HIGHER | Talent 100

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Welcome to the inaugural Talent100.



The past two years have been both destructive and formative for the talent acquisition industry.

On one hand, the prevailing winds of the industry are positive, there are more in-house recruiters than ever before, salaries are higher, and we are slowly getting more influence within progressive companies. On the other, we're now fighting against a perceived disposability of our teams from boards and seeing one of the biggest waves of layoffs for in-house recruiters ever, while AI becomes increasingly close to replacing more junior roles.

We went from the most in-demand skill-set to the most laid off in the blink of an eye.

How can talent leaders navigate such choppy waters, keeping their teams focused and calm whilst looking after their own mental health?

We founded HIGHER and the Talent100 to empower talent leaders around the world to manoeuvre every eventuality whilst building the influence of this business-critical industry in the world's best companies.

The Talent100 recognises the most innovative talent leaders in Europe and the USA. We look across the full spectrum of leaders, from Fortune 500 to startups, showcasing the leaders that we feel are pushing the envelope of talent acquisition.

We have chosen to present our research in a physical book because we believe that each year should be celebrated, cherished and shared beyond our community. In today's digital world, it's easy to skip over a webpage and never come back. We hope that this book will be a source of pride for its finalists, and a useful resource for those companies and organisations looking for the very best people for research, PR or recruitment purposes.

Each person awarded here was interviewed and referenced by the HIGHER leadership team. We have tried to normalise the interviews, taking into account size of company and relative difficulty of each initiative. We have not imposed a hierarchy - finalists are listed in alphabetical order by surname - and each member of the group is awarded equally reflecting the diverse challenges each person faces.

To the finalists, congratulations! You are most certainly a leader in our industry and I hope this book goes some way to assure you that your hard work has not gone unnoticed.

We believe that talent leaders are the most important leaders in any company. People are the difference between the companies that change the world, and those that don't.

We hope you find the book insightful.



Phil Blaydes
Chief Community Officer, HIGHER


HIGHER

Higher is 'the hive mind' of global talent acquisition with over 10,000 community members.

We are a safe, inclusive space where in-house recruiters can share best practice, make new connections and plug into the ever-changing world of global TA. All united on a mission to level-up the industry of TA, together.

"Better than Google for the world of TA!" - Keziah

Where ambitious TA professionals **learn**, **grow** and **connect.**

- Free virtual events every week for the inside track on the topics that matter the most in global TA.
- Unlimited access to our Slack community where you can crowd-source information from a diverse group of TA professionals.
- Regular invites to local social events so you can connect with your community in-person.
- A comprehensive archive of guides, templates and toolkits as well as verified recommendations for vendors, software providers and more, to boost your skills and turbo-charge your decision-making.
- Help with finding candidates and making hires, as well as all the hottest jobs in TA.
- Opportunities to elevate your personal brand through webinars, mentoring, meet-ups and more.

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Founded in 2015, Talentful is inventing the future of recruitment by providing cutting-edge products and services that enable high-growth technology companies to recruit the best talent.

Talentful's experienced team of 300+ global recruitment experts across the USA and Europe act as a flexible onsite extension of in-house talent functions via a monthly or weekly subscription model, ensuring our partners receive a superior recruitment experience.

From sourcing and coordination to full-cycle recruiting and leadership search, Talentful supports many of the world's largest technology brands to scale efficiently, including Alphabet, Microsoft, Atlassian and many more.

Talentful are proud to sponsor the **Talent100** and the wider HIGHER community. 2023 has so far been a year of unprecedented change for the global talent acquisition community, and now more than ever it's important to recognise and support the leaders who are pioneering innovation in this space.

talentful.com

Meet the Talent100

The leaders shaping the future of global TA



Cherry Ainsworth

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Financial Times*

Cherry has spent the last 12 years working in recruitment and is currently Global Head of Talent Acquisition at The Financial Times. She started her career agency-side and then made the move in-house, where she was responsible for establishing and growing talent functions for a number of media and tech firms. In her current role she is in charge of delivering the overall TA strategy for the FT, with a focus on diversity hiring and developing their employer brand, as well as leading an experienced team of recruiters globally.

Judges comments

Cherry is a thoughtful and articulate leader who has been transformative for the FT. We loved hearing about her bringing startup agility to a 135 year old company.

Finalist insights

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Collaborating with the different communities within our business has been essential to building our DEIB strategy. For example we have engaged with Proud FT when looking at making the hiring process more inclusive for the LGBTQ community, getting their expertise and really leaning into their knowledge. Likewise we have a really active ESG community across the FT, so engaging with them, getting them out speaking about the areas they are passionate about, featured in magazine articles, but also working with them directly on our processes and our practices.

The FT agreed to protect all jobs in 2020 during the covid 19 pandemic. What we did during this time to make the best use of our people’s resources was to roll out a secondment programme. This was great because it utilised people in areas of the business that were busier than others. At an organisation like the FT, where there’s people that have been here a long time, they’re definitely not just a number; the relationships between line managers and direct reports are very, very strong. It initially was met with a little resistance in some areas - i.e. “how is this going to work when we go back to normal in six months time? What if that person wants to stay in this department?”. But today we have more people moving internally across the FT and taking up secondments because the business has realised it can work. And it’s much better to retain that person within the company than to lose them elsewhere.

I don’t think we’re ever going to get rid of the need for human interaction throughout the recruitment process. But how do we harness that technology and use it in a really, really effective way is probably one of the biggest challenges.

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Judges comments

Quincy is an insightful and impactful TA leader. We found him incredibly honest and transparent, so we learnt a great deal during this interview.

Finalist insights

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Innovation for me comes with a lot of professional development, a lot of networking, and staying up to date with everything that's going on in the industry and with some of my peers. I've always thought of myself as a leader who purposefully aligns our recruiting and talent strategy to the organisational strategy. As the organisational strategy evolves, we align our talent strategy along with it.

Our recruiting team is aggressively improving our sourcing and pipeline development well in advance of upcoming open roles. We have our annual operating plan so we typically know what roles are coming in what quarter. Speed is important, especially in today's recruiting climate, so keeping warm pipelines filled with candidates from all backgrounds helps us stay ahead of the competition.

Our DEI efforts stretch beyond just our talent strategy, but are also evolving in our marketing and care provider efforts. Bringing health and happiness to the entire world is our goal and we need everything we do at Headspace to be infused with DEI.

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Quincy Amekuedi

Vice President,
Head of Global Talent Acquisition
– *Headspace Health*

Quincy is a highly accomplished talent acquisition leader with a remarkable 11-year career across several industries. Having held pivotal roles at Facebook, Genworth, and Fidelity Investments, Quincy has continuously excelled in driving successful talent acquisition strategies. Currently serving as the VP of Talent Acquisition at Headspace, a prominent leader in mindfulness and meditation, Quincy plays a vital role in shaping the organisation's workforce.



Tricia Bailey

Director, Executive Recruiting – *Chime*

Tricia is a leader in the recruiting industry with 20 years of experience in healthcare, technology, and financial services. Presently she is the Director of Executive Recruiting at Chime, a national high-growth fintech company. Previously, she led global executive search at Twitter, managing teams placing talent at the director through c-suite level across all functions. Earlier in her career, she held positions at Heidrick & Struggles, Kaiser Permanente and The Caldwell Partners where she successfully completed executive search assignments for both publicly-held and privately owned companies.

Judges comments

Tricia is a thoughtful and articulate TA leader. She's clearly very focused on great team dynamics and getting the right result for her stakeholders.

Finalist insights

"We developed a process for identifying both target companies as well as target candidate profiles and then created an individual sourcing plan for each role. The pre-work does make the kick-off slower and I think sometimes that can be a little frustrating to a leader but when we are able to provide them insights through this deep research and mapping, it usually works really well in the long run. Typically it creates efficiencies because they're not talking to a thousand candidates because we've worked closely to build a shortlist. Leaders end up feeling really satisfied because they're not wondering if there was a stone that we didn't turn over.

The thing I am the most proud of are the teams that I've had the honour of both building and leading.

We assess quality of hire around length of time with the company, the hire's engagement scores after they've been with the company for a while and their reviews.

Executive search doesn't scale. You should build processes to able to do it more efficiently, to be able to do it quicker but you're not going to have a pool of 30 VP's of Marketing in the wings that you can just pull the trigger on because these are all one-off positions."

Judges comments

José is one of Silicon Valleys most experienced TA leaders. He led some of the most pioneering hardware recruiting at Apple through arguably the most groundbreaking product innovation periods. We loved the story of analysing the quality of cameras to determine the best people to headhunt.

Finalist insights

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One thing that I did that was pretty innovative is that I looked at the whole industry of products that have cameras. I went and bought every single product that I could find. I even attempted to buy some military grade components that I wasn't allowed to purchase and took them over to the lab, I basically moved my office into the lab, and asked the technicians to do a complete teardown of the products and give me a list of components. I then went out and built a team of researchers and sourcers, and we literally mapped out every single individual that had touched that specific component.

I told everyone that my expectations were for each recruiter to carry no more than five requisitions at a time, which is crazy, right? Everybody else is probably carrying 50 and the reason is I wanted candidates to have the best experience of their careers from an interview perspective.

My philosophy relies on 110% confidence in hiring the best available candidate. Such can best be achieved by spending quality time getting to know them and providing a great candidate experience.

I think I'm going to judge myself not so much in the legacy of the types of products that I have helped build and the teams behind it. I'm going to judge myself in terms of the team that I leave behind and where they end up.

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José Benitez Cong

Head of Talent Engagement – *Humane*

José has spent his career driving talent strategies behind some of the most recognised consumer electronics products in history. He spent the 2000s organising the talent scale behind iPod, iPhone, iOS acoustics, wireless technology, camera/imaging, and SPG advanced technologies at Apple. In 2011, he joined Nest Labs as an early employee responsible for people operations and helped to expand Nest from a garage startup into a $3.2B acquisition by Google. Following his departure from Google/Nest, he co-founded Plause, an HR Systems startup driving a machine learning based real-time performance optimisation from 2015 - 2018.



Leah Bent

Vice President of Recruiting – *OpenPhone*

Throughout her career, Leah has had the opportunity to join a number of early-stage technology companies at the inflection point of experiencing exponential growth, where hiring and building strong foundational teams played a pivotal role in enabling business success. Leah's passion for working with candidates to enable career growth and leading scale initiatives to evolve hiring processes, has led to a love of developing high-performance recruiting teams.

Judges comments

Leah is a passionate and innovative TA leader. We've seen her lead hyper-growth, first hand, in a calm, measured and people-centric manner.

Finalist insights

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Growth really happens when you're pushed outside of your comfort zone. Don't resist the bigger picture scale work. Hiring will always be your first love, but how you lead comes from that deeper, cross-functional work.

I'm really fascinated by all the shifts in compensation right now. Publishing pay bands on your job descriptions for pay equity and making sure that when you get it right on the way in, not only do people feel better signing, but they end up staying with the company longer because everything at that point is fair, and then they have line of sight of what growth actually looks like.

One of the biggest projects that we've been working on is actually doing the research to figure out benchmarking and how we want to pay in the market and building a process around that. We are designing career frameworks and we're building a strong foundation for the organisation.

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Judges comments

Vicky is an insightful and strategic TA leader. We loved talking about building flexibility into talent teams.

Finalist insights

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One of the things that I feel proud of has been around the pretty sizable shift in the way my teams thought about diversity, inclusion and then their capability to actually influence and directly impact representation within the organisation. Equally partnering with underrepresented employee groups in the business to collaborate on that in a more deep and meaningful way.

Be super inclusive with people in the team to get their inputs and seek out diverse views. Go to the quietest voice and different functions.

To keep innovation alive, people need to have space and autonomy, but at the same time make sure to align their energy around core priorities, such as increasing representation or reducing time to hire.

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Vicky Bourne

Vice President, Talent – *Delivery Hero*

As Delivery Hero’s VP Talent Vicky is responsible for talent acquisition, talent development and culture. Before joining the company, Vicky worked at Meta for almost 5 years, leading business recruiting internationally and then globally. She has also spent time in both oil and gas and pharmaceutical industries. She loves working in a global and diverse fast-paced environment and building high performing teams that learn and have fun together as they go. She champions equity and inclusivity and is an active ally.



David Brammer

Founder
– Bondu

David has worked in talent acquisition for over two decades, across technology, banking, energy, retail and consulting sectors. Working typically in large scale transformational roles, his work has often centred around TA systems, employer brand and establishing new and/or emerging TA functions, often as a result of mergers and acquisitions within FTSE and NYSE listed companies.

Judges comments

David is a highly innovative talent leader. We loved hearing about transformations at massive scale, all done with human touch. David is also innovating in his spare time with a tech product, which sounded well aligned with the current talent market.

Finalist insights

“We created an automated exit interview process through Slack with the premise to rehire and re-engage people, or funnel them into our alumni communities. We’re running an integration with another platform so it generates referrals too.

We’re creating this sense of expertise and to do that we’re going to look after the skill rather than looking after the business, because there’s no value in having five or six generic recruiters. We are creating specialists.

I set about making sure that the very visible people could see that I was supporting them individually, their career and their skillset and how we would develop and engage with them in the longer term. And after we delivered the talent pathway for a four month period, there wasn’t a single resignation, not one.”

Judges comments

Ryan is a future-looking TA leader. He has led transformational change in such a wide range of companies, and brings this evolving viewpoint to every new leadership role. We loved hearing about his empowerment of teams to solve huge challenges.

Finalist insights

"What's much more important now is making sure that your people are in the right place with the right support and that you're creating environments where they can operate safely and embody a growth mindset.

Change management is the belief that actually we can do this by breaking down challenges into their component parts and then creating a belief structure that everybody has to help everybody else, and they do that.

With generative AI, we've really got an opportunity now to professionalise ourselves. More than we've ever been able to do previously. Let's really lean into it to enhance the work that we do and automate a lot of the tasks. Things that we typically never get to. AI has the potential to be like a personal assistant for us."



Ryan Broad

Global Talent Acquisition Leader – *Brainlabs*

Ryan is a transformational talent acquisition leader and a catalyst for organisational change. With an impressive portfolio spanning several industries, Ryan is known for his expertise in technology innovation, cultural turnaround, and strategic planning. His journey in talent acquisition and leadership has led him to work with international brands like Brainlabs, GroupM, Vodafone and Just Eat Takeaway.com. At Brainlabs, he holds a pivotal role as the Global Talent Acquisition Leader, contributing to the company's massive growth.



Aaron Bruce

Vice President Recruiting – *Samsara*

Aaron has 24 years of experience in talent acquisition. He currently serves as VP of Recruiting at Samsara, a leading global IoT solutions provider. Prior to this, Aaron held various leadership roles at Amazon, spanning over 17 years, where he focused on recruiting for the software engineering space and played a crucial role in the growth of the AWS sales organisation. Aaron was responsible for senior leadership hiring, global sales, marketing, support, and overseeing talent acquisition for AWS in the USA and Latin America. He was interim leader for APAC, China, and Japan recruiting for AWS.

Judges comments

Aaron is a thoughtful and articulate TA leader. We particularly liked his work on predictive analytics that had outsized impact at AWS and now Samsara.

Finalist insights

“We had a lot of great looking backwards analytics. But we couldn’t tell you when all the hires would be made for each business and each location. So we created a predictive platform that could tell you with 90%+ certainty, when you would see that hire and how many were coming through the pipeline.”

We put together matching technology and created a centralised team to go and recruit the talent. The technology allowed candidates to be matched to their preferences. We separated the assessment part from the placement completely. So, we were offering a general Amazon software engineering opportunity at the scale of a thousand candidates interviewing per month. And then, based on a set of criteria both from the business and the candidates, we would offer them at least two opportunities.

