**CHRO Case Studies:** 

# Leading from the Front

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# Quick question: What do you call the person in charge of your organization's biggest asset?

Head of personnel? Chief people officer? Chief talent officer? Chief heart officer? CHRO? All of the above?

The name is as fluid and varied as the responsibilities. But in most organizations, the CHRO today finds themselves grappling with the three T's: talent, technology, and transformation.

And **one of the top challenges** for CHROs these days is leading the change management involved with adopting Al in the workplace. It's an issue that touches on skills, culture, organizational design, and career development.

In short, an issue that often falls to the CHRO.

LinkedIn has begun a series of conversations with dynamic chief human resources officers — no matter their actual title — around the globe who are at the forefront of reimagining the world of work.

What have we heard? To tackle these immense challenges, it's sometimes best to start small. To move quickly. To lead from the front. And, as difficult as it may be, to embrace failure. Or at least the possibility of it.

"We're an HR organization," says **Eric Dozier**, an executive vice president and the chief people officer at the pharmaceutical giant **Eli Lilly and Company**, "and we're dealing with people and there's this challenge to be perfect all the time. But as long as we can iterate, we don't have to be perfect. Let's embrace that and launch things.

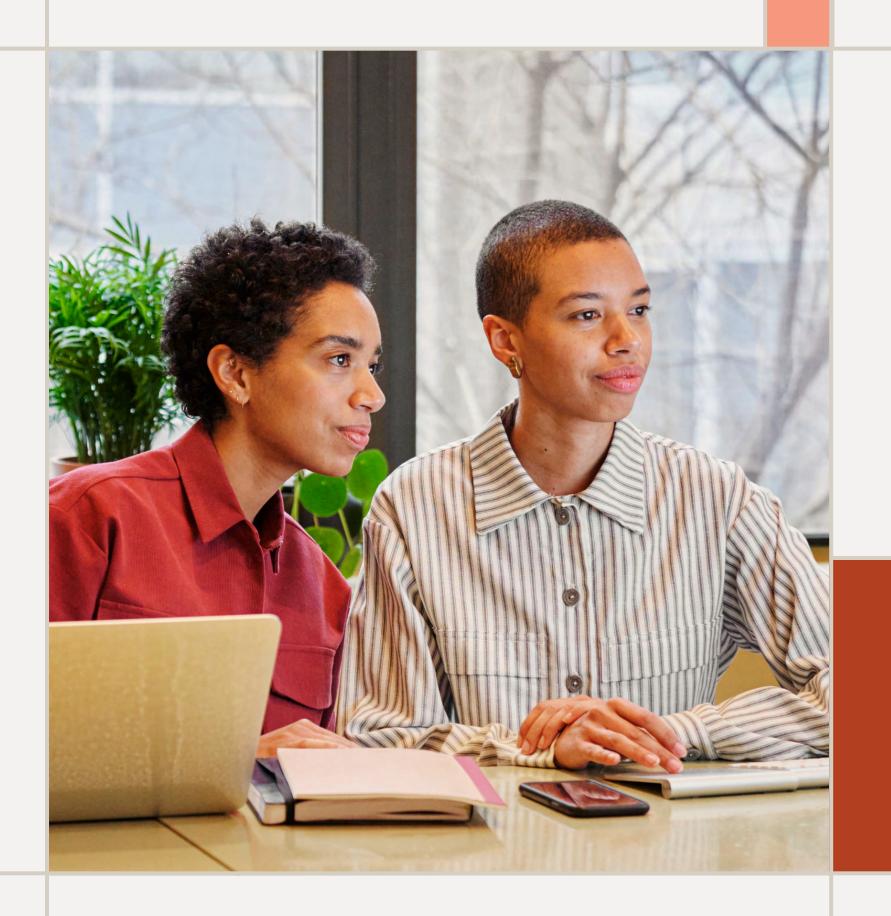
"The biggest risk," he adds, "is not taking risks."

