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Third Quarter 2020

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Brooke*

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BECAME A MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE



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Dan Cafaro

#### Managing Editor

Stephanie N. Rotondo

#### Contributing Editors

Brett Christie

Jim Fickess

Brittany Smith

#### Editorial Assistant

Linda Larson

#### Contributing Writers

Mark Athitakis

Trisha L. Howard

Jane Larson

Tom Starner

#### Contact

pubs@worldatwork.org

### Design

#### WorldatWork

#### Senior Graphic Designers

Molly Meisenzahl

Kris Sotelo

#### Design and Production

Mark Anthony Muñoz, RIPE Creative

### Circulation

#### Circulation Manager

Linda Larson

202-315-5516

linda.larson@worldatwork.org

### Advertising

#### Visibility Manager

Dawn Jeffers

480-304-6784

dawn.jeffers@worldatwork.org

#### Advertising Information

Visit our website at worldatwork.org.

### Workspan Leadership

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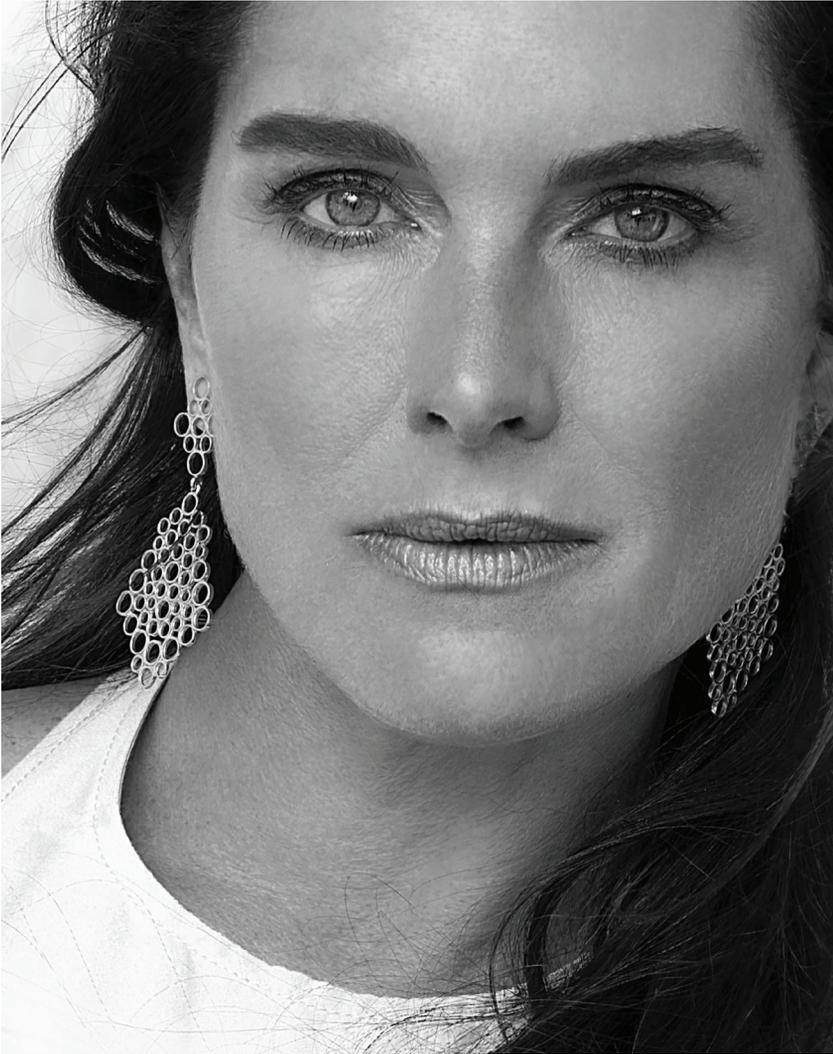
#evolve is published four times/year by WorldatWork, 14040 N. Northsight Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85260-3601, as a benefit to members who receive an annual subscription with their membership. Periodicals postage paid at Scottsdale, AZ, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Workspan*, 14040 N. Northsight Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85260-3601; 480-951-9191. Canada Post (CPC) publication #40823004.

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“No matter how good a day you may have had at work, what would you do differently tomorrow to make the next day better? That's the penultimate question. Forget the salary, the bigger office and the job title.”

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“JetBlue is betting that creating a sense of comfort for passengers and frontline workers alike will be key to the company's recovery. And, creating that culture is the result of attentive teamwork from the company's leadership.”

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“As a team leader, you're required to inspire and to offer comfort when times are tough. And while honesty is the best policy, a “doom-and-gloom” attitude is never effective. Emotions are contagious; be sure to spread optimism rather than defeatism.”

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**Stephanie N. Rotondo**  
Managing Editor, #evolve

# A Time to Break Down, a System to Build Up

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

— *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens

**I’ve been thinking a lot lately** about this well-known line from one of Charles Dickens’ most-beloved tomes and how the goings-on of the story relate to current times: A ruling class upended by those they sought to rule. It was gruesome, bloody and horrific, which certainly points to the “worst of times.”

And while no one should condone violence, it’s hard to argue that the spectacle of the French Revolution did not, in fact, produce — at the very least — better times, if not “the best of times.” The system was upended and, ultimately, that led to an improved system that didn’t seek to keep people “under control,” but rather allowed them the chance for a better life (generally speaking, of course).

Looking at today’s headlines, it’s often difficult to see how things will get better. In such instances, we must look to leadership to guide us through whatever trials and tribulations we may be facing. How are leaders handling a system that has, once again, been upended, whether by the pandemic, by protests or the ongoing issues facing most organizations, such as globality, automation and reskilling? Are they learning to adjust and take advantage of the systemic shifts, or are they staunchly following the old rules in hopes of “getting back to normal”?

Take, for instance, Eric Hutcherson, chief human resources officer of the National Basketball Association. (See page 18.) COVID-19 certainly upended the NBA season, all the way down to its internship program. But instead of simply cancelling the program, the organization went virtual with it. By going this route, not only has the program continued, it expanded with more candidates than usual.

A system upended, without a doubt, but perhaps for the better.

JetBlue is another organization that is making the best out of the current crisis. (See “A Bet on JetBlue,” page 36.) Having already taken steps to identify the culture it wanted, it was positioned to pivot amid COVID-19, as necessary. And, by all appearances, the attempt to upend its culture is working.

In these trying times, we need leaders who can adapt to changing environments. In some cases, these leaders might need to upend their leadership style in ways that can help their people stay connected and productive, even if they aren’t in the office anymore — or, in some cases, ever again. (See “Practical Management,” page 48.)

Taking an even broader look, today’s realities have certainly shined a light on mental health and how the systems surrounding that have altered. “Mental health is not a luxury,” said Brooke Shields in an interview with *WorldatWork*. (See “Suddenly, Brooke,” page 28.) In order for all of us to be our best selves, leaders need to upend the stigma attached to mental health and replace it with honest conversations about what “mental health” means and how we all can support each other.

When the world seems to be coming apart at the seams, we must dust off our resilience and put it to work — though perhaps in uncustomary ways. And, we must find — or be — leaders who can help navigate toward “the best of times.” The system has been broken. Now’s the time to build it better. ###

# Unmasking Unconscious Bias



**Ben Franklin said there are only two certainties in life: death and taxes.** I cannot help but point out the other big certainty: People are human, and they are going to act like humans. You will likely watch “Hocus Pocus” near Halloween and get “Love Actually” ready for holiday viewing. You’ll tear up when you see the video of that dog being rescued — even though you saw it yesterday. You’ll get very annoyed when someone pulls out in front of you and may even call them a name from your car. You’ll look at the buttons in the elevator when another person enters. You may give someone a concerned look because they’re wearing — or not wearing — a mask. You know, *human stuff*.

As a leader, you need two fundamental traits to be successful in the Workplace Revolution. First, you must be able to authentically generate followers. Your title, experience and credentials do not get you followers. You, and you alone, do that. Sure, you may get power with your new title, but it won’t help you gain actual followers — which is a critical task for leaders who want to make an impact. And, you may also have

to gain followership virtually as face to face may no longer be a possibility. There are leaders who think they are leading, but if they are without followers, they are not leading.

Second, you need to possess awareness. Great leaders who make an impact are acutely aware of nearly everything. This includes their own behavior, capabilities, liabilities, causes they believe in, how others perceive them, what they want out of life, how they move throughout the world and the responsibility they have for both themselves and others. Leaders are aware, and with good reason: Leaders must forge paths and in so doing, bring others with them.

Because of this heightened level of awareness, great leaders can engage

others and gain followership by being inclusive. Thus, they can better use their role for the good of others — including the organization and its ability to keep its promises.

Who is currently following you? I mean, *really* following you? This means they trust you, have confidence in your skills, and are inspired to do what it takes to deliver. How aware are you as a leader or emerging leader with impact? We know we aren't escaping taxes, death or people being people, so we need to get really good at eliminating any constraints that stop people from becoming your productive, committed and inspired followers. This all starts with your ability to take the time to see the person in front of you and work to create the bond that lets them be the full person they are, without reservation or concern of inequity.

#### **Bias: An Insidious Interloper**

The way we lead will fluctuate and our behaviors will be interpreted differently based on the social identity of others. There are many ways we get tripped up on differences. There are more obvious sources of bias like race, gender, age and sexual orientation, but humans are more like a buffet than a sit-down dinner: People who spend a lot of time thinking about bias and inclusion have identified about 150 forms of this insidious interloper. These include religion, height, weight, physical disability, hair color, clothing style, socioeconomic status, family lineage, surname, alma mater, diet, accent, manner of speech, place of residence, political affiliation, tattoos, body piercings — many things that matter to people and many things that can create hurdles and opportunities to your leadership.

Bias is not uncommon. It isn't always intentional, nor is it always covered by laws designed to protect personal attributes. Many times, bias stems from a lack of awareness. Yet, you can't get followers without being acutely aware of yourself and others, as well as the experience they are having.

There are going to be different outcomes depending on any proven bias, especially if it's in the workplace and is illegal. Thus, we must work through the biases that drive our behavior. There is nothing to be gained by bias-driven actions and in fact, most can be used to provide broader awareness and connection. Great performance coincides with the person being their full self. The way you view people and their attributes dictates your coaching, mentoring, investment and belief in their capabilities.

In high school, I was active in several groups and worked fast food jobs. I loved being on the debate team, the swim team, and serving as a cheerleader. Yelling one letter at a time — “G-E-T I-T T-O-G-E-T-H-E-R” — will always have special meaning to me. As a result of many things, including my social calendar, my academic performance wasn't stellar by any measure. In fact, I would dare say it was near the bottom of any chart used to traditionally measure success.

“There are more obvious sources of bias like race, gender, age and sexual orientation, but humans are more like a buffet than a sit-down dinner: People who spend a lot of time thinking about bias and inclusion have identified about 150 forms of this insidious interloper.”

It was assumed by most everyone that I would not go to college — my profile didn't fit. I did not have the grades, any socio-economic support, and I was the child of parents with one high school degree between them. It isn't totally surprising that my high school counselor told me to try harder but not to despair as (and I am quoting verbatim), “Dumb people can go to college too.”

Perhaps this was her way of encouraging me. But her words gave me great pause that day and stayed with me a very long time. I had not thought of myself as dumb until that moment. When I graduated with distinction with an Ivy League doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, I wanted to reach out to her and update her on my progress. Clearly, this was more about me than her, as she likely did not even remember me. Like many, she may not have understood what she said from my point of view and therefore, could not have ever uncovered her unconscious biases. While this did not stop me in my tracks, these types of interactions — those that stem



**Scott Cawood**

“Gen Z is coming with elevated expectations that you transparently demonstrate you’re an equitable workplace, that you don’t have equity gaps, and that you don’t have inherent bias that can affect working dynamics and productivity.”

from unconscious and conscious biases — can have a significant impact. Leaders who care about leading and following are aware of others and adjust their style to meet each person where they are in their journey.

The Workplace Revolution is coinciding with more diversity and inclusion efforts by the nature of the workers. Gen Z is coming with elevated expectations that you transparently demonstrate you’re an equitable workplace, that you don’t have equity gaps, and that you don’t have inherent bias that can affect working dynamics and productivity. People agree about rejecting racial and gender bias, but you need to guard against something that is potentially much more insidious: unconscious bias.

A Korn Ferry survey of 715 executives found that 81% believe they work for a diverse and inclusive company, while 87% said there is more of a focus on diversity and inclusion in their organization today than there was five years ago. Still, 76% of respondents said they do understand the causes of bias, and 59% feel there is still an element of unconscious bias when it comes to diverse backgrounds such as religion, race, gender or sexual preference.

WorldatWork’s own “2019 Pay Equity Practices & Priorities Survey” found that recruitment and hiring practices make up four of the top five areas that organizations are examining for bias. Yet when looking for potential areas of bias or factors in pay disparities, benefits programs are receiving less attention.

#### Understanding the Person in Front of You

Novelist Harper Lee provided a suggestion for combating unconscious bias through the words of Atticus Finch in her classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” While reflective of the time, his use of the male pronoun also extends to “her” and “them” in today’s workplace.

As a boss, you don’t have to listen to the person in front of you — but as a leader, you should. You also should very

carefully choose your words. See the person in front of you. Who is that human being facing you? They are being human this very moment in time — even if they are presenting themselves as an employee. Who are they, what are they thinking? What is important to them? What do they need to do their best work?

Luckily, we know some things about being human. There are commonalities that apply across all cultures, even though they may be expressed in slightly different ways. These include:

- **Health:** We all want to be physically and emotionally healthy, with clean water and safe conditions at home and work.
- **Education:** We all want to better ourselves through fair and proper education.
- **Livelihood:** We all want to be free to work and make a living, hopefully through a job that gives us a sense of purpose and satisfaction.
- **Love and Belonging:** We all crave meaningful relationships and the love of our friends, family, and giving back to our community.

Thinking about these is a good tool for overcoming unconscious biases — looking with clear eyes at the person in front of you and *listening*. You may need to search for a personal connection, but there are connections to be made — and that’s something you can build on. We are each on different paths, but we all intersect at important places. It’s in those intersections where we can create momentum and engagement — especially if we have to work through our own learned biases. It takes hard work and dedication to lead, but it takes a genuine and authentic view of yourself and others to create followers. Admittedly, this is a different caliber of leadership and is much harder to achieve. But it is achievable, and the rewards are insurmountable for all involved. ###

**Scott Cawood, Ed.D., CCP, CBP, GRP, CSCSP, WLCSP**, is the president and CEO of WorldatWork.

# Striving to Have the Back of Your Employees

71%

of employees agree that their leadership is protecting the health and well-being of their people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Willis Towers Watson

76%

of U.S. employees see racism as a problem at organizations — but only 44% think it's a problem in their own organization.

Source: "How Businesses Are Responding to the Death of George Floyd and the Resulting Protests," Clutch

95%

of the population has been affected by unconscious bias.

Source: "Science Explains Why Unconscious Bias Training Won't Reduce Workplace Racism," *Fast Company*

61%

of global workers believe their employer can help them better manage their mental health through technology.

Source: Aetna International

“When a leader is self-aware, they are better able to be empathetic to others’ experiences and needs. Empathy, in the sense that a leader can walk in another person’s shoes or see things through another person’s eyes, has become a distinguishing characteristic of leaders who are making a difference today.”

Source: "Leading in a Crisis," Korn Ferry

# Social Justice in the Spotlight



## Building Sustainability for All

This isn't the first time Jarami Bond, a contributor to *GreenBiz*, has urged the sustainability community to be part of the diversity conversation. In his second letter to the community – written three years after the first one – Bond notes that sustainability professionals “not only must steward the environment, but also explore ways to meet the needs of the vulnerable and create healthy platforms for people of all backgrounds.” [Read more.](#)

## Uncle Ben, Aunt Jemima Retire

Food brands Mars, Quaker Oats and Conagra acknowledged the racial stereotypes of some of their products, including Uncle Ben's, Aunt Jemima and Mrs. Butterworth, and will be retiring – or at the very least, reviewing – the logos. [Read more.](#)

## Organizations Speak Up

In the wake of protests against police brutality and in support of the black community, organizations quickly issued statements showing their alignment with the cause. Here, WorldatWork's Brett Christie gives a rundown on the various ways organizations showed their support. [Read more.](#)



## Leading the Conversation

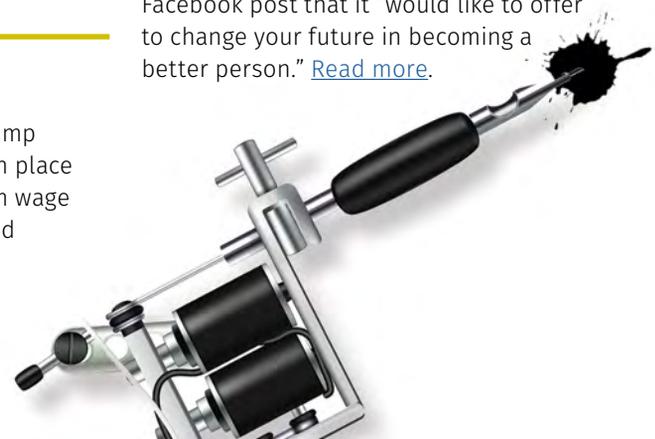
In these troubled times, it can be difficult for leaders to know how to have conversations on racism, equality and justice. Serilda Summers-Mcgee, CHRO of Workplace Change, spoke with the *Portland Business Journal* to provide leaders with some tips to talk with their employees. [Read more.](#)

## Target Takes Aim at Wage Increases

Target announced it's keeping its \$2-an-hour wage bump permanently. The increase, which was originally put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, will raise the minimum wage at the company to \$15 an hour for United States-based employees. [Read more.](#)

## Re-writing Your Own History

One Kentucky-based tattoo parlor hopes to erase racism, one tattoo at a time, by offering to cover up any racist, hate- and gang-related tattoos, free of charge. Gallery X Art Collective said in a Facebook post that it “would like to offer to change your future in becoming a better person.” [Read more.](#)



JOHN LENT/AP



“Every time we turn our heads the other way when we see the law flouted, when we tolerate what we know to be wrong, when we close our eye and ears to the corrupt because we are too busy or too frightened, when we fail to speak up and speak out, we strike a blow against freedom and decency and justice.”

— Robert F. Kennedy

### Resources to Help the Cause

This list published by *USA Today* offers a myriad of resources on ways people can further the cause without having to risk exposure to COVID-19. [Read more.](#)



Jarami Bond

“If you really want to be part of the change, it’s time to get uncomfortable.”

— Jarami Bond, [www.jaramibond.com](http://www.jaramibond.com)

### Dear White People: Take Action

In this piece for *Forbes*, senior contributor Dana Brownlee asserts that racial injustice isn’t merely an issue for minorities: “Arguably, it’s a white problem.” She shares 10 actions white people can take in their workplaces to promote racial justice. [Read more.](#)

### Actions Speak Louder Than Words

As protests raged around the world in response to George Floyd’s murder, many organizations have issued statements voicing concern and support for the black community. Mark R. Kramer of *Harvard Business Review* notes that such statements are a good start, but further action is needed. [Read more.](#)

### Learning from the Past

Bryan Stevenson, a civil-rights lawyer and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, sat down with *The New Yorker* to discuss the roots of police violence, how to change current police culture, and what was driving the protests. [Read more.](#)

### All for One, One for All

Even within the black community, there can be varied discussions on race. In this op-ed piece for *BBC*, Larry Madowo, a journalist from Kenya, discusses how the conversations vary and why it’s important to understand the different experiences of the black community. [Read more.](#)

### COVID-19: A Lesson in Inequality

Data has shown that minority communities are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This *New York Times* piece delves into the reasons for the imbalance and posits that it’s not just a health issue, but a civil rights issue. [Read more.](#)

# Mentoring with a Theme



**Mentoring programs have existed**, both formally and informally, within organizations for decades. Mentoring is a known method to help employees develop personally and professionally while being more engaged and connected to their organization. As large-scale mentoring programs become more commonplace and easier to manage, organizations are starting to look at ways to expand these programs to connect a larger population. An easy way to do this is with a themed mentoring program.

Themed mentoring, also known as a mentoring circle, is a flexible format of mentoring that is primarily participant-driven. These programs offer mentoring in a group setting where individuals can connect around a central topic or theme. Like a traditional mentoring program, themed mentoring groups still require a primary purpose or strategy to guide the program and help participants set goals. Even if the group is hobby-based, there is still knowledge sharing and professional growth occurring between individuals and within the entire group. Themed mentoring differs from traditional programs in three main areas.

**1. Themed mentoring allows for flexible roles.** Unlike a traditional mentoring relationship where there is a known mentor and mentee, themed mentoring allows for everyone to be an expert. Each member has unique experiences and knowledge to bring to the group and by removing labels, the group encourages a more dynamic conversation where everyone can learn from each other. You never know what experiences someone brings to the table and what they may be an expert in. Frequently, organizations opt to have an appointed moderator to ensure the group remains on track and to help facilitate the discussion.

**2. In themed mentoring, participation can be optional.**

Participation is usually voluntary and based on the employee's availability and desire to attend. This is especially true when themed mentoring is used as a social outlet or to support employee resource groups (ERGs). However, be mindful of your organization's goals, as participation may be required in some programs, such as supporting leadership in your organization. Creating a group for your leaders to connect and support one another socially has goals and participation requirements that are entirely different from a leadership development group which is focused on learning role-specific competencies and soft skills.

**3. Themed mentoring has flexible timing.** Like a conversation, themed mentoring will ebb and flow with the topic of conversation. Traditional mentoring programs typically have set enrollment periods and relationship timelines. With themed mentoring, the program starts and continues until the program fades or there is no longer a need for the topic. Participants are encouraged to enter and leave the group as their needs change. In some cases, like a project-based themed mentoring group, the group will start with the recruitment of participants and end when the project is over.

As themed mentoring reinvents how organizations are thinking of mentoring programs as a whole, the opportunities for incorporating themed mentoring are endless. Recently, as the workforce has shifted to a work-from-home model, themed mentoring is used as a social outlet for people to connect and maintain relationships. One organization, Nielsen, implemented themed mentoring after receiving requests from employees for additional ways to connect. As their population of associates started working from home, Nielsen held global listening sessions to understand what their employees needed and how the company could support them. As a result of the listening sessions, Nielsen noticed trends in themes and sprang into action to enable associates around the world to support one another. Topics of interest included tips for working from home, hobbies and healthy living. Here are other ways companies are starting to use themed mentoring:

**1. To complement a 1:1 mentoring relationship.** Themed mentoring can be used to enhance 1:1 mentoring relationships by providing access to a larger group in which the mentee can continue learning from their peers. This is mostly seen within career development programs. For example, you can use a group mentoring format as part of employee onboarding. In the 1:1 relationship, a new employee typically meets with a more experienced

“As themed mentoring reinvents how organizations are thinking of mentoring programs as a whole, the opportunities for incorporating themed mentoring are endless.”

employee in their field that will help the employee through the onboarding process. In addition, the employee is grouped with other individuals going through the same process. In this group, employees can share their progress, ask for insight, and build their network of internal contacts.

**2. To provide resources for employees.**

Themed mentoring is becoming increasingly popular for sharing company information and resources with groups of people. These groups can be set up around any topic that employees need to navigate, from life events to company policy. With people now working from home, themed mentoring supporting homeschooling children, adapting to working remotely, work/life balance, and discussing new company policy and procedures have started taking hold.

**3. As a social outlet.**

Humans are social creatures. One of the best parts of going to work in a larger office is having the opportunity to chat with a variety of people. In 1:1 mentoring relationships, you typically meet with a large variety of people, similar to themed mentoring groups. Setting up themed mentoring for employees to celebrate their hobbies and interests is a great way for them to meet with each other socially and feel more connected to their peers. ###

**Jennifer Labin** is chief talent and diversity officer for MentorcliQ. Connect with her on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/in/jennlabin/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jennlabin/).



**Jennifer Labin**

# Guiding Your Culture into Possibility



**Associations play an important role** in the world. They are not driven by money, but mission. They exist to work toward bettering things through a variety of methods, including teaching, advocacy and setting standards for what “good” looks like.

Many times, however, as associations work to serve various constituents, they try to keep a balanced approach on core issues so not to upset any particular group of members. While doing this — that is, while playing it safe — they end up losing the opportunity to use their voice for the betterment of others.

This dynamic is not just about associations. All organizations should have a mission, a vision and values that guide them.

While for-profit organizations may be more direct about chasing revenue as a priority, they also need to be sure about who they are and what they stand for as they measure their actions against the expectations of stakeholders, employees and customers.

The prevalent theme of inequality in the United States today provides organizations an opportune moment to showcase who they are and what they stand for. For those who value equity,

“From a leadership standpoint, there is a critical next step for many organizations: Crystallize to your employees what your organization stands for and do it with great urgency, specificity and clarity. This means going much deeper than counting on the mission, vision and value statements plastered to the walls of the offices we used to occupy.”

showing who you are now is an important step in the inevitable longer-term effort to help each person bring their true and full self into work.