Two of the leaders that I hired, and that I got a chance to work with and develop, are now leading huge organisations within AWS recruiting. And these individuals, who started as managers that I was able to promote from within. To see how they’re impacting others and continuing to share what it means to be a great leader, not just a great practitioner of recruitment, and to see the passion that they have for developing other people - that is awesome.”

Judges comments

Ian is truly innovative. We talked in depth about pivoting the TA team to supporting 50+ of their 'competitors' in the web3 space, and working in a purely asynchronous environment.

Finalist insights

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We created a whole pipeline stewardship model based on the candidate's background. We align people with their different expertise areas and have those people act as advisors for the different recruiters, but also have those be transition points for candidates.

As long as you're being 100% transparent about the changes ahead and how we're working through them, then that really helps people buy into that change. The next thing is understanding - at an individual level - the direction that people want to go from a growth perspective.

We have a really diverse leadership team that really values diversity. We're a very mission-driven company, so everyone here really believes in what we're doing and how under-represented groups around the world are going to benefit from the technology that we're trying to put out and knows increasing diversity within the business helps us to better serve those communities.

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Ian Brunner

Head of Talent
– *Protocol Labs*

Ian is a creative, energetic, and empathetic Talent Acquisition leader that has spent the last 13 years in technical recruiting within companies both large and small. He thrives in ambiguous environments where he can grow and motivate teams to have an impact quickly while continuing to innovate. He's passionate about working for mission-driven companies and he currently leads a large recruiting team at web3 powerhouse Protocol Labs, an Open Source R&D company working to drive breakthroughs in computing to push humanity forward. Prior to Protocol Labs, Ian was leading high-performing teams of recruiters at Facebook.



Jeremy Bushaw

Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition – *Infomatica*

Jeremy has 15 years of HR executive focus with the past 10 years running talent acquisition strategy and campus programs for leading high-tech and healthcare organisations. Currently at Informatica, he is leading a global recruiting team that supports over 25 countries. He has redesigned and innovated the entire talent acquisition process over the past 7 years as the company has gone through business and talent transformations.

Judges comments

Jeremy is a highly data-driven leader, who is very focused on team development shown by his 96% approval rate on his engagement score. We loved hearing about his journey at Infomatica from private to public company.

Finalist insights

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We implemented software to measure and score job descriptions, which ultimately led to a redesigning of how we go out and attract talent. It was challenging and difficult to start out because the managers liked the status quo but this didn’t take into account that talent has really shifted in the last few years. We’re starting to see significant improvements in the organic top of funnel activity from a diversity standpoint - we went up five percentage points for female representation on the top of the funnel, which has been super cool.

Recruiting is at the core of what we do. But what I’ve tried to instill into the team is ‘what’s the core plus’? So from a plus standpoint, how do I influence results that I need to get? How do I innovate? How do I change the process? I’m telling recruiters, tell me what you think is broken here at Informatica. Give me something that maybe we need to upskill ourselves a little bit more on. It’s their responsibility to do some research, come back with a recommendation presented to the TA team and then we’re going to implement it.

In the past few years we’ve been hyper-focused around diversity and inclusion. So really being able to identify challenging functional groups where we have a lack of diverse talent. Ultimately looking at how we progress that diverse talent deeper into the funnel to make sure that we’re achieving our goals. After we hired our first diversity inclusion leader, we set pretty audacious goals where three years ago when we started, we were hiring 26% females into the organisation and for the past two and a half years we’ve been north of 30%, and I would say 100% of that has come from better visibility into the analytics of the pipeline, but also really re-innovating every step of the recruiting process to make sure it’s inclusive.

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Judges comments

Kelly is a superb talent leader, with really insightful views on the philosophy of great TA. We loved hearing about the candidate as the most important customer for any business.

Finalist insights

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Establish goals that are realistic, contribute to broader org diversity goals and are most importantly able to be accurately tracked and reported on a consistent basis. The business needs to be aligned and there should be other DEI org and business programmatic goals (eg interviewer trainer, leader L&D objectives) that have connectivity to the TA deliver results goals.

To lead successfully through change it is critical to have a clear strategy and plan with a roadmap that is aligned to support the broader business strategy and in concert with the current state maturity of your own function. It is important that the TA org at all levels understands the business strategy and what the TA priorities are, how they align to the broader people function and how and why the priorities were selected and their impact. This ensures that your recruiters, sourcers, coordinators, operations team and managers understand how they contribute day to day. Goals can also be associated. Secondly, it's critical that there is a defined operational rhythm of business that puts the strategy and priorities front and centre so that progress is tracked, and if priorities change it is clearly communicated. This keeps the broader org aligned regardless of the ambiguity or constant change in dynamics - which is akin to current state in the broader tech industry and macro-economic climate.

I feel fortunate as I have been provided the opportunity over the course of my career to expand scope and remit into areas where I did not have command or 100 percent SME in a specific area. While it may have created angst at the time of expansion, the willingness to accept the challenge, lean in and learn has meant I've developed into a better leader. It is also essential that you hire bigger and better than you, so you have a highly capable leadership team that can also expand, grow and enable me to contribute strategically and provide space for calculated risk and innovation.

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Kelly Cartwright

Vice President,
Global Talent Acquisition
– *Splunk*

Kelly Cartwright is the VP of Global Talent Acquisition for Splunk. In this position she leads the design and execution of Splunk's enterprise talent acquisition strategy inclusive of executive, experienced, earlier in career and contingent hiring. Prior to her current role she was the Head of Talent Acquisition Tech and Enablement Strategy for AWS where she led the design and implementation of programmatic and technology enabled solutions that enhanced candidate experience and drove efficiency and scale for the global recruiting organisation. Kelly has more than 30 years of experience in the human capital management industry with deep expertise in rapid development and delivery of professional and technology solutions.



Sean Celli

Vice President of Talent Acquistion – *Amperity*

Sean is a talent leader who has worked with some of the world's largest brands during his 25 year career. With a passion for connecting talent and opportunity, Sean has a unique gift for building people centric processes, which include leading edge tech, to foster experiences that drive outcomes that bring business value. As a life long learner, he believes that every day is a school day and a chance to learn, grow and develop. Sean is a builder at heart, and has opened/operated in many countries around the world. He is now enjoying start up life, getting close to the work again.

Judges comments

Sean is a thoughtful and experienced TA leader. He led much of the early growth in Apple's retail operation, and we enjoyed talking about hiring outstanding people at incredible scale.

Finalist insights

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One of the skills that is often missing in the TA world, probably more on the HR side of the people team, is influencing and negotiating, and really thinking about how you build consensus around vision.

Build the belief in education with the team, that they can have a data-driven conversation. Give them access to the data that allows them to influence the business.

What's interesting is how you share outcomes and admit when things don't go right. You have to lead the change; you might know where you have to get to, but the path might be a little windier than the straight direction. Lots and lots of input and feedback along the way is super important.

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Judges comments

Nayeem is a thoughtful and insightful TA leader, with vast experience from startups to the worlds' biggest enterprises. We were really impressed with his metrics focus across all aspects of TA.

Finalist insights

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Typically we have the recruiters or a hiring manager record a one minute clip which highlights the job details, what the interview process looks like, and the benefits of working at our company, and these are shared on social media, embedded into our job postings and LinkedIn and within our candidate outreach. This has significantly increased our engagement and number of applicants.

We created global data dashboards which we used to identify the best recruitment channels and which ones were the most effective in attracting top talent. Once we implemented those it resulted in almost a 50% increase in quality of hire.

In DEI strategy, the most important things I've always used was a four pillar approach: leadership involvement, education and training, policies and procedures, and retention and development of diverse talent. That's the core of our whole approach. We examine any potential bias during the interview process as we assess the candidate's skill sets. We make sure to ask all the same questions and we encourage interviewers in the different protected groups, maybe female veterans, minorities, or any other protected group to be part of the interview panel or process, to help sell our company toward those targeted diversity groups.

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Nayeem Chowdhury

Senior Manager,
Global Talent Acquisition
– *Hewlett Packard Enterprise*

Nayeem is a diversity certified senior global talent acquisition leader with 19+ years of experience with across four Fortune 500 companies based in Houston, TX covering the energy, tech, and government sectors. He has driven execution and delivery for complex cross-functional global HR and talent acquisition projects by providing strategic solutions and subject matter expertise through innovative outside the box ideas, in sync with cutting-edge methodologies, tools, and technologies to resolve legacy challenges, strengthen the brand, improve people, culture, and user experience.



Becks Clarke

EMEA Head of Talent & DEI – *Adobe*

Becks is an accomplished talent leader who is driven by a strong belief that the talent agenda should be approached holistically enabling organisations to reach their growth goals through developing internal talent in sync with acquiring from the external market. She currently heads up the EMEA Talent and DE&I organisation for Adobe. Striving to create experiences that matter for all, she leads a team of 50 across 22 countries. Becks brings a long track record of building and developing highly successful global and regional talent teams for organisations such as King, SITA and Siemens.

Judges comments

Becks is an inspirational TA leader. We loved hearing about her people-centric approaches and positive view on the future using generative AI.

Finalist insights

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In my tenure, we set an aspirational goal to achieve 50/50 male female hiring over the course of 2019. We achieved the goal through a range of initiatives: changing sourcing practices, diverse panels, consistency of interview questions, and opening up job descriptions.

What gives me the most satisfaction is the role that I’ve been able to play in other peoples’ careers, whether it be grads that joined training programmes 20 years ago and are now CEOs, or TA professionals who are now in leadership positions.

AI is an opportunity for us all to look at selection processes afresh. I actually think it provides a real positive pivotal moment for us all.

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Judges comments

Danielle is a passionate and resourceful TA leader. It's clear that she's a great team manager and leader.

Finalist insights

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How do we build a deeper sense of inclusion internally? We start at the top of our hiring funnel ensuring that our outreach, branding and interview processes are equitable. This is a machine that has been working great and our team is spearheading.

We do an annual DEIB audit. Making sure that we are holding ourselves accountable to where we want to have greater impact across the business.

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Danielle Colanto

Director of Global Talent Acquisition – *Yotpo*

Danielle is the Director of Global Talent Acquisition at Yotpo. In her current role she and her team lead talent acquisition, employer branding and DEIB initiatives across North America, Europe and APAC. Danielle has been scaling inclusive, high-performing teams around the world for well over a decade. Her first loves are fashion and retail; she's worked for some of the most widely recognised brand names in the world, including Armani and Victoria's Secret. She developed an interest in tech startups while living abroad in Sydney, Australia, and nearly three years ago found the perfect union in Yotpo, an eCommerce marketing platform.

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Judges comments

Michelle is a emphathetic and insightful TA leader. We loved discussing innovation, recruiting for AI and candour. It's always enjoyable and interesting talking to Michelle.

Finalist insights

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We initiated an internal project compiling all of the data that you typically are a guardian of as a people team - quantitative interview scorecards, personal data as well as onboarding, probationary passes, promotions - and then as we rolled out levelling and performance check-ins, tracked and analysed who were our top 'hiring panel members' and which product teams were outperforming. From this, we spotted lots of patterns, iterated hiring processes and adjusted hiring panels, and gave training to those that needed it. I'd do it again in a heartbeat and encourage others to start earlier than they think they should.

In some roles, we realised we didn't need computer science graduates from top league universities. The gender mix in STEM subjects was also declining for women in technical subjects, so we knew that another bottleneck would come our way in a couple of years. We built a short, engaging coding game that lived on our careers page, similar to the role they would have been doing in our annotation team. We wanted people to participate and enjoy the application process; from this campaign, we hired people from various backgrounds and social classes worldwide.

I sweat the small stuff because it accumulates and compounds. Honesty rules, even if the message is hard to give and likely to receive. Be direct, be clear and be kind.

"



Michelle Coventry

Head of Talent
– *Creandum*

Michelle is the Head of Talent working across Creandum's portfolio of companies. Michelle brings deep and broad experience in attracting and developing high-performance teams with a growth mindset, both in EMEA and in the US. Prior to joining Creandum, Michelle was the VP People at autonomous driving software assurance platform, Five.AI and talent advisor at Kindred Capital as well as first VP Talent at Depop. She previously helped build foundational teams at Paddle, Betfair, Wise and Farfetch.



Neil Davies

Vice President, Talent – *Roku*

Neil started his career in Europe as an HR generalist before specialising in talent acquisition upon moving to the US. He has held business unit and enterprise heads of talent acquisition positions at companies like Enron, Microsoft, Visa, Motorola/ Lenovo, PayPal, Activision Blizzard and most recently, Roku. He has also held Head of Talent roles for two tech unicorns – Flexport and Qualia, both of which involved building talent functions from the ground up.

Judges comments

Neil is a highly strategic TA leader. We loved hearing about how he approaches hyper-scale, global hiring with a personalised touch. It's clear that he's very close to the experience of every candidate and every recruiter in his team.

Finalist insights

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We've mapped the market. We know the talent who can do the work that we need to get done. These days that's the easy part. The difficult part is how do we engage with them in a way that's sustained and that meets them where they are? We need to educate them about Roku, make them aware of what we could mean for them and their career - but when they're ready. I believe that integrating all our different recruiting activities and channels in a single stream of consciousness to focus on the talent that we really want to hire, so that when they're ready, they know who we are. And we become the first thing that they think of.

Effective recruiting is built on the foundation of a great product, a great business strategy and culture and a good business plan that the people team can turn into a talent plan. Then you've got to execute - measure your inputs, your throughputs and outputs - recruiting is part machine and part magic - the recruiting and hiring team operate the machine and create the magic. DEIB must be integrated into every aspect of your recruiting operation – branding and marketing, college and early in career hiring, sourcing, events strategy, interviewer training and assessments and your metrics – again inputs, throughputs and outputs – all need to be measured and tracked.

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Judges comments

Ricky is a strategic and innovative TA leader. His values are kindness, care and collaboration, which really resonated with us.

Finalist insights

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Now that public-facing AI is in the hands of recruiters, it’s us that are able to utilise it with meaning. So I think that’s really exciting for TA.

How do we move recruiters away from just having a ‘butts-on-seats’ mentality to being the super-recruiter that focuses on end-to-end talent capabilities. So that we can really invigorate people once they are hired, help them to grow and develop and become the best versions of themselves.

What is our benchmark for top talent? How do we truly know? I’ll start to pick out attributes, competencies and some performance matches of who the top talent profiles are, and then create a rubric for what top talent is for each of the verticals within the company.

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Ricky de Ruiter

Senior Director, Global Head of Talent Acquisition
– *Andela*

Ricky is a talent leader curious about the realms of human possibility in the world of work. Since leaving the British military in 2011 after 15 years of service, Ricky has spent over a decade building teams and scaling companies for brands such as Andela, Google, Facebook, Dentsu and corporate VC, bp Launchpad. With a servant-leader and empathetic approach to leadership built on kindness, caring and collaboration, Ricky is Andela’s unofficial Chief Kindness Officer.



Jonathan Durnford -Smith

Portfolio Partner
– Octopus Ventures

Jonathan joined Octopus Ventures in 2021 to support the deeptech portfolio of companies on all areas of talent and people. He has spent most of his career working with tech companies to build exceptionally talented teams across engineering, data science, research, design and product. He most recently led the team growth for the applied group at DeepMind where his main focus was building and structuring teams in engineering, product and strategy across the UK to take AI research to real-world impact. Jonathan previously worked as head of recruiting at QuantumBlack where he grew the internal talent function internationally.

Judges comments

Jonathan is an insightful TA leader, experienced in high-tech AI organisations. We loved his advice on communication and improving hiring processes.

Finalist insights

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In my career so far, I’ve noticed that a narrative goes a long way with people. So if you can build a bit of a story behind what you’re saying and what you’re trying to get people to do, that for me has been the best way to influence people’s thinking.