According to a global survey of more than 300 CHROs done by Linkedln and YouGov, 78% of HR leaders agree that building a culture of innovation where more risk-taking is encouraged is critical to their business's growth over the next five years.

HR doesn't have to look far to see how this might work.

"We took some lessons from our development and product teams," says

Nickle LaMoreaux, the CHRO at IBM, noting that the agile ways of work and
constant feedback loops helped them pivot quickly.



In our CHRO conversations, we heard about the need for agility, curiosity, and resilience in both HR and the broader organization. "Everybody just understands that there are going to be those moments where we have to pivot," says

Katarina Berg, incoming CHRO at the performance sportswear company On and formerly the CHRO at Spotify. "Sometimes we have to sprint; sometimes we might need to slow down; sometimes we might need to sunset something."

From our conversations, we've pulled five case studies of CHROs and their teams embracing approaches or launching programs that address the current moment — and may spark others to do the same. We'll look at how **Boston**Consulting Group has fully embraced AI; how IBM has rethought performance management; how leaders at Allianz are modeling the change they want to see; how Wood is addressing burnout and well-being; and how LinkedIn (because we're regularly asked, "What are you doing?") has introduced Coaching for All.

of HR leaders agree that building a culture of innovation is critical to their business's growth over the next five years.

# How BCG Is Making Gen Al Stick: A Firm-Wide, People-Led Transformation

Imagine a consulting firm where every employee — from junior analyst to partner — is empowered to harness Al to amplify their impact. With a bold "early and often" approach championed by leadership, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) is reimagining work and unlocking new levels of value for its people and clients.

At BCG, innovation is never isolated, it's a shared endeavor, driven by the belief that transformation begins with people. Led by their people leadership team and shaped collectively by their managing partners, including chief talent officer and head of recruiting **Amber Grewal**, the firm adopted a generative Al (gen Al) strategy grounded in experimentation, empowerment, and inclusive access.

# The BCG Playbook: Early, Often, and Equitably

Rather than restrict AI to tech teams or isolated pilots, BCG took the bold step of activating all 33,000 employees to explore gen AI.

In October 2023, the firm rolled out ChatGPT Enterprise globally and continues to integrate additional LLMs signaling that AI at BCG is not a specialist tool but a core capability for all.

#### Key pillars of the people-led AI transformation:

- Firmwide access & enablement: Every employee received secure access to gen Al tools, fostering a culture of experimentation and innovation from day one.
- Integrated learning ecosystem: Al upskilling was built into BCG's competency models and career development paths, with required courses, on-demand content, and support from a network of 100+ gen Al coaches, internal superusers driving peer-to-peer learning.
- **Homegrown innovation:** Tools like Deckster, an internal Al app that's refined over 450,000 presentation slides, showcase how gen Al can drive daily productivity and creativity.



# Amber Grewal

Chief Talent Officer and Head of Recruiting Boston Consulting Group

Where's an opportunity where AI helps us return to what makes us uniquely human—curiosity, creativity, and purpose."



Hear from Amber live on the evolving role of HR in the age of Al

- **Custom GPTs at scale:** With over 18,000 employee-built GPTs, use cases span workflow automation, knowledge curation, and client delivery, all accessible via BCG's internal GPT store.
- **Gamified adoption:** BCG's "Gen Al Olympics" challenged employees to submit creative Al use cases, resulting in 1,000+ submissions that reinforced a bottom-up innovation mindset.
- Ethical guardrails through the Responsible Al Council: BCG's crossfunctional governance body ensures Al deployment is safe, inclusive, and responsible.

# From Bespoke to Future-Ready: Building a High-Tech, High-Touch People Stack

BCG's transformation is not just digital, it's deeply architectural. A major milestone was the modernization of the People Tech ecosystem: migrating away from fragmented, legacy platforms to a future-ready, agentic, cloud-native stack powered by a 360-degree data lake.