There is a tendency to act only when things are trending, but the real work must continue even when the headlines shift. You may be tempted to ignore causes that on the surface don't seem to involve you. However, if you are a champion for full equity, then you must continue to work on the systems that inherently create an unlevel playing field for others. I think Nelson Mandela said it very profoundly, “To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

### Crystallizing the Core

From a leadership standpoint, there is a critical next step for many organizations: Crystallize to your employees what your organization stands for and do it with great urgency, specificity, and clarity. This means going much deeper than counting on the mission, vision and value statements plastered to the walls of the offices we used to occupy. It means talking about your actions, reactions and leadership pivots that illuminate more about you and your principles in the context of current events.

In the last several weeks, multiple organizations have spoken out against racism and violence, with many big brands releasing specific statements about who they are, what they stand for and what they stand against. Some brands have removed institutionalized icons such as Aunt Jemima and Space Mountain due to their racist origins. Donations toward causes like anti-racism have emerged almost daily. And just recently, the Dixie Chicks changed their names to “The Chicks.”

In June alone, countless brands — from Diesel to Target to Walmart — have offered an array of options for those wishing to participate in the celebration of Pride Month to honor those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and questioning. On the Walmart pride section, the words that accompany the rainbow theme says, “All People. All Love. All Pride.”

We all have fallen into the habit of attaching behaviors to organizations. For example, Costco believes in paying people fairly. United Airlines believes in diversity and inclusion. Yet, neither Costco nor United itself can actually believe in anything. So then, who are we really talking about when we assign beliefs or actions to organizations? Is it the team leading Costco or the CEO of United, or is it the collective group of employees and stakeholders that comprise these entities? Can we assume Walmart and Target are supporters of gay people because they sell gay pride products?

Let me reiterate: From a leadership standpoint, there is a very important next step for many organizations. Crystallize to your employees what your organization stands for and do it with far greater urgency, specificity, and clarity than ever before.

### Adhering to Core Values

Most organizations adopted “core values” following the 1994 release of the *BusinessWeek* bestseller, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Collins submitted in his book that greatness was best achieved when organizations adhered to a set of guidelines called core values. It set off a tidal wave of new ways to describe who the organizations were and what they believed to be important.



Scott Cawood

This isn't the end of the story on the work needed to show the world who you are. Don't get me wrong. I love core organizational values and am always curious about them. However, note the key word in the findings from Collins: Great organizations *adhered* to values; they didn't just have them.

Core values are powerful guideposts. They reveal some of who you are as an organization, but their more important role comes to light when situations arise, and your core values are tested. This is when you adhere to them despite the sometimes rigorous action or stance that they may require you to take. If you have a core value that speaks to leadership, diversity, integrity, or inclusion, then the last few months have offered multiple opportunities to show who you are by your actions and stances. Adherence to core values can be a defining moment or a completely missed opportunity to show who you are.

Too often, organizational leaders miss their chance to showcase who they are by their actions and, unfortunately, your workforce often will scrutinize how you demonstrate your core values. They will notice when you deviate. When your actions conflict with your core values, it erodes trust and turns something powerful into something destructive.

When I worked on the annual *Fortune* magazine list of the "100 Best Companies to Work for," I visited companies to either talk about the need to build great workplaces or to witness some of the ones we identified as the best. During one visit to a cosmetics manufacturing organization, I watched as every employee was thoroughly searched as they entered and exited the facility. Once inside, I met the plant manager and we began the tour. I noticed on the walls a great poster of their core values, with the first one being "trust."

I relayed my observation of the search to the manager and asked if trust was really their No. 1 core value and, if so, how was that demonstrated each day? He told me the value indeed was real, but the invasive practice of patting down their employees was because they had some issues with missing products. I politely suggested that it wasn't trust they had as a value; it was anti-theft. Your core values should not be used to fix your culture, they should be used to guide it into possibility.

### **Sending a Clear Signal**

As the CEO of WorldatWork, I like to remind our employees that our association is in the business of people. We strive to help each worker have a better experience at work. That means, regardless of our own personal beliefs, we, as an association, will always fight for every person to be able to bring their full self to work. That means not only do we recognize and honor differences, we leverage them. When we see things that are not equitable, we take action.

**"Core values are powerful guideposts. They reveal some of who you are as an organization, but their more important role comes to light when situations arise, and your core values are tested."**

For example, last year, when WorldatWork announced soccer star Megan Rapinoe was headlining our pay equity symposium, I received an email that expressed grave concerns about selecting Ms. Rapinoe as our keynote. More recently, I was asked "which side" of the Black Lives Matter issue were we on. And, finally, not long ago I was asked to participate in a national effort that did not align with our view about putting people first in organizations.

All of these situations were opportunities. Moreover, they were moments when I had to choose to take a stand. And, since my job duties are fairly vague (all duties assigned by the board), I made a choice and responded to all of them. Afterwards, I shared my responses with our entire organization to send a very clear signal of who we are and what we collectively stand for. My hope is that these responses made our employees proud of where they work. I too hope that my responses gave them both the insight and courage to better navigate these turbulent times. ###

**Scott Cawood, Ed.D, CCP, CBP, GRP, CSC, WLCP** is the president and CEO of WorldatWork.



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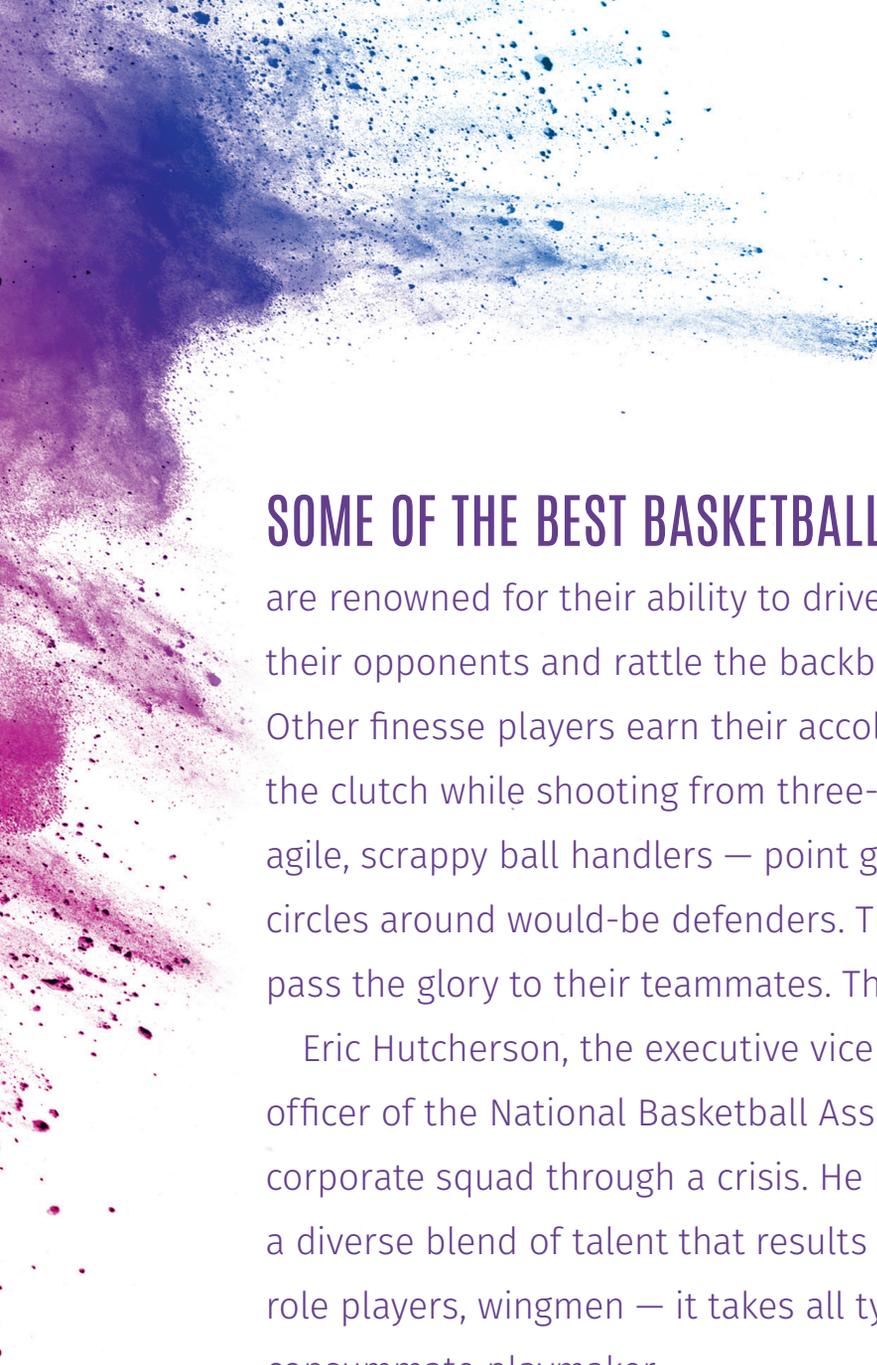


A close-up, low-angle shot of a basketball, showing the textured orange surface and the dark lines of the seams. The lighting is dramatic, with the top of the ball in shadow and the bottom catching the light. Overlaid on the basketball is the text "PLAYMAK LEADING TO AN" in large, white, 3D-style letters. The letters have a slight shadow and are arranged in a curved path following the shape of the ball. The text is cut off on the right side.

PLAYMAK  
LEADING TO  
AN

# ER THE NBA GAME 7 D BEYOND

BY DAN CAFARO, WORLDDATWORK



## SOME OF THE BEST BASKETBALL PLAYERS OF ALL TIME

are renowned for their ability to drive hard down the court, whisk past their opponents and rattle the backboard with a game-winning slam-dunk. Other finesse players earn their accolades by knocking down baskets in the clutch while shooting from three-point range. And then there are the agile, scrappy ball handlers — point guards, usually — who can dribble circles around would-be defenders. They feint from the top of the key and pass the glory to their teammates. They rack up tons of assists.

Eric Hutcherson, the executive vice president and chief human resources officer of the National Basketball Association, knows how to lead his corporate squad through a crisis. He knows too that the secret sauce is a diverse blend of talent that results in a winning chemistry. Catalysts, role players, wingmen — it takes all types to succeed. Hutcherson is the consummate playmaker.

### CAREER JUMP SHOT

If you're keeping score at home, Hutcherson's full-court press to become a human resources executive and the second most powerful man in the NBA corporate offices could be likened to a dream-come-true, buzzer-beater from half-court.

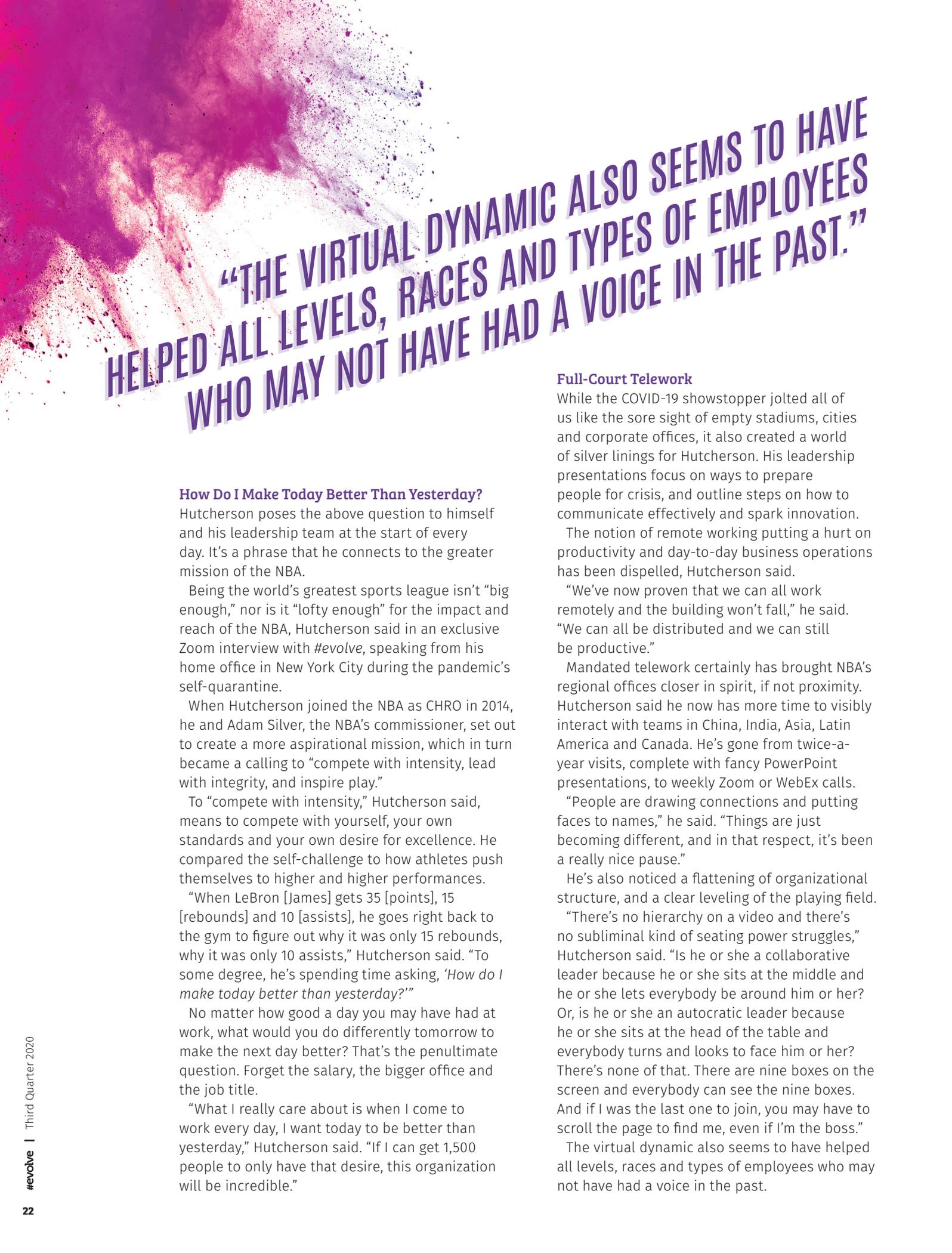
A Freehold, N.J., native, Hutcherson played basketball in high school and college before choosing the practicality of grad school over the chance of playing hoops overseas. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from New York University and a master of science in sports management and administration from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

He started in public relations for the Boston Celtics, launched a footwear brand for Foot Locker, and then represented players as a sports agent before leaving sports for a development and diversity position with Inroads, a company dedicated to increasing the number of ethnically diverse employees in corporate management.

He then entered the HR profession as a recruiter, professional development trainer and business partner before rising through the ranks at Mercer and Marsh.



**ERIC HUTCHERSON**  
EVP and Chief Human Resources Officer  
National Basketball Association



**“THE VIRTUAL DYNAMIC ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE HELPED ALL LEVELS, RACES AND TYPES OF EMPLOYEES WHO MAY NOT HAVE HAD A VOICE IN THE PAST.”**

#### **How Do I Make Today Better Than Yesterday?**

Hutcherson poses the above question to himself and his leadership team at the start of every day. It’s a phrase that he connects to the greater mission of the NBA.

Being the world’s greatest sports league isn’t “big enough,” nor is it “lofty enough” for the impact and reach of the NBA, Hutcherson said in an exclusive Zoom interview with #evolve, speaking from his home office in New York City during the pandemic’s self-quarantine.

When Hutcherson joined the NBA as CHRO in 2014, he and Adam Silver, the NBA’s commissioner, set out to create a more aspirational mission, which in turn became a calling to “compete with intensity, lead with integrity, and inspire play.”

To “compete with intensity,” Hutcherson said, means to compete with yourself, your own standards and your own desire for excellence. He compared the self-challenge to how athletes push themselves to higher and higher performances.

“When LeBron [James] gets 35 [points], 15 [rebounds] and 10 [assists], he goes right back to the gym to figure out why it was only 15 rebounds, why it was only 10 assists,” Hutcherson said. “To some degree, he’s spending time asking, ‘How do I make today better than yesterday?’”

No matter how good a day you may have had at work, what would you do differently tomorrow to make the next day better? That’s the penultimate question. Forget the salary, the bigger office and the job title.

“What I really care about is when I come to work every day, I want today to be better than yesterday,” Hutcherson said. “If I can get 1,500 people to only have that desire, this organization will be incredible.”

#### **Full-Court Telework**

While the COVID-19 showstopper jolted all of us like the sore sight of empty stadiums, cities and corporate offices, it also created a world of silver linings for Hutcherson. His leadership presentations focus on ways to prepare people for crisis, and outline steps on how to communicate effectively and spark innovation.

The notion of remote working putting a hurt on productivity and day-to-day business operations has been dispelled, Hutcherson said.

“We’ve now proven that we can all work remotely and the building won’t fall,” he said. “We can all be distributed and we can still be productive.”

Mandated telework certainly has brought NBA’s regional offices closer in spirit, if not proximity. Hutcherson said he now has more time to visibly interact with teams in China, India, Asia, Latin America and Canada. He’s gone from twice-a-year visits, complete with fancy PowerPoint presentations, to weekly Zoom or WebEx calls.

“People are drawing connections and putting faces to names,” he said. “Things are just becoming different, and in that respect, it’s been a really nice pause.”

He’s also noticed a flattening of organizational structure, and a clear leveling of the playing field.

“There’s no hierarchy on a video and there’s no subliminal kind of seating power struggles,” Hutcherson said. “Is he or she a collaborative leader because he or she sits at the middle and he or she lets everybody be around him or her? Or, is he or she an autocratic leader because he or she sits at the head of the table and everybody turns and looks to face him or her? There’s none of that. There are nine boxes on the screen and everybody can see the nine boxes. And if I was the last one to join, you may have to scroll the page to find me, even if I’m the boss.”

The virtual dynamic also seems to have helped all levels, races and types of employees who may not have had a voice in the past.

"It's so completely changed," Hutcherson said. "It's leveled the playing field to a degree that now we're all on the same level, even from a diversity and inclusion perspective."

Like many things with an upside, there's a downside to videoconferencing.

"There's a double-edged sword that goes with this," Hutcherson said. "You could potentially run the risk of excluding people when you're on Zoom calls, and you might lose a little bit of the language nuance."

But everybody has an equal opportunity to contribute and nobody has to be called on to jump in. Managers also can see the diversity on their team much more easily, he said.

"It creates a different style and aura that I think are here to stay," he said. "We're trying to identify and write down some of the things that we think make the workplace better. How do we keep those institutionalized even after we return?"

Normal is what normal does ... or is it?

"My biggest fear is that we snap back to some old habits that we were spending a lot of time trying to get rid of and all of a sudden now we're going to bring them back because we're back to 'normal,'" he said. "I want 'normal' to be this thing that we're doing right now, just also going to the office."

### **An Innovative Three-Pointer**

The NBA is no stranger to innovation. A few short years ago, the NBA joined forces with Take-Two Interactive to form an esports competition called the NBA 2K League. All games are livestreamed and consists of five-on-five matches where players use archetypes with preset skills.

What better way to keep the game alive and keep fans engaged when you're not playing actual on-court games?

The NBA also has players entering and presenting TikTok challenges with video prompts that encourage users to submit their own interpretations on a theme.

From an HR perspective, some recent innovations have included virtual onboarding and virtual internship programs. Because of COVID-19, the NBA canceled its customary internship program and replaced it with a virtual development program, with a robust training and speaker series that includes a "business of sports" symposium.

This new internship format has benefitted interns who may have been finalists for the program but not selected. It's expanded the pool of talent by getting more people to participate.

"All of these activities that we otherwise would have done in person we're now doing virtually," Hutcherson said.

Initially prompted by COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines, these innovations, he thinks, will remain.

"It's accelerating what we naturally do," Hutcherson said. "We always examine: How do we get better? How do we innovate? How do we stay progressive? How do we stay ahead of the game? How do we anticipate what's around the corner before we're around the corner? This [the COVID-19 lockdown] is just making us have to do that faster and sharper."

### **Far More Than a Game**

When you think about the NBA, you may think about it strictly in terms of a live spectator sport. Hutcherson, however, estimates that just 1% of the NBA's fan base ever enters an arena to watch a game live.

Three layers of fans (core, curious and casual) consume the NBA "in all of its glory," Hutcherson said. Whether it's the televised game, the content or coverage before and after the game, or, for example, the comings and goings (and fashion choices, say) of marquee players like Houston Rockets point guard Russell Westbrook, a nine-time NBA All-Star who signed the largest contract in NBA history (\$205 million over five years) in 2017.

Some people support the league because they appreciate what the players are doing in and for their communities, such as refurbishing courts, or perhaps they like to hear about the "rags to riches" life stories of the players.

"Our goal is to reach and touch as many people around the world as we can in all the ways people like to interact with the NBA," Hutcherson said. "You never know the thing that's going to make them plug in."

How the game is distributed — the game presentation — is likely to look different in the future. Many fans today — particularly the younger fans — don't watch the game on TV. For example, Hutcherson has two sons, ages 22 and 20, and he described a typical scene.

They have the game going on their iPad, while they have music playing on their phone. The TV is on and loud in the background. At the same time, they're on Instagram, Twitter and maybe Facebook. They might knock out a TikTok video and post it, see how many followers they get. Maybe they're checking their free fantasy stats or watching KSI, the famous YouTuber, do his thing, while at the same time, they're writing a paper.



“On paper, we compete with the NFL [National Football League] and MLB [Major League Baseball] and the NHL [National Hockey League] and MLS [Major League Soccer],” Hutcherson said. “On paper, we do. But, in fact, we really compete with anybody that is asking people to give their discretionary time and attention to whatever distraction it is they have to offer. Because, in reality, every day that you wake up, you have a discrete amount of time that you’re going to allow to be distracted by something.”

Whether it’s listening to music, watching a movie or binging one of our favorite shows, we’re all consuming perishable entertainment in different ways than we have in the past. To keep up with the times, the NBA is reskilling its workforce to deliver entertainment in a dynamic way.

“Apple and Netflix might as well be our partners because the way we’re going to distribute games in the future is the consumer interacting with us directly,” Hutcherson said. “They’re going to want to be able to go on NBA.com, League Pass and NBA+ and they’re going to say, ‘I want to watch the Celtics games against this team’ and they’re not going to want to wait ... The live games are a different story, but for all of the other content, ‘I want to be able to push a button and get it whenever I want it.’”

While the game, of course, is the most important piece of content the NBA offers, it’s almost background noise when you consider the flood of merchandise, social media posts and online debates all happening during game time.

“Engagement of the game is so different and when you get outside the U.S., that engagement is much more about everything ancillary to the game,” Hutcherson said. “Our innovations stretch across all those different domains because we have an opportunity to engage in so many different places, not only with fans but partners, players and other leagues.”

### A League of Her Own

The remarkable growth of the Women’s National Basketball Association is another bright spot for the NBA. The new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) reached in January 2020 helped put the league in a better light by increasing the minimum and maximum base salaries of WNBA players. Under the new CBA, players with zero to two years experience earn an annual minimum base salary of \$57,000, while any player with three or more years in the league collects \$68,000. The maximum salary for veteran players also increased from \$117,500 to \$215,000 for 2020 (an 82% increase).