The thing I’ve learned is that communication is really key for any change, and certainly from a leadership perspective. Communicating is better than having stuff shrouded in mystery, but a lot of people seem to shy away from it. Be honest and upfront with your communication. Don’t mix compassion with ambiguity. You don’t want to necessarily be too soft because you’re giving people false hope, and you do want to be direct.

A challenge for a lot of founders is this ability to be decisive, especially for first time founders. It’s having confidence in your decisions but you’re only competent if you have the knowledge. If you’re navigating something for the first time, you don’t have the knowledge to do it. So you are going to take more time to make a decision.

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Judges comments

Mario is a thoughtful and pragmatic TA leader. We really enjoyed talking about the future of TA and how to future-proof teams.

Finalist insights

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Diversity recruiting requires a team effort from top to bottom. Partnering with your hiring manager and the surrounding team can help people understand why diversity matters and eliminate any vagueness around the efforts. Additionally, visualising your pipeline from a hiring front with tools like Gem, Ashby and LinkedIn can help you understand how many diverse candidates are being approached or have applied for a role they are qualified for. Apply both qualitative and quantitative filters to this effort.

Effective change management is driven by data and process. In the context of hiring, this begins with proper role scoping that clearly states the reason for the hire, headcount and compensation planning that helps define what is required to attract the hire and when, and a hiring plan that outlines how to most effectively search and hire the best candidate. Ensuring alignment from leadership down to the TA team is critical, and doing so effectively saves a lot of time and confusion. A great talent leader must also be a great project manager - this is just one of the many skills required!

AI will change the TA team as we know it. The sooner we get comfortable with this idea, the better we can plan and upskill our teams. Tools will cut redundancies, which may mean some roles will be eliminated. However, this also creates space for recruiters and talent teams to become more consultative and strategic with their stakeholders. What AI won't do is replace critical thinking. It's important to reframe what you and your team bring to the table as talent experts today, knowing that AI tools will become more sophisticated in all core areas of hiring effectiveness.

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Mario Espindola

Senior Director, Talent – *SignalFire*

Mario is a skilled talent acquisition leader with expertise in search, consultancy, and head of talent experience as an operator prior to moving into VC as a Senior Talent Director. With over 10 years of TA experience in various settings, Mario is passionate about creating a positive impact through recruitment and tailored talent strategies.



Sasa Ferrari

Vice President, Talent Acquisition – *SurveyMonkey*

Sasa has more than 10 years of recruiting experience and currently leads the global talent acquisition team at SurveyMonkey. She also oversees employee experience including learning and development, talent management, and employee events. Previously, Sasa spent 3 years at DocuSign where she led all non-sales recruiting, both pre and post-IPO. Before that, she spent more than six years at Google leading talent acquisition for Google's people services organisation during a time of significant growth across the company.

Judges comments

Sasa is a true innovator, she told us about a multitude of ideas some of which were completely unique, in fact, she led a tiger team at Google on the subject. She also had great initiatives around inclusion in the interviewing process.

Finalist insights

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Innovation means different things to different people. For me, it's any type of improvement, improvement for yourself, your candidates and your hiring managers.

I've led through change by being very open, transparent and having empathy. I can't stress the empathy piece enough. I remind myself all the time that everyone's barometer and capacity for change is really different.

As a best practice, when any new role opens up at the leadership level, we prioritise outreach to both ethnic and gender diverse candidates who are qualified. This diversity-first mindset brings focus and ensures that our hiring managers are presented with a wide variety of choices as they evaluate the best talent for the job.

There's nothing that brings me more joy than delivering a promotion letter and watching my team grow.

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Judges comments

Anastacia is a passionate and articulate TA leader. We loved her work on DE&I and team leadership.

Finalist insights

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Where innovation really comes together is taking the big idea and making it happen. It's when the rubber meets the road. Talking with the necessary people, figuring out the best path forward, and then making it happen

When I came in, I talked to the team, listened to them and paid attention to what they wanted and what they needed and what the company wanted and what the company needed. I was then able to build out respected, repeatable and clear expectations for the foundation of things. And this isn't one of those innovation ideas where we went from nothing to bright shiny lights and a big performance. It's more basic, but it allowed me to really show what my background was and how to execute on it and support the team.

We've now created a diversity-forward sourcing organisation. So my expectation with my sourcers is that they are focused on intentional and thoughtful sourcing. We've given my sourcing team training and resources to execute on a diversity-forward approach.

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Anastacia Flores

Director of Talent Acquisition Enablement – *Snap Inc.*

Anastacia is an experienced talent acquisition leader with over 20 years of expertise in various TA functions. At Snap, she serves as the Director of Talent Acquisition Enablement and oversees all TA aspects except full life cycle recruitment, including university, recruiting coordination, operations, sourcing, and DEI programs. Prior to joining Snap Anastacia held a leadership role within TA at Guild. As the Head of TA at CBS Interactive, she led sourcing and recruitment for technical and non-technical roles, managed diversity partnerships, and oversaw university relations and during her 9 years at Google, she was involved in sourcing, employee referrals, and hiring innovation.



Roz Francuz-Harris

Vice President, Talent Acquisition – *Zillow*

As the VP of Recruiting at Zillow, Roz is a talent acquisition leader focused on developing talent strategies that connect and grow the organisation. With extensive experience in building the infrastructure, programmes, and teams needed to scale companies massively, she has a reputation for delivering results aligned with business goals in fast-paced environments. She is deeply committed to both representation and internal talent investment. Previously Roz has built lead talent acquisition teams for IBM, Uber, Slack, and WarnerMedia. As a dynamic and innovative speaker, she has spoken at leading events such as SXSW, Lesbians Who Tech (LWT) Summit, Afrotech, and Unleash America.

Judges comments

If you want to know about DEI, speak to Roz. The whole conversation was really inspiring and filled with passion.

Finalist insights

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During tough times, you have to turn the light on for your team. Help them to understand where we're going, why we're going there and how we will get there. Bring them along on the journey. Listen to them and what they're excited about with the change and use it to communicate in a way that is most impactful for them.

I want to get to the basics that we often overlook, and it starts with the representative make up of my own team and ensuring that we have the ability to make our candidates feel comfortable and open to having discussions with us.

A communication plan is not solely change management, but a part of change management. Change is driven by people. You have to get down off your high horse and be with the people to drive change. And if you don't want to get down, make sure you have a team of lieutenants who can drive that change from the seat that they're in.

My entire career, I've been like a Robin Hood. Going into big tech and creating representation and access for under-represented minorities and women in this space. And I've done that everywhere I've gone, and it has been great. But for the first time in my career, I'm working for a company whose products and services also do that.

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Judges comments

Sakena is a forward-thinking TA leader. We loved her ability to simplify complex problems, and her focus on diversity hiring strategies.

Finalist insights

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Leading with authenticity, transparency and over communicating during these times is critically important.
This is an opportunity for our teams to gain a deeper understanding of how our companies run and increase business acumen.

All recruiters need to see themselves as diversity recruiters. When you have a separate team who focuses on it, in my experience, the impact isn't as great comparably. I love and appreciate the investment that it shows when organisations build diversity functions within teams, but long term sustainable impact occurs when all recruiters make themselves accountable for this.

Make sure that you're aligned with the leadership and strategy of the organisation. And you're focused on the big wins first. There will always be a list of important enhancement projects for the function. But you're positioned to make the greatest impact when your time and people resources are aligned to support the organisation's strategic talent needs.

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Sakena Gardner

Vice President, Talent & DEI – *Numerator*

Sakena is a highly accomplished talent leader with a deep commitment to building high-impact teams and implementing strategies that enable companies to attract and retain top diverse talent. She is dynamic, forward-thinking and passionate about driving results through data informed strategies and process optimisation. She is most proud of her track record of developing the individuals on her teams and supporting the professional growth of colleagues over the years. At Numerator, Sakena leads DEI globally.



Geto Getov

Global Head of Recruitment – *Adyen*

Geto is the Global Head of Recruitment at Adyen, the financial technology platform for leading global companies. In his role, he leads recruitment teams spread across four continents and oversees Adyen's employer branding efforts. With a career spanning 16 years in talent acquisition, predominantly in the software industry, Geto is a true builder at heart. His expertise lies in helping organisations scale while prioritising culture and fostering collaboration among diverse teams. He is passionate about leveraging technology to enhance talent acquisition and constantly seeks creative solutions that balance innovation with a human touch.

Judges comments

Geto is a passionate and thoughtful TA leader. It's clear that he is an intentional person and we feel he's a driving force behind one of the world's most efficient tech companies.

Finalist insights

"Innovation for me is around how I've implemented technology in everything we do whilst striking the right balance between technology and human connection. I think that is very critical in recruitment. I think both candidates and hiring teams really value human connection. So basically all of the automation that I've introduced has been about enabling that, not substituting it.

An effective way to manage change is also to always explain what we're replacing and what we're adding. So it doesn't feel like we have to do more and more each time. And I think the other critical component is probably allowing enough time for change to happen.

Everything that is new is only innovation if it serves a purpose. Otherwise it's just novelty in my opinion. It matters how technology is applied in the process that you already have or what you want to achieve in terms of hiring. Just implementing it for the sake of having it might not add a lot of value.

What I'm most proud of is the people that I helped to be successful. My career has been about people."

Judges comments

Jason is a highly innovative TA leader. We loved talking about the role of talent advisor vs order taker in our meeting.

Finalist insights

"I've seen in my career there's this desire to over-engineer an interview process. I really like to keep things simple, and one of the tools we use is literally just a piece of paper between our hiring managers and our recruiters that we consider a contract.

We're not order takers. We don't make hires, your team hires. And most importantly, we're not here to make our hiring managers happy. We're talent advisors. We're partners who provide insight on the market. We help them understand. We become subject matter experts on our business, which allows us to take that long view of okay, you have a position that's open today, but in reality, what this represents is just a slice of time. It's a problem we have identified that we're trying to solve. But the thing is, people aren't static. We change, we evolve, we're dynamic. And over time, we want more.

I think the very first step in leading a successful DEIB strategy is being able to define what diversity means to you, what it means for your teams and your business. It is not a one size fits all approach, particularly if you're hiring for a global company."



Jason Gingrich

Talent Acquisition Lead – *Intrinsic*

As an experienced talent acquisition leader with over 10 years of experience, Jason has a proven track record of delivering successful recruitment strategies to identify, assess, and hire niche talent. Jason is known for his ability to create relationships, and for his approach to help mentor hiring teams in a better understanding of how to hire best in class talent. He believes who, and how, a company hires are the only real differentiators companies can point to. Talent is everything - without a high performing team it's hard to imagine success.



Maisha Gray-Diggs

Vice President Global Talent, Inclusion & Experience – *Eventbrite*

Dr. Maisha Gray-Diggs stands out as a rare example of an engineering leader who successfully transitioned into talent acquisition leadership. She leverages her deep expertise to deliver tangible results to organisations on a global scale. Her approach is a result of her extensive experience at several Fortune 500 companies across the CPG and tech sectors. Currently, Dr. MGD is the VP of Global Talent, Inclusion & Experience at Eventbrite. In this role, she impacts every stage of the employee life cycle; prioritising diversity, inclusion and employee engagement at every stage. She recently joined the HR Venture Advisor group of SemperVirens, a collective of 100+ senior HR leaders who are committed to building a better future of work.

Judges comments

Maisha was a fascinating interviewee, she has an amazing career arc from PhD Development Scientist to VP Talent. Her work on DEI at Twitter is particularly of note, and how to lead large, geographically dispersed teams.

Finalist insights

“What drew me to talent acquisition was wanting to think about how we do diversity recruiting differently. People talk about how it’s hard and slow which is counter to tech typically moving fast, fast, fast. I have taken pride in embedding the right mindset to do the work. The right mindset includes getting everyone who’s involved in hiring to embrace their responsibility to attract and hire diverse talent

My recruiting teams are very diverse and look like the talent and the representation we want to have, wherever we are. So part of the go-to-market strategy is, first and foremost, having a diverse recruiting team.

The data shows that when you get one or more diverse candidates to the onsite stage, you have a higher likelihood of hiring a diverse candidate. So it’s really around that intentionality. Multiple companies, not just us, have shown that diverse slate hiring works.”

Judges comments

Andrea is an experienced and consultative TA leader. We loved hearing about her varied career, particularly about leading and developing teams.

Finalist insights

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TA is responsible for the communication being both client-facing and market-facing and we need to ensure we are aligned with the narrative. I learnt quickly that I had to raise my hand and rally the senior people to help with that.

Accountability - that’s the word of 2023.

I have always partnered very closely with our compensation and analytics team to drive conversations with data. Looking at what the market is showing and being strategic about how we go after diverse talent. And I feel data always resonates with really senior people because data doesn’t lie.

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Andrea Howey

Head of Global Talent Acquisition – *Kinaxis*

Andrea’s entire career has been focused on talent acquisition covering both agency and corporate environments. Over the last decade, Andrea has stepped into a leadership role and has helped to develop some of the best TA folks out in the market today. She thrives on collaboration and working together as a team, helping to move the dial in a positive direction, challenging the status quo and continuously looking for more efficient and effective ways to work.



Lazian Ibrahim

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Avalanche Studios Group*

Lazian has 11+ years of experience in recruitment, managing globally distributed teams across EMEA, the Americas and Asia. Currently she heads up the global talent acquisition team at Avalanche Studios Group, a triple-A gaming studio with offices in Stockholm, Malmö, Liverpool and New York. She is responsible for all things related to talent acquisition – from setting the global vision and strategy to implementing and ensuring a TA infrastructure and operational model that aligns with the overall business goals. She previously spent six years at Spotify and was a part of the global TA team that scaled our company from 1500 employees to 7000+.

Judges comments

It was great to hear about Lazian's journey from setting up new teams and products in Spotify to a team rebuild at Avalanche Studios. Overall, a very insightful conversation.

Finalist insights

"I looked at our values and how we talk about ourselves as a company and identified behaviours linked to them that make us a successful employer. From this, I established a clear link between success here at Avalanche Studios Group and behaviours behind these, and I proposed changes in how we would identify our future leaders based on these.

We want to be able to attract and retain talent from all over the world. Ultimately, the more perspectives and backgrounds we have represented, the better games we produce. DEI work is an important aspect of everything that we do, but I always say that the ideal state would be to not need a DEI working group. Wouldn't it be amazing if there was no need for us? Wouldn't that be fantastic if everyone was seen as a natural part of everything? But we, as an industry are not there yet. Here at Avalanche, we are holding ourselves and the rest of the company accountable because DE&I is not only a question for Talent Acquisition, we can bring in the talent but we also need to ask ourselves, what do we do to keep our employees? What do you do to include them in every aspect that we have?

You don't have to agree with everything but you should always try to understand it."

Judges comments

Stefanie is an innovative and enthusiastic talent leader. We loved hearing about her transformative journey at Trimble.

Finalist insights

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We now measure diversity along the hiring process so we can look at every element of diversity from the start of the process all the way down to the point of hire to determine where we may have opportunities.

My team was doing a lot of manual reporting and I think you have to always challenge yourself to fully leverage the tools that you have, particularly your ATS as the system of record. It was amazing just adding a few fields in Workday and automating some of our reporting. What a game changer that is to not only drive data accuracy, but also to give capacity back to your team.

I have a five pillar strategy that is essentially our vision, mission, focus areas and supporting initiatives. Last year we had 12 key initiatives tied to those five pillars and we discussed them as a global team on a monthly basis to ensure visibility, transparency, and alignment. Giving people a strategy and roadmap and saying here's where we need to focus and then celebrating the wins along the journey is key to leading through transformation.

