



# TAPPING INTO TALENT

The pressure on TA leaders to drive success is greater than ever before. See how this year's award finalists are getting ahead with innovative initiatives.

By: Taylor Thompson

With SHRM reporting that 83 percent of HR professionals have faced challenges recruiting the right job candidates in the past year, it comes as no surprise that organizations are restructuring their talent acquisition departments with the hopes of seeing positive change. Gone are the days of job applicants working to gain the attention of potential employers. Instead, that focus has shifted onto the organizations themselves as HR and talent acquisition leaders drive initiatives to help them stand out among the crowd in a competitive job market.

When it comes to attracting top talent, a number of different approaches related to technology and the candidate experience have infiltrated the agenda. Whether it's programs to increase employee engagement and retention or the implementation of applicant-focused software, the risks and challenges these individuals are overcoming deserve to be recognized. Luckily, our *HRO Today* Talent Acquisition Leader of the Year Awards do just that.

Discover how this year's Talent Acquisition Leader of the Year Award finalists are using new technology-driven tactics and employee-centric initiatives to attract top talent and drive change in their companies' recruitment efforts.



**Elisa Bannon-Jones**  
**Chief HR Officer**  
**Frontier Communications**

As chief HR officer, Elisa Bannon-Jones has increased Frontier Communications' level of talent for years to come through improvements in innovation, employee engagement, and retention. Under her leadership, she has completely transformed and embedded a strategic mindset on talent, starting with talent acquisition, in support of Frontier's organizational strategy. This includes the implementation of new talent acquisition systems, processes, capabilities and technologies to meet present and future business needs and enhance the overall employee value proposition.



**Amy Beales**  
**Director of Talent Acquisition**  
**Children's National Health System**

As the leader of talent acquisition for Children's National Health System, Amy Beales' hard work has resulted in a dramatic decrease in vacancies and requisitions for the organization. Through the implementation of an interviewing training program, pipeline techniques, and a new recruitment model, Beales and her team have reduced time to fill by 18 percent. She has also been successful in cutting costs and increasing satisfaction scores for hiring managers and new hires by 12 percent and 13 percent, respectively.



**Kevin Bodline**  
**Executive Director of Talent Acquisition**  
**Health Care Service Corporation**

Under Kevin Bodline's leadership, the talent acquisition team at Health Care Service Corporation has more than doubled its filled positions since 2016. This success can be attributed to the organization's integration of a new ATS and candidate resource management (CRM) tool. Together, these additions help the company identify potential candidates faster for its 800 to 1,000 open roles. This proactive approach also allows the company to stay in touch and deliver content to silver medalists. By increasing the quality of the applicant pool, Bodline is helping the organization reduce its overall time to fill.





**Leigh McCluskey**  
**Vice President of Talent Acquisition**  
**Advisor Group**

Leigh McCluskey joined Advisor Group in September 2016 as the company prepared to operate independently after being sold, and was tasked with implementing an entire talent acquisition function in just five months. With the current competitive talent market, McCluskey and her team set forth to introduce a number of key initiatives, including a new brand strategy focused on inclusion. The results: 90 percent of positions were filled without third-party support and Advisor Group's LinkedIn community saw a 50 percent increase in followers. A team of two recruiters filled more than 400 requisitions in 2018, and the company saw its Glassdoor rating go from 2.6 to over 4.0.



**Rudi Ngnepi**  
**Head of Global Talent Acquisition, Workforce Planning, and HR**  
**Business Analytics and Insights**  
**National Instruments**

Rudi Ngnepi transitioned into the global talent acquisition leader role at National Instruments in early 2017. Through the creation of a new recruitment approach focused on candidates and hiring managers alike, the organization has seen an increase in service, personalization, and customer intimacy levels. Ngnepi also led the charge in implementing a new global recruitment system and hiring 800 employees from 50 different countries. As a result, National Instruments saw a 30 percent increase in offer acceptances from U.S. graduates, reduced its use of external agencies in the Asia-Pacific region by 70 percent, and decreased time to fill in Europe.



**Greg Pardo**  
**Vice President of Talent Acquisition**  
**Fresenius Medical Care North America (FMCNA)**

Greg Pardo joined Fresenius Medical Care North America to reposition its talent acquisition department and has done so by introducing a number of key initiatives since joining the organization. Under a three-year model called "Strategic Talent Acquisition Realignment & Transformation" (START), designed to align the talent acquisition mission with broader company goals, Pardo set out to improve FMCNA's process, selection, retention, and engagement levels. From creating and deploying a brand new EVP and recruitment marketing strategy to implementing an employee referral program, a CRM, an AI search engine, a pre-hire selection tool, and redesigning interviews and job descriptions, the TA team successfully hired nearly 15,000 new associates in 2018. Since Pardo joined the company in 2016, less than 90-day retention has improved nearly 6 percentage points, and involuntary termination has decreased by nearly 2 full percentage points.