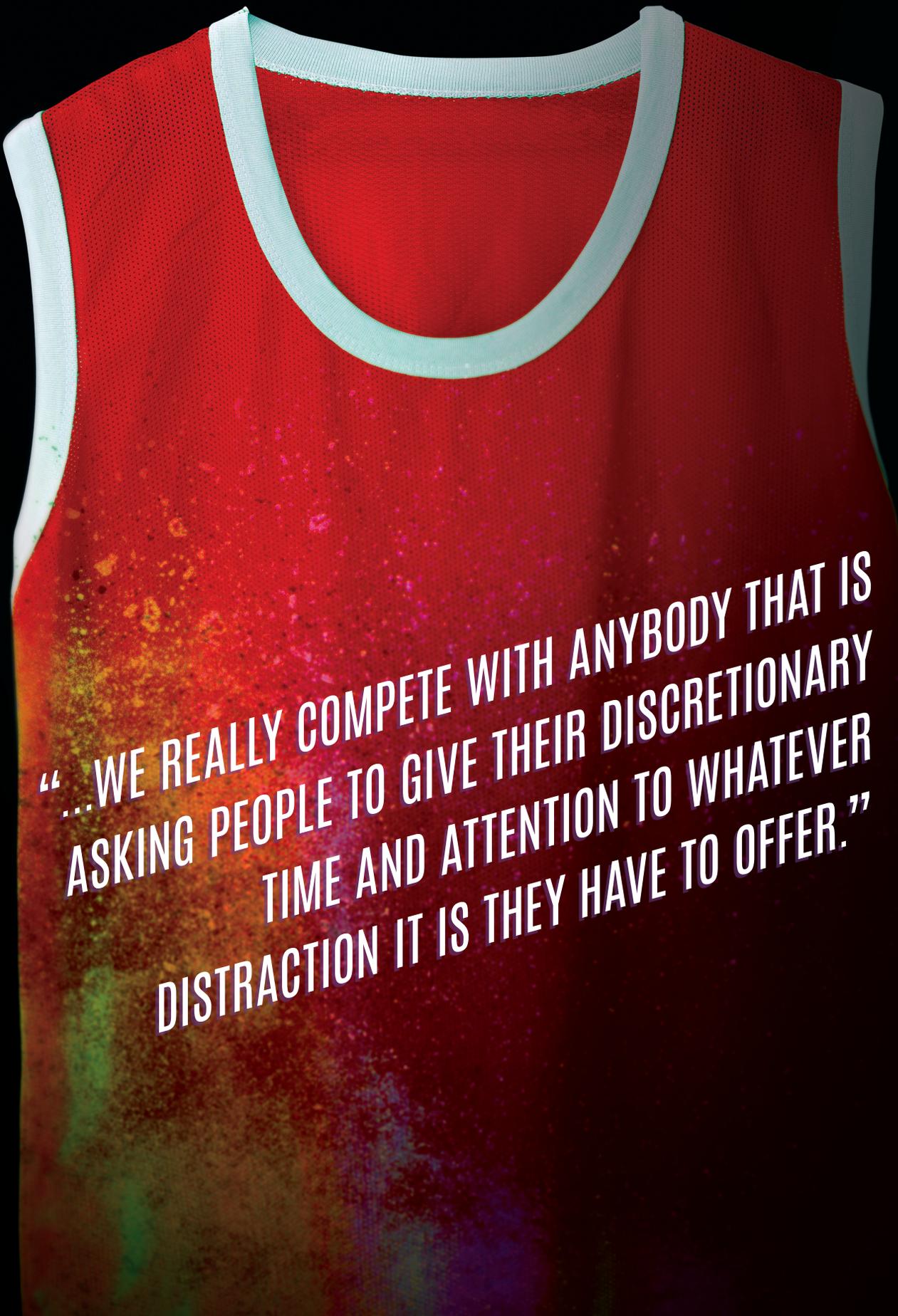
The new CBA also guarantees players 100% of their base salary if they are unable to play due to pregnancy, a 50% increase from the prior CBA, which had listed pregnancy as a “condition.”

New sections of the CBA also provide additional benefits, such as team reimbursement for childcare up to \$750 per month, costs of up to \$20,000 directly related to adoption, surrogacy, oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing), or fertility or infertility treatment for players with eight or more years in the league, and accommodations for nursing mothers that includes a safe space and access to refrigeration for breast milk, according to a High-Post Hoops report on Fansided.

The WNBA has made remarkable strides and the CBA “puts them on a solid ground that allows them to really be able to think about the future of the game and the future of women’s basketball,” Hutcherson said.

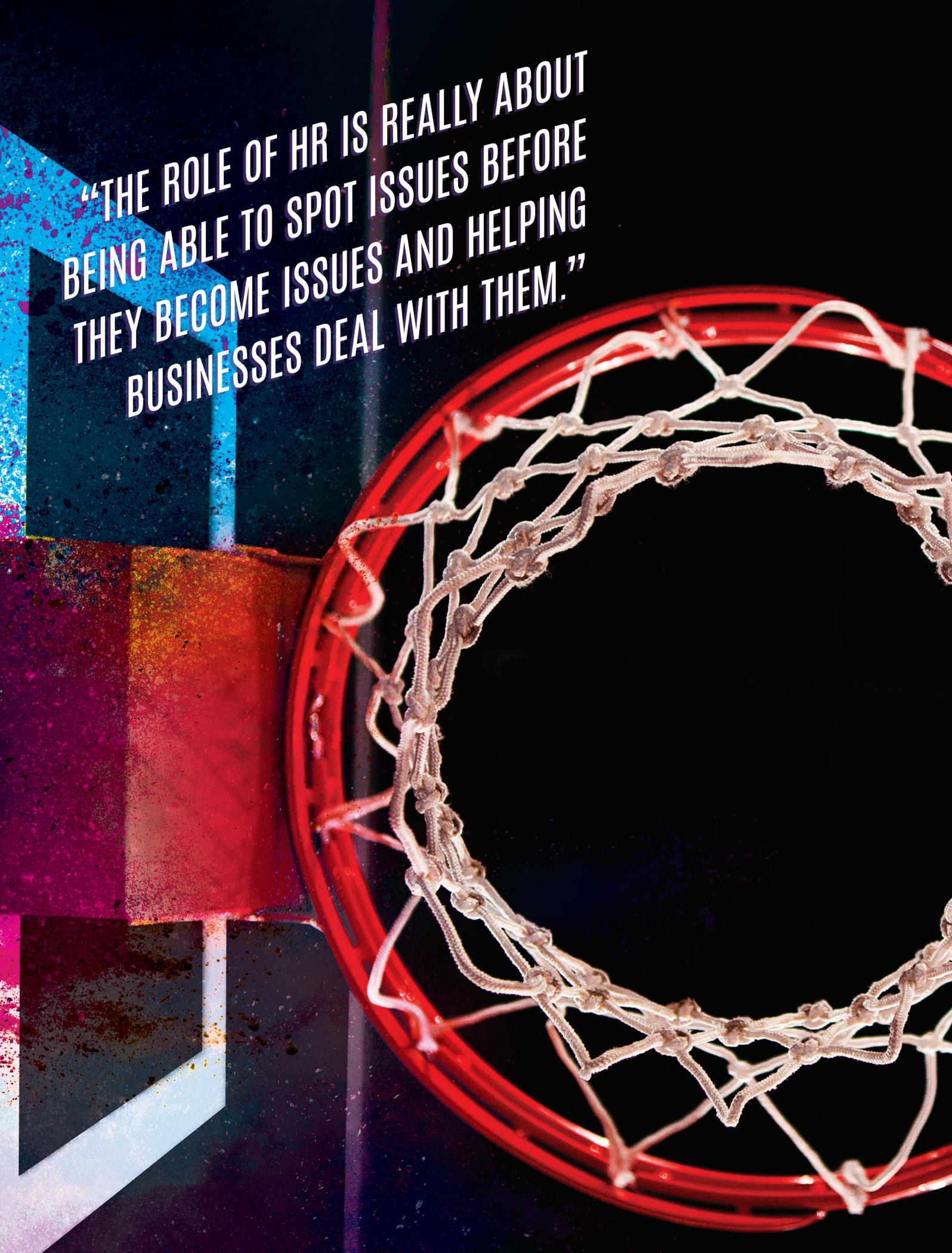
WNBA players certainly appeared to fare better than the U.S. Women’s National Team whose players lost a legal dispute in May 2020 when a U.S. federal district court judge accepted a motion for summary judgment by the U.S. Soccer Federation to dismiss the years-long argument that they were systematically underpaid by U.S. Soccer in comparison with the men’s team.

“We faced a similar situation [in the WNBA] and we did what we could to make sure that the WNBA players felt that they were appropriately compensated for the value and the status at which



**“...WE REALLY COMPETE WITH ANYBODY THAT IS  
ASKING PEOPLE TO GIVE THEIR DISCRETIONARY  
TIME AND ATTENTION TO WHATEVER  
DISTRACTION IT IS THEY HAVE TO OFFER.”**

**“THE ROLE OF HR IS REALLY ABOUT  
BEING ABLE TO SPOT ISSUES BEFORE  
THEY BECOME ISSUES AND HELPING  
BUSINESSES DEAL WITH THEM.”**



their league sits,” Hutcherson said. “We do our best to not let any differentiator — other than competence, experience and job expectations — be the differentiators in the way compensation is dispersed. And we’re pretty precise with our team about how expectations drive performance and how performance drives compensation and how compensation drives value and opportunity.”

### From Wingman to Superstar

The alley-oop is arguably the most exciting play in basketball. A leaping player catches a looping pass above the basket and immediately dunks the ball. In the business world, the alley-oop equivalent is when you lift the performance of others. You set up their success; they deliver.

As an executive who wears an HR hat only 10% of the time and a business hat the other 90%, Hutcherson said he seeks to understand what motivates his staff and what they aspire to.

HR leaders, of course, are responsible for the people and culture in which they work, and since everything that the organization does somehow touches people, he said, then HR should be involved in everything.

“The role of HR is really about being able to spot issues before they become issues and helping businesses deal with them,” Hutcherson said. “I often say I’m in the problem-avoidance business, not the problem-solving business. I know how to solve your problem after you’ve messed up. I know how to come fix it. But I’m much better at helping you see that there’s a problem just around that corner.”

The new employee value proposition is not about the prestige, he said. “It’s about what you believe in,” he said. “It’s about what values you espouse and the consistency with which you live those values.”

While Hutcherson doesn’t trivialize his traditional HR responsibilities, such as recruitment, succession planning and training, he’s more focused on what it will take for the NBA to transform from a linear sports and entertainment business to a digital business.

From the long-established model of long-form content editors, videographers and TV production staff to digital/social media specialists and tech engineers (with AI and virtual reality platforms), NBA games are now seen in 215 countries and territories in 49 languages.

### Reskilling is a must.

“The type of people that worked at the NBA 10 years ago and the type that will be at the NBA 10 years from now are completely different,” he said.

One massive initiative, with SAP tech support, is the development of an online stats page that could accommodate thousands of users interacting at once, with 4.5 quadrillion possible combinations of data to handle all the different data manipulations being explored by fans.

“I’m aligning across our business to make sure the experience management side of our business is a positive one, irrespective of where you are on that spectrum,” Hutcherson said. “I’m kind of an HR guy on Mondays and then every other day of the week, I’m not.”

### Hoop Dreams

Hutcherson understands the insatiable drive of an athlete and the passion of a sports fanatic. He grew up rooting for the Philadelphia 76ers (Julius “Dr. J” Erving was his jam), became a Magic Johnson (Los Angeles Lakers) fan and switched to Larry Bird when he worked in public relations for the Celtics after completing grad school. Away from the business of sports for nearly 18 years, he returned six years ago to the NBA. He now calls himself “a fan of Game 7.”

“[The NBA position] was an opportunity for me to take my personal passion and my professional pursuit and put the two together,” he said. “I’m the head of HR for the NBA. It’s like a dream job. I’m doing what I was called to do.”

The G League (the official minor league basketball organization, formerly known as the Development League) is another NBA product with ample growth opportunity. It’s poised to help inner city youth from Detroit to New York to Philadelphia to Chicago fulfill their own dreams — and it inspires Hutcherson to know that he and his colleagues make a difference in peoples’ lives.

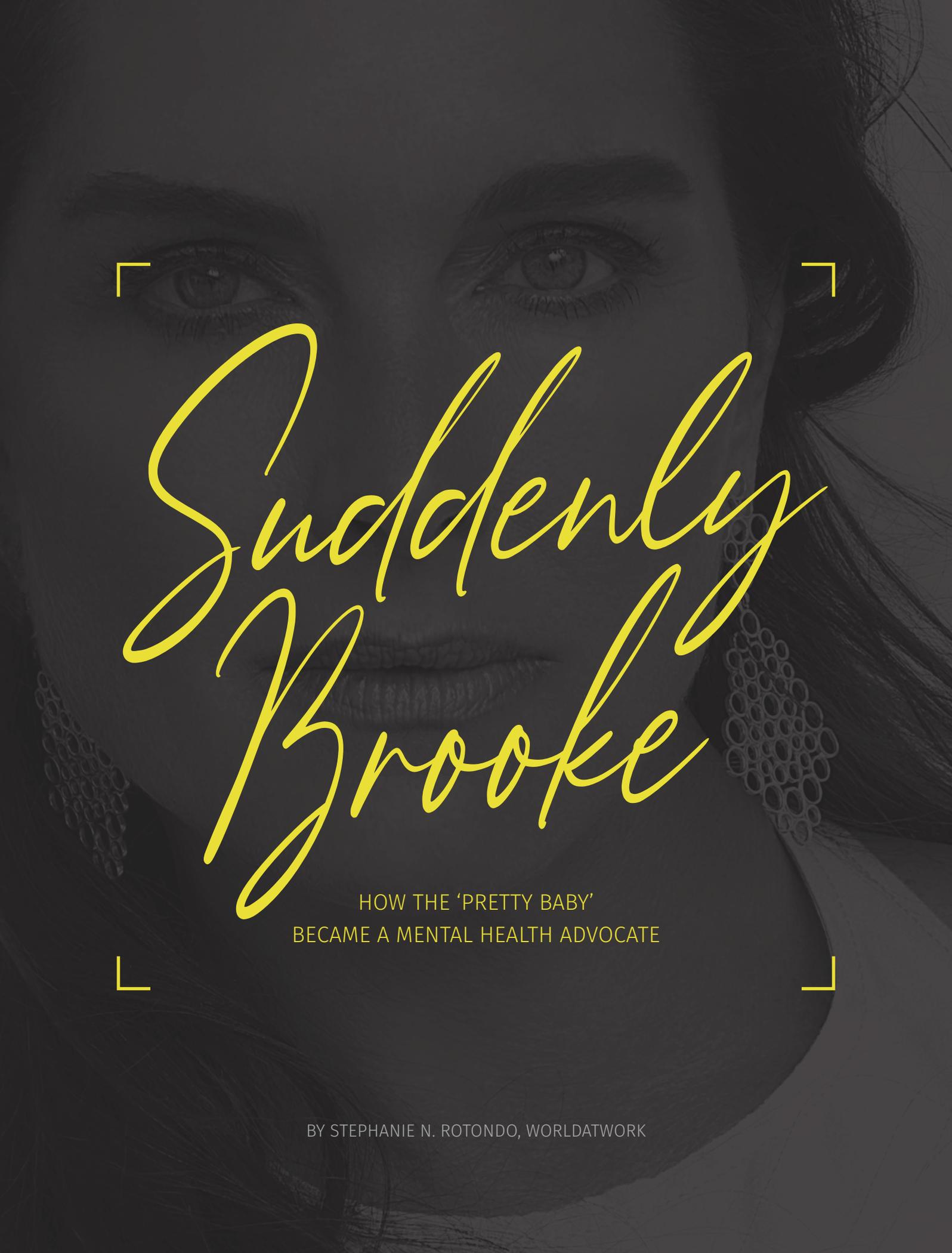
“We’re 1,500 [employees] strong, but the reach and impact that we have and our ability to change the world from the seats that we sit in is pretty impressive,” Hutcherson said. “The thing that I love the most about this job which makes it unique to any other job is I feel I have a sense of responsibility to change the world. And so everyday I’m trying to find ways to impact the world in a positive way and most of the time that comes with the name ‘NBA’ on my shirt.”

Hutcherson takes his responsibility very seriously. He says that he and his NBA cohorts “recognize that not everybody gets the privilege of doing what we do, and so we try to do it as best as we possibly can.”

“We try to reach and influence as many people as we can along the way,” he said.###

Dan Cafaro is editor-in-chief of #evolve.

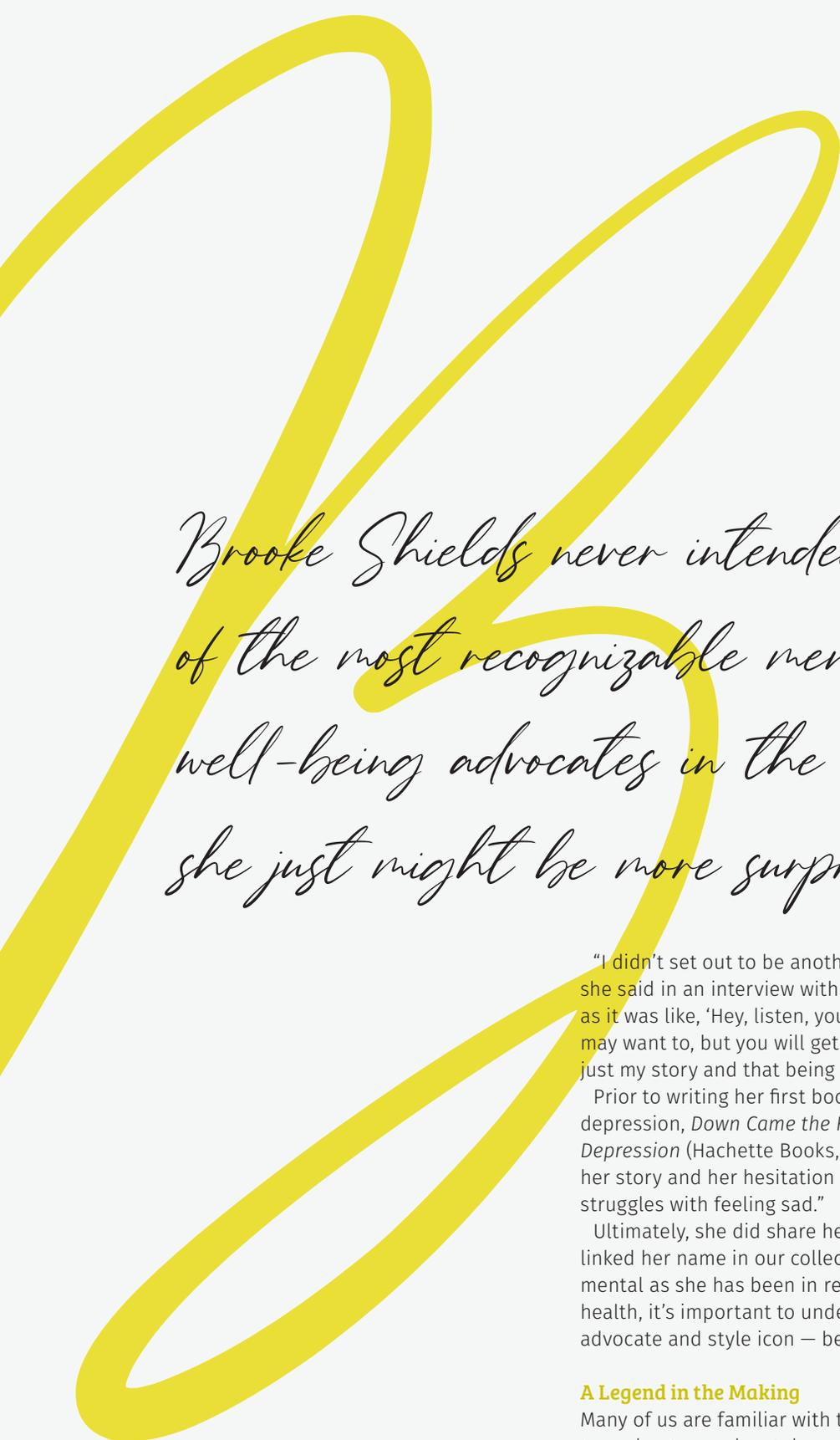




# Suddenly Brooke

HOW THE 'PRETTY BABY'  
BECAME A MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

BY STEPHANIE N. ROTONDO, WORLDDATWORK



Brooke Shields never intended on becoming one of the most recognizable mental health and well-being advocates in the world. In fact, she just might be more surprised than anyone.

“I didn’t set out to be another celebrity talking about some hardship,” she said in an interview with *WorldatWork*. “It wasn’t a soapbox as much as it was like, ‘Hey, listen, you’re not alone. Please don’t disappear. You may want to, but you will get help, you will get through this.’ It was really just my story and that being relatable [to others].”

Prior to writing her first book that chronicles her battle with postpartum depression, *Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression* (Hachette Books, 2006), she recalls being encouraged to share her story and her hesitation to do so: “No one wants to hear about my struggles with feeling sad.”

Ultimately, she did share her story and the drama that ensued forever linked her name in our collective minds to mental health. But as instrumental as she has been in reshaping the conversation around mental health, it’s important to understand how Shields — model, actress, author, advocate and style icon — became the Brooke Shields of today.

#### **A Legend in the Making**

Many of us are familiar with the story of Brooke Shields, the child model-turned-actress who stole our hearts in movies like “Pretty Baby” and “The Blue Lagoon,” and who dazzled and tantalized us in her *Calvins*. She was raised — and managed — by her mother Teri, who, by all accounts, was a powerful force of nature.

Without a doubt, Teri raised her daughter to be tough. From the start, many saw — and treated — Shields as if she were a beautiful object: something to be gawked at, but not, perhaps, taken seriously. But an “I’ll show you” mentality — something she got from her mother — pushed Shields to take chances many never expected, such as pausing her career

to attend Princeton University, where she got a degree in romance languages. She even turned her sex appeal on its head, reportedly remaining a virgin until she was 22.

Through it all, Shields maintained a solid work ethic and came from the viewpoint of “what doesn’t kill you does make you stronger.”

“You tough things out,” she said. “You get over the pain, you dust yourself off, you don’t let them see you sweat. It’s sort of this survivor mentality that my mom instilled in me. I always learned, ‘OK, let’s just figure it out and let’s try to get past it.’”

For most of her life, this mentality served Shields well.

“I realized that I got stronger and I started to be somebody to be reckoned with,” she said. She was determined to be seen for who she really was and who she wanted to be. For instance, she went against the grain when she opted to take the comedy route — and eventually, she won.

“I wanted to be a comedian,” she said. “And that wasn’t where people wanted me to go, but I fought for it.”

In the 1990s, Shields returned to acting, going on to star in her own sitcom “Suddenly Susan,” as well as having truly memorable guest roles on such hits as “Friends” and “That 70’s Show.” (On a side note, that hand-licking scene in “Friends” where her psychotic character laughed maniacally? That almost didn’t make it in, but once again, she fought for it. And she nailed it.) While she also took more dramatic roles here and there (most recently on “9-1-1”), her comedic chops were apparent. This, of course, only served to support her *modus operandi*: “You don’t think I can do this? Watch me.”

### Fulfilling a Dream

The life of a celebrity may seem to be a dream in and of itself: the money, the fame, the parties, and so many other glamorous and extraordinary things that many of us aspire to have. But at the end of the day, celebrities are just people, with

*“I was knocked on my ass and I mean in a way that none of my old [coping] tricks would work.”*

many of the same hopes, dreams and even fears of non-celebrities.

For Shields, that dream was being a mother. But unlike her other dreams and goals, motherhood proved elusive. It took seven rounds of in-vitro fertilization before her first daughter, Rowan, was born in 2003. (The father is Chris Henchy, a screenwriter and producer that married Shields in 2001.) Notably, the birth took place barely a month after Shields’ father passed away from prostate cancer. (Rowan turned 17 on May 15, just before Shields’ 55th birthday on May 31.)

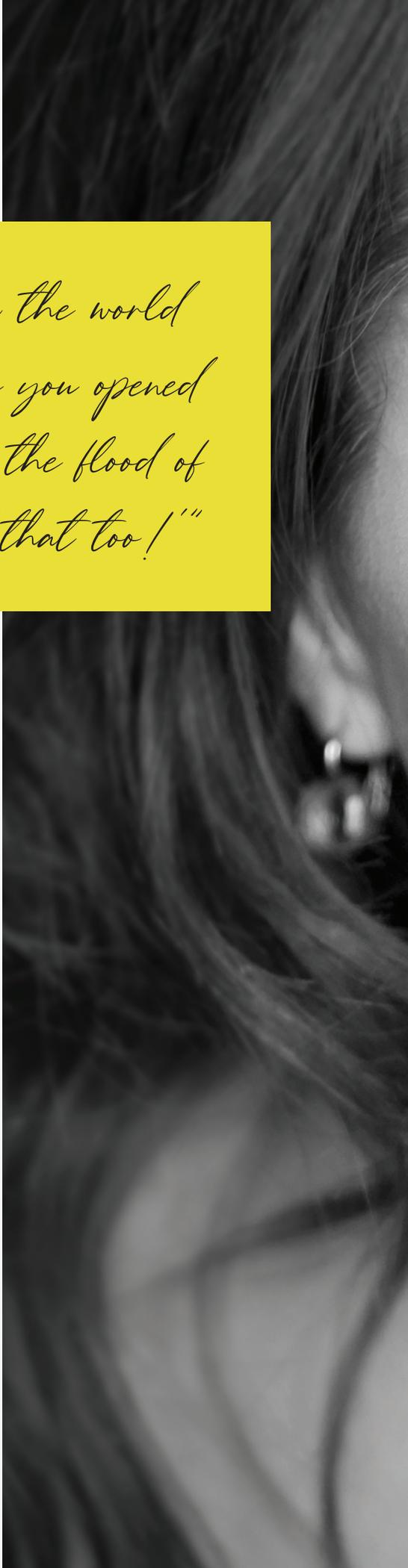
But instead of it being the joyous occasion she always had imagined, “it just unraveled me,” she said.

“I was knocked on my ass and I mean in a way that none of my old [coping] tricks would work,” she said. “I had no desire to pull myself out of anything. I wanted to just disappear. And no one could help me — or so I thought.

“I looked around and I thought, ‘Oh, this is really bad. You’ve finally met your match. You should really stop living right now.’”