This initiative known internally as HT2 (High Tech, High Touch) laid the foundation for intelligent automation, Al agents, and personalized talent experiences at scale. With more than 2 million conversations already supported by Al agents, the focus is not just efficiency but elevation creating more seamless, engaging, and human-centered employee journeys.



#### The Results: Less Toil, More Joy

By the end of 2024, over 70% of BCG's global workforce was actively using gen Al tools in their day-to-day work. While the productivity benefits are measurable, the true success story is cultural: Al is not replacing people — it's empowering them to do more meaningful, creative, and strategic work.

"There's an opportunity where AI helps us return to what makes us uniquely human — curiosity, creativity, and purpose," Amber says. "It's a people story, not just a tech one."

BCG didn't just implement a tool, it activated a mindset of continuous learning, ethical innovation, and people-first transformation. And in doing so, BCG is building a future-ready workforce that's energized, empowered, and evolving with Al.

#### **Key Takeaways for People Leaders**

For CHROs and people executives seeking to drive meaningful Al adoption, BCG's model offers a compelling road map:

- Don't wait for perfect start now.
  - Real learning comes from doing, not waiting.
- Make it everyone's job.

  Broad access democratizes innovation and builds organizational confidence.
- Empower peer champions.

  Superusers and coaches accelerate trust and uptake more than top-down mandates.

# Beyond the Annual Review: How IBM Built a Future-Ready Performance Model

In recent years, IBM has overhauled how it measures employee performance. The shift wasn't just about modernizing processes — it was about addressing a fundamental disconnect. The company realized that traditional performance reviews were no longer keeping pace with the rapid rate of change in its business, especially as emerging technologies like AI were transforming the nature of work and the skills required to succeed. Leaders needed a better way to understand not only what employees had achieved, but also how they were preparing for what's next.

Under the leadership of senior vice president and chief human resources officer **Nickle LaMoreaux**, IBM moved beyond the once-a-year review in favor of a more dynamic, skills-based approach that emphasizes growth, adaptability, and real-time feedback.

Big Blue's new performance management framework is built around three core pillars: business results, skills, and behaviors. This model doesn't just measure what employees accomplish—it also accounts for how they achieve their goals and how they continue to develop along the way.

# Pillar 1: Business results still matter — just not alone

"Like most companies," Nickle says, "we are grounded in performance — results matter, and they still matter." But at IBM, results are no longer the sole measure of success.

The company has redefined performance to reflect not just what employees deliver but how those outcomes contribute to IBM's broader strategic direction. The new framework emphasizes impact — whether an employee's contributions are driving innovation, supporting collaboration, or enabling meaningful transformation.

# Pillar 2: Skills — from "check the box" to future-ready

Roughly a decade ago, IBM introduced Think40, a program requiring employees to complete 40 hours of learning and development each year.



# Nickle LaMoreaux

Senior Vice President and CHRO IBM

We want employees to understand not just the skills that are needed today, but the ones they'll need next."



Hear from Nickle live on IBM's reimagined performance management.

While the intent was to build a culture of continuous learning, over time the program began to feel more like a compliance exercise than a catalyst for real upskilling. "It became another box to tick," Nickle says.

To close the gap between intent and impact, IBM reimagined its approach. In 2016, skills development was formally integrated as the second pillar of the company's revamped performance framework. Employees would be evaluated not just on their results but on how they were preparing for the future.

Someone could be the highest-performing salesperson in the company but, without evidence of building new, future-facing skills, they couldn't earn the top performance rating or qualify for a raise. Bonuses remained tied to past results but salary increases began to reflect future readiness.

"Every company says they want to be a skills-based organization, but you have to make it real for people," Nickle says. "We want employees to understand not just the skills that are needed today, but the ones they'll need next."

