

# HR INNOVATION

This year's CHRO of the Year Award finalists are being recognized for redefining human capital management.

By Marta Chmielowicz

In today's competitive business world, talent has the potential to be the greatest strength of an organization and one of its most powerful sources of competitive advantage. But developing a top talent pool requires more than just a good recruitment strategy: culture, technology, data insights, benefits, learning, engagement, and more are emerging as top considerations.

Chief HR officers are responsible for managing all of these elements of the talent strategy while delivering business results. To honor the contributions of these incredible leaders, *HRO Today* is proud to present the finalists of the annual CHRO of the Year Awards. Award winners will be announced at the *HRO Today* Forum on May 6th at MGM National Harbor, Md.

FINALIST

**Marissa Andrada**  
**Chief People Officer**  
**Chipotle Mexican Grill**



Marissa Andrada joined Chipotle at a moment of transformation and change. Faced with a complete organizational restructuring effort that included the relocation of the company's headquarters, centralization of its shared service functions, and rebuilding of its leadership team and workforce, Andrada tackled the company's top challenges head-on. She also spearheaded the evolution of a new culture that embodies Chipotle's "Cultivate a Better World" mission. Her work to build an employee value proposition that attracts and retains top talent has led to continued organizational growth.

FINALIST

**Tanya Axenson**  
**Chief HR Officer, Aerotek**  
**Global Head of HR, Allegis Group**



In her roles as chief HR officer of Aerotek and global head of HR of Allegis Group, Tanya Axenson has demonstrated a commitment to employee engagement, inclusion, and self-improvement through service. As a way to celebrate Allegis' 35th year of operation, Axenson introduced the #AllegisCares35 initiative, encouraging employees across the globe to dedicate the entire month of July to improving their communities. As a direct result of her efforts to develop the company's corporate social responsibility program, Allegis employees engaged in more than 10,000 volunteer hours with 68 organizations around the world—exemplifying the company's core value of serving not only customers, but communities.

FINALIST

**LeighAnne Baker**  
**Chief HR Officer and Corporate Vice President**  
**Cargill**



As the first chief HR officer and one of the first women appointed to Cargill's executive leadership team, LeighAnne Baker is used to challenging the status quo. Throughout her tenure, Baker has overseen the company's reorganization from 65 separate entities into five large enterprises. Thanks to her efforts, Cargill has undergone a complete global HR transformation that encompasses a new operating model, a new HR information system (HRIS), and a new approach to talent management. By creating a culture that puts a spotlight on performance; introducing employee assessments; implementing leadership development programs; and driving digital learning across the organization, Baker has enabled Cargill to boast an 86 percent employee engagement rate and \$90 million in HR cost savings.



**Roger Casalengo**  
**Senior Vice President of HR**  
**Cobham Advanced Electronic Solutions (CAES)**



Roger Casalengo's strong background in organizational development has been instrumental to the success of Cobham Advanced Electronic Solutions (CAES). In just shy of two years, Casalengo introduced a "One CAES" approach that unified the company's five HR operating systems and duplicated processes under a single umbrella. This encompasses a new leadership-driven culture, one HRIS system, and the introduction of CAESnet, the company's first corporate intranet site that makes it possible for employees to monitor all manufactured products and milestones across the business. Casalengo was also instrumental in restructuring the entire organization, including the senior management team, resulting in a flatter structure that improves efficiency, provides more development opportunities for employees, and delivers significant cost savings. In addition, he built the first CAES HR strategy, which aligns with the organization's goals and measures success through analytics on a monthly and quarterly basis to show the value that HR brings the business.



**Bonnie Daniels**  
**Senior Vice President of Culture and People Services**  
**MiTek Industries Inc.**



Bonnie Daniels is a key member of the MiTek leadership team, enabling the growth and evolution of her organization while reinforcing core cultural values. She has transformed HR from an administrative, transaction-based function to a true strategic approach embedded in the core of the business. Some of her primary initiatives include launching the company's first-ever global employee engagement survey and action planning project; developing change management strategies to ease the adoption of a new HRIS; launching the first employee recognition program; and redesigning the approach to employee incentives and bonus compensation.



**Jill Geimer**  
**Managing Director and Head of HR**  
**OpticsPlanet Inc.**



Jill Geimer is focused, determined, and passionate about the world of HR. Thanks to her contagious enthusiasm and innovative approaches, she makes the employee experience shine across geographical boundaries in each of OpticsPlanet's four companies. Geimer has worked tirelessly to promote safe and healthy workplace environments. Recent initiatives include designing preventive measures for workplace violence and conducting active shooter training. Ahead of her time and decades before the #MeToo movement, she stood up to sexual harassment in the workplace and successfully combated behavior that objectified female professionals. Geimer has become a mentor to the next generation of workplace leaders and an advocate of diversity inclusion and respectful workplace boundaries. She leverages her more than 20 years of experience in talent management, organizational development, employee benefits design, employee relations, and strategic human capital planning to bring forward-thinking initiatives to OpticsPlanet.



