. Yes, there is always a

long-term strategy and long-term gains – but in the process of getting there, it’s really critical to take a step back and break things down into manageable pieces that we can execute.

What are the positives to come out of the pandemic from an HR perspective?

Wellbeing is gathering a lot of momentum. Before the pandemic, the focus for HR was ‘wellness’ – otherwise known as the prevention of illness. But wellbeing is the strategic, empathetic and holistic approach to being a human being at work and outside of work. The way the pandemic has literally put home life and work life under the same roof for nearly two years has, thankfully, made wellbeing our priority and accelerated the conversation around what flexible work can be without a loss of productivity.

“I’m trying to imagine how I would get through a 24-hour sequence without touching my phone once.”

What’s the one thing you could not go a day without?

My phone – it’s an appendage at this point. I’m trying to imagine how I would get through a 24-hour sequence without touching my phone once. I don’t see a way of that happening. Maybe as a personal challenge, I should go for it and see if I can do 24 hours without my phone.

“Kyoto in Japan is beautiful and peaceful, vibrant and exciting, modern and traditional.”

Where is your favorite place in the world?

My favorite place to travel to is Kyoto in Japan. I have been there many times and will go many more times. It's beautiful and peaceful, vibrant and exciting,

modern and traditional. When we think of going to a different culture and feeling immersed, curious and delighted, Kyoto is a part of the world that satisfies all those things for me. ■



Alice Yoo LeClair

Alice Yoo LeClair is the Chief Human Resources Officer for Euromoney PLC's Financial & Professional Services division. She is responsible for leading talent management, DEI, recruitment and performance enablement initiatives, in alignment with the organization's strategic objectives. In this capacity she also serves as a member of the division's executive committee and the group's HR leadership team.

Before joining Euromoney, Alice was the head of HR for the Americas GTM region and multiple product verticals at Refinitiv, a London Stock Exchange Group business. Previously, she held global people strategy and commercial program management roles at IPC Systems, IntelPeer and Level 3 Communications (now Lumen Technologies).

Alice has a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Hartford where she double majored in Piano Performance and English. She also has a certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition from eCornell, Cornell University's external education unit.

CONNEX COMMUNITY: INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

As the great resignation rolls on, what innovative approaches are CHROs deploying to develop talent? Our community has been alight with novel ideas, the best of which we share here.

Re: Succession Planning and Hi-Pos

'One of the things that we're stressing with our hi-pos and leaders, in general, is that it's not just what you do, but how you do it. And those that are ready for more made that clear earlier in the crisis when they stepped up to the plate.'

'One of the initiatives we've launched focuses on individuals "owning" their career, and coming to their leader or manager with a clear desire to take on more, rather than waiting for an opportunity to land in their lap.'

'A few things that we're looking for in hi-pos/leaders is agility and flexibility. We've seen the need for this increase dramatically over the last 20 months and we need individuals in the organization who can assess situations, make decisions and pivot quickly, based on available information/data.'

'A big focus for us has been giving our high-potentials cross-functional experience, and so we're looking for those that have a willingness to try out other roles, make some lateral moves, and round out their skill sets and understanding of the business.'

'We find that we can spend a lot of time on Talent Management without tangible results so have removed performance ratings and simplified our talent processes to make them more agile and support career development for all employees, rather than those that have been selected as high potential.'

What We're Reading

Our members also recommended checking out these thought leaders for alternative talent management strategies



Marcus Buckingham, author of *Nine Lies About Work: A Freethinking Leader's Guide to the Real World*, marcus Buckingham.com



Lucy Adams, CEO at Disruptive HR, disruptivehr.com

Would you like to get involved in the discussion? If you're a member and you'd like to contribute, simply sign into [Connex's Community here](#)

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