In her first book, Shields details her early struggle to bond with her newborn:

“In general, I have always loved babies, and Rowan was not only amazing and alert but also quite beautiful. Her features were perfectly formed, and she looked like an angel. But I felt no appreciation for the little miracle. Although I didn’t dislike her, I wasn’t sure I wanted her living with us. In addition, I could hardly stand on my own two feet because of the sheer mass and weight of my body ... Besides the fact that I was physically incapable of performing many of the basic mothering duties, I also didn’t feel like I wanted to get too close to Rowan.



*"I thought I was the only person in the world who experienced this. And then, once you opened up that dialogue, I was shocked by the flood of people saying, 'Oh my god, I had that too!'"*

I wasn't afraid she was too fragile; I just felt no desire to pick her up. Every time I have ever been near a baby, any baby, I have always wanted to hold the child. It shocked me that I didn't want to hold my own daughter. I wished I had 'I Dream of Jeannie' powers so I could blink myself into a warm, loving embrace with Rowan. Instead I was more like the distant and unsympathetic Endora from 'Bewitched'."

Finally, Shields admitted — both to herself and to her loved ones — that she was in dire need of help, medically, mentally and physically. Slowly — and with a few setbacks along the way — she did get help. She started taking antidepressants — for which she was rather publicly shamed by Tom Cruise, among others — and started therapy. She admits that she stopped taking her medications at one point, thinking that she could go it alone. She soon realized that was not the case and went back on them.

"I felt alone and embarrassed and ashamed and that's why it was important for me [to share my story]," she said. "I thought I was the only person in the world who experienced this. And then, once you opened up that dialogue, I was shocked by the flood of people saying, 'Oh my god, I had that too!'"

"I was never the person who said, 'Here, take this medicine and you'll be better,'" she noted. "I was like, 'I don't need medicine, I don't need that. I'm struggling, but I'm not crazy!'"

But her ever-curious mind took over and she started researching the biochemistry behind mental health issues and, specifically, postpartum depression. "It became something that was very tangible instead of me looking at it as some kind of failure or weakness on my part."

"The freedom that comes from being [open] to help has been a huge lesson for me," she said. "Asking for help was never in my rhetoric. It was just huge."





*"Isn't it great when you see people at a company and they say, 'God, I love working for this person, this team, they make me feel like a human being?'"*

"It's hard to admit that you need help," she said. "The shame is so much and so acute."

Today, Shields is mother to Rowan and Grier, who was born in 2006. Knowing what her experience was like, as well as the experience of so many others, has made breaking through the shame and stigma around mental health and well-being even more important.

"I now have two daughters," she said. "God forbid, they ever go through this. One in seven women experience [postpartum depression] and left untreated, it can become... There's damage done no matter what. We associate it only with the horrible stories of moms drowning babies, but there's this whole other contingent of people that are suffering with these types of illnesses. It's really scary."

### **Opening a Dialogue**

The stigma associated with mental health is often present in the workplace. Employees may feel that they can't — or shouldn't — tell their employers when they are struggling with things like burnout or other mental health-related issues. In the past, employers were all too willing to ignore the signs of mental health issues in their people, often with long-lasting negative impact.

This is why, in Shields' opinion, employers need to be increasingly cognizant of the role mental health plays at work.

"I really believe that we have a responsibility to people that we are asking to provide us with something," she said. "If your workforce is happy and you're respecting your team, you're cognizant of them as a whole person, I think productivity will increase. Isn't it great when you see people at a company and they say, 'God, I love working for this person, this team, they make me feel like a human being?' I think that makes for better productivity, happier workers and a happy place to be."

"We only get one life. How miserable is it if you're in an environment and you're working and you feel like you don't matter? I think mental health is a huge piece of that puzzle."

And, whether you're talking about a workplace or about your personal life, there's one thing that can help move the needle on the stigmas of mental health: honesty.

"I think honesty is really, really important," Shields said. "The first response that people always think is they're afraid that what they're going through isn't as bad as other people's, or that they have no reason to complain, or that they have no value there. They don't merit complaining about something."

Shields notes that even among her friends — that is, people who can hide out in their country house during COVID-19 lockdowns and can afford to do things like take time off of work — she's amazed at how many of them try to downplay their own mental health issues.

"Every time one of them gets a little depressed, they'll say something to the effect of 'Yeah, but it's not as bad as anybody else,' or 'Yeah, but in the grand scheme of things...' But what I always say is 'It is valid because you are a human being, just like everybody else.' And we need to provide environments that are safe for judgement-free conversations, dialogues, groups, blogs, messages. It can be the most beneficial thing, disseminating the knowledge that there is a community."

"Just because you think it's less than what someone else is going through does not mean that it's not valid and doesn't mean it's not worthy of attention. Mental health is not an indulgence. It's not a luxury. I think we're so ashamed of it, so we quantify it. But it doesn't mean that you don't address your mental health and find ways of coping."

"People need to know that there's a safe zone, whether it's HR or a group, because once you start hearing other people's concerns or feelings or

## An Author's Note of Gratitude

When I first learned that Brooke Shields was going to be a keynote speaker at our annual conference, I was the first to call “dibs” on interviewing her. After all, I grew up mesmerized by her and this could be my first true celebrity interview! Unfortunately, I was not attending the conference — though it would soon turn out that no one was attending, at least not physically.

So, when Dan Cafaro, our editor-in-chief and my boss, asked me to take the reins, I went from giddy to incredibly nervous: How could I possibly do this interview? I mean, Brooke Shields!

I did my best to keep my nerves in check on the day of the interview, but I was also dealing with something else: my own mini-mental health breakdown. Amid all of the COVID-19 concerns, family health issues, work stress and life in general, I was about to reach my breaking point. All I had to do was get through the interview and then I was taking some much-needed time off; I was not confident that I could do it.

The time of the interview came. I tried to downplay my excitement as much as possible, though I did allow myself one to two minutes of fan-girling. Luckily, she took it in stride and laughed at all the points I had hoped she would. As we got into the interview, I was struck by how, well, normal she was. At one point, she put me on hold because she couldn't find her purse. I heard just a snippet of the conversation she was having and chuckled. She sounds like I do, I thought to myself.

As we discussed mental health and her own journey through postpartum depression, I began to feel something in me change. I began to feel lighter. The tension I'd been carrying for weeks in my head, neck, shoulders, really everywhere, was not as apparent. I didn't feel like I was being crushed anymore.

At the end of the interview, I thanked her for her time and also told her that I'd been dealing with some things personally and that what she said had struck a chord. I thanked her for making me feel a little better, even without intending to. I will never forget her response:

“Thank you. Please don't suffer, whatever it is, it's not any less valuable. You're not alone. And you get to begin now. And if you have a setback, you get to begin again.”

So again, thank you to my boss, Dan, for giving me this assignment, and to WorldatWork for bringing her to us and, of course, to Brooke for giving me just what I needed at just the right time.

I am eternally grateful.

emotions, two things happen: One, you feel that you're not alone in the world. And the other thing is empathy for others, stemming from a common ground. It's really powerful. It's extremely encouraging and empowering.”

Shields explains that she recalls her lowest moments and how she would attack herself for being weak or even just a horrible person. But hearing the stories of others resonated in a way that helped her emerge from her own “dark hole,” as she puts it.

“The problem with mental health is that we're pigeon-holed into this shameful place that you should just try to get over,” she said. “Especially in the workplace. If I was in a workplace and there were many, many people, and I felt a certain way, my first reaction probably would be *‘I'm the only one that feels this way.’*”

But, if employees feel like they can be honest and open about their struggles, if they can connect with others who are feeling similarly, “you open yourself

up to that vulnerability and then all of a sudden, you're in a community and then all of a sudden there's a power in that number.”

“It does take a village,” she said. “It's just that companies have sort of become *not* villages. The companies that seem to thrive are companies that have environments where people feel like they're treated as human beings, and they're valued and encouraged and challenged.”

“I've seen many people who are miserable in their jobs and it seems like smaller changes could make a bigger difference,” Shields opines. “It doesn't have to be the touchy-feely thing that people are afraid of. It's just valuing their people in a more multidimensional way.”###

**Watch Brooke Shields' keynote address at WorldatWork's 2020 Total Resilience Conference on Aug. 12!**

**Stephanie N. Rotondo** is the former managing editor of #evolve. She is also a lifelong Brooke Shields fan.

# A Bet *on* JetBlue

CULTURE WILL BE KEY

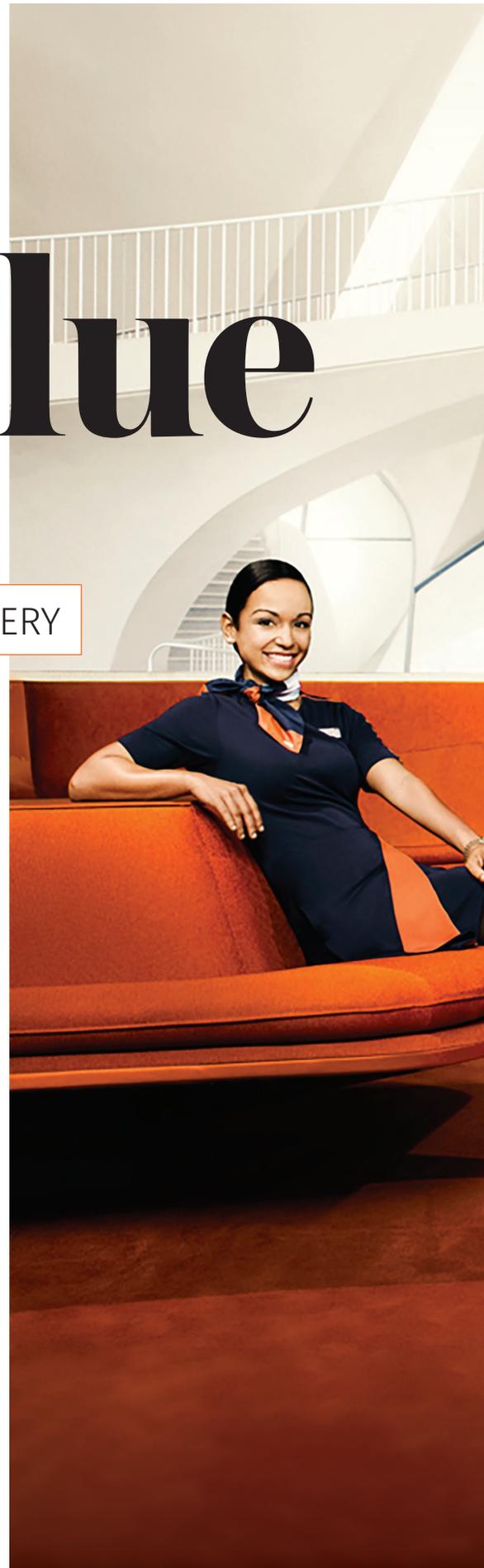
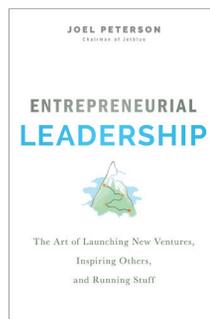
TO THE COMPANY'S RECOVERY

BY MARK ATHITAKIS, WORLDATEWORK

**"We're not going to sugarcoat it,"** read the email JetBlue sent to its 23,000 employees on March 18. "Demand continues to worsen, and the writing is on the wall that travel will not bounce back quickly."

The airline's message was a blunt one at a time when the novel coronavirus was just beginning to force states to implement stay-at-home orders and the federal government was preparing to announce a state of emergency. But in many ways, the e-mail represented business as usual for the company. For years, JetBlue has sent a straight-talking companywide email to all employees every week, signed by a member of the company's C-suite. It's a habit that's served the company well in the age of COVID-19. Leaders struggle to communicate well even on ordinary days, noted Joel Peterson, who in May completed a 12-year tenure as the company's chairman. In a crisis, such communications have proven even more essential.

In his book *Entrepreneurial Leadership*, Peterson writes that the weekly emails were designed "to make sure [employees] never learn news about the airline from the press." That strategy of getting ahead of the news, Peterson said in an interview, has remained the same during the crisis.





“You’ve got to have a communications plan,” he says. “A lot of the way you handle crises is by being transparent, by telling people bad news as well as good news, by articulating a plan, and by being credible. Communication skills are one of the things you work for.”

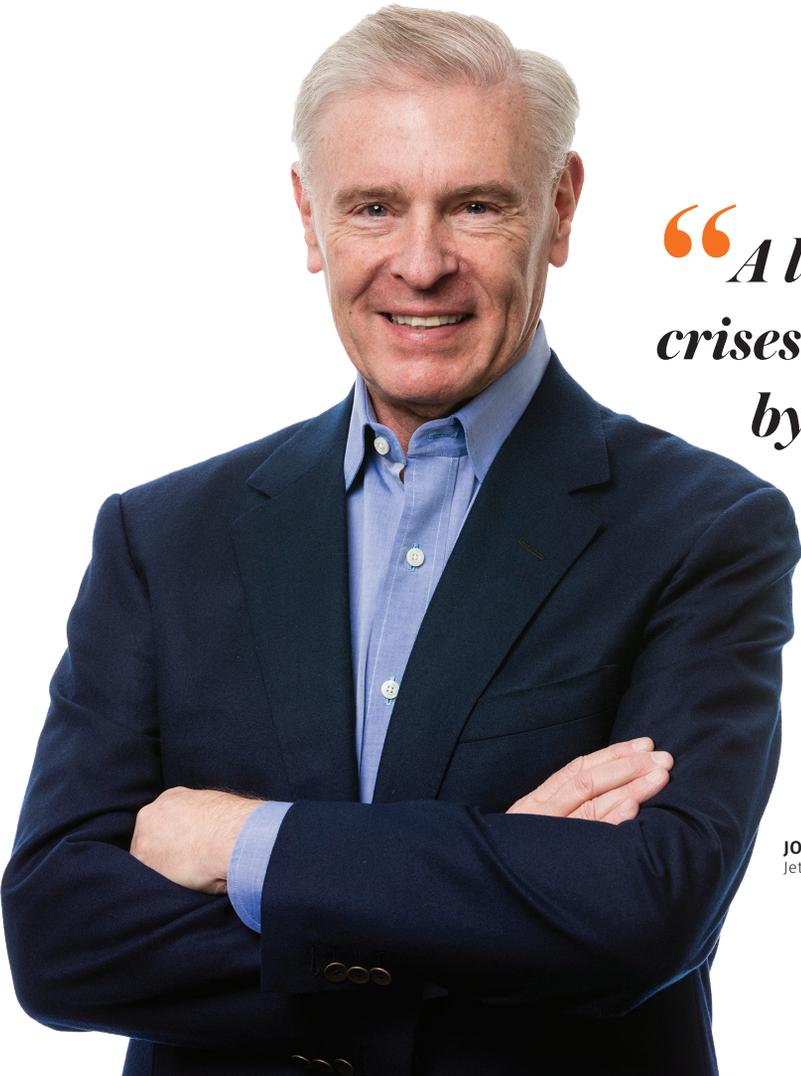
No clear picture has emerged for how JetBlue — or any organization, for that matter — will emerge from the pandemic. But JetBlue serves as one example of how employee-centric policies that emphasize transparency and safety will be a critical part of whatever comes next.

“Our number-one value at JetBlue is safety, and everybody already thinks this is the safest industry and the safest way to travel in the world,” Peterson said. “But now we’ve got a new hurdle, which is health safety. So, we want to make sure that we are living that value.”

### Establishing Value — and Values

On May 7, JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes had some bad financial news to deliver on the company’s quarterly earnings call. That was to be expected: The pandemic had hit the travel industry particularly hard, prompting substantial drops in demand and revenue. But Hayes opened the call with a different order of bad news that put the red ink in perspective. Hayes noted that six of the company’s employees had died from the coronavirus, then took a moment to briefly share personal details about each of them. Ralph Gismondi, for instance, was a veteran of the New York Fire Department and had served at Ground Zero on 9/11; Charles Lewis was a “natural and confident leader” as a grounds-crew member.

Hayes then asked for a moment of silence to commemorate all six before continuing with the call. It was an unusual enough gesture that *USA Today* reported on the call as a story in itself. But Peterson, who in addition to his role at JetBlue, has served as an investor in and CEO of multiple companies and teaches leadership at the Stanford



**“A lot of the way you handle crises is by being transparent, by telling people bad news as well as good news, by articulating a plan, and by being credible.”**

**JOEL PETERSON**  
JetBlue

**“I think showing respect all the way up and down the organization, even to the newest, lowest-level person, will develop trust.”**

Graduate School of Business, said that such gestures aren't unusual if the values of a company are clear to everybody in the organization. Indeed, they become something of a reflex.

In *Entrepreneurial Leadership*, he writes that successful companies work to boil down their values to their simplest essences, not so that they can function as catchy ad taglines, but so employees can easily understand and support them. “Part of the job of an entrepreneurial leader is to formulate and articulate this mission so that everyone understands it, remembers it, and owns it,” he writes. “When this happens, people sense their work has meaning.” (By “entrepreneurial leader,” Peterson doesn't exclusively mean startup CEOs, though he's taught and invested in some of those, from Bonobos, Asurion and others. Entrepreneurial leadership is flexible, capable of adapting to changing circumstances — a meaningful skill for the current moment.)

JetBlue's mission is “to bring humanity back to air travel,” and Peterson said that means demonstrating humanity throughout the organization. At a time when customers and staff are anxious, trust becomes crucial, he posits.

“I think showing respect all the way up and down the organization, even to the newest, lowest-level person, will develop trust,” he said. “If people only respect some people or some offices, that actually destroys trust.”

In board meetings, Peterson likes to show how JetBlue staff demonstrate that trust by sharing examples of above-and-beyond behavior from rank-and-file employees. For instance, one flight attendant discovered a pair of Super Bowl tickets in a seat-back pocket after a flight, identified their owner, and drove 30 miles to return them. More relevant to the current moment, JetBlue was one of the first airlines to require both passengers and flight crew alike to wear face masks, and to conduct regular temperature checks of front-line employees. As some airlines absorbed criticism in the spring for continuing to book crowded flights, JetBlue implemented social-distancing rules by blocking out middle seats.

For Peterson, those actions demonstrate an intersection of living corporate values while successfully running a business.





“The management team knew that the board would absolutely support anything that secures the value of safety, and masks was one of them,” he said. “Sanitizing planes means it takes a little longer to turn them around, but that’s something we can do to secure that value.”

### Staying Goal-Oriented

In *Entrepreneurial Leadership*, Peterson tells the story of a public debate he had with business scholar Jeffrey Pfeffer, who’s advocated for a ruthless, nice-guys-finish-last approach to business. Peterson argued onstage that “trust and respect for others are essential in leadership; intimidation and manipulation always fail in the end.” He’s certain, he writes, that companies built on trust and respect will always outperform those laser-focused on the bottom line.

But part of that trust and respect, he explains, means being able to establish goals for employees. Such goals can be modest ones in a crisis. “I’ve been involved in a couple of turnarounds intimately, and I’ve told people, ‘Our goal for this quarter is to lose less money than we did last quarter,’” he said. “It may sound like a low goal, but you have to have

some kind of objective. You have to say, ‘We’re going to cut our cash burn.’ That’s not ‘winning.’ It’s not sustainable. It’s not what you’d call a really inspiring goal. But for the moment, it’s the true goal. It’s the accurate goal. I think people operate best with goals, and if you set a goal that wasn’t doable, it wouldn’t be inspiring.”

Peterson acknowledges that goal setting in response to the pandemic presents a particular challenge, because there’s nothing so all-encompassing in recent memory to compare it to.

“This is worldwide, and it’s really not well understood,” he said. “There’s a lot of fear and ignorance associated with it.”

But JetBlue, like a lot of successful companies, regularly runs through worst-case-scenario exercises. And though they may not address a global pandemic, they bolster a culture of responsiveness and quick decision making.

“You can be both deliberate and have a rapid response, and the way you do it is by doing it ahead of time,” he said. “We’ll run cybersecurity tabletop exercises; we’ll run accident tabletop exercises. If you run those ahead of time, you can be deliberate and thoughtful and intentional



*“JetBlue is betting that creating a sense of comfort for passengers and frontline workers alike will be key to the company’s recovery.”*



about your decision making. In a crisis, to dither is actually to make a decision, and it’s often not the right decision.”

### **An Emphasis on Culture**

With air-travel demand falling 70% in May 2020 from the year prior, simply surviving is a challenge for carriers, as is retaining employees. JetBlue was one of the high-profile airlines that received support via the CARES Act, the \$2.2 trillion federal bailout program that provided \$936 million to JetBlue to continue operations. The relief comes with a requirement that the company refrain from layoffs until the end of September. (The company has absorbed criticism for cutting back hours for employees as the number of flights have dropped off, though the company says the move is meant to help the company avoid layoffs after that September milestone.)

But Peterson notes that bailouts alone won’t pull the airline through.

“There’ll be no long-term if there’s no short-term, so you really have to think about how you’ll get through the narrows,” he said. “That means extending the financial runway, making sure you’ve

got adequate resources. That can mean delaying payments, cutting back operating expenses. The government stepped in and we got some help there, but we also borrowed a bunch of money. We mortgaged planes. We did all kinds of things to make sure that we had the resources to see us through an extended period.”

Bolstering the company culture is just as essential in that environment too, he said. JetBlue is betting that creating a sense of comfort for passengers and frontline workers alike will be key to the company’s recovery. And, creating that culture is the result of attentive teamwork from the company’s leadership.

“What you work for in a crisis is a culture of collaboration and cooperation,” Peterson said. “I always think about it as climbing up a cliff face where you’re belayed with other people. If you don’t trust them, and if you haven’t developed a working relationship where you’ve climbed together before, you’ll have a hard time. A group working together and operating as a team is extraordinarily powerful. But only if they’re working together as a team.” ###

**Mark Athitakis** is a contributing writer for #evolve.

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PROVIDING ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES

BY JANE LARSON, WORLDDATWORK







# B

ob Merriman was lunching with a college buddy when the two started kicking around ideas for using technology to measure the hits players take in concussion-prone sports such as football and rugby.

*What if*, they thought, they could create a “smart mouthguard” that could measure the force of a collision and alert coaches and others when something bad happens to a player? The idea for what would become Force Impact Technologies and its FITGuard product was born.

That day, the pair took their first step on what would be a long road to making their idea a marketable reality. But unlike the typical image of entrepreneurs who then seek out investors and create products in their garages, Merriman returned from the lunch to his job as a human resources program manager at Avnet Inc., a global distributor of high-tech components and services.

“I was a program manager for an Avnet team within HR that implemented global systems,” he said. “We were doing HRIS, which is the workday system that Avnet still uses, performance management, the learning and development systems. I could not have been further removed from what we were talking about at FIT and building this mouthguard.”

Yet Merriman became an “intrapreneur,” or an “internal innovator,” the corporate version of someone who comes up with a new and creative idea, finds the resources, and has the passion to take it as far as possible.

As much as people want to copy successful entrepreneurs such as Apple Inc.’s Steve Jobs or the founder of any up-and-coming local startup, they can just as easily take inspiration from co-workers at the next desk or on the other side of the world. And, corporations are quickly realizing the benefits of letting all levels of employees pursue new ideas internally rather than seeing them — and the idea — walk out the door.

When employees’ ideas align with an organization’s priorities, advancing those priorities happens



## Definitions

**Intrapreneur:** Intrapreneurs are employees of a company who are assigned to work on a special idea or project. They are given the time and freedom to develop the project as an entrepreneur would. However, they are not working solo. Intrapreneurs have the resources and capabilities of the firm at their disposal.

**Entrepreneur:** An entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. The entrepreneur is commonly seen as an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services, and/or business procedures.

Source: Investopedia

more quickly and easily, said Simone Ahuja, chief executive officer of innovation consulting firm Blood Orange and author of “Disrupt It Yourself: Eight Ways to Hack a Better Business — Before the Competition Does.” The result is an increase in quality — and quantity — of innovations for the company and its customers, and for the employees, more engagement through a greater sense of purpose and the autonomy they crave.

HR professionals can and should play important roles in supporting and encouraging intrapreneurship in their organizations, experts say.

“Historically, HR is not a thought partner, which is really unfortunate,” Ahuja said. “It doesn’t have to be that way. If an HR organization helps empower people, their intrapreneurs, and supports them within the company as they bring forward and execute on meaningful ideas, then you shift from being the receiver of information to an innovation partner.”

Kaihan Krippendorff, CEO of Outthinker consulting firm and author of *Driving Innovation from Within: A Guide for Internal Entrepreneurs*, sees similar potential.

“HR often struggles with getting called in after the fact,” he said. “They aren’t there when decisions are being made and strategies being created. Shaping the brand of HR to be that trusted adviser, being at the table as priorities are being set, that’s important. It takes political acumen and building those informal relationships with business.”

*What if*, they say, HR professionals are ready to make a difference?

