

HRO
TODAY

TALENT ACQUISITION SUMMIT

SEPTEMBER 15-16, 2026
ATLANTA, GA



EVENT SPEAKERS



Sunil Asija

Director of Human Resources
Oakland County,
Michigan Government



Matthew Battista

Vice President of Talent Acquisition
Lennar



Jeff Battinus

Head of Talent Acquisition
Dental Care Alliance



Carly Chase

VP Careers
US News



Patrick Daniel

Chief Human Resources Officer
General Aviation Terminal
and Skycafe



Sarah Doucette

VP, Global TA and Onboarding
Sovos



Jennifer Garrett

Corporate Director,
Nursing, Talent Acquisition
Emory Healthcare



Lauren Herron

Director, Talent Acquisition
Rollins, Inc.



Antonio Johnson

Vice President
of Rehab Operations
Pivot Rehabilitation



James Lafferty

VP, Global Talent Acquisition
Epicor Software



Michael Lawrence

Senior Manager Learning
and Development
Fox Factory



Julie Mann

Former CHRO
Neogen



Hollie Marcus

Director, Recruitment,
Division of Human Resources & Talent Management,
Gwinnett County Public Schools



Rhonda Merchant

AVP, Global Talent Acquisition
Clarvida



Kizmet T. Moore

Assistant Vice President,
Inclusion & Belonging
NFP, an Aon company



Shalon Murdaugh-Travis

SVP, Talent Acquisition & HR Systems
Landmark Financial Services

EVENT SPEAKERS



Dr. Vanessa Peterson
Founder
VLP Consulting Group



Prudence Pitter
Former Global Head
of HR - Automotive,
Manufacturing &
Business Development
Amazon Web Services



Alex Putman
Director of Talent
Price Industries Inc.



Karen Riapos
Vice President,
Global Talent
BrandSafway



Lori Riordan
VP, Human Resources
AmeriPro Health



Stephen Saxon
Managing Director -
Affiliate Talent
Acquisition
Boys and Girls Clubs
of America



Gordon Smith-Bouler
Global Head of Talent
Acquisition
ISG



Marcie Smedlund
Vice President
People Services
Heart of Texas Goodwill
Industries



Tom Watson
Senior Director, Talent
Acquisition Operations,
Equifax

DAY 1 AGENDA

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

7:30 AM

Registration and Coffee

8:20 AM

Chairman's Welcome

8:30 AM

Opening Keynote Panel Discussion: Adopting a Proactive Approach to Strategic Workforce and Scenario Planning to Prepare for the 2026–2030 Landscape

The next five years will bring significant shifts in skills, demographics, and job structures. This presentation equips attendees with practical models to anticipate workforce needs and shape hiring priorities proactively. Organizations will learn how to adopt a more strategic approach to long-term talent and business strategy.

- Using build-buy-borrow frameworks to design future workforce composition
- Identifying emerging skills clusters and at-risk roles
- Stress-testing hiring demand through multi-scenario modelling
- Aligning TA planning cycles with finance, strategy, and business operations

Moderated by:

Dr. Vanessa Peterson, Founder,
VLP Consulting Group

Panelists:

- **Antonio Johnson**, Vice President of Rehab Operations, Pivot Rehabilitation
- **Jennifer Garrett**, Corporate Director, Nursing, Talent Acquisition, Emory Healthcare
- **Karen Riapos**, Vice President, Global Talent, BrandSafway

9:00 AM

Building an AI-Enabled, Talent Acquisition Function

- Centralizing a decentralized TA function to improve consistency and capability
- Building specialty recruiting teams to boost candidate quality and maintain volume
- Leading company-wide implementation of Workday Recruiting
- Developing a scalable recruiting tech stack
- First Lennar function to adopt and implement AI in recruiting

Speaker:

Matthew Battista, Vice President of Talent Acquisition, Lennar

9:30 AM

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

10:00 AM

From Activity to Impact: Redesigning Enterprise TA Operating Models for Speed, Governance, and Measurable Business Outcomes

The session focuses on practical lessons learned across high-volume, regulated environments, including operating model redesign, AI enablement with governance, executive-ready analytics, and how TA leaders can move from service delivery to true enterprise partnership.

Speaker:

Patrick Daniel, Chief Human Resources Officer, General Aviation Terminal and Skycafe

10:30 AM

Morning Coffee and Networking

11:00 AM

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

11:30 AM

TA Operating Model Redesign for Speed, Consistency and Global Governance

As organizations scale, many TA teams struggle with inconsistent processes, slow hiring, and limited visibility across markets. This session shares a practical approach to redesigning a Talent Acquisition operating model to improve speed, consistency, and governance without losing local partnership.

Using the rollout of a global recruiting hub as a real-world example, attendees will learn how transactional recruiting work was centralized, workflows and intake processes were standardized, and clearer ownership was established between TA, Operations, and Shared Services.