To win executive buy-in, Nickle and her team presented compelling data: A three-year lookback revealed that top performers who failed to build new skills often declined over time, becoming average — or even below-average — contributors. The conclusion: Yesterday's results couldn't guarantee tomorrow's success.

#### Pillar 3: Behaviors — embedding culture into performance

The newest addition to IBM's performance framework was rolled out in the past year and focuses on behaviors — how employees show up in their roles and contribute to the company's culture.



"We were measuring performance and skills, but then we realized that in this age of AI, those weren't enough," Nickle says. "The world is moving so quickly, and we began evaluating this idea of behaviors — entrepreneurial spirit, curiosity, being able to move with speed, being OK with failure as you try new skills."

Managers are trained to have ongoing, real-time conversations rather than rely on once-a-year discussions — allowing them to spot challenges early and celebrate growth in the moment.

The future of performance management isn't about checking boxes — it's about building a culture of continuous growth, grounded in real-time feedback, evolving skills, and human-centered leadership.

## Key Takeaways for People Leaders

By anchoring its performance management strategy in business results, future skills, and aligned behaviors, IBM is showing that reviews don't have to be a once-a-year obligation — they can be a meaningful driver of growth and adaptability.

Don't wait for the annual review.

Encourage regular check-ins, real-time coaching, and in-themoment recognition to keep performance conversations relevant and actionable.

- Skills development shouldn't be an afterthought.

  Build future-facing skills into the performance dialogue to help employees grow with and ahead of the business.
- Empower your managers.

  Equip leaders with the tools and training they need to have impactful, ongoing conversations about results, behaviors, and growth.
- Show how skill-building and adaptability today can predict stronger performance and retention tomorrow.

Use data insights to gain buy-in.

# Role Models for All: How Executives at Allianz Are Leading by Example

"If you're going to ask your team to do new things, you better start with yourself," says Bettina Dietsche, the chief people and culture officer at Allianz. For her, leading from the front isn't a slogan — it's a daily practice. Whether it's adopting new technologies, mentoring emerging leaders, or prioritizing well-being, Bettina believes role-modeling is essential to building trust and accelerating transformation.

"People are watching," she says. "And if you're not doing it, how can you expect someone else to?"

# Leading by doing: Adopting AI to unlock time and focus

For Bettina, leadership starts with action — and right now, that means embracing Al. She uses AllianzGPT, the company's internal generative Al assistant, to streamline her workflow.

"I use it to summarize lengthy reports so I'm reading five pages instead of 100," she explains. "That frees me up to focus on what really moves us forward: strategy, mentoring, and learning."

Her team is applying AI to automate time-consuming HR tasks
— from scheduling interviews and drafting job descriptions to
matching candidates with open roles. These efforts have helped
reduce time to hire and lightened administrative loads across
teams.

"It's about automating the repetitive, low-impact tasks," Bettina says. "You know, those annoying things on everyone's desk—what I call 'the ugliest four hours of the workday."

#### Mentoring across generations

Mentorship is another area where Bettina leads by example. "Using AI to be more efficient is important," she says, "but mentoring is also key."

Each year, Allianz welcomes more than 24,000 new hires. As part of onboarding, employees are paired with experienced colleagues in two-way mentorships that foster connection and learning across generations and career stages.



# Bettina Dietsche

Chief People and Culture Officer Allianz

resilient if you take it seriously yourself.
Then you're in a position to help others.
Start with yourself — and lead from there."



Hear from Bettina live on how she models the behaviors she wants to see as a leader. "I mentor new hires and future leaders alike," Bettina says. "It's one of the most important things I do. Supporting people as they grow and navigate their careers creates a ripple effect across the organization."

Now that there are five generations represented in the workforce, Bettina sees mentorship as a powerful cultural connector — one that bridges perspectives and builds mutual understanding.

"It's not about Gen Z or Baby Boomers," she says. "It's about creating meaningful opportunities to learn from each other naturally. That's the kind of culture we want."