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Stefanie Jacquemin

Head of Global Talent Acquisition – *Trimble*

Stefanie Jacquemin is a global talent acquisition leader with experience leading large scale transformation. Her experience spans multiple industries and various sized organisations from start-ups to Fortune 500. She is passionate about developing and delivering strategies to source, engage and hire game changing talent.
She is also passionate about internal mobility, ensuring that talent sees the opportunity to grow and advance in their careers within their current organisation.



Yvette Kamperin

Vice President of Talent – *Liftoff Mobile*

Yvette is currently the VP of Talent at Liftoff, a growth acceleration platform for the entire mobile app transition cycle across user acquisition, engagement, monetisation and analytics. She is responsible for talent acquisition, onboarding and DEI efforts as well as internal mobility. Before Liftoff, she was the VP of Talent at MURAL, a collaboration intelligence company that allows teams to work together in real-time or asynchronously using MURAL's leading digital workspace.

Judges comments

We really enjoyed the conversation with Yvette, she's forward-looking, innovative and had great answers for all questions.

Finalist insights

"My most recent go-to tool is Bright Hire, it's a game changer. It records, transcribes and summarises interviews using AI. This enables our interviewers to write more detailed scorecards and makes the whole process around hiring more efficient.

The best way to strategise your diversity efforts is to first understand what your employee base looks like in terms of diversity, break it down by department and then see where you think you can move the needle. Put goals in place and watch that change over time. And it does take time. But again, if everybody's focused on it, you can actually see it move pretty quickly.

If you're leading TA then innovation looks like anything that can improve your process, increase your response rates, offer insights into the company culture or create a strong candidate experience.

Most companies realise how expensive it is to hire people. So when we have these hiccups in the economy or pauses, it's important to keep your top performers and have them focus on cleaning up data, doing analysis on quality of hires, analysis on source of hire from leavers, improving job descriptions or reviewing all parts of the interview process. Changing the teams' goals a bit and encouraging more of a partnership between them and their hiring managers."

Judges comments

Danny is an exceptional leader. We feel his focus on team leadership is outstanding and has yielded amazing results.

Finalist insights

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The power of the team is much stronger than the individual. What we've created on our team is a culture where we use the power of the team. I would say that's probably the biggest innovation we've made. They don't come to me with questions, they come with potential solutions for us to try. We try them, we test them. If they work, we use them. What we've seen is a tremendous decrease in our time to hire and an increase in how people perform in their first 90 days. We've also seen the cost per hire go way down.

We take slower times to really think about how we can improve our processes, what can we do better, what couldn't we get to when we were super busy? I think it's an amazing growth opportunity for our junior folks to participate in massive projects that they wouldn't usually get to participate in.

With innovation, one of the most important things for me is the crowdsourcing of knowledge. We have a pretty big team and although I've accomplished things in my career, they've accomplished things in their career as well. I leverage their knowledge. It's not one of those things where I dictate down, this is how we're doing it. We get small groups together and ask '"hey, what are you guys seeing? What is working? What is not working? What have you seen work in the past?" Let's try it. Giving the team that flexibility allows them to be leaders.

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Danny Karageorgis

Head of Talent
– *Reify Health*

Danny is an accomplished talent leader with a diverse background in hyper-growth technology. He has a passion for creating highly scalable and innovative solutions to consistently deliver exceptional results throughout his career. With over a decade of experience in the tech industry, including companies such as DraftKings, Circle and OneStudyTeam, Danny has successfully managed and led large talent teams. His expertise lies in creating efficient and quantifiable hiring practices that result in tremendous growth, ahead of schedule and under budget.



Jennifer Kaufman

Head of Global Talent Acquisition – *Wiz*

Jennifer is an experienced talent acquisition leader with a proven track record of successfully scaling recruiting teams within the tech industry, including category leaders like Twilio, Okta, Zynga and now Wiz. She is a strong people professional, with experience in growing the talent function as well as building strategic partnerships, training and professional development programmes.

Judges comments

Jennifer is a insightful and experienced talent acquisition leader. We loved her views on team leadership and DEI.

Finalist insights

"Hiring managers need to understand that diversity is a team construct and recruiters can help them see what is missing from their team. A strong recruiter should help hiring managers see what viewpoints are lacking on their team and identify candidates to fill that gap.

I believe you are only as good as the people around you, so I always try to hire people who are smarter than me. My job is to help them grow, but they also help me to grow. There are so many great people I would love to rehire for my team, but they have outgrown me and that is awesome.

We do not do enough recognising and celebrating the good stuff we accomplish - especially in a startup when you are moving so fast - you are always focused on what is coming next. As a leader, I really try to focus on the positives and what people are doing really well and less on the negatives."

Judges comments

Brent is a thoughtful and articulate TA leader. We felt that he'd tackled some huge challenges with elegant solutions during his time at Globalisation Partners.

Finalist insights

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Our purpose is really to break down barriers in global business and enable opportunities for everyone.

From the ERGs that we had, we created four different groups and they were able to help us in terms of our recruiting and diversity initiatives which allowed us to create a new internship program and write more inclusive job descriptions.

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Brent Kinsey

Formerly Head of Talent Acquisition – *Globalisation Partners*

For over 25 years, Brent has been a strategic leader of global teams across APAC, EMEA, Americas and LATAM. He has a proven track record of transformation within both start-ups and Fortune 500 companies, across the tech and life sciences industries, developing creative talent acquisition initiatives to attract and retain the right people to determine company-wide success.



Betsy Kippenhan

Vice President of Talent Attraction & Acquisition – *Comcast*

Betsy is the VP of Talent Attraction and Acquisition and leads the global recruiting organisation for Comcast. Before Comcast, Betsy led talent acquisition for Wolters Kluwer North America, a global leader in professional information services, and at Advantage Resourcing, where she spent 13 years in several HR roles with increasing responsibility, and last served as the VP of Field Solutions.

Judges comments

Betsy is a strategic and insightful TA leader. We loved her views on team leadership and development at massive scale.

Finalist insights

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Where do we go with AI? I think there’s a lot of pressure right now to understand it and be ahead of it, specifically in TA. When thinking about AI, the candidate experience should really be in the centre of what we do. How will it enhance the hiring experience and make it better for the candidates?

The most important thing is connecting with the teams and helping people succeed. Building strong networks, sponsoring and caring about people and helping them to achieve their greatest dreams.

It’s people first. You have got to build trust and put people first and all the other stuff will work itself out. When I was younger if I focused on that and worried less about all the other stuff, I think it would have been an even better ride.

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Judges comments

Marisca is a truly global TA leader, with deep experience living and working in Europe, The Americas and Asia. This gives her a pretty unique view on the cultural richness of the whole world, and it's impact on hiring.

Finalist insights

"As a TA leader, it's important to be your authentic self, explain where we're going with the change, and most importantly, why? If we're going to cross this wild river, I'd like to be a role model and I'll go first. I'll explain why it's worth taking the risk, what I think is better on the other side of the river and why. It's so important to create that buy-in. Bringing your team along as you go through change is so important, as is being able to show what the benefit is of the change.

Believe in yourself, and know that feeling uncomfortable is okay as long as you have an open mind, are willing to listen, willing to learn, and willing to adopt and appreciate the differences that you will encounter.

Our 'Women in EDB' employee resource group has monthly meetings, their own Slack channels and a support structure around that group. We are focused on all the details from the way we do sourcing and outreach to the way we write our job descriptions. Right now, it's all coming together and starting to make some real impact on the DEIB within the business."



Marisca Kooij

Vice President, Global Talent – *EDB*

Marisca manages the global talent team at EDB. As one of the leading contributors to the vibrant and fast-growing Postgres community, EDB is committed to driving innovation in cloud and open source enterprise database technology. Marisca grew up in the Netherlands but has also called Seattle, Barcelona, Singapore, and now Boston, home. Most of her career in talent acquisition has been with software/technology companies including Microsoft, Vistaprint, Red Hat and Confluent.



Jocelyn Lai

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Duolingo*

Jocelyn is the Global Head of Talent Acquisition at Duolingo. She grew up through the advertising and marketing industry (JCPenney, T3, GSD&M, R/GA, Droga5) and has spent the past four years in consumer tech, where she helped Duolingo scale from a private company of 100 to a public company of 750+. She is a regular public speaker and has been recognised by the American Advertising Federation, American Association of Advertising Agencies, Association of National Advertisers, The Wall Street Journal, and SXSW for her achievements.

Judges comments

Jocelyn is a vibrant and creative leader, who is truly pushing the potential of talent acquisition teams. A conversation with Jocelyn always makes you feel more positive and to think differently about business strategies.

Finalist insights

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We have invested in our new graduate and internship programme, which has been the biggest pipeline for us for diversity and representation. We also do something unique here, where alongside valuing gender and ethnic and racial representation, we also really value international representation. The main reason is that Duolingo serves the entire world, so, for us to best serve our learners, we have to reflect our learner base. This is the additional layer of DEIB we have at Duolingo.

We actually use ChatGPT to write our interview questions. By using it and getting to know it, we aren’t scared by it. We realised that it only does about 75% of the work, and we are still needed for the remaining 25%. In this way, it makes us faster so we can now focus on the things we’re more interested in. We’re friends with ChatGPT, and we can actually talk about it with candidates, which enables us to be better recruiters.

Being kind is not being weak. There’s a difference. You can be kind and still strong.

I call it connecting the dots. If you go and collect all these different dots, the dots can connect to create a picture. However, very few people actually know how to connect the dots. It takes a visionary to say “That collection of dots is in the picture of a bear” for people to actually see that bear. Once they see the bear, they’re going to see there’s a whole new world out there. We can do things in a different way if we can figure out how to connect the dots.

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Judges comments

Denise is an articulate and passionate TA leader. We particularly enjoyed talking about DEIB initiatives, where she is very insightful.

Finalist insights

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A few years ago when I was running talent acquisition at an early stage organisation, I noticed that there was a gap in the retention of the top diverse talent. One of my suggestions to address this was the creation of employee-led resource groups. Introducing these were monumental to our employee engagement and to our community building, and now of course these groups play a bigger role in companies as an integral part of talent strategy.

I do understand that talent acquisition is usually associated with the beginning of the employee lifecycle but I think at the end of the day, as a people team leader, we’re responsible for the entire employee experience. As part of my own growth, I’d like to continue to take on programmes that span through the entire employee journey.

The best part of my job is coaching, mentoring and seeing my team members take on bigger, better and more strategic roles. And in turn, I think that’s also created a broad community of experts where we can learn from one another. That network has become part of my own growth throughout my career, and I call them ‘my external Board of Advisors’.

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Denise Lam

Global Vice President of Talent Acquisition – *Acquia*

Denise leads the talent acquisition organisation at Acquia where she is responsible for the company’s global recruitment strategy to attract top talent. She brings over a decade of recruiting and HR experience building and scaling various tech companies. Prior to Acquia, Denise was the Head of Talent Acquisition at Intersection, a smart cities technology company, where she led the business through rapid growth and championed DEI.



Paddy Lambros

Talent Director
– *Atomico*

Paddy has spent the past 10 years leading people and talent teams in high-growth startups. Over the course of his career, he has scaled some of the best engineering teams in the world, first at Improbable and then at Sensat. Paddy works to connect business strategy to people and talent programmes, thinking like an organisational engineer to ensure businesses have the capabilities they need when they need them. Today, Paddy supports Atomico's portfolio founders and companies to find, hire and develop world-class teams.

Judges comments

Paddy is a real innovator in talent acquisition. He's a free-thinker and strategist who takes as much inspiration from outside of TA as within it. He doesn't pull any punches and we're sure his clear and concise advice is well valued in his role at VC firm, Atomico.

Finalist insights

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We were direct sourcing at scale, the team was shipping more than 1000 messages a week, we A-B tested everything, from the length of the email, how much personalisation, where we personalised, subject lines, message frequency and timing! We achieved an industry-beating 50% open rate and a 40% response rate. At one point, sourcing accounted for more than half of all the hires made, at the highest echelon of global technical talent.

Regarding DEIB, I believe in action over marketing. Many companies will tell you how great a place to work is or how committed they are. I think people are starting to see through that now. They want to know, "What have you actually done" Let's set goals, let's be clear about our aims and let's communicate what we've done - that's when you've earned the right to enter that conversation.

TA and people leaders are having a rude awakening on what it means to be true business partners. For the last ten years, many have operated as delivery functions, but when the macro changes, and the cost of capital increases, we must begin to operate strategically. As leaders, we have to understand the ROI of our work and how it contributes to and can move the needle on business objectives. Today the questions TA leaders need to ask are not "how" we will deliver but 'what' and 'why' we should deliver. On the people side, we're seeing a shift from perks to performance. It's not enough for teams to be happy; they need to be high performing too, and increasingly, companies expect their people leaders to know what it takes to build high-performing teams.

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Judges comments

Lauren is an insightful and innovative TA leader. We loved talking about innovation in compensation and transparent cultures driving great results.

Finalist insights

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I am incredibly proud of creating an innovative compensation philosophy. We believe it’s vital to offer a wide range of compensation packages to candidates, which gives them the power to make the appropriate financial decision for themselves and their families. This strategy showcases our dedication to building a workplace that values individual autonomy and recognises the importance of giving individuals the flexibility to choose what matters most to them, which in turn empowers them to be more motivated, engaged and fulfilled.

One of the aspects I take great pride in is our ability to foster a safe and inclusive space for ALL team members. We recognise and champion the importance of diversity of thought. It is a fundamental belief that guides our approach to building successful teams. We celebrate the remarkable blend of cultural backgrounds, which enriches our collective experience. We firmly believe that embracing diverse perspectives and experiences fuels innovation, sparks creativity and propels us forward as an organisation.

Never underestimate the impact you can make by staying true to yourself, even in the face of opposition. Trust that your voice matters and that your contributions have the potential to inspire and create positive change. Embrace the discomfort that comes with challenging the status quo and remember that growth often happens outside of your comfort zone.

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Lauren Landis

Director of Talent – *Mothership*

Lauren is an accomplished recruiting and HR professional with a passion for driving company growth and delivering exceptional results. With over 10 years of experience in the field, she has established herself as a dynamic leader and strategic thinker. Currently, she is the Director of Talent at logistics business Mothership. With her proven track record, commitment to continuous growth and passion for empowering organisations and individuals, Lauren is poised to make a lasting impact at Mothership.



Tony Le

Formerly Senior Director, Global Talent Operations, Contentful – *Contentful*

Tony is a seasoned talent acquisition executive with 15+ years of experience in leading recruitment teams. He started his career as a recruiter for a leading tech staffing agency and quickly worked his way up to managing the recruitment process globally for some of the most recognisable tech brands. In his current role, Tony is responsible for leading operations and developing programs that will increase recruiter productivity, build better data understanding around hiring, and develop special projects to educate hiring teams on the best ways to hire. He is dedicated to ensuring that his organisation has a diverse and inclusive workforce and is committed to creating a positive candidate experience.

Judges comments

Tony is a future-focused TA leader, equipped with market-leading data and operations skills.

Finalist insights

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At this point, I’m seeing teams in recruiting that are bigger on the non-recruiting side, than in the recruiting side. So it’s less now about how many recruiters can you get in the seat to go knock on people’s doors, cold call and find candidates, and it’s more about how do we attract more people to our roles? How do we build the brand of our company? How do we amplify the employee voice? But then also how do we think about diversity, equity and inclusion? I think the innovation for me this year was really doubling down on this enablement piece, which is the definition of everything in between.

What’s changing in how we build our recruiting teams? Last year I hired a data scientist just to build dashboards. People that actually could read and write SQL and create basic code so they could take all of our data from HR, finance, and recruiting and bring all the data together not just to report it, but to build insights. Real time data and alerts such as our attrition rate, quality of hire, time to fill, applicant funnel health, career site statistics, just to name a few. All this insight helps us then drive our hiring plan with the team.