**Simon Perkins**  
**Head of U.S. Resourcing and Onboarding**  
**HSBC Bank**

Under Simon Perkins' leadership, the U.S. TA function at HSBC Bank helped deliver on a major global HR transformation called "True North" in 2018. This ambitious project has propelled HSBC's worldwide organization forward and introduced new cloud-based HR systems for all employees. In the U.S., Perkins assembled a team that took into account the needs of recruiters, candidates, and hiring managers. He was instrumental in planning and executing an implementation plan that ensured recruitment was delivered effectively during the transformation and set up for even greater success in the future. Through open communication, effective training for more than 70 recruitment professionals, and a focus on supporting recruiters through the process, Perkins successfully led the team through the transformation.



**Lisa Pueschel**  
**Vice President of Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning**  
**Staples**

Within the past two years in her role at Staples, Lisa Pueschel has led initiatives that have positively impacted the organization from both an internal and external standpoint. By investing in technology, she has introduced a new career site, implemented a CRM system, and has introduced chatbots to successfully screen and schedule candidates. All of this has helped TA to connect with more qualified candidates faster. Pueschel has also overseen the company's transition to a new managed service program (MSP) provider, improving and enhancing the contingent hiring process at Staples.



**George Smallwood**  
**Associate Director of Talent Acquisition**  
**AT&T**

George Smallwood was tasked with the unique challenge of hiring 1,000 management sales hires in addition to AT&T's normal staffing activity. He quickly implemented innovative strategies within management staffing, including launching video job descriptions for all external job postings and leveraging video interviews and screening for hiring managers, recruiters, and candidates. This ultimately resulted in 90 percent approval ratings in overall satisfaction and quality of candidates from candidates and hiring managers alike. The end result of his hard work was that it was delivered under budget and within record time.





**NN Srinivas**  
**Head of Management Recruitment, Americas**  
**Cognizant**

NN Srinivas and the recruiting team at Cognizant have worked toward embracing new technologies and developing innovative strategies in their talent acquisition approach. Under Srinivas, the organization's goal of hiring 6,000 new employees has been achieved through a number of recruitment initiatives, including launching new talent intelligence capabilities which have resulted in a 45 percent improvement in time-to-fill for management positions. A gamified approach drove technology adoption and user retention. Srinivas co-founded and currently directs Cognizant's "Talent Innovation and Design Lab" for continued innovation.



**Crystal Stanfield**  
**Director of Talent Acquisition**  
**SAC Wireless**

Crystal Stanfield was tasked with building out an entire staffing function and meeting the company's growth goals of 100 percent in headcount at a time when it was well behind industry standards. In just over a year, Stanfield and her team hired 1,300 niche positions nationally; implemented an ATS with automated onboarding; trained hiring managers; and redesigned hiring processes into a centralized model. Through these changes, the company took a big risk but saw positive results as it exceeded its annual revenue target, mitigating \$10 million in year-over-year staffing costs while also directly saving \$4.3 million in expected contract labor costs.



**Rachel Sullivan**  
**Vice President of Talent**  
**TransUnion**

Rachel Sullivan sponsored and drove key initiatives for TransUnion in 2018 to rework how her team approached recruitment efforts, which resulted in the vast majority of recruiters filling 120 roles each and doubling the size of the company talent pool year-over-year to more than 195,000. In addition, where talent is highly critical to the business, 50 percent of external sales hires in 2018 came from the company's proactive pipeline efforts and slashed fill timelines, with most positions filled in an average of 30 days. Sullivan also initiated and implemented a training program to build capabilities in the management population, growing skills in profiling, behavioral interviewing, selection, and feedback.



**Mike Vella**  
**Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition**  
**UniFirst**

In his role as senior manager of talent acquisition for UniFirst, Mike Vella has led an aggressive RPO implementation and expansion as a strategy to solve the need for a quickly scalable solution and consistent recruitment process at UniFirst, which has impacted more than 1,500 new hires annually. In addition, through extensive analyses of UniFirst's existing practices, he developed and executed plans to centralize the TA function at UniFirst by earning executive buy-in and successfully navigating the tenuous landscape associated with any internal restructure. He now develops and implements all strategic talent acquisition initiatives for UniFirst's 250 nationwide facilities and oversees the talent acquisition team in Wilmington, Mass., the talent engagement team in San Antonio, Texas, and UniFirst's RPO partnership with Sevenstep.



**David Wilkinson**  
**Global Infrastructure and Operations Director of Talent Acquisition**  
**Boeing**

With 10 years of global talent acquisition experience, David Wilkinson set out to ensure his team at Boeing is deploying its services globally while remaining locally relevant in its operations worldwide. Working to increase the organization's candidate and user experiences for customers, Wilkinson has introduced artificial intelligence, automation, and real-time data to enable the best service delivery possible. Under a widespread restructuring strategy, he has begun to bridge the gap between hiring volumes and complex operating systems worldwide.