### Consider Your Culture

Intrapreneurship starts with an organizational culture that encourages and supports new ideas, which can range from incremental to ground-breaking and can come from anyone from front-line workers to executives. Rather than requiring employees to get permission first, managers in the new culture should give employees space to try new things and empower them to make decisions based on the greater good, Ahuja noted. Employees value that, and it gives them the confidence to innovate. Intrapreneurial companies also have systems, channels or common areas for people to talk to each other, where they can put ideas forward and come together to execute them.

It also helps when leaders can communicate simple statements of purpose, so employees understand the company's top strategic alternatives and what the organization needs, Krippendorff said. L'Oreal, for example, aims to be a "beauty technology" company, and Best Buy's "Renew Blue" strategy highlights its blue-shirted employees as tech-savvy people who can personalize advice to customers.

Merriman's project initially took "a gut punch" when his employer told him his smart-mouthguard idea was interesting but not what the company did. For the next two years, he and his buddy used their personal networks, learned to address challenges on tight budgets and slowly worked on their mouthguard idea. Merriman's biggest concern was that Avnet would view it as a threat to his productivity and focus at work.

Then a new CEO took over and challenged much of the company's conventional wisdom.

"My story became more desirable because of the direction we were going, and less of an outlier or problematic," Merriman said. "After that, there were all kinds of teams that we were talking to, just about the journey and product development, and a lot of teams were very eager to help."

Soon, he was getting help on choosing the best components, procuring those pieces with short lead times, and taking advantage of the company's manufacturing and design services, as well as its marketing teams.

### Finding the Right People

What if HR could jump-start intrapreneurship? Recruiting and hiring are key areas where HR staffers can play a role in intrapreneurship and, at the same time, bring in employees who care about their impact on the world.

"When you're bringing in people to the organization, you're fundamentally building its cultural DNA," Ahuja said. "If you have intrapreneurship in mind, if you're thinking about 'What is the mindset of an intrapreneur?' or 'How can we attract and retain the most curious minds?' or 'How do we ensure we have strengths in ideation, execution and leadership?,' then suddenly you're playing a really active role in building an intrapreneurial culture."

When writing job descriptions, she advises including intrapreneurship opportunities.

In recruiting, look for action-obsessed candidates and those who favor collaboration over a "lone wolf" approach. In interviews, give candidates the chance to share stories about problems they have solved and how frugal they were in their approach.

Krippendorff agrees that job descriptions should allow for flexibility and for collaboration across siloes. Rather than duplicating the roles a predecessor played, jobs can become missions or projects, and can even change every quarter, he said.

He, too, looks for certain qualities in potential intrapreneurs. Like entrepreneurs, they are innovative thinkers who take autonomous action and have strong market awareness of customers and the industry. But intrapreneurs also are good at taking small risks with the potential for big rewards. Their motivations are intrinsic.

"They aren't in it to get rich," Krippendorff said.

"They really get a kick out of advancing innovation, having an impact, and don't grow frustrated when the innovation is successful and they're not making the money, the company is making the money."

Intrapreneurs also need political acumen.

"Successful internal innovators view the political challenge as half of the problem-solving process," he said. "And they often enjoy it."

Merriman believes that in judging candidates, HR tends to rely on assessments that look at the wrong things.

"If HR really wants to find intrapreneurs, stop asking questions about work," he said. "Talk to people about their passion and what it is they'll be willing to work 10 to 12 hours a day on. Then start to think, 'Is there some way to take that and find a home to foster it through the organization?'"

Even when some hires "look weird" or don't pan out, he said, organizations should support HR in making nontraditional choices.



### Adapting Metrics and Rewards

*What if*, as intrapreneurship takes hold in an organization, performance reviews and other metrics can help move the process forward?

Would-be intrapreneurs frequently told Ahuja that too often, it was middle managers who quashed ideas. She suggests measuring managers in new ways that help them better support intrapreneurship – for example, on how many new ideas their team members bring in and on what managers do to support those ideas.

Merriman credits his managers for supporting him. His HR manager was upfront that his project shouldn't interfere with work time, but she also saw an opportunity to take an employee's innovative idea and leverage the company's services to different customers. She paved the way for his next job in the company's strategic planning department, where his new manager also supported him and introduced him and his idea to other teams in the company.

*What if* encouraging and rewarding intrapreneurs became another opportunity for HR professionals to make their mark?

"It's not always about money," Ahuja said. "It's also very much about visibility, it's very much about recognition, it's very much about connecting with senior leaders."

Autonomy, the sense of learning something, and support from a system of intrapreneurship also are their own rewards.

Merriman thinks as part of organizational planning, HR can help create paths for intrapreneurs to do, own and run their passion projects. Just as investors trust entrepreneurs to do everything from product development to sales and management, he said, companies should have ways to trust intrapreneurs to make their ideas happen.

Smart companies realize that not all ideas will pan out, but that lessons can be learned from each effort. Sharing lessons on what didn't work – and examining why – can help point employees in more fruitful directions or spare them from repeating fruitless efforts.

Krippendorff advises celebrating innovative efforts and ideas even if they fail and celebrating the sometimes-forgotten people who initiated what became a successful innovation.

"Also, look at the consequences," he said. "If people feel that by taking the risk to pursue innovation, their career may be damaged if that innovation doesn't happen, then they will naturally think twice before speaking up or stepping up."

Managers' reactions also matter.

"Do they say, 'Tell me more,' or do they say, 'Oh, that won't work?'"

That suggests organizations have opportunities to train managers on how to be more open-minded and supportive of new ideas.



IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT MONEY... IT'S ALSO VERY MUCH ABOUT VISIBILITY, IT'S VERY MUCH ABOUT RECOGNITION, IT'S VERY MUCH ABOUT CONNECTING WITH SENIOR LEADERS.



### Different Organizations, Different Approaches

Intrapreneurial cultures can vary across organizations, depending on size and geographic spread.

Smaller organizations can have an advantage in developing intrapreneurs, Ahuja said. They can move faster than large organizations and rules may not be as embedded as in large organizations. However, owners need to have an open mind versus a top-down, "my way or the highway" attitude.

Small companies, though, may be unable to dedicate a full-time person to a project, so it may take longer to achieve, Krippendorff pointed out. And, while large organizations may have resources, intrapreneurs there are challenged in aligning their projects with the company's goals and getting support from other business units.

Global organizations have an advantage if employees have a way to connect with each other and learn from other approaches, Ahuja said. Krippendorff suggests that localized businesses might opt for a more centralized innovation program, while decentralized programs might be more effective in global companies with varied product lines and customer segments.

Today, Force Impact Technologies is manufacturing and producing FITGuards, its online platform is working, and its early-adopter program is growing. Several high schools and universities – not

to mention a professional European rugby team – have signed up to use FIT's smart mouthguard, and Merriman is preparing for consumer sales to start in summer of 2021.

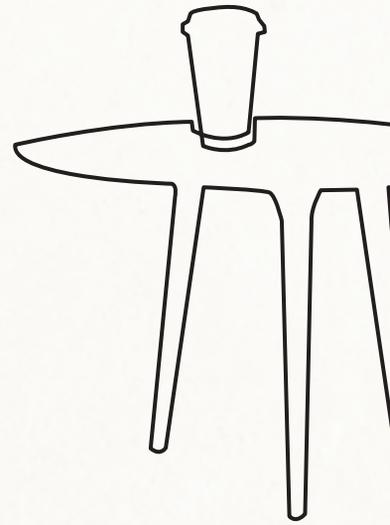
Merriman left Avnet in late 2019 to focus on FIT, but his passion project will always be known as one of the first successes out of Avnet's emerging-business organization, which offers its services in hardware development to smaller or nontraditional customers.

"There was that dual benefit," he said. "[Avnet said], 'Hey, we've helped this guy who had no experience. Why can't we use our expertise to help other companies that have ideas for products but haven't ever produced a hardware product before?' Avnet is very well positioned to go in and help those companies."

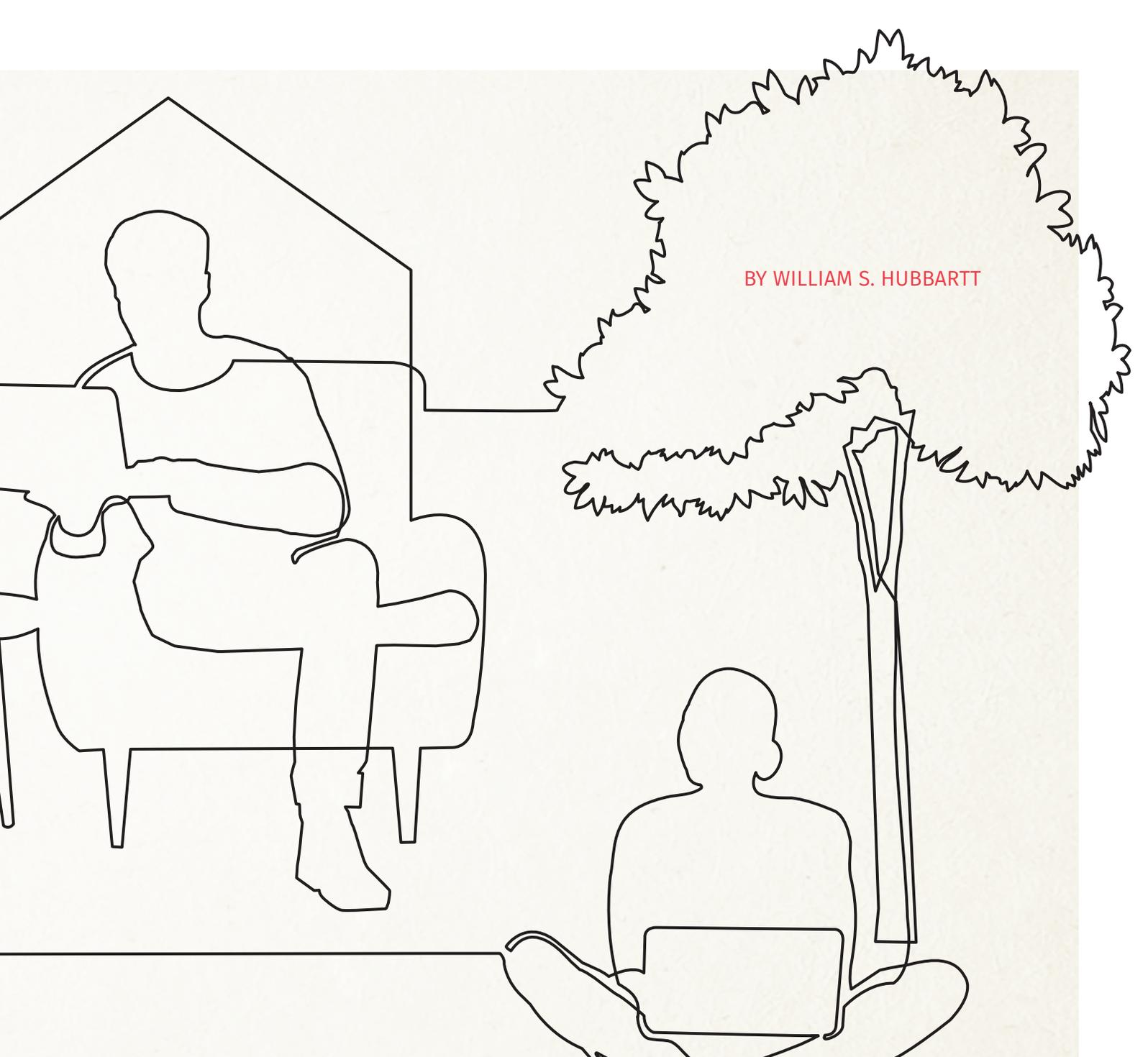
And in the end, both Merriman and Avnet were able to claim victory. ###

Jane Larson is a contributing writer for #evolve. She can be reached at [pubs@worldatwork.org](mailto:pubs@worldatwork.org).

**PRACTICAL**



**MA**



BY WILLIAM S. HUBBARTT

# NAGEMENT

A GUIDE FOR LEADING VIRTUAL EMPLOYEES

# EACH GENERATION

has experienced “a day that will live in infamy.” You vividly recall the events of that day and how life seemed to stand still as you heard the news – and how everything seemed to change in the aftermath. Depending on your age, dates such as December 7, August 6, November 22, April 4, September 11 or March 12 have been such a day. (See “Days That Will Live in Infamy.”)

In the days following March 12, 2020, the various state governors issued “stay at home” orders intended to protect citizens from the devastating effects of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, a deadly illness for which no known medication or vaccination exists (at least, at the time of this writing). The effect of the stay-at-home order was the temporary closure of many businesses except for certain essential industries. In the last two weeks of March, many organizations that had permitted occasional or ad hoc scheduling of telework were suddenly faced with a choice of mandatory furloughs or allowing significant numbers of employees to work from home, where job duties and suitable communications systems permitted such work.

During this trying period, businesses and their leaders have been scrambling to find workable processes to guide managers on how to direct a 100% virtual workforce. Suddenly, the informal communication practices of water cooler or hallway chats are gone, as are the customary scheduled or impromptu meetings in a conference room or the supervisor’s office.

Such face-to-face communication often reflect an individual manager’s preference for a specific style of communication. Some managers prefer one-on-one discussions or group meetings, while others feel more comfortable communicating by phone call, emails, texting or messaging systems. These practices vary as well based upon the culture and size of the organization and the degree of technological processes in place to operate the business and communicate with customers, vendors, suppliers, employees or the public.

But given the recent crisis, it is imperative to provide practical management tips for the effective management of virtual employees.

## **Build on Known Practices**

Now is not the time to reinvent the wheel. Odds are that nearly every reader of WorldatWork’s publications is employed by an organization that already has in place work practices relating to the management of and communications with existing remote employees. Examples may include field sales representatives, field technical service representatives,

## DAYS THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY

**DECEMBER 7, 1941**

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

**AUGUST 6, 1945**

The United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

**NOVEMBER 22, 1963**

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

information system specialists or independent contractors who provide specialized or project support to the entity. The practices and protocols for dealing with these individuals can likely be ramped up for a broader-based virtual workforce.

Similarly, most readers have participated in a virtual meeting or training seminar where the meeting presenters are located elsewhere, and such training used telephone or local area network-based communication allowing decentralized employees to tune in on a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile device to participate in the training seminar. Depending on the communication system(s) used, such workshops may be designed for a one-way presentation of information, or a presentation with questions and answers (Q&A) at the end, or an interactive open communication forum. The nature and purpose of the training and the size of the group will influence which presentation format is most suitable. Further, having participated in such training, you have a feel for what medium was effective and promoted learning, and what practices were ineffective and should be avoided.

### **Building Engagement**

Do you remember the first day at a new job? It may have been your current job or another at a prior employer. It can be a bewildering and uncomfortable experience, particularly if the employer's onboarding practice was ineffectual or if the hiring manager was too busy to introduce you to the people, place, position or workplace procedures. I have had that experience, and as a human resources professional, I have observed instances where a first-day new hire goes out for lunch and never returns.

The challenge of building workplace engagement is even greater when we are interacting in a remote environment. This is an important starting point for the team leader to be effective in motivating team members to achieve effective results. Here are some suggestions.

#### ***Show personal interest in each employee.***

When you interact with people by phone or video chat, it is not a good time for multi-tasking. That individual(s) deserves 100% of your attention for that moment. If the person has reached you at an inopportune time, arrange for follow-up communication and be sure to show up.

#### ***Build a relationship.***

If you have ever dealt with a seasoned salesperson, they have a knack for gleaning bits of information about you and then disclosing tidbits, demonstrating that you share similar experiences or perspectives. This tidbit might relate to the school you attended, or where you are from, favorite sports or hobbies, children or thoughts on some current event. And likely, this tidbit of information will be part of the next discussion you have with this individual. It is human nature to be more open towards someone with whom you share similar interests. Your common interest builds an ongoing relationship.

#### ***Be available and responsive.***

In the office environment, a manager's open or closed door signals their availability. In remote environments, the timeliness of our response is a clear indicator of our availability and responsiveness.

#### ***Be inclusive.***

Our world and our workplaces consist of a diverse mix of individuals. Each employee brings unique skills, experiences and perspectives to the group. Make a conscious effort to be welcoming and inclusive of all. Learned attitudes and unconscious bias affect how we interact and communicate with others and such actions are perceived by the recipient.

**APRIL 4, 1968**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis.**

**SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

**Terrorists hijacked multiple commercial airplanes, resulting in death and destruction at the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Penn.**

**MARCH 12, 2020**

**President Trump addressed the nation and declared a national emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

***Seek employee input.***

Many organizations are now seeking to provide a more transparent organizational culture. One way to achieve this is by looking for and taking advantage of opportunities to elicit employee input on matters that affect the job.

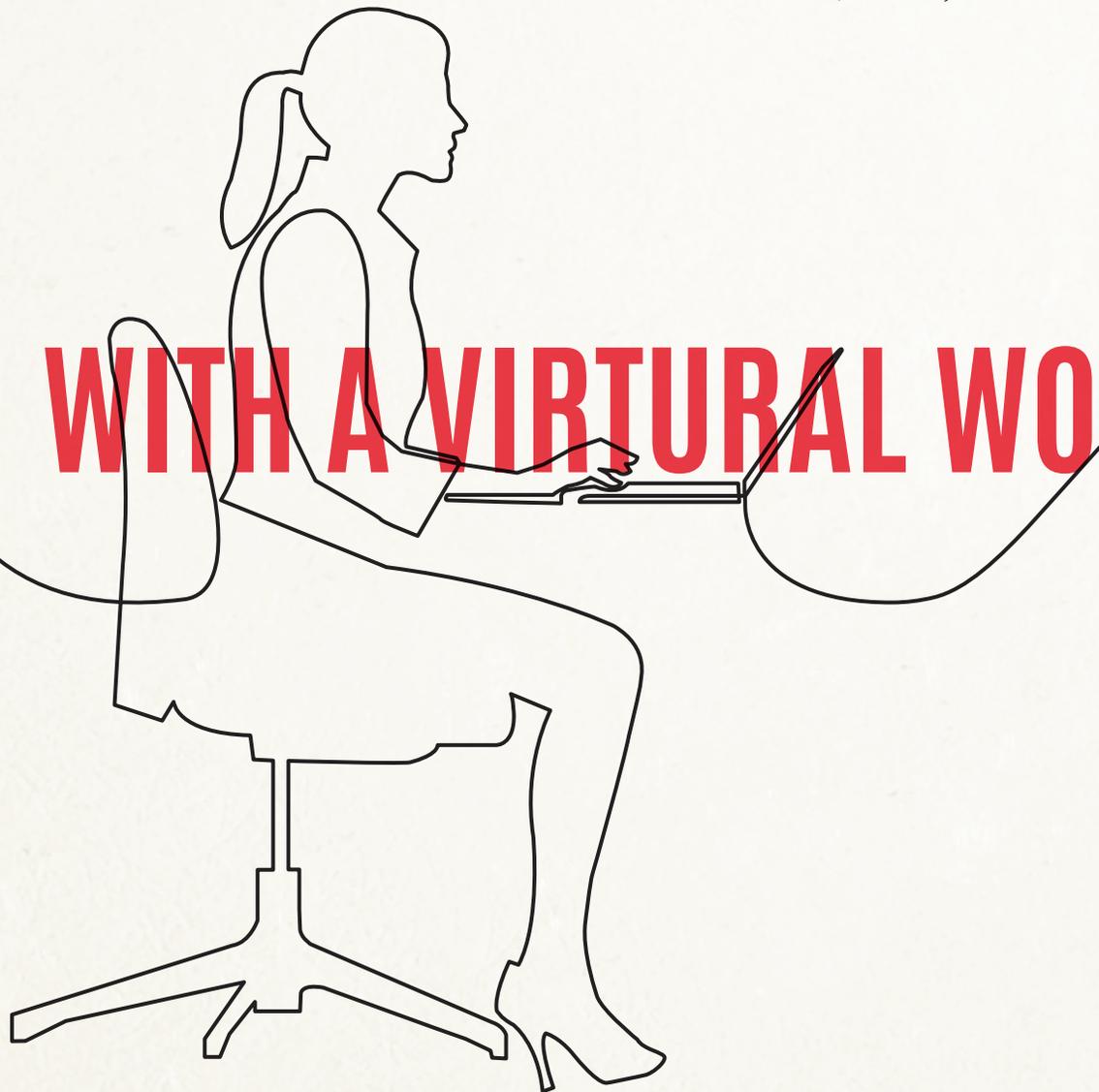
***Periodic informal feedback.***

An increasing number of employers are now adapting their performance management process by doing away with annual performance appraisals in favor of performance management processes that provide more frequent performance feedback. Consistent with your employer's performance management process, find ways to give your team recognition and appreciation through periodic feedback on work activities, goal achievement and project status.

**Dealing with Distractions**

It is a challenge for an on-site presenter to lead a meeting in a way that keeps an audience focused and attentive. That challenge becomes magnified when the audience is remote and likely has an array of communication devices at hand, all beeping for attention like a Las Vegas slot machine. The digital generation seems glued to a five-inch screen that has such addictive power that its owners forego their own safety when walking across the street or driving a car.

Having participated in virtual meetings and training, I must admit that it is easy to allow oneself to become distracted. Common distractions include multi-tasking (such as checking texts and emails or reviewing file information for the next meeting), receiving or making phone calls, eating or dozing off. In the home office environment, there may be



the interruptions of children, pets or activities of other family members. Further, individuals who may not be actively involved with the topic under current discussion can readily become bored and allow distractions to take precedence.

Such distractions can readily interrupt the meeting experience for all concerned when phones are not muted, or crying babies or barking dogs carry across the airwaves into the entire meeting. Careful planning will help the leader to find ways to minimize these disruptions.

### **Leading Effective Virtual Meetings**

With a virtual workforce, virtual meetings now become an essential mode of management. And, as in the office environment, meetings are one communication tool for dispensing, sharing or reporting information on work or project status, and for collaborative problem solving and decision making. Maybe you're an old hand at leading conference room face-to-face meetings, but virtual meetings are a bit of a different animal. Here are some thoughts on tailoring your leadership skills to effectively conduct virtual meetings.

# WORKFORCE,

virtual meetings now become an essential mode of management ... meetings are one communication tool for dispensing, sharing or reporting information on work or project status, and for collaborative problem solving and decision making.

### ***Set a schedule — and be on time.***

In any large organization, it is always a challenge to juggle schedules to assure employee availability for maximum participation. Outlook or other calendar apps provide a means to check availability for designated participants. The software can be used to designate participants, and announce the date, time and medium through which the virtual meeting will be conducted.

### ***Select an appropriate presentation medium.***

There are many meeting software offerings to choose from, or your organization may already have one in place. The purpose or goal of your meeting may affect your choice of medium. Are you looking to present information or announce an activity or conduct training? Such meetings may be best accommodated by software that features a display of graphics or text with leader voiceover and Q&A at the end. If your meeting calls for multiple participants to report or multiple activities, or perhaps to encourage brainstorm-style input, select software that facilitates this style of meeting. One suggestion for dealing with the cellphone distraction issue is to incorporate the use of the cellphone for input or survey response replies during the meeting.

### ***Announce the meeting and its agenda.***

This allows participants to prepare for the discussion and to participate effectively. In some situations, it may be advantageous to survey participants about important topics to be included in the discussion. Employee participation in setting the agenda can be an effective way to build engagement in the meeting.

### ***Prior planning prevents problems.***

The items listed above are essential elements in the planning process for conducting an effective meeting. As a seasoned presenter and trainer, I found that my presentation always went smoother when I rehearsed my talk. My rehearsals were in private and spoken out loud. Saying the words out loud helps to identify and smooth out the sometimes-bumpy syntax of a particular thought or message. Practice makes perfect and can help avoid sometimes embarrassing verbal stumbles. Broadway actors do a vocal warm-up before going on stage, professional golfers spend time on the range before their tee-time, and we've all watched the warm-up by basketball and baseball players before the start of the game.

### *Test meeting systems.*

One of the biggest complaints voiced by virtual meeting participants is the technical glitches that seem to occur because either the meeting presenter and/or participants are not familiar with how to use the software features. The effect can be disruptive noise that should have been muted, missed comments because the speaker didn't realize how to open the mic, and poorly aimed camera lenses that display partial faces or inappropriate background images. Take advantage of vendor-offered or any in-house training that gives leaders and presenters a hands-on opportunity to participate in a practice meeting. A brief explanation of communication protocols at the beginning of the meeting can help employees to participate properly.

### *Have tech support on hand.*

Experience is the best teacher. Whenever I give training sessions, I check out the A/V system before

the program begins. Now, with training-meeting technology involving software, hardware, internet connections, telephone lines and local or wide area networks, a lot is going on behind the scenes to make the presentation a success. As a participant, I have observed a few embarrassing system failures that degraded the effectiveness of the meeting or caused it to be rescheduled. So, it's wise to have tech support on-hand throughout the meeting to intercede or prevent system failures.