Attendees will leave with clear decision frameworks and actionable ideas to apply immediately within their own TA organizations.

- What to centralize versus what should remain market-owned
- How to implement governance that actually works
- Lessons learned from managing change during live hiring

Speaker:

Rhonda Merchant, AVP, Global Talent Acquisition, Clarvida

12:00 PM

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

12:30 PM

Lunch and Networking

TRACK A

AI-Enabled Talent Acquisition
& Intelligent Hiring

1:30 PM

Future-Ready Hiring: A Scalable Framework to Assess AI-Ready Mindset (Without Hiring AI Specialists)

Sarah Doucette

VP, Global TA and Onboarding
Sovos

As AI becomes part of everyday work, organizations need hires who will adopt AI tools responsibly not just “AI experts.” This presentation will look at how Sovos built a repeatable hiring framework that helps teams identify candidates with the mindset, judgement, and adaptability to thrive in an AI-enabled workplace across any function.

- Assessing AI readiness through learning agility, curiosity, and openness to change
- Evaluating responsible AI judgement without requiring technical expertise
- Equipping hiring teams with a consistent framework that scales enterprise-wide
- Improving quality of hire by selecting candidates who embrace modern ways of working

2:00 PM

**Session Reserved for Tom Watson,
Senior Director, Talent Acquisition,
Equifax**

TRACK B

Strategic Talent Leadership,
Stakeholder Trust & Workforce Strategy

1:30 PM

**From Contact to Commitment:
Designing Connection that Drives
Hiring Outcomes**

Michael Lawrence

Senior Manager, Learning and Development
Fox Factory

Talent Acquisition teams invest heavily in technology, process, and messaging, yet many initiatives still fail to create real commitment from candidates, hiring managers, and stakeholders. This session introduces the 6 Levels of Connection, a practical framework for designing stronger relationships across the hiring journey. Attendees will learn how intentional connection can improve candidate confidence, stakeholder trust, decision quality, speed-to-hire, and long-term workforce sustainability.

- Diagnose where connection breaks down across candidate journeys, and why engagement stalls as a result
- Apply the 6 Levels of Connection to TA operating models, hiring manager partnerships, and candidate experience design
- Intentionally design touchpoints that move people from compliance to confidence and commitment
- Link connection levels to measurable outcomes such as quality of hire, and retention

2:00 PM

Session reserved for Industry partner

2:30 PM

Leadership Legacy: Architecting Organizations That Outlast the Moment

Prudence Pitter

Former Global Head of HR – Automotive, Manufacturing & Business Development
Amazon Web Services

In an era defined by rapid technological change, shifting workforce expectations, and leadership turnover, the organizations that endure are those intentionally designed, versus accidentally inherited. This session explores how leaders can move beyond short-term performance and AI implementation to architect talent systems, succession pathways, and leadership behaviors that create continuity, resilience, and trust. Drawing on real-world executive experience, this session reframes leadership legacy as a deliberate design choice, one that ensures organizations scale responsibly, retain organizational knowledge, and develop future leaders without burnout or chaos.

- From reaction to architecture: Why leadership legacy is built through intentional system design, versus one-off initiatives
- Human judgment in an AI-enabled world: Where data and AI support better decisions, and where leadership accountability, values, and governance must remain firmly human
- What endures beyond any one leader: Practical principles leaders can apply to ensure clarity, capability, and leadership readiness long after they exit the role or organization

2:30 PM

Building Trust with Internal and External Stakeholders in Talent Acquisition

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

For talent acquisition leaders, trust is essential to operating as a strategic partner to the business. Balancing the expectations of hiring managers, leadership, candidates, and external partners requires transparency, credibility, and consistent delivery. This session will explore how experienced TA professionals can strengthen stakeholder relationships to improve hiring outcomes and reinforce the strategic value of talent acquisition.

- Strengthening alignment with business leaders and hiring managers to ensure clarity on priorities, expectations, and hiring outcomes
- Delivering a consistent and transparent candidate experience that builds trust and enhances employer brand
- Managing relationships with external partners including agencies, platforms and talent communities
- Using data and market insight to demonstrate impact and reinforce TA's strategic role within the organization

3:00 PM

Afternoon Coffee and Networking

3:30 PM

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

4:00 PM

Implementing Agentic AI to Transform Recruitment: A Practical Guide for Talent Acquisition Teams

In the midst of the fifth industrial revolution, agentic AI represents a transformative shift for talent acquisition—moving beyond traditional tools to autonomous, proactive systems that act as a true force multiplier, working 24/7 for recruiters. This session explores the practical application of agentic AI in clinical recruitment, addressing persistent challenges such as regulatory compliance, candidate scarcity, and niche skill requirements.