I don’t mind making hard and fast mistakes on a small scale, quick. To be able to then adjust and do it bigger and better.

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Judges comments

Jerome struck as insightful, honest and pragmatic. We enjoyed talking with him about leadership, AI and L&D for recruiters.

Finalist insights

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I sleep-walked through management for the first year of my leadership journey because I had no idea. I lost sense of what good looked like. When you’re a recruiter you make hires, it’s very tangible, the sense or reward and success is clear. When you’re leading a team of recruiters it becomes way more intangible, you achieve success through others and the sense of excitement and pride in making a great hire is different. The lesson is to be more meaningful about what the journey looks like, what it takes to transition successfully into leadership, and the support that you’re going to need. Don’t wait until you feel like you’re failing before you figure out that you need to find yourself a mentor, a coach and a support network. They are two very different jobs. It’s a privilege to be a leader and it’s a curse at the same time, and you’ve got to be prepared. You’ve got to invest in learning a new skill set.

I think the conversation now is a lot about how organisations will replace people with a bots or AI? I think it’s the wrong conversation to have. The conversation to have is how do we use AI to augment and accelerate the productivity of human beings in their jobs? Generative AI can take on time consuming tasks and do them in seconds, it saves you a tonne of time and you can do more with the time you get back, and be far more valuable and productive to the organisation, which means that if you can do 20-25% more, then you should be paid 20-25% more, so how do we drive that? That’s what I’m excited about.

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Jerome Leclercq

Global Head of Recruitment & Employer Branding – *Wise*

Jerome is the Global Head of Recruitment and Employer Branding at Wise where his focus has been on embedding scalable hiring practices that deliver on the business growth ambitions in a thoughtful and sustainable way. Before Wise, he was VP of Talent at GoCardless, a global leader in account-to-account payments. Prior to joining the fintech world Jerome spent over 8 years at LinkedIn scaling its EMEA enterprise operations as a recruitment leader, as well as a three year stint in product marketing helping to bring to market products such as LinkedIn Talent Insights and LinkedIn Talent Hub.



Stephen Lochhead

Senior Vice President,
Global Talent Acquisition
– *Expedia Group*

Stephen has dedicated his entire career to all of the areas of HR expertise that drive growth in companies at massive scale. He has worked in six different sectors and for some of the world's most successful businesses and brands including Arthur Andersen, Walmart, AstraZeneca, Unilever, Standard Chartered Bank and now Expedia Group. Stephen was one of the founding thinkers of the Talent Marketplace movement back in 2014 and was instrumental in delivering the world's first talent marketplace in a global bank in partnership with Gloat.

Judges comments

Stephen showed exceptional ability across the full spectrum of TA. We could see that his leadership style is emphathetic, strategic and insightful.

Finalist insights

"Making sure that our recruiting teams are armed with excellent data around the total available marketplace. This business conversation, one role at a time, is how we inform our approach to hiring so that we can put in place the best available sourcing strategy.

When you go through tough times, you've got to be so incredibly transparent and straightforward around what is going on in the business, how it's fairing. As leaders we have a very strong mandate to make sure that people know where they stand.

For the health of your team, never, ever take your mind off the big three; retention, engagement and inclusion, especially when you go through times of change."

Judges comments

Chris is an inspiring leader with some great insight into the future of TA orgs. We loved his focus and results in diversity hiring, as well as new types of team setups. His views on TA orgs aligning with business strategy are completely in line with our views on the future of TA.

Finalist insights

"The more transparent you are, the easier change management conversations will be.

You're going to have to think differently. Everything you knew from the last 10-15 years has been thrown out and you've got to think 'how are you going to operate?'. What are the steps you're going to take to make the business more successful?

How can the TA organisation be an extension of the business? Are we just viewed as recruiters who find candidates? We've got to shift the conversation. By partnering with business leaders, you'll make the team more indispensable."



Chris Lyon

Head of Talent – *CaptivateIQ*

Chris is a talent leader with 15 years of experience. He has successfully sourced and secured technical talent for a diverse range of companies, encompassing early-stage ventures such as Clearslide, growth-stage enterprises like Palantir, WeWork and CaptivateIQ, and companies undergoing both pre and post-acquisition phases like Twitch. Chris has successfully scaled talent functions from 1 to 60 while efficiently measuring performance using tools like Ashby. Additionally, Chris has been involved with several startups operating in the realm of recruiting and interviewing, namely Hired and Interviewing.io.



Chad MacRae

Vice President, Talent – *Tinder*

Chad is a recruiting leader and design thinker with 15+ years of experience in talent acquisition at Tinder, Plenty of Fish, Match Group, Grindr, King Games, Omnicom, Amazon and Activision. As a former resident of Vancouver, Dubai, Athens and Kandahar in Afghanistan, he has sourced talent in over 50+ countries. He recently completed his post-graduate diploma in organisational leadership at the University of Oxford, and his expertise has been featured in Forbes, Business Insider, The Huffington Post, SHRM and CBS.

Judges comments

Chad is a true scholar of people strategy, he's constantly challenging himself to learn more and takes inspiration from marketing, futurism and product management.

Finalist insights

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When I started out, I was attending futurism conferences, marketing conferences, supply chain conferences, really understanding what I could take that's innovative from those markets and industries, and apply it to recruiting. I found that a lot of recruiting conferences had the exact same people every year, presenting the same thing. If I was going to innovate and get ahead in the war of talent, I needed to take ideas from elsewhere.

When you create that psychological safety within your team, you're going to get ideas from the quietest members on your team. The key was creating a safe space for people to share their ideas up to executives. It was this that allowed us to elevate our talent acquisition team.

I think the biggest challenge is just having that seat at the table. You really need to have the strategic foresight on how to guide the business.

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Judges comments

It was great to talk to Neeta about hiring at truly global scale, across 192 countries. The nuance of tackling DEI and candidate experience at that scale is fascinating.

Finalist insights

"We are creating opportunities for folks in 192 different countries. Very quickly we've had to pivot to get the legal and compliance leadership buy in to ensure we craft our employment contracts outside of the US to help us move the process along faster. This has truly created the magic of hiring and enabled teams everywhere, which is our mission when it comes to serving our clients.

We really wanted to understand our talent attraction demographics. Are we really catching the attention of the under-represented groups in each country and each region? For us, this is a highly complex to track due to all jobs being 100% remote plus our ability to hire from anywhere, thus resetting the demographics survey and making it clear to the applicant that their response is completely voluntary. This is the only way it will help us evaluate and improve our diversity and belonging efforts.

We are exploring a 'new hire concierge' programme to make sure that the candidate experience is of utmost importance to us and each candidate can get a sense they have an in-house agent working for them to help them navigate during pre-boarding stages, especially in countries where notice periods are lengthy and often right to work documents could be delayed due to local jurisdiction timelines."



Neeta Maliakal

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Velocity Global*

Neeta is Velocity Global's Global Head of Talent Acquisition responsible for the end-to-end execution of talent acquisition strategy and leading a high-powered team dedicated to engaging, attracting and hiring at Velocity Global in over 54 countries, bringing a diverse community of people who are brilliant at their craft, passionate about borderless teams and deeply aligned to company values. Prior to joining Velocity Global she led globally distributed talent acquisition teams including analytics, research and operations for over 10 years in disruptive business environments including Amazon and Lemonade.



Daniela Maniaci

Chief People Officer
– *Northvolt*

Daniela has a diverse background in project management, supply chain within manufacturing and executive recruitment. She is the Chief People Officer at Northvolt, focusing on the important goal to recruit and nurture a strong, engaged workforce that is committed to building the first and greenest European EV battery company. Prior to joining Northvolt, she spent five years with Michael Page in Shanghai, where she specialised in recruiting for APAC fast-growing multinationals in the manufacturing, engineering, and technology sectors, and built a high-performing team. Upon moving to Sweden, she focused on executive recruitment in the FMCG sector.

Judges comments

The conversation with Daniela was truly insightful. She's grown Northvolt from small startup to 5000+ headcount over her tenure, without using a single external supplier along the journey. Given the highly technical and scarce talent pool, and needing the majority of staff onsite in Sweden, this is an incredible feat of TA.

Finalist insights

"Recruitment is a long term workforce planning exercise, and it's an opportunity to build your employer branding and showcase your unique culture, values and benefits. Through your recruitment process you can shape the organisation's path for future growth and success"

We prioritise investing effort at the front-end in attracting and engaging the desired talent pool while also leveraging analytics to support the identification of future talent pipelines and to strategically plan for future hires.

We work towards creating a diverse panel of interviewers to ensure representation of the individuals with whom the candidate will collaborate. This includes considering gender and cultural diversity to foster an inclusive and well-rounded interview process."

Judges comments

James is a brilliant leader of scaling companies. We really enjoyed hearing about truly challenging DEI initiatives and rebuilding TA and people orgs.

Finalist insights

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What I proposed to the leadership team was to tackle people debt, like we tackle technical debt. Let’s stop the organisation for a week and lay the foundations of our learning culture. My responsibility was to design the whole curriculum, working with the leadership team to drive the principles. It was a huge investment but a success, we got through 2500 hours of learning in just one week.

We pivoted the TA team into an internal resource management function where we could manage the ebb and flow of talent and capacity around the business and give us a flexible workforce. Not only will this help the business optimise towards its goals, but it could also create interesting learning and development opportunities.

Don’t beat yourself up about being self-reliant. Seek external expertise and learn from them.

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James Mantle

Vice President, Talent – *Mews*

James is the VP of Talent at Mews, a disruptor in hospitality tech, where he is responsible for talent acquisition, reward and onboarding. Previously he was at Hudl, a US-based sport analytics company, where he led their global recruiting team. He started his internal recruiting career at a VC group and spent four years, working centrally and across their portfolio of businesses and was also an early employee at Clearscore, leading their people function.



Andrea Marston

Senior Director,
Global Talent Acquisition
– *VMWare*

Andrea is based in London and has worked in talent acquisition for 25 years, initially in agencies and executive search, and running her own business. 13 years ago she moved into in-house recruitment, setting up or leading TA functions at various tech firms including Workday, Verizon Media, Huddle and Oracle. She is currently leading the Global GTM and Ops Talent Acquisition team at VMware. She is also on the Customer Advisory Board of Beamery. Andrea is hugely passionate about the evolution of TA into a more efficient and business-centric function and loves new tech that amplifies not replaces humans.

Judges comments

Andrea is a truly insightful TA leader. We loved the conversation on her people-centric approach to TA leadership and driving adoption of great data skills.

Finalist insights

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You can change people's opinions with good data, but it's hard to start the conversation without it. Three years ago, I focused on getting all of the recruiters in my team to understand how to read data and how to use it to drive conversations. That was my primary goal. Still work in progress, but we are definitely making some real impact there and crucially it's what gives TA more credibility within the business. Using data as a basis for change is far more powerful.

We do have hiring goals for both women and URM (like every other tech company), and we also have a goal to have a diverse candidate slate where possible. Today, we track our progress and it's all very transparent. We report on this every month to our business leaders and Chief People Officer. People are proud of their achievements and I'm sure also compare themselves with others.

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Judges comments

Chris is a true startup TA expert. It was great to talk about coaching founders on hiring the right people, who are truly aligned to startup life rather than simply the most technically gifted.

Finalist insights

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Tapping into an early stage role where you experience hyper-growth is something that, if chosen correctly, will be a career multiplier, an accelerator that you simply cannot access at larger companies.

It's critical for recruiting leaders to communicate the value of building a recruiting engine that doesn't only pump out hires but also creates an internal culture exciting enough to generate the hires required to get a company from point A to point B. When you do this well, and word gets out, and you'll notice that top candidates find their way to you (a huge blessing when you have lots of roles to fill).

So it's really building this relationship with founders that teaches them how to look for things and make sure that they're hiring people who aren't just great engineers, but are actually great engineers who have breadth, who want to do a lot of things and are the right fit for startups.

A candidate's enthusiasm should grow at every stage, as should yours. If you're not seeing that happen - and often it's because they're not sure if they want to do something early and risky - it's your job to diagnose that. And, if the candidate doesn't have the appetite for something early, it's better for them if the process ends. What is key is having the confidence to drive a conversation with candidates such that they uncover what they really want to do. If done properly, you'll help your hiring team avoid wasted hours with a candidate who will not ultimately commit.

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Chris Marty

Partner
– Unusual Ventures

Chris is an Operating Partner at Unusual Ventures - a seed-stage VC firm with 1.2B under management and offices in Menlo Park, San Francisco and Boston - where he works alongside early-stage founders to build foundational, high-performing teams. Previously, he led talent acquisition at Fleetsmith (acquired by Apple), Wealthfront (currently valued at 1.4B), and was fortunate to have enjoyed early career experiences at Dropbox, Google and Wildfire. He's a self-professed zealot for the startup journey, and believes in its potential to yield transformative experiences both personally and professionally.



Traci McCulley

Senior Director,
Global Talent Management
– *SonicWall*

Traci is a seasoned professional with over 20 years of experience in global talent acquisition and business operations. As the Senior Director of Global Talent Management at SonicWall, Traci is responsible for building talent strategies that promote diverse hiring practices and support the company's growth and transformation. Prior to joining SonicWall, Traci worked in various roles at Guidewire Software and led operations at a startup digital marketing agency. Traci's unique talent solutions have been highlighted in Blueboard and Glassdoor articles, and she has spoken at the Glassdoor Best Places to Work roadshow.

Judges comments

Traci is a very insightful TA leader, we talked a lot about the macro-picture for TA and hiring in general. We loved her calm, knowledgeable approach.

Finalist insights

"I'm data driven as far as what's working and what's not working to help drive what we're doing. I noticed that our referrals were really lacking. So, we decided to have a referral contest to get people inspired to refer. We had quarterly winners and the prize was an experience award. Our very first winner chose skydiving as his experience. That was incredible, because then we got a video and were able to splash that everywhere. In the end we doubled our referrals that year.

Interview training is really important for a lot of different reasons. We developed an interview training course where a portion of the training is focused on bias and recognising bias, because everyone is biased. We cover common types of bias and how to combat them.

We're most recently using ChatGPT to build messaging and so that's been really cool to experiment with it and see how it can help us. We do make sure to use our personal machines for security purposes."

Judges comments

Becky is a passionate and enthusiastic TA leader. It was great hearing about DEI strategies that have worked at Hubspot.

Finalist insights

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We have made it a priority that we’re going to continue to give candidates feedback at every single step of the process. We’re going to be highly communicative. I think the innovation has been in how we do not compromise the candidate experience and the high-touch nature of making sure that they see our values come to life in the process.

We’ve not only made diversity, inclusion and belonging the core part of our strategy, we’ve made workforce planning a core part of our strategy as well.

We’ve never had diversity recruiters. We’ve never had a diversity recruiting team. We’ve made it a priority and made it really clear that it’s everyone’s job. It’s not about checking a box or even saying we have a dedicated focus. It’s embedding all of the practices around equity such as being really comprehensive in your research, raising awareness of bias and making it part of our process.

In a world where we’re losing a lot of the human element, our work is innovative.

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Becky McCullough

Vice President, Global Recruiting – *Hubspot*

As Vice President of Global Recruiting & Talent Development, Becky leads the team responsible for hiring, onboarding, and developing top talent for HubSpot globally. In looking after the full talent life cycle, her team is charged with scaling HubSpot’s recruitment strategy, creating a remarkable onboarding experience, and ensuring HubSpot has a rigorous, equitable approach to recognising and rewarding high performance. During her time at HubSpot, Becky has established and scaled teams in executive recruiting, recruiting operations, people analytics, and workforce planning.