### **Informal Communications: A Two-Sided Coin**

Certain meeting professionals suggest the use of an informal communication network or alternative space where employees can communicate directly with peers to share ideas, concerns or the status on projects. In the office environment, these kinds of discussions often occurred at the water cooler, while waiting for the lunchroom microwave, or when passing in

### **ESTABLISHING ETIQUETTE**

If you are the team leader, be sure to provide instructions relating to team and meeting etiquette so that the leader can maintain control of the session while recognizing and encouraging participants to participate without everyone trying to talk at once.

- Signal your intent to speak and present your thoughts concisely when acknowledged.
- Actively participate to offer ideas.
- Acknowledge the ideas and suggestions of others.
- Listen without making judgment or criticism of others.
- Avoid dominating the discussion; allow others to participate.
- Ask questions or seek clarification if more information is needed.
- Make a serious effort to resolve problems.
- Arrive on time and comply with requested deadlines.
- Cooperate and communicate with fellow team members.
- Comply with operating rules or procedures to protect the security of work records.

Source: *Achieving Performance Results: Boosting Performance in the Virtual Workplace*, William S. Hubbard.



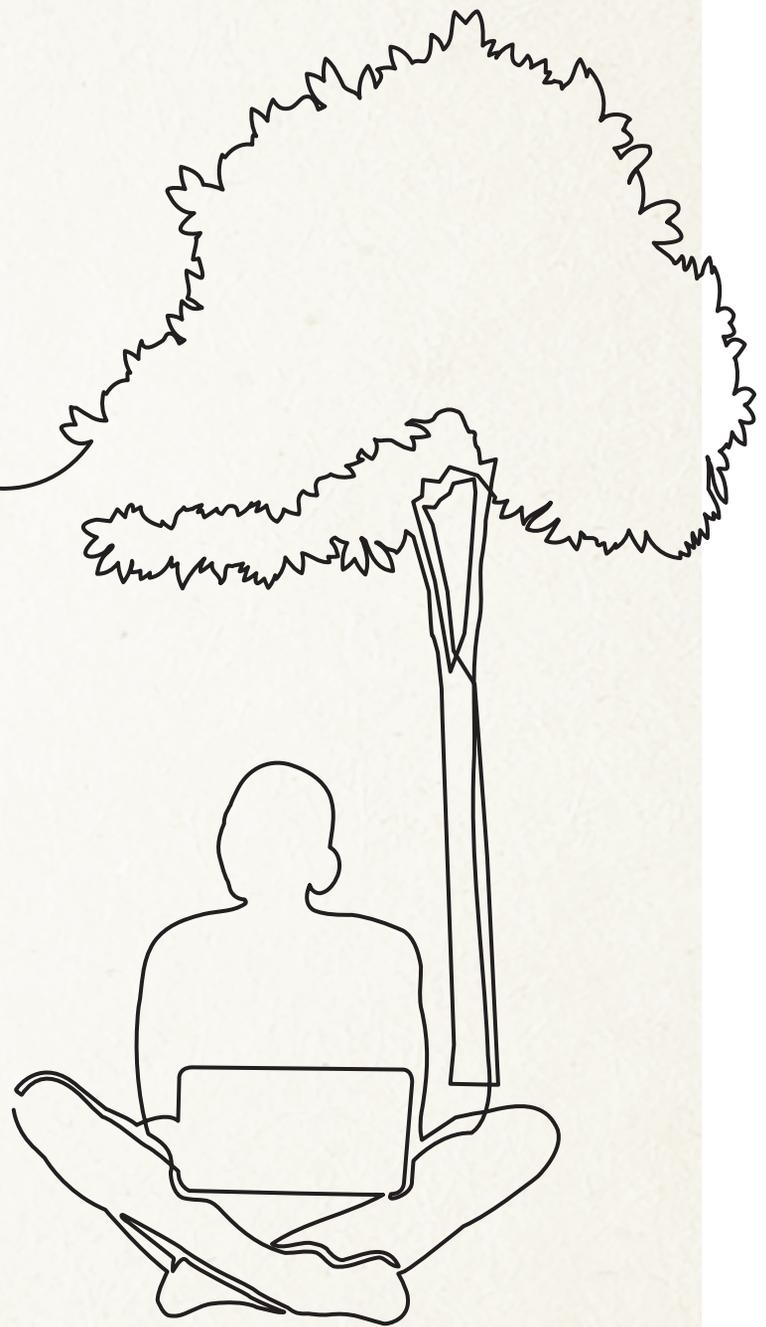
the hallway. Such informal communications can be effective in resolving problems and building team engagement.

Some organizations may provide such a dedicated communication medium via instant messaging or other similar tools. If the employer does not provide such tools, employees likely will utilize other methods for communication such as email, phone, texting or social media platforms. Whether verbal or electronic in format – and whether formal or informal – such communication will occur and will spread the word (or gossip) throughout the organization.

According to one *Tech Radar* report, half of businesses now have a social media policy. A social media policy typically defines an employer's guidelines governing the use of social media in the workplace or defining limitations on how staffers should present themselves or the company on the internet.

Sometimes, posts become rants or complaints about employer practices or policies, or inappropriately disclose private or confidential information. An employer typically wants to prevent such disclosures and may deem it necessary to take action if an employee's actions are determined to be misconduct subject to discipline or discharge. Such employee communications are subject to the purview of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the federal agency which enforces employee-labor relations laws. The NLRB has ruled that employees have no statutory right to use employer-owned IT equipment, including email, for Section 7 purposes. The Board observed that employers "unquestionably" have a property right in such systems.

Likewise, issues such as sexual or other forms of harassment can and unfortunately do occur through whatever communication medium is available to employees. The team leader is encouraged to confer with HR if questionable or inappropriate communications come to light.



### Putting it all together

We are managing in an evolving workplace. The irony of change is that it is constant, and constantly accelerating. The role of the team leader or supervisor is to achieve organizational goals by guiding team members to effectively perform their respective tasks. The difference now is that there are more tech tools at our disposal, and to be effective we must properly use those tools. There remains one common element: people. These practical tips will help you to effectively manage your employees.###

**William S. Hubbartt, MSIR, SPHR**, has over 30 years of experience in HR management. He is also the author of *Achieving Performance Results: Boosting Performance in the Virtual Workplace*.





BY RHONDA P. MARCUCCI, CPA

# *HR TECH AND ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING*

A WORTHY INVESTMENT

# “TO WIN IN THE MARKETPLACE, YOU MUST FIRST WIN IN THE WORKPLACE.”

This bit of wisdom comes from Doug Conant, former president and CEO of the Campbell Soup Company. During my 36 years of working — most of which has been in management — never before has this statement be truer. Current labor conditions mean that companies compete every day to attract and keep good talent.

As Conant suggests, success in the market is directly tied to the success of the company’s employees and the associated people strategy. Corporate leaders look to human resources to attract, motivate, engage and retain employees. And, as with most organizational functions today, there’s technology to support that. Gallagher’s “2019 HR Technology Pulse Survey” found that 62% of employers expect to expand or replace their HR technology by 2021, and that 57% of HR leaders believe investing in HR technology helps drive organizational well-being.

Despite the relatively high level of investment in HR technology, funding support can be hard won for some HR leaders, for a variety of reasons. The same survey found that only 26% find it easy to convince their organization’s top decision makers of the necessity of HR technology adoption. In contrast, 38% find it difficult to get buy-in, with personnel and/or budget constraints the top-cited reason for the lack of buy-in. In my experience, this objection can easily be overcome by helping senior leaders fully understand the value of the investment — which is where the real challenge lies.

## **TIE THE BUSINESS CASE TO THE PEOPLE STRATEGY**

As with any request for funding, a strong business case is needed. When it comes to getting buy-in for funding new or updated HR technology, the key to a successful business case is to tie the ask directly to the organization’s people strategy. Doing so should get the attention of senior decision makers by offering a solution that addresses the issues most likely keeping the CEO up at night: talent attraction and retention. The following are two examples of a people strategy objective and how HR technology can support the objective.

**Strategy: To offer competitive compensation**

### **TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION: COMPENSATION SOFTWARE**

Compensation software brings together various compensation survey data (filtered by industry, company size, location, etc.) and allows you to compare it to your employee population to determine if they are above, below or at market rates. It identifies “outliers” — individuals who are significantly under or overpaid. It also enables an employer to set a threshold for compensation, such as employees should earn no less than 70% of the mid-point of a job grade (to minimize their susceptibility to other offers), and then calculates the associated cost to bring everyone up to this threshold.

**Editor’s note:** This is the first in a series of articles on human resources technology and the role the HR professional plays in advocating for, selecting and managing the right tools.



*"SUCCESS IN THE MARKET IS  
DIRECTLY TIED TO THE SUCCESS OF  
THE COMPANY'S EMPLOYEES AND  
THE ASSOCIATED PEOPLE STRATEGY."*

# READY, SET, SHOP!

Your CEO has signed off on a budget to purchase a new HR platform and embraced the value of investing in technology to support your organization's people strategy. Congratulations! No doubt you're feeling pretty good, believing it's all downhill from here. Getting senior management buy-in may have been a significant hurdle, but don't get too comfy: You've still got a lot of work ahead of you. This is your time to shine and an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your value to the C-suite.

## It's a Crowded and Confusing Market

There are thousands of companies out there that comprise the HR tech market. Many serve varying sizes of organizations and budgets, deliver solutions for varying objectives or target specific industries. So, where do you start?

First, set a few basic objectives:

1. Learn what is available and accessible to you in the market. If you haven't shopped for HR tech in a while (and by "a while," I mean two to three years), you'll likely be amazed at what's new out there.
2. Prioritize your requirements, separating your "must-haves" from "nice-to-haves."
3. Reduce the number of providers you're considering to a manageable number. It's a waste of your time (and the providers) to seek bids from more than three or four companies.
4. Identify a best-fit solution based on an understanding of what you need and what the technology can deliver.

## Learn What's Available

Tackling the first objective can be fun. If the timing is right, consider attending an industry technology expo or conference where tech providers showcase their products. Check out the online vendor directory for WorldatWork's Total Rewards Conference or the HR Technology Conference exhibitor list. You can window shop online, but it will be helpful to narrow your focus to avoid going down the rabbit hole of all the search results Google provides. Working with an HR technology consultant or an employee benefits advisor who has HR tech expertise is one way to approach the task.

## Prioritize Your Needs

In my experience, many shoppers start off wanting everything, and quickly learn that there's a lot of cool stuff out there, particularly tools that incorporate smart technology innovations. I tell my clients not to fall in love with "the bright shiny ball." It's easy to do, but more often than not, it will distract you from your core objectives. Stay focused on your "must-haves" and the features that support your organization's people strategy.

## Narrow Your Shopping List

Your shortlist can be more than the list of companies to which you ultimately send an RFP, but we recommend limiting it to five to seven companies. More than that can be confusing and difficult to differentiate. Creating a shortlist forces you to do a trade-off analysis, which you will ultimately need to do. No product delivers everything you want or need. More importantly, a thoughtful trade-off analysis will focus your thinking on your organizational strategies and priorities, which will make the RFP process more productive.

At this step, just googling will not be helpful. Online searches offer too much information, and all the paid ads will be distracting. Instead, talk with colleagues from similar-size organizations or industries. Tap into an online community or professional association to solicit input. Pay attention to who's sponsoring industry events, attend topical roundtables and read articles and reviews from industry experts. Again, an HR technology consultant can do the heavy lifting here based on an understanding of your goals and resources.

Once you have your shortlist, do your homework. Visit the company's website and read Glassdoor reviews or social media feeds. You're buying more than just software from them. You're also purchasing a service, which means you're buying the company's culture, too. You should understand how a company is funded and other factors associated with a risk analysis. Read advice about what you're really buying when you buy technology and, if needed, engage someone with sufficient business acumen to conduct a risk evaluation.

## Prepare to Buy

Using your shortlist, reach out to the providers and ask for a demo meeting and other information. Your request (and their response) should be structured around the next decision you need to make. This may be deciding which companies to send an RFP, but it could also be to give you a better understanding of the market or to know how much to budget.

During demos, the tech providers will demonstrate what they want to show you. This doesn't necessarily tell you everything you want or need to know. During a demo meeting, don't hesitate to ask probing questions or to request a review of features/functionality they are not showing you. If a provider won't demo specific functionality, it's likely because they don't actually have it in place.

Much like the bright shiny object syndrome, we see employers make poor purchase decisions based on the salesperson. Don't let the fact that you just love working with Alex — or that Alex drives you nuts — influence your decision. After the sale, you won't see much of Alex anymore.

Finally, evaluate what you're seeing and document your thoughts. We provide our clients with a scorecard to organize stakeholders' feedback. This helps ensure everyone is comparing platforms apples-to-apples. A well-designed RFP will support this. Involve all stakeholders — including end-users (your employees). The current trend is to build technology for the employee (vs. for HR or IT department), so be sure to get their input. Key questions to ask yourself in the evaluation process include:

- Does it meet the majority of my needs, and can I live with the tradeoffs?
- Do I feel good about working with this company for the long-term (five to seven years)?
- Is there buy-in from all stakeholders at my organization?

If you can answer "yes" to all three of these questions, you have likely found a good-fit technology solution that will serve you well and support your business objectives. It's never going to be perfect. And, while choosing a best-fit solution is a big to-do to check off, a productive relationship with your tech provider is key to a successful implementation and ongoing relationship.

Of course, there is more to attracting and retaining employees than money: benefits, professional development opportunities and work-life balance, to name a few. There is technology to support each of these areas and more, but that's a topic for another time.

Compensation software can also check for gender pay equity — an especially timely topic — and, in theory, for any type of discriminatory pay practices, such as those related to age or race. Due to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations, employers may lack the required data to determine such instances of pay inequity. However, if you think you have a problem, or have received complaints, compensation software may be the solution needed to identify and address an issue before losing good talent to a competitor — or being sued.

**Strategy: To attract and retain a diverse workforce**

### **TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION: APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS**

Employers looking to target specific audiences to create a more diverse workforce can use technology to help guide where to advertise or pursue other hiring activities for open positions, such as Women in Business events, historically black colleges and universities, etc. More valuable, however, is the technology that evaluates recruitment efforts on an individual basis to determine if it yielded the desired return. There is software that can track where applicants come from and if they were offered a position or hired. Analysis of this data allows employers to switch strategies where there is no desired response and hone successful strategies through ongoing testing and analysis.

### **RISING TO MEET EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS FOR TECH**

Having a solid business case tied to your organization's people strategy is key to securing senior leadership's buy-in, but there may be other challenges to overcome. A second important consideration of winning the talent war is meeting the expectations employees have related to the technology tools they use at work. Workplace technology — even in the most advanced companies — may fall short of the technology most of us carry in our pockets or have at home. The result is that employees can become easily frustrated with the technology provided to navigate day-to-day activities, such as choosing benefits, time keeping, locating information needed to complete a task, etc. Further, for at least the next decade, the majority of top decision makers will be Baby Boomers or older. These generations came of professional age

*“HAVING A SOLID BUSINESS CASE TIED TO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PEOPLE STRATEGY IS KEY TO SECURING SENIOR LEADERSHIP'S BUY-IN, BUT THERE MAY BE OTHER CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME.”*

before the internet, the cloud and other modern smart technologies, so they may be less inclined to see these as critical to workforce productivity, employee satisfaction and, ultimately, talent attraction and retention. Gallagher's survey found that 50% of employers consider “meeting employee expectations and requirements” important. Related, a 2018 survey by PwC found that 90% of employers said their company pays attention to people's needs when introducing new technology, whereas only 53% of employees said the same.

### **ADDRESSING THE ROI QUESTION**

Finally, with any business case, decision makers look for the return on investment (ROI). Depending on the technology, this can be a hard or easy case to make. Automation and compliance technology delivers a pretty solid case for hard-cost ROI (savings from reduced and/or more productive personnel and avoidance of expensive fines and penalties).

The ROI for technology related to a people strategy — including talent recruitment and attention — may be more difficult as much of its value is in soft returns, such as increased employee engagement and satisfaction, improved decision making and customer satisfaction. It's a worthy goal to measure the soft ROI, but be mindful of the associated challenges. While hard metrics are ideal, alternative approaches, such as a case study, may be a better fit.

### **MAKE A CLEAR AND DIRECT LINK TO ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING**

HR leaders can overcome the technology buy-in barrier by developing a comprehensive HR tech strategy that closely aligns proposed investments with the organization's strategic priorities, which in today's world, is almost always related to maintaining a productive workforce. Linking spending clearly and directly to improved organizational well-being helps to make a compelling case for a people strategy that will attract and retain top talent. ###

**Rhonda P. Marcucci, CPA**, is co-leader of Gallagher's HR and Benefits Technology Consulting Practice.

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REWARDS AND  
PROGRAMS

BY DEBRA COREY

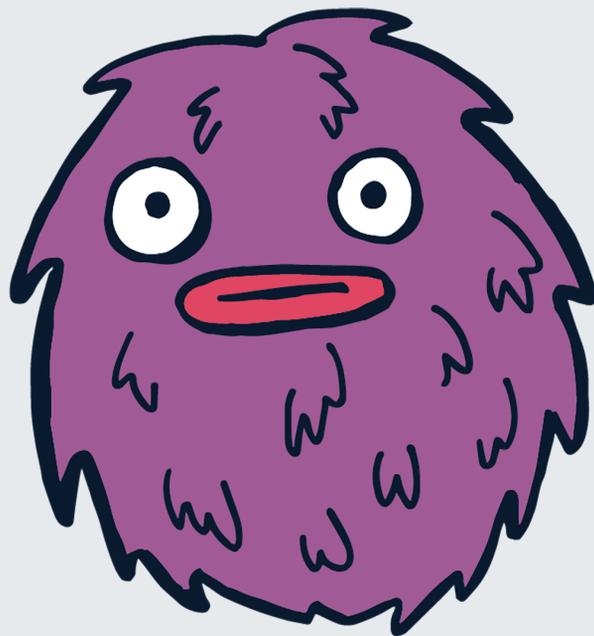
# WHEN MY CHILDREN WERE YOUNG, THEIR FAVORITE BOOK WAS

*The Monster at the End of This Book*, written by Jon Stone and starring the lovable, furry Grover from Sesame Street. It's a fantastic book, one I'd highly recommend, but at the same time, I should warn you that it does encourage and reward the wrong behaviors in our children.

The reason for this is that at the end of every other page, the book says "Don't turn the page, there's a monster at the end of this book." And, like any child, mine did just that — they turned the page! And, like any parent, we laughed and cheered them on. But when I think back on this, it makes me realize that as fun as these moments were, they did in fact reward and reinforce bad behaviors in my children.

Why am I telling you this? Because I believe we're doing the same thing at our companies, encouraging and rewarding bad behaviors in our employees through some of our rewards and recognition programs. In fact, I believe that we are also creating our own versions of monsters — and they are certainly not as cuddly and lovable as Grover is!

To illustrate this point, here are three of the monsters that can be seen in the workplace as a result of our rewards and recognition programs. And, to ensure that you're not left with "monsters at the end of your book," there are some ways to banish these monsters from your organization.



## BEWARE OF BIMBLING

The first monster is the **Bimble Monster**. This monster, and these employees, bumble along as they go about their work, doing so at a leisurely, and often ineffective, way as they receive little direction and encouragement to help them understand if what they are doing is acceptable, unacceptable or even damaging to the company.

I've seen this happen in two ways:

1. The first way is through a *lack of transparency in pay programs*, with companies not clearly explaining to employees how their pay is determined and what they need to do to receive further pay increases. This causes confusion, frustration and lots of bimbbling, as employees are lost in a maze of confusion, trying different paths and approaches in order to receive the highest pay possible.

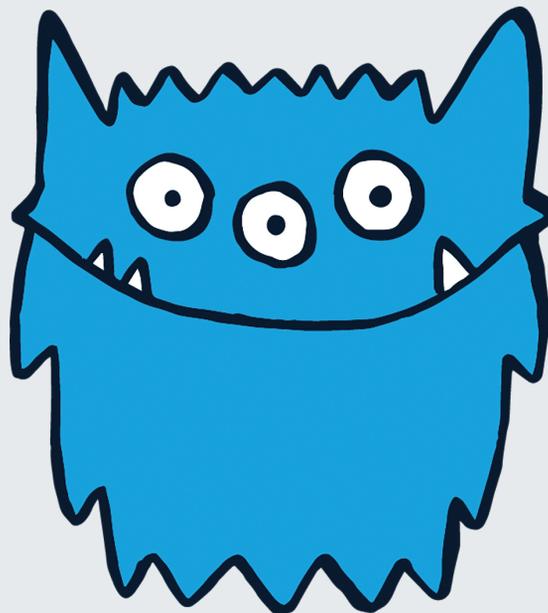
To rid your company of these monsters, take a step back and look at how well you are communicating to your workforce the details behind your pay strategy, pay structures and performance-related pay approach. Don't leave it to chance that your employees will understand how they work, but develop clear communications and education sessions at every step so that your employees can easily see the path they need to take when it comes to their performance and their pay.

*“TO RID YOUR COMPANY OF THESE MONSTERS, IMPLEMENT A CONTINUOUS APPROACH TO RECOGNITION, ONE THAT FOCUSES ON RECOGNITION IN-THE-MOMENT, SO ANYTIME AND FROM ANYONE.”*

2. The second way is through the *lack of timely* recognition programs, with many organizations focusing recognition mainly on long-service and best-in-class (e.g. annual, quarterly and monthly) programs. This again causes confusion and bimbbling, as the majority of employees will not be recognized, which means they are receiving little to no encouragement and direction. And even for the few being recognized, the distance between their achievement and their award is often so great that even these employees are bimbbling along.

To rid your company of these monsters, implement a continuous approach to recognition, one that focuses on recognition in-the-moment, so anytime and from anyone. These programs can be as simple as having a Post-It wall where anyone can put up a recognition message, to something more robust such as eCards or other options that leverage technology.

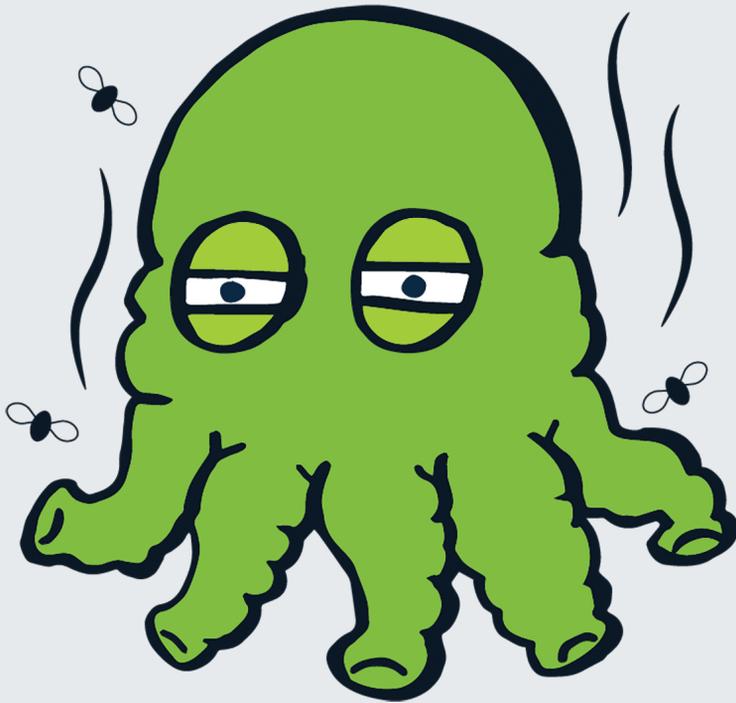
A great example of a company doing something creative and meaningful in this area is Reward Gateway. This company has used eCards, or what they call “High-Fives,” as a tool for employees to recognize each other on a continuous basis. The name is great, in that it signals to employees that they are to be used at times and for moments when you want to thank and appreciate someone for their contribution by giving them a high-five. The name and the program together ensure that bimbbling will not happen due to a lack of recognition.



## *GIMME, GIMME, GIMME*

Next is the **Gimme Monster**. This monster, and these employees, often start out “normal” until they see someone else rewarded differently for what they view as a similar action or contribution. An amusing example of this comes from Frans de Waal, professor of primate behavior, at Emory University’s TED Talk. In it, he shares the results of a study of two monkeys, showing what happens when they are “paid” differently for performing the same task. In the study, all was good when both monkeys are receiving cucumbers for the same task, but as soon as one monkey received grapes, the other monkey was no longer satisfied, saying in their actions to “gimme” this new reward.

To rid your company of these monsters, assess your rewards and recognition programs to determine if any Gimme monsters may appear based on their design. For example, do you have a bonus program that rewards your sales team for winning a new sale, but ignores everyone else in the company that contributed to the sale? Do you recognize all members of a team for living a company value, or possibly just the person who is the most visible? Challenge yourself to assess the fairness of your programs, making sure none of your employees act like the monkeys and, in a tantrum, throw the reward back in your face.