# Practicing what she preaches: A human-centered approach to well-being

In an era defined by rapid change and constant pressure to "do more with less," Bettina believes leaders must take well-being seriously — not just in words, but in practice.

"As a yoga practitioner myself, I'm passionate about wellness and mental health," she says. "Creating an environment where people feel valued and motivated to grow starts with leading by example."

She makes a point of taking time off, unplugging, and investing in her own well-being — setting the tone for others to do the same.

"You can only be resilient if you take it seriously yourself," she says. "Then you're in a position to help others. Start with yourself — and lead from there."

## **Key Takeaways for People Leaders**

What can HR leaders learn from Allianz's lead-from-the-front approach?

Put your own oxygen mask on first.

Leaders who adopt new tools, new processes, and new directions set the tone and make it possible for others to pivot.

Be the change you want to see.

Resilience, empathy, and adaptability must start at the top.

Prioritize well-being.

The way leaders take care of themselves sets the tone for how teams care for themselves — and each other.

Be a mentor.

Allianz's global buddy system fosters connection, learning, and culture — in both directions.

# Wellness Initiatives That Work: Inside Wood's Whole-Person Approach

In today's workplace — still recalibrating after the shocks of a global pandemic — chronic stress and burnout remain persistent challenges. According to the World Health Organization, depression and anxiety cost the global economy over \$1 trillion in lost productivity every year. Meanwhile, recent LinkedIn research finds that 4 in 10 workers in the U.S. report feeling stuck and burned out on the job. For people leaders, employee well-being is no longer a "nice-to-have" — it's a business imperative.

Marla Storm, chief human resources officer at Wood, is part of a growing wave of CHROs who are championing a whole-person approach to employee care. "This is real," Marla emphasizes. "Our employees are dealing with so much — professionally and personally. We want to normalize that it's OK to say, 'This is too much,' and to prioritize your well-being." Wood has a team of professionals and volunteers who support the delivery of a set of initiatives designed not just to encourage self-care but to embed it into the company's culture.

## Mental health champions: Building a peerled network of support

At the center of Wood's well-being approach is its Mental Health & Well-Being Champion initiative — a global volunteer network of employees trained to recognize and respond to colleagues who may be finding things challenging or need someone to talk to. They are embedded across offices and operational sites, equipped with the tools to offer immediate, nonjudgmental support, connect peers with professional help, and refer them to internal and external resources. Champions are supported and connected via quarterly calls to share updates and case studies that support the evergreen development of their tool kits.

"What we've done is treat mental health support with the same seriousness and structure as physical health," Marla says. "If someone raises their hand and says, 'I need support,' there's someone nearby who's trained to help."



## **Marla Storm**

CHRO Wood

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with so much —
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This peer-led model not only expands access to mental health support but also helps destigmatize conversations around emotional wellness. It's about meeting people where they are and reinforcing that care is a collective responsibility.

# Around Wood in 30 Days: A global movement for movement

Another hallmark of Wood's wellness programming is Around Wood in 30 Days — an annual initiative that encourages employees to get active for physical and mental wellness. Whether it's hiking in the mountains, cycling with colleagues, or taking solo walks during lunch, the campaign promotes connection through movement.

Participants track their miles and minutes with a shared, symbolic goal: to collectively "travel" around the world of Wood, virtually stopping in one of the more than 60 countries where Wood has offices. "We started and ended the route in Dubai this year," Marla says, "but it's really about creating space for people to move, reflect, and take care of themselves."

The initiative also taps into the connective power of storytelling. Employees are encouraged to share photos and reflections on their activities — often highlighting local scenery, creative fitness routines, or moments of personal renewal — on internal platforms and social media. The joy and success in this annual initiative is its grassroots nature — it's driven by employees, for the benefit of themselves and each other.



#### Equipping managers to lead with empathy

Recognizing the ripple effect that manager behavior can have on team well-being, Wood is investing in tools and training to help leaders support their teams' mental and emotional health.