Attendees will gain actionable insights into building the recruiter-AI power couple, mapping automation opportunities across the recruitment lifecycle, ensuring ethical and bias-free deployment, upskilling teams for AI collaboration, and measuring meaningful ROI through updated KPIs. Drawing from real-world implementation experiences, the presentation offers a roadmap for talent acquisition leaders to embrace this inevitable evolution while preserving the essential human elements of empathy, judgment, and candidate experience.

Speaker:

Jeff Battinus, Head of Talent Acquisition, Dental Care Alliance

4:30 PM

Total Talent Strategy Across Permanent and Contingent Workforces

As workforce models evolve, organizations are taking a more integrated approach to managing both permanent and contingent talent. A unified total talent strategy helps improve agility, optimize costs, and ensure the right skills are available when and where they're needed.

- Aligning permanent and contingent hiring within one workforce strategy
- Improving visibility, planning, and workforce flexibility
- Optimizing cost, productivity, and access to critical skills
- Strengthening collaboration between HR, procurement, and business leaders

Speaker:

Shalon Murdaugh-Travis, SVP, Talent Acquisition & HR Systems, Lendmark Financial Services

5:00 PM

Chairman's Close and End of Conference Day One

DAY 2 AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

8:00 AM

Registration and Coffee

8:45 AM

Chairman's Welcome

9:00 AM

Beyond Compensation: A Policy Framework for Attracting and Retaining Transformational Gen Z Talent

Gen Z interns are redefining workplace expectations, prioritizing transformational benefits over transactional ones. Drawing on U.S. News' career data, this session reveals that securing a full-time job is the top internship benefit, far outweighing compensation or academic credit. This generation is motivated by high-impact professional development, including skill-building workshops and opportunities to present work to leadership—not passive activities like shadowing.

Employers must address logistical hurdles, as housing and transportation influence over 70% of acceptance decisions. This session will explore Gen Z's preference for medium-sized intern classes and companies, their nuanced interest in in-person work, and how platform-specific recruiting strategies (LinkedIn, social media) are essential for attracting and retaining this dynamic talent pool.

Attendees will leave with a strategic framework for designing programs that meet the desire for meaningful career development and ensure a clear, predictable talent pipeline for the future workforce.

Speaker:

Carly Chase, VP Careers, US News

9:30 AM

From Strategy to Impact: Building HR Digital Transformation That Delivers Real Value

Successful HR digital transformation begins with strategic clarity, not technology. Organizations achieving the strongest outcomes align people, processes, and platforms around business goals, prioritize data integrity, and focus on adoption before automation. When these foundations are in place, AI and digital tools can genuinely enhance HR's strategic impact.

- Aligning HR strategy, processes, and technology with clear business objectives
- Simplifying and standardizing processes before digitization to reduce complexity and risk
- Strengthening stakeholder engagement, change management, and executive sponsorship
- Leveraging AI, analytics, and automation to enable data-driven HR and improved employee experience

Speaker:

Lori Riordan, VP, Human Resources, AmeriPro Health

10:00 AM

Panel Discussion: Leveraging the Employer Brand AUTHENTICALLY when Culture Proof Replaces Culture Slogans

Candidates are increasingly skeptical of generic brand messaging and want credible evidence of culture and opportunity. This session explores how organizations build EVP narratives and assets that translate into measurable pipeline and offer acceptance improvements.

- Developing employer brand proof points grounded in real employee experience
- Using performance marketing to amplify EVP impact
- Creating consistent messaging across job ads, career sites, and social platforms
- Measuring brand contribution to funnel progression and conversion

Panelists:

- **James Lafferty**, VP, Global Talent Acquisition, Epicor Software
- Sara Luebke, Director of Talent Acquisition, PlayOn
- **Alex Putman**, Director of Talent, Price Industries Inc
- **Marcie Smedlund**, Vice President People Services, Heart of Texas Goodwill Industries
- **Lauren Herron**, Director, Talent Acquisition, Rollins

10:30 AM

Morning Coffee and Networking

11:00 AM

Case Study: ISG – Embedding AI Skillset Testing into Modern Talent Assessment

As organizations accelerate AI adoption, identifying talent with genuine AI capability—not just theoretical knowledge—is becoming critical. In this case study, ISG shares its approach to integrating AI skillset testing into recruitment and evaluation processes, demonstrating how structured assessment can improve hiring accuracy, support workforce transformation, and ensure organizations build teams ready to operate effectively in AI-enabled environments.

- Designing practical AI competency assessments that move beyond CV claims to evaluate real-world capability and adaptability
- Balancing technical AI literacy with human judgement to ensure candidates can work responsibly alongside intelligent systems
- Reducing hiring risk through structured evaluation frameworks
- Aligning talent acquisition with future skills needs by embedding AI readiness into long-term workforce planning

Speaker:

Gordon Smith-Bouler, Global Head of Talent Acquisition, ISG

11:30 AM

Presentation Reserved for Industry Partner

12:00 PM

Opportunity by Design: Building Workplaces Where Talent Thrives and Belongs

Organizations across industries continue to talk about talent shortages, yet many are overlooking a deeper issue: how opportunity is designed inside the workplace.