Carla McIntosh

Vice President of Global Talent Acquisition – *Reddit*

Carla is the VP of Global Talent Acquisition at Reddit where she is responsible for strengthening and scaling operational processes for its global workforce. With more than 24 years of experience leading talent organisations, Carla brings to Reddit a genuine passion for people and a proven record of building world-class recruiting practices and teams. She most recently served as the US Head of Talent Acquisition for Google's first-ever US operations centre and also previously held several roles across people operations. Carla is also a US Air Force veteran and was the founder of a technical recruitment firm.

Judges comments

Carla is an exceptional TA leader. We loved her work on DE&I and preparing her team for future growth.

Finalist insights

"Oftentimes, we focus on what are the relationships that we need today. With my teams, I really try to impart the importance of building partnerships, not only when you need them and to really be anticipatory in the partnerships you might need in the future.

I am currently trying to understand all of the different levers that we can pull as it relates to AI, especially in the talent space. Think about sourcing job descriptions, candidate maintenance, and about the overall candidate experience. It feels like we were really on the precipice of something quite different. This could be our reset moment. What I see is that maybe AI could remove some of the more boring parts of the job, for talent acquisition and recruiting, and actually allow the humans to concentrate on the human stuff, which is the bit that we're really best wired for. So I'm pretty hopeful.

Diversity to me is beyond just ethnic and gender diversity. It's about diversity of thought. So people that come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, people that have disabilities, people that are veterans like myself, LGBTQ+ community, all of that is important."

Judges comments

The conversation with Jim was fascinating. We particularly enjoyed talking about mapping the worlds entire population of engineering talent, and the strategy that went into it.

Finalist insights

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We created a partnership with LinkedIn working with their data scientists focused on analysing tech stacks to identify potential companies to hire from that hadn’t been previously considered. We analysed our tech stack as represented by our engineers on their public LinkedIn profiles and the common technical terms used. We built out a map of companies who have the same technology base and then identified what do the people who do that work call themselves. Sourcers were always searching for ‘software engineer’, but they were forgetting that at Goldman Sachs for instance they are called a ‘technology analyst’. Then we could stack rank by the flow from those companies to us and key competitors and identify new opportunities for software engineering sourcers to be able to go after.

I believe that everyone sees change in a different way. You’ve got to come at the problem of driving change and influencing change from multiple different directions. The first is, is there a clear logical reason to change? Is there data that supports why you want to make a change? Can you present that data? Can you persuade a proportion of your audience that the change is the right thing to do through that data? The second piece is, is there an emotional connection to the change? Some people really need to care about the change, and you’ve got to be able to build that element and then bring another proportion of the folks along on that journey. And then the final piece is how are you going to facilitate the change and how are you going to implement continuous measurement of the change?

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Jim Miller

Vice President of People & Talent – *Ashby*

Jim has been a recruiter for 22 years and is presently the VP of People and Talent at Ashby, who are redefining what a recruiter can expect from their ATS. Prior to joining Ashby, he began his career within an agency, hiring software engineers, and then moved to Google, where he spent 15 years building non-US sourcing functions and leading the global online (inbound) talent channels team.
His greatest passion in recruiting is building out fair and equitable hiring processes that will scale with all eventualities.



Sean Mitchell

Vice President & Head of Talent
– *American Century Investments*

Sean Mitchell is the VP and Head of Global Talent at American Century Investments, a leading financial services asset management firm. A global talent leader with a superior track record of establishing, scaling, and leading top-performing talent acquisition operations, Sean has over 20 years of experience in the talent management space. Previously Sean has led talent acquisition teams at successful startups to Fortune 500 companies, including IBM, Tenable, SAIC and DailyPay.

Judges comments

Sean is an experienced and motivated leader, with a diverse portfolio of experience. He struck us as forward-looking and insightful in our interview

Finalist insights

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When I think of innovation, I think of technology. Whether it’s an applicant tracking system, talent mapping, applicant sourcing and CRM platforms, video interviewing or social media - these are innovations that have accelerated, for better or worse, our craft. There are great tools out there to help us constantly evolve, not only from a sourcing, interviewing and time to hire perspective, but also being able to decipher and make decisions on employee performance using deep data analytics.

I’ve always taken the approach of incorporating DEIB initiatives into my strategies, even before DEIB existed as a term. It’s important to lead by example through actions and structural changes in the company. You have to start with yourself and your own team. That really trickles down - or up - to your staff and your peers, but also to senior leadership. In the past and currently, I’ve developed initiatives to help employees broaden their networks. These initiatives focus on how to branch out from our traditional family, friends, college, and workplace networks. I encourage all employees to look for professional organisations or affinity groups that are dedicated to DEI. These groups can offer networking opportunities, resources, and forums to discuss and promote diversity and inclusion in various industries. By engaging different communities and employee resource groups it will expand your network; otherwise, it’ll remain the same.

Tackling change management is being a great communicator. Change is tough for a lot of people. When you’re in a position of leadership, I think the most important thing is being transparent with your team in terms of why these changes are occurring, how it’s going to affect the team moving forward and how to continue. We’re doing more with less. We’re focusing on how we get the most out of our technology, finding opportunities to optimise and find efficiencies to improve our hiring processes in addition to ensuring we are developing and retaining all employees at every level. The market for highly talented technologists, analysts, sales, marketing, finance and people professionals still exists, just not at the breakneck speed we’ve seen post-pandemic.

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Judges comments

Ariana came across as a thoughtful and strategic leader. When she talked about cultural shifts in the business, we could see how impactful she has been and continues to be at Greenhouse.

Finalist insights

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In the past few years, I partnered with our DE&I team to advise on a refresh of our workforce diversity goals at Greenhouse. We made sure to take the global nature of our company into consideration, setting goals on ethnicity, race and gender, as well as exploring goals around LGBTQ+ representation and diversity of nationality. In addition, we built a model that allowed us to work backwards from 2025, 2026 and 2027 that made assumptions around team ratios, headcount growth, attrition and proportions of demographic representation over time, so that at a regular cadence, we could measure how we were progressing towards longer-term goals and shift present-day tactics as needed in an informed way.

My experience with diversity recruiting is that you'll see the best ROI when you invest directly into doing the proactive outreach yourself. My team has partnered with many DE&I-focused organisations, posted on countless job boards targeting under-represented communities, worked with agencies that had DE&I as part of their core operating model, etc. But across all those avenues, the most success we've experienced was when we reached out to prospects ourselves and established a direct, personalised connection.

I don't pack my team meetings with status updates. For that, I cascade information through my leadership team. If I'm going to ask everyone on my global function to be on a Zoom across time zones, what I'm going to prioritise is elevating other voices, providing opportunities for learning, and facilitating small group discussions and activities that deepen team connection. I prioritise the stuff that builds trust that's harder to do when you work asynchronously.

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Ariana Moon

Head of Talent Planning & Acquisition – *Greenhouse*

Ariana is the Head of Talent Planning & Acquisition at Greenhouse. As a member of the senior leadership team, Ariana runs a global function that supports hiring and workforce planning for the company. Her team are continuously iterating on sourcing and assessment processes to identify the right talent, which has enabled Greenhouse to 10x in headcount. Ariana has led key hiring initiatives in new geographies, served in leadership positions on Greenhouse's diversity, equity & inclusion council and employee resource groups, and participates actively in Greenhouse's customer advisory board with various technology partners.



David Moore

Vice President, Talent Acquisition – *Box*

David heads up global talent acquisition at Box, the cloud content management company with a mission to power how the world works together. He is a career talent leader with 25+ years of experience and industry expertise spanning enterprise software and SaaS to consumer electronics and retail. A Brit, he started his career in the UK and then spent the next decade in the Asia Pacific region where he joined a pre-iPhone Apple in 2006 in Singapore. After moving to California, he supported markets across the Americas with Apple and then while supporting Google's digital advertising sales and marketing teams, before joining Box.

Judges comments

David is a visionary leader who really cares deeply about the future of talent acqusition. He talked passionately about educating future TA leaders - he'd love to see degrees in talent acquisition and we could tell that he's constantly thinking of new ways to improve existing processes and technology. With a background at almost all of the worlds' greatest tech companies, we certainly wouldn't bet against him truly revolutionising TA through education or new technology in the near future.

Finalist insights

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With DEIB, it's important to help executives to understand the level of investment and commitment needed from them. They don't just get to stand up at an all-hands meeting and say 'I'm a supporter of improving diversity at the company'. It's something that has to be living and breathing for them, they have to spend time on it, and really hold their leaders accountable for driving results.

The idea that, ten years ago, I'd sit in front of a SVP Engineering and persuade him (and it would always be a him) to agree to hire software engineers without a university degree from a top school, would have felt like an insurmountable challenge. I'm really proud of how far we've come with our apprenticeship program. It's amazing to be offering folks great jobs who haven't come through the traditional pathways.

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Judges comments

Jeff is a highly experienced and passionate talent leader. We particularly admired his ability to simplify complex problems into easily understandable and actionable processes.

Finalist insights

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The best innovation is the most simple and the most obvious things that are right in front of you. Make a tweak, get things done and really just focus on doing the things that everyone knows will be successful as opposed to getting yourself too caught up in whatever the big fad is at the time.

When a job opens up, especially if it’s a type of role that you’ve hired for in the past, go pull the past few years worth of applicants and go through that list first because there’s an 80% chance your hire is sitting there ready to be re-engaged and they will be excited to hear from you!

Find a reason to hire the person, as opposed to finding a reason not to hire them. I feel like as recruiters, we’re trained from the day we get started to focus on, say, the top five skills and experience needed for the job and not moving forward with people who don’t have all those things. I pushed the team to think like, nope, rather than that say “here’s the four skills they have, here’s the gap” and communicate the gap to the hiring manager and figure out if you can get over that hump or if they have a sixth skill that’s just as important as the fifth one they don’t have. So we spend a lot of time on finding a reason to hire.

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Jeff Moore

Vice President of Talent Acquisition – *Toast*

Jeff is a talent acquisition leader that has been recruiting for almost 25 years. Prior to Toast, he worked at Mathworks, TripAdvisor and Google where he led the recruiting effort for several major product areas. He is passionate about scaling organisations and helping them build consistent processes and behaviors that allow them to maximise their talent pools while creating equitable practices.



Katie Moriarty

Director, Talent Acquisition – *SevenRooms*

Katie is the Director of Talent Acquisition at SevenRooms where she leads a team of talented recruiters who have helped grow SevenRooms to 300+ employees around the globe. Katie has spent her 15+ year career hiring talent and building recruiting processes for high-growth tech companies, like Spotify, Vistaprint, mParticle, Pinterest and BuzzFeed.

Judges comments

Katie is a great TA leader. We particularly liked her answers around innovation and team communication.

Finalist insights

"We regularly look at our DEI numbers and think about what we could be doing differently. Some of the strategies that have had a significant impact for us include emphasising behavioural changes, such as shifting how we communicate, our approach to sourcing and interviewing and ensuring the use of inclusive language in our job descriptions. We have revamped our interviewer and hiring manager trainings to encourage more deliberate focus on building inclusive hiring processes.

For me, one of the most important aspects of being a leader is investing in building genuine relationships with your team and being consistently transparent. This connection makes it easier to communicate unexpected changes and navigate challenges together. Recruiting is filled with change, quick pivots and roadblocks, so I try to share as much about the 'why' as possible. It's important to talk about where the business is today and what's coming up in the future.

With every offer that we give out, we include a gift card for a restaurant within one of the hospitality groups that we have as a client. Candidates invest a lot of their time and energy into interviewing so this is our small way of saying thank you. This allows us to bridge the candidate and product experience together in a way that is unique to SevenRooms and our mission. It has been really powerful."

Judges comments

Andy is an innovative TA leader. We loved hearing about some truly unique talent attraction ideas that were implemented at Atlassian to access communities outside of the usual talent pools. We found Andy to be open, honest and insightful in our interview.

Finalist insights

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Make sure the employer brand is true to the experience rather than being a pure talent attraction.

The best innovation is when you take the things that are important to your business, particularly your executive team and turn them into the initiatives that help you hire more effectively for that company.

Your actions when you operate are really important. We specifically said we do not have diversity recruiters, we do not have diversity sourcers. We have an expectation for everyone in our team of how they deliver their work. And so we wanted that accountability to really sit with everyone and that shows up in some of that practice.

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Andy Mountney

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Atlassian*

Andy is an established global talent acquisition professional leading Atlassian’s team. Operating across Australasia, the Americas, EMEA, India and Asia the team delivers experienced hires, early career talent and executives in a dynamic software company. Andy, and the team, are committed to delivering on Atlassian’s openly published DEI strategy. To drive this Andy has a keen focus on sharing insights into Atlassian’s culture. Prior to joining Atlassian Andy grew in-house talent acquisition functions across the tech sector and other industries as an industry consultant out of the UK.



Jennifer Mullen

Director, Talent Acquisition - Global GTM & US Sales – *Intuit*

Jennifer has spent the last 15 years working in recruitment, and is currently the Director, Talent Acquisition for Global Go To Market at Intuit. She has spent the majority of her career in the tech industry, spending time at Yahoo, Expedia and now Intuit.
Intuit is 40 years old and is famous in Silicon Valley for being able to constantly reinvent itself with a product portfolio that includes Quickbooks, Turbotax, Mailchimp and Credit Karma. Jennifer's current role requires her to lead a global team based in the US, UK, Ireland, Australia and Canada and to accelerate growth into new markets.

Judges comments

Jennifer is a passionate and insightful TA leader. We saw a proactive approach to change and substantial innovation being driven from her leadership.

Finalist insights

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Our 'Assessing for Awesome' assessment process ensures speed to hire, quality of hire and a delightful experience for our candidates. It requires hiring teams to do work up front to really think through the most critical skills needed for a role, and how they will assess for these skills, but this work up front ensures we make great hires, and that all candidates have a great experience whether they get the job or not.

We are very focused on increasing internal mobility rates across the company, and have approached this problem by testing our way to the right solutions. We have focused on driving accountability with managers to both import and export internal talent. Educating employees on how to grow their careers at Intuit and experimenting with ways to encourage more employees to consider mobility.

In our people and places organisation we have invested heavily in resources dedicated to programme management to ensure we are scaling the work we do and affectively supporting our employees through change. Taking the time to do this well ensures adoption of whatever change we are making.

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Judges comments

We really enjoyed the conversation with Akshay. It was great to hear about innovating as a scaleup within a legacy corporate.

Finalist insights

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Take the time to celebrate the wins as they come. That doesn’t mean you’re stopping or pausing. Take those small wins as a sign and use them as a data point that you’re going in the right direction.

The biggest challenge facing TA leaders right now is doing more with less. How do we make sure that we are still seen as a huge value add at an organisational level and that our identity is not just based on a number of reqs that we are hiring and that the leaders understand the long cycle of TA that happens outside of those workforce plans.

Being able to open doors for people who look like me, who are like me, who may not have ever seen themselves in a tech company and being able to make those dreams come true, I think that’s the best thing about what I do. Really helping people connect those dots and change the question from why me to why not me?

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Akshay Nair

Director of Recruiting – *Blue River Technology*

Akshay is a seasoned talent acquisition leader who has built and led world-class technology recruiting teams at both rapidly growing start-ups and Fortune 500 companies. With a remarkable 15-year tenure at Google, he has been a part of recruiting teams across multiple regions, including Asia, Europe and North America. Akshay holds a BS in Engineering and an MS in Human Resources, combining technical expertise with a deep understanding of people and organisational dynamics. As the Director of Recruiting at Blue River Technology, Akshay plays a pivotal role in leading the recruiting organisation.