"There isn't something magical that happens the moment someone becomes a manager," Marla says. "We need to recognize that leadership means a change in responsibility, and then give them the support they need to lead well."

That support comes in the form of accessible, just-in-time resources. "Our approach," Marla says, "is to make sure development tools are readily available, so that when a manager needs guidance in the moment, they can find it."

From short-form training on people-oriented leadership to practical tool kits to aid meaningful check-ins with team members, the goal is to equip managers to foster psychologically safe, supportive environments. While these efforts are still evolving, the message is clear: At Wood, supporting employee well-being is a core part of what it means to lead and to build a culture that attracts, retains, and develops the best talent.

### **Key Takeaways for People Leaders**

Employee well-being isn't one-size-fits-all, but these strategies can help HR leaders create more supportive, connected, and resilient workplaces.

Create a peer-led support network.

Train employee volunteers in mental health first aid to extend the reach of internal support systems and normalize seeking help.

- 2 Encourage movement-based campaigns.
  Promote employees' physical health while fostering a sense of community.
- Support your managers.

  Equip leaders with practical tools and training to have empathetic conversations and recognize signs of burnout.

# All-In on Growth: LinkedIn Makes One-on-One Coaching a Company-Wide Benefit

Career coaching isn't just for job seekers or senior leaders — everyone deserves support, no matter their role or the stage in their career. At LinkedIn, chief people officer Teuila Hanson is turning that belief into reality.

Last year, the company launched Coaching for All, a bold new initiative that gives every employee access to one-on-one career coaching from a certified professional.

It's a simple but powerful premise — in a workplace being rapidly reshaped by Al and shifting business priorities, employees need tailored support to keep up, build new skills, and navigate uncertainty with confidence. The idea was sparked during a conversation between Teuila and LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky.

"Ryan asked me, 'What do our employees need in this moment of time when there's so much change?" she recalls. Her answer came quickly: personalized coaching for everyone. "For an employee to look at everything that's happening," she says, "not only in their day-to-day, but also the changes ahead, we want them to have a resource that helps them thrive and grow."

And the data backs this up. Since 2015, the skills required for jobs have changed by **roughly 25%**. By 2030, thanks to generative Al and accelerating transformation, that number is expected to reach **nearly 70%**. Recognizing that employees needed an extra layer of support to meet this moment, Linkedln made the decision to expand access to independent career coaching to every employee.

# A company-wide rollout, grounded in equity and access

Instead of piloting the program with, say, a select group of top performers, LinkedIn took an all-in approach. Every employee, regardless of job function or seniority level, was offered access to a certified career coach.

Employees who opt in are encouraged to have a clear goal or challenge in mind — whether they're exploring new career directions, developing leadership skills, navigating change, or simply reflecting on their strengths. After answering a few questions about their goals and learning style, they're matched with a coach from an independent leadership development service.



# Teuila Hanson

Chief People Officer LinkedIn

We see personalized coaching as more than a perk. It's a strategic investment that helps employees build the skills they need to thrive."



Hear from Teuila live on how coaching for all LinkedIn employees came to be.

And the early results are compelling. So far, 97% of participants say they feel more confident in their ability to navigate their careers after coaching. Even more notably, about 80% of those who've signed up are individual contributors — a strong signal that the program is reaching and resonating with the broader workforce.

Because coaches can't be there for employees 24/7, LinkedIn also offers Alpowered coaching on LinkedIn Learning, where people can practice navigating challenging workplace conversations (like performance reviews) through interactive scenarios. After each session, employees receive personalized feedback that highlights strengths and opportunities for growth. They're also provided LinkedIn Learning course recommendations for closing skills gaps.

#### A powerful lesson: Invest in people, not just tools

In a world increasingly shaped by Al, LinkedIn's Coaching for All initiative is a timely reminder that lasting transformation starts with people. As Teuila puts it: "We see personalized coaching as more than a perk. It's a strategic investment that helps employees build the skills they need to thrive."