*“TO RID YOUR COMPANY OF THESE MONSTERS, LOOK AT THE RULES AND AWARDS YOU PROVIDE UNDER YOUR REWARDS AND RECOGNITION PROGRAMS.”*

## GET UNSTUCK

The final monster is the **Sticky Monster**. This monster, and these employees, stick around at your company well past their “sell-by” date due to the design of your rewards and recognition programs. And, like a product in your refrigerator that has expired, they stink up your company as they really don’t want to be there, only sticking around to receive the awards through these programs.

One example of when this happens is with share programs, where the program is designed so that employees lose their shares, and thus potential earnings, should they leave the company. Another example is with long-service programs, where employees receive overly generous cash or gifts for staying at the company. Both of these examples lead to and create stickiness, or what we often call “golden handcuffs.”

To rid your company of these monsters, look at the rules and awards you provide under your rewards and recognition programs. Here are two examples:

- For your share programs, ask what would happen if you let employees keep any shares that were already vested when they leave the company. This is exactly what we did at a previous company when we started

seeing too many sticky monsters, and responded by removing the rule saying that shares were lost if employees left the company.

- For long-service awards, ask if you really need to award such high-level, high-value awards. You can still make employees feel valued without spending so much that they dare not leave before receiving it.

A great example of a company doing something creative and meaningful in this area is Venables Bell + Partners. The company gives employees \$1,000 to be used to celebrate their long service with their colleagues. The award-winner is also tasked with sharing how they have been able to succeed at the company.

The key to your success is to first be aware of what attracts these monsters through your rewards and recognition programs, and second, to bravely and rebelliously modify them to set your employees — and your company — up for a happy ending. ###

**Debra Corey** is the founder of DebCo HR and an author. Her most recent book, *Bringing Your Values Out to Play*, discusses company values.



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# Maximizing Productivity During Long-Term Remote Work



**The COVID-19 pandemic** has scrambled everything we know about daily life. From wearing masks in public to the cancellation of sporting events, the virus has affected the way everyone does business.

For businesses now forced to operate remotely due to shelter-in-place orders, maintaining a sustainable level of output to make it through the health crisis is the top priority. However, it appears increasingly likely the virus will still be a factor in 2021, which makes long-term planning a must.

## **Be Flexible with Remote Work**

During the pandemic, employees are dealing with many different issues. Whether these are increased childcare responsibilities or internal communication breakdowns, these issues will arise.

A Clutch study found that 66% of employees are required to work from home. The quickest way to ensure disengagement while employees work from home is to act like everything is exactly the same. Fundamentals like work hours, messaging channels, and daily commitments are important to maintain.

Be sure to start building more efficient processes and implementing effective scheduling—having meetings that drag for hours over video chat are even more damaging now. Fostering more communication, implementing new

remote work tools like Asana, Trello, and Figma, and constantly keeping employees in the loop are equally important. As the prospects of remote work and reduced office hours continue, more problems are bound to come up.

Some of your staff may be able to come to the office when governments allow, but others that are immunocompromised may not. Make sure to stay flexible on long-term plans in order to improve public health and increase productivity.

### Prepare Your Staff

For employees that aren't accustomed to remote work, this has been a difficult transition. While some businesses had been moving to remote work before the pandemic, others were caught flat-footed.

By now, you should ensure that all of your employees have a reliable home office setup with a desk, a working internet connection and minimal distractions. However, as the quarantine phase continues, make sure your employees are prepared for drastic, long-term changes. Many employees left for remote work thinking it would only be a few weeks. They could even be scattered across the country and staying with significant others or family.

Implementing technologies to start systemizing and organizing your remote staff is a must. If you haven't started looking at corporate messaging services or set up a regular phone directory, it would behoove you to do so in short order. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to coordinate.

Be sure to keep up with your employees' overall well-being as the situation persists. Having remote bonding experiences such as fitness classes or cooking demonstrations can be a great way to release stress and anxiety.

### Consider Hiring Remotely

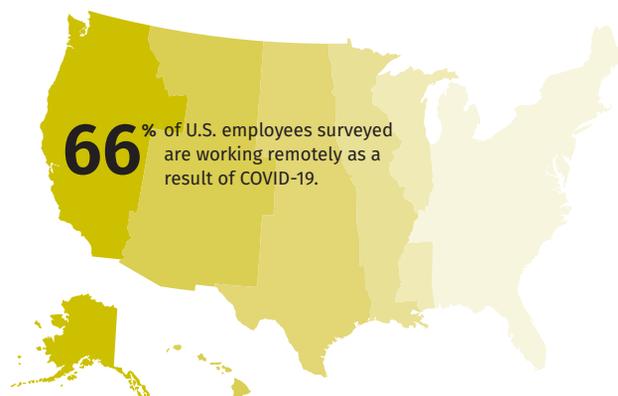
With no set timeline for when normality will resume, the onboarding process has become a mess. Hiring a virtual assistant service outsourced company can be a low-cost way to help bridge the gap between now and the release of a vaccine.

Since virtual assistants and remote back-office staff don't need to be in physical contact, now would be a good time to start exploring those options to support your team. Finding online freelancers is also a good way to divide labor and keep expenses down. Make sure to notify your current staff of your hiring plans so that the transition goes as smoothly as possible.

### Modify Your Office Space

When the world starts to reopen, it will not be the same. Having hundreds of people in office buildings is a public safety hazard. As the situation develops, make sure to ensure safety and security for office buildings.

### Remote Work a Requirement for More U.S. Employees Due to COVID-19



N=242 U.S. employees who are working remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: Clutch 2020 Remote Work Survey

While the physical challenge of moving desks and ordering sanitary equipment is one thing, make sure to consider which teams need to be in the office and which do not.

Also, take into account your employees' commutes and whether that will be affected. If some teams need to stay remote for the foreseeable future, those expectations should be clear.

### A Long Road Ahead

In the wake of the pandemic, remote work will become the norm for an indefinite period of time. We don't know how long this will last, but it's always better to over-plan than be underprepared.

For businesses to stay afloat during these times, employees need to buy into the new normal while also receiving the support they need to stay productive and healthy.

By following these strategies and coming up with new ones for your specific situation, you can make the best of the situation. ###

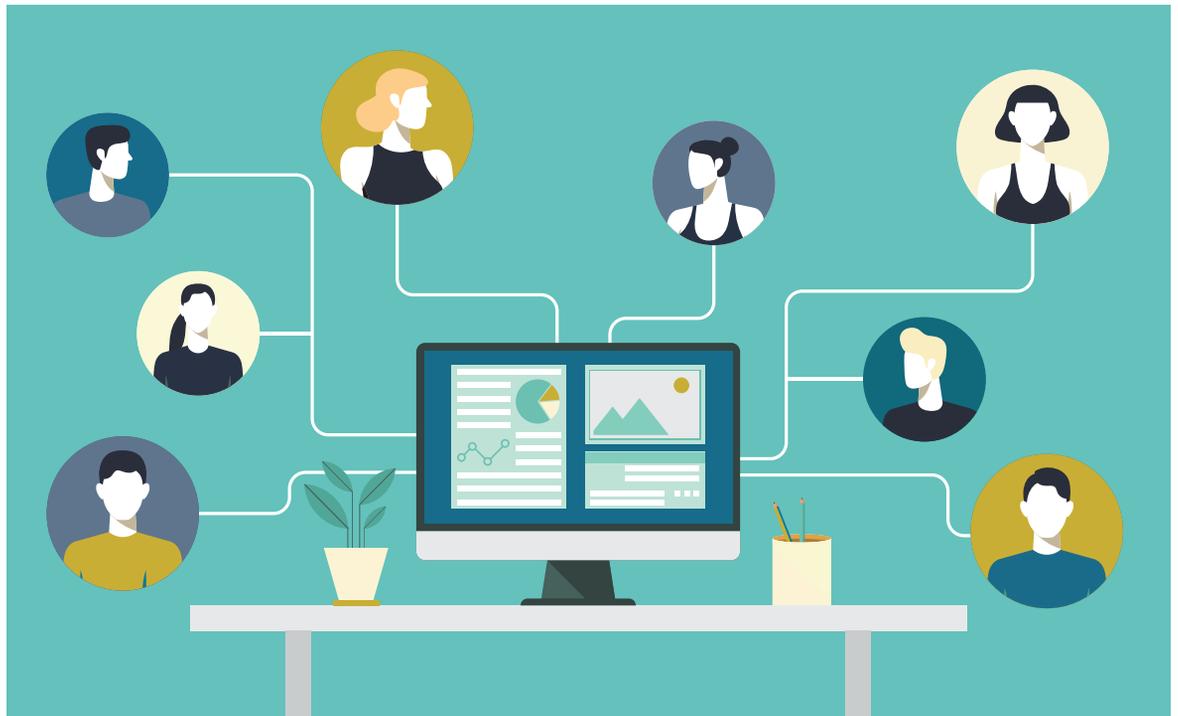
**Tristan Jung** is a content writer and editorial associate at Clutch.

Editor's Note: This article first ran in *Workspan Daily* on May 27, 2020.



**Tristan Jung**

# How to Boost Team Morale and Maintain Alignment During COVID-19 — and Beyond



**COVID-19 has given business culture a wake-up call.** No matter the major tensions or minor annoyances of the past, each of us is fundamentally on the same page about one crucial thing: We all have a shared goal of staying safe.

And, as scary as that might sound, remember: Shared adversity builds alignments that last.

Joint experiences open the door to strengthening team relationships and cultivating ongoing support. Research suggests that shared events — good or bad — establish a feeling of community, which is an integral component of mental health. In addition, fears and frustrations felt on a communal level can form a common language and an emotional shorthand that

make people feel less alone, all of which can lead to a serious boost in morale. Just think of all of those social distancing dance parties and virtual birthday celebrations; these remind us there's comradery, and even joy, in commiseration.

Here's a simple, step-by-step guide to turning the tables on adversity by bringing teams together and keeping spirits high during the coronavirus pandemic and in the months and years to come.

### Ask Three Questions Before Speaking

Communication facilitates human connections and can help stave off feelings of isolation or confusion that plague workers even in the best of times. But while communication is the cornerstone of alignment, it's necessary for team leaders to consider things like content, tone and effectiveness before they begin to speak. This goes double in times of crisis.

A well-known mindfulness exercise suggests asking three things before you choose to communicate:

- "Is what I'm about to say true?"
- "Is it necessary?"
- "Is it kind?"

Review these questions before imparting information to your team. Seek to be as truthful, productive and compassionate as possible. This should always be part of your process — with or without a pandemic.

### Keep Talking

Feeling detached from one's coworkers is a common problem, and our new work-from-home climate only magnifies this issue. Still, as WorldatWork mentioned previously, efficient communication is necessary to keep employees updated on any changes that will affect their business or their livelihood.

With so much at stake, no news is almost worse than bad news. Avoid uncomfortable silences by:

- Checking in regularly via online meetings, phone conferences or group emails.
- Using a "top-down" rather than a "trickle-down" method of disseminating information. All team members at all levels should always be informed, especially where health and financial wellness are concerned.
- Never assuming anything. Err on the side of offering more information rather than less.

Keeping in constant touch will serve you well, even as the world gradually returns to normal. No one likes being in the dark, and the more knowledge your employees are afforded, the better they'll be able to make positive, impactful decisions.

### Remember: Feedback Is Your Friend

For alignment to be successful, information has to flow both ways. You can build trust among your colleagues by pledging to listen to their feedback.

As part of this commitment, set up processes for continuous correspondence on all sides, particularly in areas that influence your bottom line. Examples include:

- Team- or department-wide digital polling via mobile apps to take a general pulse regarding the progress of campaigns or COVID-related policies.
- Implementing a sales enablement platform to keep revenue teams coordinated on content availability, efficiency

and performance and/or to help coaches provide real-time tips and tricks that encourage employees to develop in their roles. A robust solution will also centralize all revenue-building materials, making for easy access and revision.

- A collaboration software tool that allows team members to leave comments or queries about ongoing projects.

### Stop the Stress

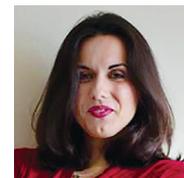
As a team leader, you're required to inspire and to offer comfort when times are tough. And while honesty is the best policy, a "doom-and-gloom" attitude is never effective. Emotions are contagious; be sure to spread optimism rather than defeatism.

To that end, it's a good idea for co-workers to experience moments of shared release. Transmit happiness to your teammates by allowing for some fun. An inside joke from a Zoom trivia night can go a long way toward making people feel like they're on the same side.

If you're looking to go the extra mile, offer to host third-party experts to mitigate feelings of anxiety surrounding finances, retirement, health care, etc. Even a virtual yoga session can help establish a sense of calm and community, which can serve to fortify your team.

Shared experiences — and, by extension, shared objectives — are the bedrock of alignment strategy. If you're able to foster a culture where your employees are seen, heard and appreciated in times of shared distress, you'll be laying the foundation for a team that can weather any storm. Practice the above principles each day, no matter the climate, and watch as the bonds among your teammates grow stronger and more secure. ###

**Eleni Hagen** is a contracted content strategist for Highspot. She can be reached at [eleni.hagen@highspot.com](mailto:eleni.hagen@highspot.com).



**Eleni Hagen**

# A Good Fit for Your Rewards Library



**Compensation professionals in the United States** do not usually look to the United Kingdom (U.K.) for books that contribute to the practice in their field. But that is exactly what has happened with the publication of *Reward Management, A Practical Introduction*, (Second edition) by Michael Rose. It was published in 2018 by Kogan Page Limited, London, Great Britain.

The book is a succinct, practical guide to total rewards management for students and those in the early stages of their HR careers. The book is part of the publisher's HR fundamentals series, covering seven major functional HR areas. The series is endorsed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), a professional association of 145,000 human resource management professionals headquartered in London.



Rose is an author, speaker, and independent consultant. He has held senior-level total rewards positions at major U.K. companies and the CIPD.

One of the book's main contributions is the level at which it is written. It serves as a guide to the main areas of total rewards (TR), which the British refer to simply as "reward." It lies between two existing resources of total rewards information: (1) professional certification study materials, which lack sufficient detail and indexing to serve as a job guide, and compensation textbooks, which offer dense information on theories, research, and practices; and (2) the *WorldatWork Handbook of Compensation, Benefits, and Total Rewards*, which has detailed encyclopedic coverage of the field of TR for practitioners.

Because of its approach, *Reward Management*, offers a quick study for compensation professionals to aid their understanding of major topic areas in an easily accessible fashion. I am not familiar with other books that fill this need.

*Reward* is organized in these two parts:

- The Fundamentals of Reward Management
- Reward in Practice

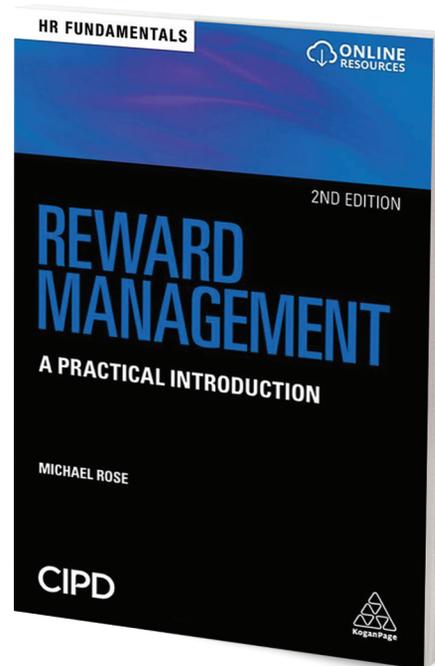
### Part One: The Fundamentals of Reward Management

In Part One, Rose explains the concept of reward strategy, its organizational impact, relationship with employee motivation, types of rewards, strategy development, employee communications, and taxation. One example of the good advice he gives to newly assigned HR professionals is that TR innovations should be adopted based on whether they are a good fit for the organization, not on whether they are considered a "best practice," to make the company appear on the cutting edge.

From the start, the reader realizes that the book has a U.K. focus. Nevertheless, the author cites survey results of WorldatWork, a U.S.-based association of total rewards professionals. One cannot help wondering how well the surveys apply to U.K. employees.

In addition, when WorldatWork conducts a special survey of U.K. companies, such as its 2010 pay practices survey, the author does not report the findings. Hopefully, these issues would be rationalized in later editions of the book (this is the second edition).

Finally, one chapter in Part One gives detailed information for developing a TR strategy, which is far beyond the needs of HR neophytes — the book's intended audience. The chapter, which includes real life examples, is of high value, obviously written by someone with extensive knowledge in this area. Hopefully readers would refer to it later in their careers, when they need to apply the information on the job.



### **Reward Management: A Practical Introduction (Second Edition)**

**By Michael Rose**

**Publish date: February 15, 2021**

### Part Two, Reward in Practice

Part Two, Reward in Practice, provides valuable information in the areas of developing and administering salary grades, pay structures, managing pay data and administering pay increases. The writing is clear, concise, and reinforced by the liberal use of effective tables, figures, call outs, and case studies. Each chapter of the book includes one or two well-chosen case studies that give real life examples of how companies have transformed concepts into action.

Part Two also includes a discussion of the design and implementation of bonus plans that deserves special recognition for its thoroughness, simplicity, use of tables and graphics. A table showing the main types of bonus plans and their



**Frank Giancola**

“When conceiving recognition programs, Rose reminds us that some people prefer a private thank you over a public one. Implementation checklists are included that tend to prevent errors, stemming from overlooking important steps when introducing plans ... They tend to be costly items when prepared by outside consultants.”

features is nice to have at your fingertips to copy and pass out at a hurriedly called staff meeting. Most of us are only acquainted with the more common types.

A bonus plans funding table will de-mystify this aspect of bonus plan administration for new HR professionals. The extensive checklist for designing a bonus plan is very useful and hard to find, and will no doubt identify areas that are likely to be overlooked when a plan is designed for the first time.

### Recognition Programs

Another strong chapter covers employee recognition programs. And you might wonder how a subject that seems so simple could be explained with new insight. Rose achieves this goal by contrasting recognition with incentives in one instance and by boiling down program success into four key elements. For example, he states that where the impact of incentives is the *prize*, it is the *message* for recognition programs. I never had this insight before to guide recognition initiatives.

When conceiving recognition programs, Rose reminds us that some people prefer a private thank you over a public one. Implementation checklists are included that tend to prevent errors, stemming from overlooking important steps when introducing plans. I cannot recall seeing similar detailed checklists elsewhere and readers should not take them for granted. They tend to be costly items when prepared by outside consultants.

The chapter on long-term reward plans is notable in one respect as it explains the esoteric sounding phantom share plans for the uninitiated.

### Employee Benefits

The final chapter covers employee benefits, and the differences between U.K. and U.S. benefits are noteworthy. In the U.K., most workers who work a 5-day week must, by law, receive at least 28 days paid annual leave a year. An employer can include bank holidays in the 28-day total.

Because of this requirement, vacation is not a benefit that enters into discussions of competitive factors to attract and retain employees in a big way, as it does in the U.S. Surprisingly, health care does receive consideration, as many U.K. employers feel the need to offer private health care plans, despite the existence of England's socialized medicine program.

### Intended Audience

Because of differences such as these that reflect the book's intended U.K. audience, HR professionals dealing with U.S. employees can be misled about the relevancy of compensation and benefits programs, if they are not aware of the differences. This fact does not detract from the book's value to its intended audience—students and newly assigned HR professionals in the U.K.

Despite this focus, the U.S. audience will benefit a great deal by using it as a desk reference, as Rose covers topics in a succinct and clear fashion. At times, his British take on HR makes certain ideas easier to grasp. The book clearly fills an existing need at a reasonable price of \$40, and deserves a place on the bookshelf of every HR professional. ###

**Frank Giancola** has more than 40 years in the compensation and benefits space. He has published 100-plus HR-related articles and made more than 8,000 posts on the WorldatWork discussion boards.

# Competitive TR Programs a Critical Part of Canadian Strategy



**Competitive total rewards programs** are a critical component of Canadian organizations' human resources and corporate strategy.

This was a main finding in WorldatWork's "Canadian Total Rewards Inventory Programs and Practices" survey. The study, which was fielded in February, found that most companies' health and welfare offerings go above and beyond the government-mandated programs.

Of the 150 Canadian companies surveyed, 96% or more offer prescription, dental, life insurance/accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D), long-term disability and employee assistance programs (EAP). Additionally, 93% of companies offer vision benefits and 92% offer short-term disability.

Unlimited paid time off programs have not taken hold in Canada, as the survey found that only 5% of companies offer it. The reason for this is likely because of mandated paid time off regulations. In general, Canadian law dictates that employees are entitled to two weeks of vacation for every completed year of employment. After five consecutive years of employment with the same employer, the entitlement increases to three weeks. After 10 completed years, they are entitled to four weeks of vacation.

The law differs in each province, but Canadians are generally entitled to sick and personal leave. The survey found that sick and personal leave beyond what is required by law is the most popular paid time off policy with 87% of companies offering paid sick and personal leave pay.

The survey also found that performance-based merit systems are very prevalent in Canada, as 90% of companies have such a system in place. Additionally, 75% of companies offer individual performance-based incentives (cash bonus). Only 10% offer cash profit sharing and only about half of companies offer long-term incentives, with 40% offering restricted stock and 22% offering stock options.

"Competitive total rewards offerings above and beyond government-mandated programs are critical for

employers of choice in Canada,” said Steve Boddy, content director at WorldatWork. “Even in today’s difficult employment environment, having differentiators in the areas of health, welfare, well-being and paid time off could be considered even more important than they were just a few short months ago.”

**Other key findings:**

- The most popular wellness program offerings include discounted fitness memberships, smoking cessation, stress reduction and nutritional counseling.
- Formal annual performance reviews are the most often used performance management system (89%).
- Workplace well-being initiatives such as corporate social responsibility/green initiatives, diversity and inclusion, and flexible work schedules are popular, with approximately 70% of companies offering them, while 60% offer personal financial planning services.
- 5% of companies offer childcare, 33% offer elder-care resources; 26% offer fertility services, and 12% offer on- or near-site child-care services.

 **Global**

**Pandemic Could Cause Organizations to Revamp Mobility Programs**

In the wake of COVID-19, social and economic disruption has spurred organizations to reassess their global mobility programs with a focus on the well-being of their expatriate employees. As employers leverage new working arrangements, changing technology and adaptive ways of thinking, Mercer analysis revealed they are considering alternate forms of international assignments in addition to traditional mobility programs to sustain their overseas operations and workforces.

Despite an appetite to grow and scale globally while navigating the uncharted waters of a health and economic crisis, reductions in staff and salaries, as well as changes to benefit programs, have challenged overseas expansion strategies. As organizations re-examine talent portfolios, mobility programs and remuneration packages with a keen eye that balances empathy with economics, accurate and transparent data is essential to compensate fairly for all types of mobility assignments, taking into account changes resulting from the current pandemic and subsequent market volatility.

Mercer’s annual “Cost of Living Survey” finds that specific factors such as currency fluctuations, cost inflation for goods and services, and instability of accommodation prices are essential to determining the cost of expatriate packages for employees on international assignments.

“The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that sending and keeping employees on international assignments is a huge responsibility and a difficult task to manage,” said Ilya Bonic, career president and head of Mercer strategy. “Rather than bet on a dramatic resurgence of mobility, organizations should prepare for the redeployment of their mobile workforces, leading with empathy and understanding that not all expatriates will be ready or willing to go abroad.”

In the short-term, preparation for this new approach to global mobility may involve re-relocating assignees who have been repatriated. In the medium-term, the priority will be about realigning the mobile workforce with new economic models centered on shortened supply chains, more regional moves and a renewed need to train talent. In addition to these concerns, relevant information about the cost and location of assignments worldwide will be a critical factor post-crisis.

Mercer’s survey revealed the top 10 most expensive cities for expatriates are:

1. Hong Kong (China)
2. Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)
3. Tokyo (Japan)
4. Zurich (Switzerland)
5. Singapore
6. New York City
7. Shanghai (China)
8. Bern (Switzerland)
9. Geneva (Switzerland)
10. Beijing (China)

New York City is used as the base city for all comparisons and currency movements are measured against the U.S. dollar. The survey includes more than 400 cities throughout the world; this year’s ranking includes 209 cities across five continents and measures the comparative cost of more than 200 items in each location, including housing, transportation, food, clothing, household goods and entertainment.

Properly vetting locations and compensating employees on international assignments is as important as it can be costly. Mercer's survey shows that costs of goods and services shift with inflation and currency volatility, making overseas-assignment costs sometimes greater and sometimes smaller.

"Sudden changes to exchange rates has been mainly driven by the impact COVID-19 is having on the global economy," said Vince Cordova, partner at Mercer. "This volatility can affect mobile employees in a variety of ways, from shortages and price adjustments for goods and services, to supply chain disruptions or when employees are paid in home country currency and need to exchange funds into the host country for local purchases."