Chris Oliver

Global Head of Talent – *Improbable*

Chris spent the first part of his career building infrastructure, dev ops and SRE teams within the fintech space. At Talentful, he worked onsite with Riot Games building their publishing and eSports leadership teams, reigniting a passion for gaming and incredible storytelling. Today, he is the Global Head of Talent for Improbable where he has focused on the growth of their UK and US games studios. More recently he has taken ownership of their metaverse prototyping and web3 environments. As well as being an avid reader, Chris is passionate about deeptech and AI and blending those into everyday life.

Judges comments

Chris is a passionate talent leader. It's rare to find someone who immerses themselves so much in the product of the company he works for and it shows in his results.

Finalist insights

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For a long time recruitment has been considered as a sales role, but I'm a pretty firm believer that a better comparison is in fact marketing. We build communities, we represent the business and communicate our company's products and their vision.

We try to understand where we want to impact where we can impact and then design solutions with this in mind. If you're willing to look in the mirror and see what your company currently is, you will always find the easiest ways to adapt to make yourselves more appealing. If you do not understand the product you're representing, it will never be represented well.

We're working to create our own academy to help us find people that will come through Improbable to learn our tools and bespoke technologies. We'll teach them best practices and give them an opportunity to work on our actual products alongside our teams. Longer term we would look to partner with charities and third parties if our initial approach is a success, We're hoping this will play a small part in bridging the digital skills gap.

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Judges comments

We really enjoyed the conversation with Jessica, she brings a varied background of connecting people across other industries which gives her a unique viewpoint in leading TA.

Finalist insights

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As a team we are committed to reviewing resumes and not using AI to eliminate candidates. This is very personal to me because I have an unconventional resume and we're also founded by two veterans. It's known that veterans don't often have those clear transferable titles, nor do I, nor do many of the recruiters on my team. Algorithms searching for specific titles or a linear career path would chew us up and spit us out. It would not go well. You need people in our industry who are going to take the time to really look for transferable skills and understand your story.

During a time when we're experiencing tremendous growth, we especially need to focus on diversity despite the rush. A big area of intentional change for us was related to referrals. What's demonstrated in the data is that people tend to know, and refer, candidates of the same sex, education level, socio-economic level, race, etc. If you rely too highly on referrals, you just end up with a lot of similar people on your team. So we made a pledge that referrals wouldn't have an advantage. Candidates aren't guaranteed a phone screen or an interview just because they're a referral. They need to meet all the same criteria we ask of other candidates.

We created something called 'the recruiter 30 day check in'. Recruiters meet one on one with the people they hired after they've been at our company for 30 days. While traditionally that might be something an HRBP would do, we saw a lot of value as a recruiting team. We partner very closely with the hiring managers that we support so we often recruit for the same roles again. So for example, if I just hired you to fill one of three similar vacancies I want the feedback right away on how it's going. How could I better describe the team or environment? What's something you found within the role that I didn't mention or that you love? Feed me that nugget so that I can be even more effective and authentic for the next candidate.

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Jessica Paddock

Senior Director of Recruiting – *Unite Us*

Jessica is a connector. Her desire to connect people to new experiences and opportunities has been a consistent motivator in both her professional and personal life. In her time leading at Unite Us, Jessica has developed scalable processes and designed a best-in-class recruiting vertical, which has grown the business from 100 to 1,000 teammates. Jessica's approach to leadership strongly reflects her personal values. Fittingly, she has built a naturally curious team skilled in identifying and advocating for unconventional resumes through good human connection.



Roopesh Panchasra

Global Head of Talent Acquisition (Interim)
– *Uber*

Roopesh has spent the last 25+ years working with some of the best minds and influencers within global talent acquisition. He is currently the Interim Talent Acquisition Leader for Uber where he is the global lead for executive-level hiring. Previously he has been blessed with opportunities to build and lead TA teams at SAP, Workday, Expedia and VMware. Prior to moving in-house he spent 10 years at an executive search firm focused on the technology sector. Combining creative thinking with inventiveness and technology have allowed his teams to successfully impact and drive optimal experiences, alongside a magnified lens on inclusivity, fun and data-driven strategies.

Judges comments

Roopesh is an innovative and passionate talent leader. It's clear to us that he's pushing the boundaries of modern talent acquisition. His experience of hiring at hyper-scale was fascinating to hear about.

Finalist insights

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Innovation in the TA process is paramount and necessary to remove subjectivity and bias in a process that has stayed the same for so long. It's a necessity because if people like me don't embrace it, then the role of the recruiter will become obsolete, period. So we need to evolve the way we work.

If you're developing talent communities, if you're pushing out information, if you're sharing updates on new hires, then the way you do it, the frequency that you do it, the language that you use is very different depending on the talent community you want to communicate with. And that's helped us significantly because now it's a tailored message to the respective channel.

We use a technology where it's a sentiment analysis. So in the stage of a recruiting journey from your application to you getting an offer, you have five different surveys to complete. Now they're very short, they're mobile enabled. You can use voice. They love the service that they're getting. But you know what? At the scheduling stage it's really poor, so we can concentrate our efforts there. That's a game changer as well in terms of our strategy and where we focus our investments.

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Judges comments

Shirin is a passionate and transparent TA leader. We particularly liked her views on team leadership and change management.

Finalist insights

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I like to give my team exposure and opportunities to learn new skills so when they leave, it’s for an interesting job, making more money.

I’m really high on integrity and a rule follower. However, I’ve learned the value of being flexible to support the business in meeting their goals.

We’ve really sold the value of structured interviewing at Fastly because it’s better for everyone if we spend the time upfront to create a fair and equitable interview process.

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Shirin Parineh

Head of Global Talent Acquisition – *Fastly*

Shirin is the Head of Global Talent Acquisition at Fastly. With a passion for sales, speed and relationship building - talent acquisition is a natural fit. She has successfully built a world-class recruiting organisation, which built Fastly from 100 to over 1100+ through an IPO (and the pandemic). Before starting a career in talent acquisition, Shirin had a successful career in real estate and then corporate sales. Shirin is a natural born leader with sincere passion for all humans - it is demonstrated in everything she does.



Matthew Parker

Director of International Talent – *Procore*

Matthew started his career in executive search, guiding technology companies worldwide as they scaled. Later he joined Ratesetter (now Plenti) in Australia and since returning to the UK, he has partnered with fast growing technology companies like Zapp, Culture Amp and now Procore where he now leads all international hiring.

Judges comments

Matthew is an insightful and passionate TA leader. We particularly loved his work on assessment and intentional sourcing.

Finalist insights

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For me, assessment methodology is key. If I was to give one message to all recruiters as they build their career, it is to have a really strong intellectual understanding of assessment methodology. If you can get that right by really understanding what it takes to thoroughly predict success in a role and you can build out the language that helps you communicate that, you will enable your hiring managers to hire the right people and ensure you are being inclusive in your hiring practices. This will drive the ultimate recruiting partnership outcome.

The two most important roles in a business are your recruiter, and your SDR. The recruiter is the first person that speaks to your employee and the SDR is the first person that speaks to your customer.

We are so excited about the scorecard and assessment process foundation that we do because we think that it will have such a long lasting ability for all recruiters to partner and guide, and advise the business in a more strategic way than they ever have been able to.

We introduced ‘the intentional sourcing strategy’ where the key for this was to give ourselves a bit of time just to get ahead of what the job market was going to give us. We recognised that, if we continue just to let job applications run the roost of our talent pool, we were just going to continue to double down on the demographics that were already in place.

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Judges comments

Sam is an entreprenuerial and strategic TA leader. She's a real innovator, has her finger right on the pulse of TA tech and even setup and runs a successful startup of her own.

Finalist insights

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I think it's so critical to understand that recruiting is so much more than just, 'Hey, I'm going to find a great candidate and hire them'. There's everything else that goes into the entire talent ecosystem - including looking at performance management and talent development. As well as building out what the hiring manager partnership and candidate experience journey should look like. It's crucial to make sure your team is really internalising that and that they see they can provide value in so many other ways beyond just hiring.

We made it a focus that we are going to build diverse pipelines and held the team (recruiters and hiring managers) to that. It was non-negotiable for me. If we're going to say we care about building a diverse team, we have to be direct and I have to be able to show movement and show the numbers - keeping in mind that you also need to build sustainable diversity, equity, and inclusion practices so that you can retain and support the talent you bring in.

I really pride myself on being a great manager. You're both caring about them as people and about their success in their roles. It's making sure they have a growth framework in place and you're regularly and consistently supporting their growth and career development.

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Samantha Perlman

Head of Talent
– OneSignal

Sam is the Head of Talent at OneSignal. She is a people-focused, results and impact-driven leader. She's passionate about candidate experience, talent development, DE&I and overall process efficiency. Throughout her career, she has focused on building and leading high-performing talent teams and helping tech companies like Fastly, Airbnb, and Venmo build for scale, putting sustainable processes in place to hire and retain top talent. She's also particularly familiar with the startup and incubator/accelerator scene, having gone through Stanford's accelerator, StartX, and YC's fellowship with her own startup.



Daniel Phelps

Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition & People Analytics – *Genesys*

Daniel is the Head of Talent Acquisition and People Analytics at Genesys, leading the global recruiting strategy and workforce analytics team. With extensive international experience in human resources, he has led teams across gaming, non-profit open-source, digital media, cloud software and customer experience software. He thrives in high-growth, complex, ever-changing environments, where he passionately explores new technologies to tackle business challenges. As a builder and optimiser, he devises strategies to attract, engage and retain exceptional talent, placing a strong emphasis on empathy, diversity, belonging and inclusion.

Judges comments

It was great to talk about Daniel's journey at Genesys. We really enjoyed talking about his work in retaining and developing team members and DEI initiatives.

Finalist insights

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We've created what we call an 'experience index'. It's an internal survey which tracks the life-cycle of the workforce. So it starts with recruiting, then all the way to operating through to development.

We're focusing on how we bring a development aspect into our employee's careers and how we look at other aspects like succession. We're working on a pilot programme right now, taking our affinity group participants and matching them with coaches who can empower and enable them to grow so they can become more comfortable in the role they are already in, are ready for different jobs within the company, or to gain confidence for larger scale jobs.

We've committed to further increasing our diversity through gender, ethnicity and racial representation to have a workforce that is as diverse as the markets that we work in. We've done a lot of manager enablement to mitigate unconscious bias and use criteria that are tied to the actual needs of a job.

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Judges comments

Brian is a highly data-driven and insightful TA leader. We particularly liked his honest, transparent approach and strategic mindset.

Finalist insights

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I have always prioritised building very comprehensive and accurate reporting suites across the breadth of teams that I'm supporting. It starts with the intent of actually serving the HR organisation. That's typically the starting point. But with every analytics person that I've hired, I always primed them that not only do we want the capability to be accurate, streamlined and automated, we eventually want to make this product something that empowers our clients in the business. I actually want to get to an end state where they can self-serve.

Having someone in the organisation who is focused on D&I day-to-day is super important. But the other piece of it that has actually been of greater importance is laddering goals that we create for our organisation into the goals of the D&I team who also sit with us under the people org. Because if we understand what outcomes they're trying to achieve, then we can provide the support that they need to get to those outcomes.

We're committed to improving representation at the company. We have a slate diversity initiative in our hiring process that aims to have at least two under-represented minorities and/or women on the interview slate. And so, that's a mechanism that helps keep us organisationally accountable. It's also clearly articulated so that our business leaders understand that it's an expectation and there's a responsibility across the organisation for us to evaluate a broad group of individuals.

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Brian Riley

Vice President,
Global Talent Acquisition
– *Riot Games*

Brian has been in the HR and talent acquisition space for nearly 20 years. He is currently the VP of Global Talent Acquisition at Riot Games where he leads the global talent acquisition function which includes professional, campus, executive, operations, and diversity talent acquisition efforts across Riot's portfolio of 20+ global offices and over 4,000 current employees. Prior to Riot Games, Brian led talent acquisition and HR organisations at Amazon, Capital One and MicroStrategy, and started his career in the recruiting agency space.



Susan Ross

Global Head of Talent Acquisition for Global Field Operations – *Elastic*

Susan Ross has 20 years of diversified recruiting experience in mid-sized agency and pre-IPO high-tech companies. She has expertise in driving the staffing and recruiting process, hiring the best staffing teams, and building close working relationships with the hiring manager at some of the most prestigious software companies. She has experience recruiting and managing large teams supporting Americas, LACA, EMEA and APAC regions and has held several leadership positions in her career at Elastic, New Relic, DocuSign, SAP SuccessFactors, Salesforce and Aspect Software.

Judges comments

Susan is an insightful talent leader, she showed exceptional ability to pivot her team based on data, particularly with reference to quality of hire.

Finalist insights

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PI (Predictive Index) will show your assertiveness, which is your dominance, your interpersonal skills, your patience, and your need for formality. It’s the four main criteria. So we looked at all of our top performers, built this pattern of success, and then we used it every time we’re interviewing. The nice thing about the PI, it’s only a 4-7 minute assessment, unlike some of the others that take 20 minutes, or an hour, I didn’t want to slow the process. So then after a year, we evaluated those that we had used the PI on and we could show 5x more likelihood that they would hit their number.

We were starting to see some of our top performers leave, and we had to change. We weren’t competing well with the pre-IPOs, and so we were seeing a lot of people leaving to go into pre-IPO. They were attracted by the thought of becoming a millionaire in two years, which doesn’t happen for many people, so we actually took the data and we built up a case to shorten our vesting to three years and make it vest immediately upon commencement, which is kind of unheard of.

I think the best companies are looking at their top performers and looking at who they are. Why are they more successful? Having that sophistication and looking at your core DNA and being able to have an objective way to look at people, I want to do that more.

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Judges comments

Matthias is a passionate and insightful TA leader. We loved his mix of experience across startups and larger businesses, which gives him a unique insight. He's a big advocate for the Berlin TA community shown by the co-founding of his own community.

Finalist insights

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In order to transition into skills-based hiring, we are rolling out hiring manager and interviewer training to coach our stakeholders to learn how to predict future job performance in our hiring process and ensure quality of hire. We coach them with licence to hire certificate via an online learning platform, interview intelligence tooling (shadow process) and onsite training on specific interview situations to master scorecards and hiring decisions better.

In my experience, the best strategy is not working if the organisation is not clear about the how, the execution. I saw good strategies failing because of the lack of commitment and alignment in the organisation.

When you have setbacks in your early career try to understand the problem statement before you come up with a solution. It might not be you that needs to change or adjust but you were rather in the wrong environment and culture that didn't leverage your skills in the best possible way. If you have a real idea of what you want to do, go and do it because bold ideas will change the game.

I am constantly working on becoming a better leader. How do you work with people? How do you understand them, how do you coach to develop them? Invest in that and really never stop learning and really developing yourself further.

"



Matthias Schmeisser

Global Director, Talent Acquisition – *Emnify*

Matthias is currently the Global Director, Talent Acquisition & Employer Branding at emnify. He is an inclusive talent acquisition leader and change management enthusiast with over 13 years of experience in talent acquisition in different businesses from corporate companies like Zalando and Scout24 to smaller scale-ups like Beamery and Visual Meta. As a co-host and anchor of the TalentSavvy Podcast, he regularly speaks with global TA leaders about the trends, challenges and best practices to share insights with like-minded people. Matthias is also the Co-Founder of TA Crunch Berlin community that builds connections and fosters inclusion among TA professionals in Berlin.



Cody Schrotel

Vice President, Talent Acquisition – *Collibra*

Cody Schrotel is the VP Talent Acquisition at Collibra, responsible for global talent acquisition, employer brand and people analytics. In this role, he has helped Collibra scale from 150 to 1100+ employees, establish their employer value proposition as well as build and refine a predictable, repeatable, and measured talent acquisition engine. Prior to his role at Collibra, Cody served as an executive recruiter at Daversa Partners where he partnered with venture-backed companies to build out their management teams.