Growth isn't just about today's performance — it's about preparing for what comes next. "This feels like an 'unlock' moment," Teuila says, "because I believe it's a tremendous opportunity to unlock human potential."

Coaching isn't just a feel-good perk — it's a smart, scalable investment in your people that pays off in agility, engagement, and long-term growth.

## **Key Takeaways for People Leaders**

To build a more resilient, self-aware workforce ready to thrive in a fast-changing world, HR leaders can take a page from Linkedln's Coaching for All initiative:

Make coaching a company-wide benefit, not a privilege.

Opening access to all employees — not just high performers or senior leaders — sends a powerful message about equity, inclusion, and belief in everyone's growth.

2 Support different learning styles with flexible options.

Pairing human coaching with Al-nowered tools allows employees to

Pairing human coaching with Al-powered tools allows employees to choose the type of support that best fits their needs and schedules.

Personalization drives engagement.

By matching employees with professional coaches based on their goals and learning preferences — and tailoring Al guidance to their roles and interests — Linkedln has built a program that feels relevant and personal.

# Inevitably, with challenges come opportunities.

And the HR leaders who have the vision and steely courage to chart a new course — to take risks and try new approaches — will be the change agents reimagining the world of work. They will be the trailblazers, the pioneers, the innovators whose impact will be far-reaching, lasting, and deeply felt.

"The No. 1 skill you really have to master as an HR leader," says **Séverine Charbon**, the CHRO at **Publicis Groupe**, "is to be able to navigate complexity and ambiguity and constantly adapt to change."

Some HR leaders, in light of so many pressing challenges and demands, may be inclined to throw in the towel. Others will embrace the opportunity.





"What I'm most excited about," says **Amber Grewal**, the chief talent officer and head of recruiting at **Boston Consulting Group**, "is that HR is no longer just about managing people and managing processes. HR is now about business transformation and creating business value through designing an archetype of what the future workforce is going to look like. Ultimately, what excites me is that HR is moving toward being the architects of a new workforce that doesn't exist."

Architects? Yes, but not a single, brilliant starchitect working alone. Instead, a distributed team of innovative, risk-taking architects working around the globe and constantly looking to learn from one another.

We hope that the case studies shared here — about change management, career development, performance management, Al integration, and employee well-being — will prompt HR leaders to reconsider where there may be promising opportunities at their organization to do something quick, something new, something from which helpful lessons can be drawn, even if things go slightly awry.

"Everyone's figuring it out as we go," Amber says. "But we have to do this together as an industry. We have to learn from each other."

# Resources & Acknowledgements

#### Blog posts

- · Spotify's CHRO Hits All the Right Notes, Adapting to Change and Creating an Inclusive Culture
- From Silos to Strategy: The Rise of Systemic HR (with Josh Bersin)
- 7 Ways HR Will Look Different in 2025 (with Lars Schmidt)
- This Is the Year for HR Leaders to Become Chief Disruption Officers (with Jennifer McClure)
- 5 Predictions for 2025 from a World-of-Work Expert (with Dan Schawbel)
- · Data Insights from Bersin's New Definitive Guide to Human Resources

#### Op-eds

- Why Your CHRO is the Missing Link In Your Al Strategy (Charter)
- · How to Create Leaders Who Coach, Rather than Command (Fast Company)

#### Conversations with CHROs video series (full episodes)

- Teuila Hanson in conversation with Katarina Berg of Spotify
- · Aneesh Raman in conversation with Amber Grewal of Boston Consulting Group
- · Aneesh Raman in conversation with Eric Dozier of Eli Lilly and Company
- · Aneesh Raman in conversation with Bettina Dietsche of Allianz
- · Aneesh Raman in conversation with Séverine Charbon of Publicis Groupe
- Teuila Hanson in conversation with Nickle LaMoreaux of IBM

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