## **United States and Canada**

New York (6) is the highest-ranked city in the country followed by San Francisco (16), Los Angeles (17), Honolulu (28) and Chicago (30). Winston-Salem, N.C. (132) remains the least expensive U.S. city surveyed for expatriates.

The Canadian dollar has appreciated in value, triggering jumps in this year's ranking. Up 18 places from last year, Vancouver (94) is the most expensive Canadian city in the ranking, followed by Toronto (98). Ranking 151, Ottawa is the least expensive city in Canada.

## **South America**

San Juan, Argentina (66) ranks as the costliest city, followed by Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago(73); San Jose, Costa Rica (78); and Montevideo, Uruguay (88). Managua, Nicaragua (198) is the least expensive city in South America. Caracas, Venezuela was excluded from the ranking due to the complex currency situation; its ranking would have varied greatly depending on the official exchange rate selected.

## **Europe**

Three European cities are among the top 10 list of most expensive locations. At number four in the global ranking, Zurich remains the costliest European city, followed by Bern (8), up four spots from last year. The next European city in the ranking, Geneva (9), is up four places from last year. As France and Italy's economies shrank at the end of 2019, Eurozone growth came close to zero. Yet, there are no signs of crisis when it comes to inflation in any of the leading European Union countries. The region saw cities like Paris (50), Milan

(47) and Frankfurt (76) drop in this year's ranking.

A decision by the United Kingdom to leave the EU has not impacted its local currency, which remains strong, gaining value to all major global currencies. London (19), Birmingham (129) and Belfast (149) jumped four, six and nine places, respectively.

## **Middle East and Africa**

The United Arab Emirates continue to diversify the economy, subsequently reducing the impact of the oil industry on GDP. With this ongoing process, there has been negative price movement in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Just like UAE, Saudi Arabia is seeking to limit the impact of oil exports and move to a more diversified economic model. Prices have remained stable over the last six months; however, with the upcoming value-added tax increase, there is an expectation to see prices change. Tel Aviv, Israel (12) continues to be the most expensive city in the Middle East for expatriates, followed by Dubai (23); Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (31); and Abu Dhabi, UAE (39). Cairo, Egypt (126) remains the least expensive city in the region despite rising 40 places.

Ndjamena, Chad (15) is the highest ranked city in Africa while Tunis (209) in Tunisia ranks as the least expensive city in the region and globally.

## **Asia Pacific**

Six of the top-10 cities in this year's ranking are in Asia. Hong Kong (1) retained its spot as the most expensive city for expatriates — both in Asia and globally — due to currency movements measured against the U.S. dollar and driving up the local cost of living. This global financial center is followed by Ashgabat (2), Tokyo (3), Singapore (5),

Shanghai (7) and Beijing (10). Mumbai (60) is India's most expensive city while Kolkata (185) is the least expensive Indian city ranked.

Australian cities have fallen in the ranking this year as the local currency has depreciated against the U.S. dollar. Sydney (66), Australia's most expensive ranked city for expatriates, experienced a drop of 16 places. The least expensive city in the region, Adelaide fell 17 places to rank 126.

### Employer Approach to Teleworking a Mixed Bag Across the Globe

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, most organizations transitioned their workforces to full-time remote. While most employers handled this transition well, many have not, according to a global survey by Peakon, an employee success platform.

The survey, "How Employees and Organisations are Responding to COVID-19," revealed 19% of the nearly 500,000 employees surveyed feel their productivity and workload are being misunderstood by their employers. Respondents noted a pressure to work harder and longer hours.

While employees appear to approve of measures taken by their employer to protect their physical health during the pandemic, many are still looking for greater understanding and support around their mental health. Of the employees who criticized their employer's response to productivity, 12% explicitly mention health and mental health issues.

Respondents spoke of companies being "out of touch" with the stress and anxiety employees are currently feeling as they attempt to work during a crisis. Others were keen for their employers to understand that, far from being a prolonged vacation, this extended period of working from home represents a violent change, impacting many parts of their lives.

The survey revealed that terms like "pulling weight" and not "slacking" were frequently used by employers. This might suggest a lack of trust among some managers, and employees feeling they need to demonstrate how much they are working.

"Business leaders and managers should also be cognizant of the pressure some workers are feeling now to work harder and produce even more in a bid to prove their worth, concerned about their job security," said Phil Chambers, CEO and co-founder of Peakon. "Remote working is not going away anytime soon, especially as many organizations are taking a phased approach to getting people back into the workplace. But monitoring employees' productivity is not the answer. It will only compromise the trust employees have in their employer."

Nearly one in 10 (8%) critical respondents raised concerns linked to family obligations and their position as primary caregivers. A desire for more flexible hours to help support

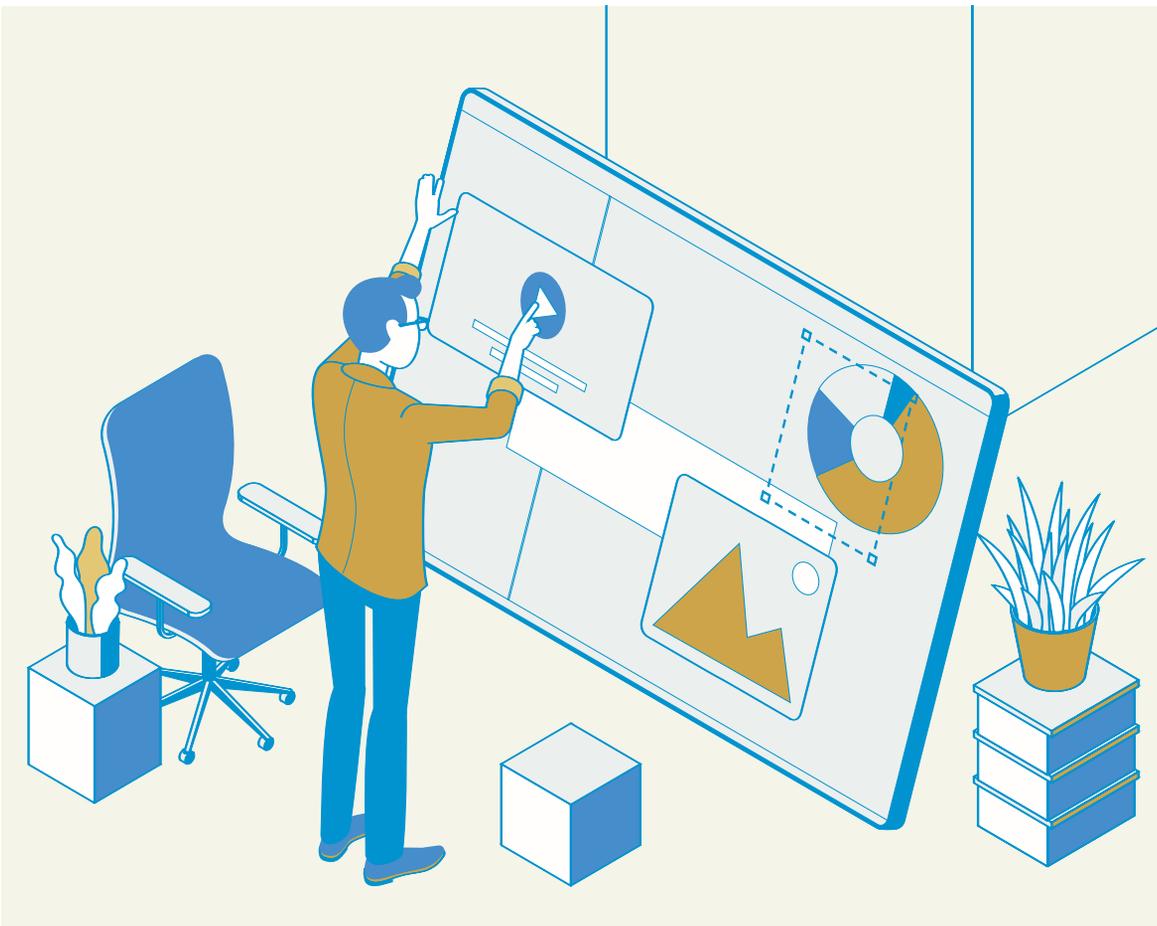
child care and home schooling was noted, along with a need for managers to better understand individual situations. Women were more critical than men on this topic of understanding productivity and workload. This suggests that traditional gender roles are continuing to play out for those still in lockdown, with women carrying more of the caring responsibilities.

Chambers said businesses should take the following steps to improve their approach to remote work:

- **Listen to employees.** It seems simple, but all too often businesses fail to ask employees for their opinion on what does and doesn't work for them. Not all requests can be acted upon immediately, but maintaining a conversation with employees regarding what is workable and what is not will ensure they have a voice and feel heard.
- **Be flexible.** According to the findings of the "Employee Expectations Report," employees worldwide are crying out for more flexibility. Often, this is feasible. Allowing employees to flex their hours around caring responsibilities — free from judgement — can help them achieve a better work/life balance, which is important to support their mental health.
- **Be realistic.** Business productivity may dip in the coming months as some employees remain working remotely and others return to the workplace. Communication will be key but monitoring employees won't help. It will only demonstrate a lack of trust in them and encourage them to look elsewhere when the climate improves. Instead, business leaders should work with employees to overcome barriers to their productivity where possible. Those that do will be rewarded with longer term loyalty and hard work. ###

**Brett Christie** is managing editor of *Workspan Daily*. He can be reached at [brett.christie@worldatwork.org](mailto:brett.christie@worldatwork.org).

# Tech Organizations Step Up to Address COVID Challenges



**In pre-pandemic days** (the ones that today seem so, so long ago), the plan for the next Tech Drive column was to focus on human capital management (HCM) software — *the* tech solution that powers the primary human resource *raison d’etre*. Talk about best laid plans. Instead, a sad, scary reality intervened and with it, COVID-19 changed the workplace landscape more than any event in recent global history. With that, the editors at #evolve chose to shift gears and focus on four applications that, while being much less

complex than any HCM platform, are nonetheless making a critical difference for employers. Bottom line, these four products are not chock full of the typical HR tech bells and whistles. But for employers, with the focus dramatically shifting to safety, staffing and remote workforces, they are meeting acute needs in these dire times.

# Workplace

from FACEBOOK

## Facebook, Menlo Park, Calif.

URL: [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

Product: Workplace from Facebook

### The Basics

Workplace from Facebook is exactly as it sounds. The main objective is to make workforce communication more efficient and effective. It allows employers to connect people at all levels within an organization, with its primary focus being on mobile messaging and live broadcasting.

### GUI/Usability

If you are one of the billions familiar with the Facebook user interface and design, you are already well aware of the usability features the platform offers. Workplace essentially looks and feels the same as the public Facebook, with some business-facing design aspects. Like nearly every application today, it is equally accessible via mobile device or desktop computer.

### Key Features for Pandemic Challenges

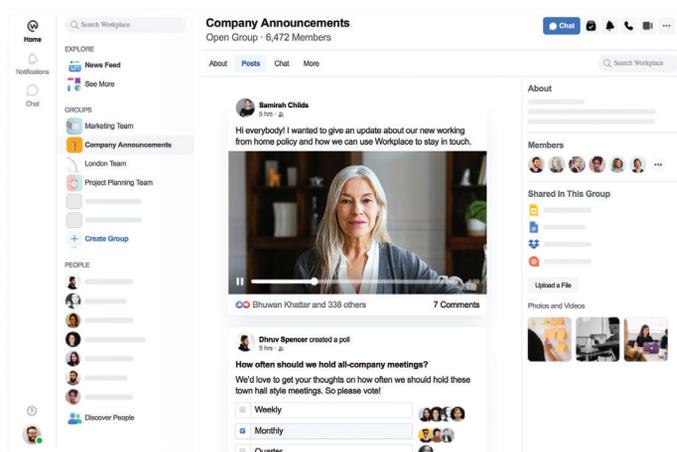
For these COVID-19 times, one of the key features here is Announcements, which HR and communications teams generally can use to ensure that communication on the platform stays authentic; it feels like it's coming from the people who are posting, typically executives or managers, because it is doing just that. With Announcements, communications professionals can draft messages on behalf of leadership, or leaders can do their own drafts. The main goal here is to take the initial workload off the executive's plate. Of course, the posting executive can edit the content to ensure it reflects their voice or add in context they want to include. COVID-19-related content can be posted immediately after edits or scheduled for a later time.

Next up is the familiar, often-deployed Q&A function. Here, the intention is to help create and encourage a more open dialogue

between leaders and their people. Essentially, anyone can kick off a Q&A post and then group members can add questions, comments and votes. Leaders are able to respond to the questions, either directly in a post or as a live follow-up.

About a year ago, Facebook decided to create a now-prescient pandemic-related function called Safety Check. It was built for when incidents such as earthquakes, hurricanes, mass shootings or a building collapse occurs. The company added this feature to Workplace because it provides peace of mind for safety teams and leadership: They are able to push a safety check to employees (via a short message through Workplace chat, the top of a newsfeed or through email) and monitor responses. Facebook also added Safety Alerts, which are brief messages that can be targeted to a specific audience. They don't necessarily require a response, but users can track alerts, read receipts and continue to send out alerts over time as the situation progresses.

Finally, Workplace offers employees a Knowledge Library, the first time Facebook has introduced static content to its dynamic platform. As it turned out, Facebook was working on this feature prior to COVID-19, but sped up the launch after many customers asked for a way to easily deliver critical, timely and updatable information to employees.



# PARADOX™

## Paradox, Scottsdale, Ariz.

**URL:** paradox.ai

**Product:** Paradox

### The Basics

Paradox is a conversational, artificial intelligence-based (AI) platform focused on helping HR and talent teams automate administrative tasks and deliver real-time candidate and employee communications.

### GUI/Usability

With Paradox, it's all about the AI, in this case in the form of Olivia, the front and center AI assistant/chatbot who also happens to be named after CEO Aaron Matos' wife (employers can rename the chatbot, if so desired). When it comes to ease of use, taking a spin through Paradox's user experience is something that anyone with a keyboard and touchscreen/touch pad or mouse can master within minutes — not a bad offering during high-stress times when you want to focus on timely, helpful outcomes, not learning how to use the technology.

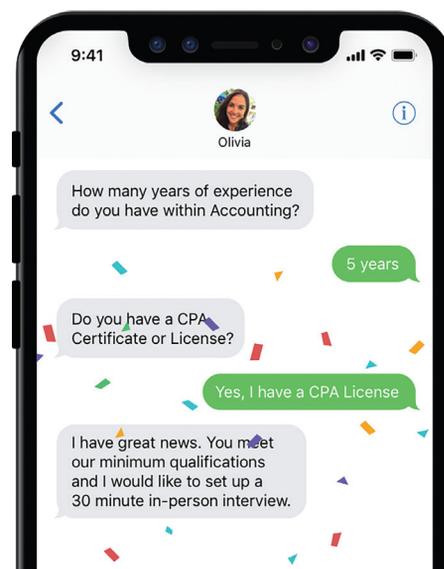
### Key Features for Pandemic Challenges

Of course, not all employers have been shedding workers during the pandemic. Companies such as CVS, the major drug store chain, have had to add people in record numbers, and quickly. With the simple, easy-to-deploy Paradox platform, employers — using the combination of a designated landing page, and Olivia doing the heavy lifting — can accomplish application and screening through its AI chatbot. In CVS's case, that meant successfully hiring 50,000 new employees.

Another critical function for Olivia is her job as a font of useful information for existing and new employees within the Paradox-built Knowledge Base. Employees nationwide who either never left the job (for essential businesses) or those about to go back to work were hitting up their HR teams, business partners, hiring managers or managers and asking about issues such as the quarantine policy for a specific state or city, if wearing a mask is mandatory, what are the COVID-19 symptoms, how to find childcare with schools closed, etc. Olivia either can quickly deliver the answers or, if not, get them to where they can get help.

During the demo, it was a smooth, seamless process: Employees have a resource that they can go to and ask questions quickly, easing some of their primary concerns. Olivia ensures they don't have to wait days or even hours for an HR staffer or their manager to get back to them on facts or policy issues related to COVID-19. All employers have to do is upload their corporate policy and responses to Paradox's central cloud-based data location.

Finally, Paradox's recruiting platform was deployed by some large employers to move workers from one part of the business negatively impacted by the pandemic to areas that may need more workers — an internal talent redeployment effort. The Paradox demo showed how such an employer can quickly match up workers from one sector to another, including a temporary location re-assignment, if applicable.





## AlertMedia, Austin, Texas

URL: [alertmedia.com](http://alertmedia.com)

Product: AlertMedia

### The Basics

AlertMedia's cloud-based platform offers employers the ability to streamline notifications along with the benefit of monitoring services to help improve worker safety. AlertMedia is a focused application, with safety and the ability to track employee well-being during a crisis its prime use. While it may not be a traditional HR tech solution (technically it was created more for the risk management function than for HR), COVID-19's challenges made it a perfect tool for the pandemic. In fact, AlertMedia's multichannel emergency communications platform may not have been created for COVID-19 purposes, but when nearly 250 new customers signed up in March alone, the company realized it had a part to play.

### GUI/Usability

As is the case with most apps today, users can access AlertMedia's simple interface via desktop or mobile device. For HR and management teams, sending out a notification is straightforward: Click on the "New Notification" button on the top left-hand side, and it presents you with a very simple process for message creation and distribution. It's a very simple, easy-to-use interface, whether you are a power user (creating and sending out messages/content) or someone receiving messages, or both. The learning curve is minimal in either case.

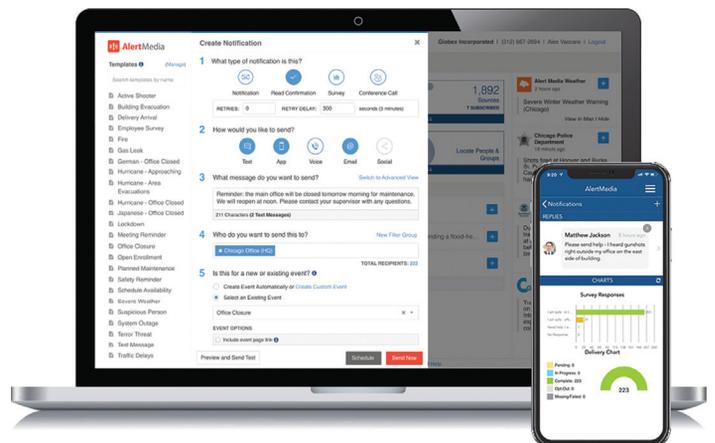
### Key Features for Pandemic Challenges

For message creation, employers/HR can select pre-configured templates from AlertMedia or they can create new ones simply by answering a string of questions. For example, what kind of notification do you want to send? What channels do you want to send it over? Who will get it? Will it be two-way?

The learning curve for both HR and employees is relatively quick, and customer support is available 24/7.

AlertMedia reports that more than 90% of new customers are using AlertMedia to communicate about COVID-19 on several levels. Such uses include health-care companies filling shifts, companies checking in on employees working from home, manufacturing companies surveying employees prior to their shift to assess symptoms, automating a response based on survey answers, and virtually all companies are communicating around government updates such as changes to shelter-in-place orders.

AlertMedia's demo showed how the platform enables quick and — most importantly — reliable delivery of critical messages to any-size audience, on any device, over any communications channel — including voice call, text message, email, mobile app push notification, and even social media. The driving idea here is employers can ensure the right people get the messages they need when they need them.





## Kronos, Lowell, Mass.

**URL:** [kronos.com](https://www.kronos.com)

**Product:** Employee contact tracing

### The Basics

Kronos's new automated feature — available at no charge to existing customers globally using several Kronos software platforms — helps streamline the employee contact-tracing process, if needed. To do that, it leverages data science to analyze labor records and time and attendance data collected by a Kronos solution. It can then generate a simple report that employers can use to quickly identify and communicate to employees who may have come in contact with a co-worker who has tested positive or is presumed positive for COVID-19.

### GUI/Usability

This is simple spreadsheet-type stuff, which for this use case is perfectly suited and useful. No need for dazzling graphics here. To do contact-tracing, it's about the data, and this tool's simple interface gives Kronos customers a chance to get granular when using the main software products.

### Key Features for Pandemic Challenges

Using this straightforward tool, employers can generate a contact-tracing report by accessing an infected employee's ID number to identify potential contacts — for instance, employees who clocked in at the same time and same location as someone testing positive or presumed positive for COVID-19 — based on overlapping shifts.

Also, Kronos believes that as state, local and health officials in general focus growing resources on various contact-tracing initiatives, being able to gather this type of data can help employers partner with health officials to rapidly notify potentially exposed employees and ensure people receive appropriate care, treatment and proper direction — for instance, self-quarantining instructions and initiating heightened cleaning efforts in exposed work areas. The goal is to help reduce further virus transmission risk.

As noted, the Kronos tool is simple. It uses workplace data that employers are already

collecting. They simply enter in the name of a person who's been identified as exhibiting symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19. Then, they enter in Kronos ID number within the different workforce levels that they are interested in searching. Submitting that information and timespan produces a list of other employees that have worked in those same locations. In essence, "punch spans" that overlap another person's punch spans are the key data point. With that data in hand, Kronos customers can launch a contact tracing effort internally.

For the Kronos customer, the good news is it's not version-dependent, as the tool uses fundamental tables that have been around for a long time. In short, it's pretty much "plug and play," with no heavy lifting on the tech side. ###

**Tom Starnes** is a contributing writer for #evolve. He can be reached at [pubs@worldatwork.org](mailto:pubs@worldatwork.org).





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# Welcome Back, My Friends, to the Meetings That Never End



“If only I’d spent more time in the office or took more meetings,” said no one ever as their time on this mortal coil entered its final countdown.

There are many soul-crushing aspects of modern work life: horrible bosses, co-workers and clients, deadening routines, rush-hour traffic, cramped cubicles, shared office spaces, lifeless décor (paraphrasing O. Wilde on his deathbed, “*Either those DOL-mandated posters go or I do*”) and wellness programs (OK, some, not all). High on this list are the meetings.

It’s not just the often-thin justification for holding them, their frequency and high noise-to-signal ratio — it’s their tiresome predictability. Office meetings are like a medieval morality play where each participant assumes a predefined role: the sycophant (euphemistically known as a “team player”), the truth teller, the finger pointer, the jokester, the contrarian, the eye roller, among others. Worse, it’s a morality play staged by a community theater company — “Waiting for Everyman,” but without the goofy charm of Corky or the endearingly demented “competence” of the Albertsons (if you’ve never seen “Waiting for Guffman,” what are you waiting for?).

But if those pre-pandemic meetings were (said in a Leonard Pinth Garnell voice) bad, very bad, horribly bad theater, they’re not nearly as bad as today’s where we fake eye contact through computer screens. I don’t know about you, but I am completely Zoomed out. And, it’s not just the increased frequency of the damned things that’s getting on my last nerve — though we’ll get to that in a moment.

If you’ve ever been to an NFL game, you realize that it’s one big stage set: The stadium is lit for television and bristles with dozens of cameras to capture the action from every conceivable angle. Similarly, meetings in the age of video conferencing turn your home office into a live production studio. Even when I’m not in a meeting, there’s a nagging sense that I’m mic’d for sound and the walls have eyes. Imagine how awful this would be if I were prone to paranoia!

This level of stifling self-consciousness extends to one’s office space. There’s a Twitter page called @ratemyskyperoom that rates your home office, kitchen, living room or backyard patio — wherever you do your video conferencing — taking into account whether your room looks authentic or staged, is too sparse or too busy, and critiques your shelving, artwork, plants, even your camera angles, lighting, depth and framing.

Video conferences bring many sets of roving eyes into your living space, forcing you to worry about every little photo, book or floral arrangement like it’s a Merchant Ivory production, which can be incredibly taxing, particularly if you are paranoid and wonder what that the otherwise innocent houseplant says about your sexual fantasies.

As to the insane spike in their frequency, these days it feels like my day is one long block of video meetings interrupted by spurts of actual work. It’s understandable that your boss wants to dragoon you into video meetings as it’s the only way to get face time now that we’re all working from home. But now even long-time clients or business associates who used to be OK with an OG phone call just assume you’re meeting on Zoom. For years, I could roll out of bed, come back from a workout and hop on a call, no problem. Now, I have to make sure that I’m Zoom-ready and haven’t left any embarrassing “tells” within camera range.

Before you call a meeting, sit on it for 24 hours like you do with an irate email — if it’s absolutely necessary, fine, but my guess is that most (75%, easily) are not. Eventually this mania will fade, but if in the meantime you’re on the receiving end of a video meeting request that you can’t get out of, do what I do: Find a creative excuse to stay off-camera and use your cloak of invisibility to stretch, practice your putting or simply close your eyes and imagine being anywhere else but in another dumb meeting. ###

**Charles Epstein** is president and founder of Backbone Inc. He is also co-host of WorldatWork’s “Work in Progress” podcast.



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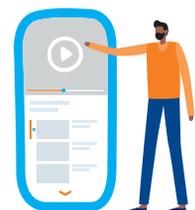
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