**Ginger Gregory**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief HR Officer**  
**Biogen**



Throughout her roles as chief HR officer for Dunkin' Brands, Shire Pharmaceuticals, and now Biogen, Ginger Gregory has demonstrated a proven history of transformational leadership. At each company, she has driven organizational growth while focusing on people, talent, development, and excellence in the HR function. During her time at Shire, Gregory oversaw the company's acquisition of Baxalta at a rate of integration that was deemed the fastest in the industry—maintaining business continuity, reducing costs, and easing the change management process. She is a strong leader who prioritizes mentorship, coaching, and leading from the front, and her approach has produced a team of confident leaders across the HR function.



**Marcus Griffin**  
**Senior Vice President and HR Director**  
**Dufry Group**



Marcus Griffin has created significant value for Dufry America by spearheading key people initiatives: the introduction of sales and managerial training programs. With sales professionals representing a significant majority of the company's workforce, Griffin implemented a global development program that focuses on improving sales techniques, quality customer service, and empowering team members and their growth within the group. He has transformed partner resources by adding value, inspiring renewal and passion in the workplace. He has led the development of an in-house managerial training program that prioritizes upskilling, providing colleagues with the technical and soft skills needed for people management. From negotiating budgets to designing content, Griffin was involved in all levels of program development and execution. A major outcome on this has been the success in attaining several employee engagement awards through Top Work Places and Best Places to Work. The Dufry America HR team plays a proactive role in delighting Dufry customers, supporting operational efficiency, and growing team members and sales and profitability with its business partner approach.



**Nancy Hauge**  
**Chief HR Officer**  
**Automation Anywhere**



Upon joining a company of 600 employees, Nancy Hauge's various recruitment programs led Automation Anywhere to more than double in size in merely one year—overcoming intense competition from fellow software companies in Silicon Valley and around the world. The organization has not only succeeded in attracting and retaining top talent, but has expanded its operations into Canada, Holland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates. This growth is expected to continue into another 15 to 20 countries in 2019, with a 300 percent projected increase in headcount.



**Jeanie Heffernan**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief HR Officer**  
**Independence Health Group**



Jeanie Heffernan is known as a visible and outspoken champion of diversity and inclusion (D&I) at Independence Health Group. Her boldness and ability to inspire employees and leadership has completely transformed the organization's approach to D&I into a formal strategy that is valued across all levels of the business. In addition to building a core D&I team that is responsible for crafting strategy and overseeing specific initiatives, Heffernan has led the creation of nine associate resource groups that boast a 95 percent engagement rate. She has also tied leadership incentive compensation to participation in the D&I program, with 85 percent of senior officers exceeding their goals.



**Sean Kimble**  
**Vice President of HR**  
**USA Compression**



As the vice president of HR for USA Compression, Sean Kimble was tasked with planning and managing the people components of the largest acquisition in the company's history. In a single day, Kimble and his team hired over 500 employees—including sending individual offer letters, distributing employee handbooks, managing benefits enrollment, and integrating disparate processes and cultures. The merger went off flawlessly, with employees reporting a 4.6 out of five score on Glassdoor and a 91 percent recommendation level post-merger. Other hallmark initiatives of Kimble's tenure at USA Compression include the planning and introduction of self-funded medical plans, the creation of an internal sourcing and recruitment group, a new internal technical training center, and the sponsorship of various employee engagement events.



**Max Langenkamp**  
**Vice President of HR**  
**Cintas**



Optimizing the talent acquisition process has been key to Max Langenkamp's success at Cintas. From fostering collaboration between marketing and HR to leveraging data insights to align talent acquisition with business objectives, Langenkamp has worked diligently to drive ROI through the talent strategy. He has also redesigned hiring and onboarding processes by creating a personalized candidate and employee experience that includes videos that highlight culture, first 30-day checklists that maintain transparency, and a copy of Cintas Founder Dick Farmer's book that provides a clear view into company values.



**Andrea Larsen**  
**Chief HR Officer**  
**Advisor Group**



Andrea Larsen joined Advisor Group in 2016 as the organization first began operating as a standalone entity separate from its parent company. She was tasked with creating the entire HR function and infrastructure from the ground up in only five months. From introducing new onboarding, payroll, HRIS, and performance management systems to redesigning the recruitment process, employee brand, and learning function, Larsen has had a powerful impact on the foundational strategy and subsequent execution of HR at Advisor Group. And her efforts have led to tremendous results: The company has greatly exceeded financial targets, rapidly expanded its customer base, and is completing a third acquisition in two years. The company has also seen a Glassdoor performance improvement, going from a 2.6 to a more than 4.0. And retention is high, with 97 percent of top talent and 94 percent of high-potential employees remaining loyal to the organization.