Hiring more people does not solve the problem if systems for advancement, mentorship, leadership development, and recognition unintentionally limit who gets the opportunity to grow. The organizations that will lead the future are those that intentionally design environments where talent not only has access to opportunity but also experiences a genuine sense of belonging that allows people to contribute, innovate, and stay.

- Why many perceived “talent shortages” are opportunity design challenges within organizations
- Identifying the workplace systems—hiring, mentorship, sponsorship, and promotion pathways—that most influence access to opportunity
- Learning practical strategies HR and business leaders can implement to foster cultures of performance, opportunity, and belonging

Speaker:

Kizmet T. Moore, Assistant Vice President, Inclusion & Belonging, NFP, an Aon company

12:30 PM

Lunch and Networking

TRACK A

AI-Enabled Talent Acquisition
& Intelligent Hiring

1:30 PM

Creating a Talent Marketing Plan Centered around Community-Building Rather than Episodic Campaigns

Alex Putman

Director of Talent
Price Industries Inc

Modern recruitment marketing favors continuity over sporadic bursts of content. How can employers build segmented, value-driven communities that stay engaged throughout the year? How to identify which channels and tactics deliver long-term performance.

- Designing community strategies for hard-to-find skills and emerging talent pools
- Using segmentation to tailor content and improve engagement
- Running always-on campaigns that warm candidates months before an opening
- Integrating employee advocacy for authentic amplification

TRACK B

Strategic Talent Leadership,
Stakeholder Trust & Workforce Strategy

1:30 PM

Best Practices to Reduce Time-to-Hire While Protecting Fairness and Quality of Evaluation

Sunil Asija

Director of Human Resources
Oakland County, Michigan
Government

Speed has become a competitive advantage, but rushed processes can jeopardize compliance and candidate experience. This session will discuss best practices for compressing hiring timelines responsibly.

- Simplifying interview steps without compromising rigour
- Using AI to expedite early-stage screening
- Training managers for faster, evidence-based decision-making
- Building governance that safeguards fairness during acceleration

2:00 PM

The Road Map to an Excellent End-to-End Employee Experience

Dr. Vanessa Peterson

Founder
VLP Consulting Group

This workshop guides leaders in thoughtfully designing and strengthening the full employee experience lifecycle, from attracting talent to developing, retaining, and advancing employees. Through interactive discussions, case examples, and system-level frameworks, participants learn to build a cohesive, equitable employee experience that aligns with organizational values and drives long-term performance.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the employee experience as an integrated journey rather than a series of isolated touchpoints
- Identify strengths, gaps, and inconsistencies across recruitment, onboarding, learning, and advancement
- Apply human-centered design principles to enhance key stages of the employee lifecycle

2:00 PM

If This Were Finance, We'd Never Allow It: Rethinking How We Plan for Talent

Julie Mann

Former CHRO
Neogen

Imagine telling your CFO, “We don’t really have a financial plan—we’ll figure it out as we go.” You wouldn’t last a quarter. Yet many organizations take this exact approach to talent, even though workforce costs represent one of the largest investments on the P&L.

This session challenges talent acquisition leaders to confront the double standard between financial planning and people planning and to redefine TA’s role in closing that gap. Too often, hiring is reactive, skill gaps surface only after they disrupt the business, and attrition is treated as an HR issue instead of a financial risk.

Attendees will explore how leading TA teams apply greater rigor to workforce planning by using hiring data to inform business decisions, identifying mission-critical roles and skills, and building readiness before urgency sets in. The session reframes TA as a strategic business function, not a service desk, and offers practical ways to elevate TA’s impact.

2:30 PM

Afternoon Coffee and Networking

3:00 PM

Opportunity by Design: Building Workplaces Where Talent Thrives and Belongs

Kizmet T. Moore

Assistant Vice President, Inclusion & Belonging
NFP, an Aon company

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3:00 PM

Igniting Change: The Power of Talent Partnerships

Hollie Marcus

Director, Recruitment, Division of Human Resources & Talent Management
Gwinnett County Public Schools

Discuss aligning internal stakeholders (hiring leaders, collaborating departments, executive leaders, etc)

- Building relationships with community partners and leaders (universities, organizations, business franchises)
- Establish a strong talent brand in the market

3:30 PM

Psychological Safety Is Not Soft: It's a Leading Indicator of Hiring Outcomes

Speaker:

Jennifer Garrett, Corporate Director, Nursing, Talent Acquisition, Emory Healthcare

4:00 PM

Chairman's Close and End of Conference

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