**Alan May**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer**  
**Hewlett Packard Enterprise**



Leadership transitions, cultural transformation, and change management are just three of the major challenges that Alan May has tackled in his role of chief people officer for Hewlett Packard Enterprise. Thanks to his efforts to build an efficient succession planning process, he was able to internally prepare and coach a new CEO while introducing a broader senior leadership assessment process. May was also instrumental in outsourcing the recruitment function; driving cost savings through supply chain optimization; introducing cutting-edge, mobile, cloud-enabled technology; and restructuring the sales portion of the business.



**John Murabito**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief HR Officer**  
**Cigna**



John Murabito was among several key leaders at Cigna involved in the planning and execution of its acquisition of Express Scripts, adding more than 20,000 employees into the organization's existing workforce of 40,000. He was also responsible for overhauling the HR service delivery model, including the deployment of a new Workday HCM technology platform. Thanks to his efforts, Cigna can better leverage people insights, reduce administrative effort and cost, and establish agile teams that increase speed-to-market.



**Linda Nedelcoff**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy and HR Officer**  
**CUNA Mutual Group**



Linda Nedelcoff has focused her role at CUNA Mutual Group on the improvement of employee experience. She transitioned the HR department into the “Employee Experience Unit” that operates in an agile framework and makes every major decision through the lens of the employee experience. As a result of her team’s initiatives, 78 percent of employees report being engaged, 76 percent trust the organization and its leadership, 75 percent are satisfied with work-life balance, and 83 percent are happy with the level of collaboration. All of these results are above industry benchmarks, demonstrating Nedelcoff’s immense impact on business success.



**Kathie Patterson**  
**Chief HR Officer**  
**Ally Financial**



What is the key element that distinguishes Ally Financial from its competitors? Chief HR Officer Kathie Patterson calls it “the care factor,” or the existence of a purpose-driven environment where employees feel supported and connected. In fact, Patterson’s primary initiative at Ally has been bringing “the care factor” to life through a multi-pronged approach that encompasses benefits offerings, communication practices, diversity and inclusion, and holistic employee wellness packages. As a result of her leadership, Ally launched eight diverse employee resource groups which are consulted when HR makes strategic decisions about benefits offerings and D&I initiatives. As a result of the feedback from these groups, the organization has adopted several new policies including parental leave benefits, financial wellness, and the removal of salary history from the hiring process.



**Rebecca Sinclair**  
**Chief People and Communications Officer**  
**American Tire Distributors (ATD)**



Rebecca Sinclair is transforming ATD’s culture into one that is focused on constant learning and development. By introducing a modern approach to learning that leverages innovative, engaging, and on-demand technology as well as data analytics, Sinclair has directly impacted business results for the sales side of the business. ATD’s new approach has achieved a 95 percent participation rate, with associates accessing the learning platform an average 17 times per month. This has resulted in a 17 percent increase in knowledge across the sales team, as well as a broader transition in the way the organization engages with its associates. Thanks to her efforts, ATD’s leadership can also connect directly to its people through leader videos and messages, encourage the adoption of new initiatives, and measure associate understanding of key business drivers.



**Anna Spriggs**  
**Chief of HR and Administration**  
**Truth Initiative**



Under Anna Spriggs' leadership, Truth Initiative has adopted an innovative, award-winning approach to employee health and wellness that is aligned with its greater mission. In a challenging time of rising healthcare costs, Spriggs is a champion for expanding employee benefits, developing a program that includes 100 percent paid medical, dental, and vision coverage as well as generous 401k contributions, transportation benefits, a substantial leave program, and numerous wellness perks. She also spearheaded various professional development initiatives, including tuition assistance, workplace training, and two annual paid professional development opportunities per staff member. Spriggs has consistently advocated on behalf of employees, creating a culture that prioritizes its people's health and well-being. She is also an adjunct professor at Trinity University.



**Darryl Varnado**  
**Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer**  
**Children's National Health System**



Darryl Varnado led the formation of a workforce management plan that completely reengineered management structures and the position control process across the enterprise, saving the organization nearly \$70 million in labor expense over three years and increasing the organizational productivity index from 95 percent to 105 percent. By shrewdly evaluating labor productivity, the workforce management team, chaired by Varnado, eliminated select vacant management-level positions; adjusted job titles, levels, and incentives, affecting 35 percent of the management positions; and removed 23 percent of positions from the management incentive plan. The new structure was communicated in a comprehensive "Job Level Management Guide," and a "Workforce Management Committee" was created to ensure everything runs smoothly and the organization remains appropriately staffed.



**Jacqueline M. Welch**  
**Senior Vice President, Chief HR Officer, and Chief Diversity Officer**  
**Freddie Mac**



During her time at Freddie Mac, Jacqueline Welch has made herself highly visible throughout the organization by hosting monthly speaking engagements and regular meet-and-greets with her employees. By making herself available for feedback and creating an environment where all levels of employees feel comfortable sharing their perspectives, she has empowered the workforce and improved engagement. This two-way communication extends to the company's D&I strategy. Under Welch's leadership, the organization hosted its first-ever inclusion summit where employees, suppliers, and community partners were encouraged to develop solutions to further improve the company's diversity efforts.