Judges comments

Cody is a strategic and focused TA leader. We found him humble, insightful and very forward-looking.

Finalist insights

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As we scaled we had to transform a number of things to be able to target and attract the ideal talent. One of the first things we did was build ideal candidate profiles around critical roles, and evolve our process into a structured interview process to support the growth.

My philosophy with change management is to leave as many breadcrumbs as you can, when you can. Help people anticipate it; the less surprise and shock there is, then the faster you can help people progress through the change management curve, into acceptance and beyond. Helping them understand why the change is happening and how it impacts them, helps them see the bigger picture, goal or purpose.

We created a self-service tool where our recruiters can go for insights. There’s a total of nine key metrics that measure how they’re tracking, aggregating over the course of the year. Now it’s less about managers showing target metrics and reviewing wins and losses, but instead is a way for our people to assess themselves and use it as a development tool.

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Judges comments

Lori is a pragmatic TA leader. It's clear that she's well suited to leadership in a startup, giving calm, practical advice.

Finalist insights

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The innovation piece is really just looking at what people are not doing. But for me, it's also the employee and talent brand. How are you a destination workplace?

It's about the intention, the impact and then the meaning. And the relationships that you form along the way. That's how I've created my hurricane of innovation.

We are curbing that urgency by being more proactive versus reactive. We're thinking ahead from a workforce management perspective across the entire organisation. I set the expectations with our hiring managers and our candidates and therefore everybody is aligned.

Advice that I would give my younger self would be to take time to grow where you want to go. It's not going to happen overnight.

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Lori Schwartz Noel

Director of Recruiting – *ZenBusiness*

Lori is a talent acquisition leader from the midwest and has over 12 years of experience in various industries. She has dedicated more than half of her career to startups. As a military spouse, mother of four and avid traveler, she cherishes spending time with loved ones. In her leisure, she is a Board Member for a non-profit outdoor education camp and indulges in the joy of reading. She holds an M.Ed and is passionate about the practice of life-long learning. She is currently the Head of Talent Acquisition for an Austin-based startup ZenBusiness.



Kevin Seay

Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *Gorillas*

Kevin is a French-American who grew up in California and has lived in 5 countries, eventually settling down in Berlin, Germany. After realising sales wasn't the right fit for him, he started his TA career at an international recruitment agency and never looked back. While working at Facebook (now Meta) during a time of hyper-growth he decided to transition to the startup/scaleup scene where decision-making moves fast and org structures are flatter. Most recently, he joined Gorillas at seed stage and built the entire recruitment engine from scratch. Thousands of hires later his values remain the same: be authentic, foster collaboration, continuous ownership, create transparency and learn to adapt.

Judges comments

Kevin is an honest, emphathetic and insightful leader. We've seen his work first-hand in the rapid scaling of Gorillas to $3b vauation in just 18 months, so there's no doubt he's a brilliant TA leader.

Finalist insights

"I believe in disseminating as much information as you can and getting the teams within the team to communicate as much as possible versus it always being a TA org three hour meeting every week. You lose people after 45 minutes anyway. So I think the more that you disseminate and the more that you build in asynchronous communication, the more this frees up space and increases engagement when you do speak. I'm not a fan of meeting after meeting after meeting at all.

Failure has been my ultimate teacher. I failed a lot, and the fear of failure should never hold you back from trying something because you will never know what awaits you if you don't explore the path."

Judges comments

Jane is an emphatic and strategic leader. She's the perfect person for founders to have in their corner when scaling a successful tech business.

Finalist insights

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Over the past 25 years I have continuously chosen projects where the key challenge is to create v1. Whether that's the first dot com recruiter in a search firm in 1997, to being the first female Talent Director in an early-stage VC in Europe in 2012. To sail this horizon-line for 25 years, I've worked out that I can only sustain my best work if I've got freedom to create, to learn, to find joy and, as a permanent habit, build in ways to replenish my energy.

As I step further into my own leadership journey, I want to 'lead with grace', to aim big and also enjoy each step, even - especially - the missteps which feel scary and hard.

At AlbionVC we're on a 5 year mission to build a world class value creation platform. As a team, we've embedded a product development mindset in all of our initiatives. This means user-testing as much as we can and being radically open-minded to failing a lot, or to letting go of fixed beliefs; it's a core component of innovation.

The most important learning for me is to pay attention to both mindset and modality. It's only by mastering my capability to adapt both of these things, consciously, that I truly show up as brave, strong, mindful, collaborative and consistent yet vulnerable.

"



Jane Reddin

Partner, Platform & Talent – *AlbionVC*

Jane is a Partner for Talent and Platform at AlbionVC and helps b2b software and healthtech founders scale the human capital dimension of their company. She leads the AlbionVC platform team which provides access to deep expertise on growth strategy alignment, leadership team hiring, organisational scaling and founder leader development. In her 25-year career, she has worked as the Talent Director at Balderton Capital where she built the proposition which provides talent strategy and leadership development to Balderton CEOs and founder teams. Reddin was also the co-founder of The Talent Stack, a talent management consulting company for startups.



Thiago Silva

Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition – *Fivetran*

Thiago is an accomplished and innovative talent acquisition executive known for his strategic leadership and commitment to building high-performing teams globally. With a proven track record, Thiago has successfully attracted top talent, driven organisational growth and cultivated award-winning company cultures at renowned companies like Tesla, Kellogg and Fivetran. His expertise extends beyond traditional talent acquisition practices and he excels at helping fast-growing companies scale globally with a focus on effectiveness and efficiency.

Judges comments

Thiago is a data-driven TA leader. We particularly liked his approach to team management, allowing teams to really thrive under his stewardship.

Finalist insights

“

I have always used data to learn from the past; what worked and what did not, to learn how we can do things better. Recently we started calling it ‘predictive analytics’ - essentially it means understanding historical data and what factors predict success. Once you identify those, you can make better strategic decisions because they are grounded in facts and data. By leveraging data and statistical models, we have been able to identify and attract the most suitable candidates and streamline our recruitment processes and overall outcomes.

The key to driving change is to get people excited about it and the opportunity it brings. I start with sharing a vision that people can get excited about and do it in the format of a story. Once people are excited about the change, I let them take ownership. And do it across all levels from individual contributors to the c-suite. There is a fine line between forcing people to go through change (eg micromanaging) and empowering them to take ownership of being a change leader. The first is hard for everybody and the second feels like playing music.

Our secret to success in finding great diverse talent is using our own employees as recruiters. If you have happy employees and set up a robust employee referral programme, you will see a very strong rate of referral hires only by leveraging people’s personal networks and word of mouth. ERPs can not only boost your overall employee engagement, but it is also a cost-effective source of high-quality candidates. Additionally, referral hires have been shown to have higher job satisfaction, longer tenures and have a positive impact on team dynamics.

”

Judges comments

Tom is an innovative and articulate talent leader, solving some of the toughest recruiting challenges in AI. We found the conversation highly interesting and informative.

Finalist insights

“

I think about innovation holistically, spotting collaboration points within the TA team and across the company.

Innovation isn’t static. It’s something that needs to be continually reassessed to ensure talent acquisition stays ahead. I try to challenge myself and my team, to make sure we bring innovative thinking into our goals and planning.

Executive level sponsorship is critical for a DE&I strategy. It sends a strong signal to the organisation and is a key factor in enabling DE&I programmes to move forward.

”



Tom Simons

Director, Talent Acquisition – *Google DeepMind*

Tom is a global talent acquisition leader with multi-sector experience. He has a track record of scaling organisations and developing long-term talent strategies that intersect with diversity, equity and inclusion. Currently at Google DeepMind, he plays an instrumental role in developing a cutting-edge talent strategy to attract and retain world leading AI talent.

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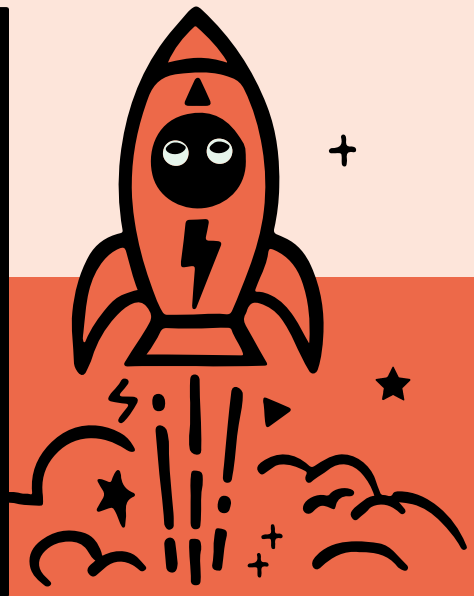

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Judges comments

Fritz struck us as a thoughtful and empathetic leader. He showed great insight across all questions, particularly on change management and DEIB. He showed a truly strategic approach completely aligning with the business strategy.

Finalist insights

“

There are a lot of great tools out there, but if you try to implement five tools at once you have to consider tech fatigue. There’s a lot of change management to consider both for your team and the wider business. It’s important to be thoughtful around when you implement and how you implement to drive the most efficiency.

We implemented a two week diversity sourcing window, which helped us to get under-represented groups into our hiring funnel before referrals and direct applicants ensuring a better chance of hiring diverse talent. Year-to-date we’re at 43% against the goal of 40% so we’re really seeing the results of our actions.

Getting change agents to buy-in early in any change management process is critical.

A career is like a rock climbing wall, not a ladder. You may take a step forward or backwards, but focus on what’s best for your end goal.

”



Fritz Singer

Vice President, Talent Acquisition – *Personio*

Fritz is a proven talent acquisition leader with continued success in high growth tech organisations, including Uber, Lime, Checkout.com and most recently Personio. He started his recruiting career in San Francisco before moving to Amsterdam seven years ago. While at Uber, he experienced the company grow from 400 to 24k employees in 5 years, so is no stranger to fast-paced environments. His experience includes supporting hiring in 50+ countries, building teams from the ground up and driving operational excellence through data, tools, processes and programs.



Manjuri Sinha

Global Director of Talent Acquisition, Employer Branding & Onboarding – *OLX*

Manjuri has over 20 years of international experience across HR with expertise in talent acquisition, talent management, DEI and HR business partnering within IT consulting, e-commerce, business process outsourcing and manufacturing. Presently she is heading up talent acquisition strategy globally, including overseeing the team, employer branding and onboarding, for OLX , a Prosus Naspers company. Prior to joining OLX, she held HR and senior leadership positions within talent acquisition at Zalando GmBH, Accenture and MphasiS (formerly HP).

Judges comments

Manjuri is a passionate and influential TA leader. She had incredible examples of innovation and is visionary about the future of TA.

Finalist insights

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The first mode of innovation is your talent team architecture. How do you ensure that this is supporting the stakeholders? One part of it is candidate-facing, the other part is business-facing, and then there’s the foundational support such as employee branding and operations that really supports you as the TA leader.

Automation is not new for TA, we’ve been using it for a long time - such as moving the entire interview scheduling to a machine-based learning tool which has shortened our overall time to hire. The candidate definitely feels that they are completely in charge of how they’re booking and changing the calendar.

I do not believe in just having fluffy fancy things around diversity and inclusion, and prefer to focus on making a direct impact. For instance, there is an approach of what I call ‘name and shame’. You pull out your workforce representation data, go to your c-suite, have an open conversation with them, literally make the workforce representation data transparent at least internally, so the areas of improvement are obvious.

”

Judges comments

David is an insightful, data-driven leader, focused on the future of TA. We were impressed with his DE&I strategies and use of technology.

Finalist insights

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We laid out our roadmap to really think about, organisationally, how we support our customers. We brought in new technology including AI and made everything more community-driven.

I created a bunch of committees to get people around the world from different functions talking to each other. To really share their own experience and let them figure it out.

Firstly recognise that, in order to actually be inclusive, you need to hire people that look like the people we want to attract. When I grew the team from eight to 42, it was intentional to bring on folks from various backgrounds. I promoted women into leadership roles. And I think it's really important that you have to start with yourself and your team in terms of representation.

Learn how to lead with data. You have to have the appetite to invest in your systems. It's overly said, and under-utilised, in terms of how you apply data.

"



David St. Cyr

Formerly Global Director, Talent Acquisition – *Dynatrace*

David has 20+ years leading talent acquisition, people and culture for small and mid-size high-growth SaaS and global Fortune 500 companies. David has built high-performing teams that supported 80+ counties. Prior to Dynatrace, David was Exa Corporation's first Head of People & Culture. There he centralised operations across five countries, and later was an integration lead following the acquisition by Dassault Systémes. Previously, David held a lead role in talent acquisition for IBM's growth market in Central Europe, Middle East and North Africa regions.



Thom Staight

GM Head of Talent Acquisition EMEA – *Microsoft*

Thom currently leads Microsoft's TA teams for the EMEA region. During eight years at Microsoft he has led technical recruiting teams, built sourcing functions and led US-based TA teams. Prior to Microsoft, Thom spent 15 years in recruiting agency in the UK.

Judges comments

Great to talk to Thom on a range of subjects including use of generative AI, communicating through change and use of data to influence.

Finalist insights

"

The first part around innovation is really to truly understand what is the problem you're trying to solve, and if you do solve that problem, what is the impact you're going to bring? That stops you doing a lot of things that you would otherwise waste a whole lot of time on, which might solve the problem, but actually a problem which once you solved it, wasn't going to bring massive amounts of impact to the customer or to anyone else. So I think spending more time diagnosing what the actual problem is that you're solving, and what the impact you're trying to bring is, and then once you've done that, just be bold about bringing out a solution.

There's some really obvious places where recruiters spend a lot of time at the moment where I think generative AI will save a lot of time. Things like scheduling. How many hours a week do recruiters and sourcers waste scheduling screening conversations? We estimate it's 10 to 15% of their time is spent scheduling, rescheduling, scheduling again. The previous generation scheduling tools were pretty good but the next generation are going to be out of this world.

Data goes a long way in Microsoft. People will throw opinions at you but if you can use data to show people the reality then they find it very hard to argue against that. Particularly engineers.

"

Judges comments

Elena is a pragmatic and insightful TA leader. We enjoyed our conversation about how to move on after challenging moments and the rise of the Chief Recruiting Officer.

Finalist insights

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The strategic placement of recruitment within a business can yield groundbreaking innovation. This is why when I join a company, my immediate priority is to position recruiting as a strategic partner and ensure alignment with both the founders and the leadership team.

I’ve come to realise that everybody’s experience is valuable, regardless of how many years or how many companies you’ve worked at.

The competency framework impacts the entire candidate-to-employee journey. It’s the thread that connects all the dots to the talent in a business.

Focusing on the foundational pieces can really go a long way when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Making sure we have a structured interview process - not groundbreaking but very effective. There’s a lot that goes into that because you need to make sure that it also translates into the quality of hire. You need to train your hiring managers to effectively scope a role, your interviewers to know what and how to assess a candidate and ensure everyone is evaluated fairly as we uncover the best talent for our organisation.

”



Elena Stefanopol

Director of Recruiting – *Labelbox*

Elena is a seasoned talent acquisition professional with extensive experience in building global and inclusive teams. She currently serves as the Director of Recruiting at Labelbox, where she harnesses her passion for establishing and growing talent functions from scratch. Over the past ten years, Elena has refined her recruiting skills, working in different growth stages from early-stage startups to more established companies across the tech, gaming and non-profit sectors. Before joining Labelbox Elena led recruiting for Airbnb’s R&D organisation, building the team behind Samara’s flagship product - Backyard.



Lehua Stonebraker

Senior Vice President, People – *Smart Recruiters*

Lehua leads SmartRecruiters global people team whose mission is to empower every employee to reach their full potential. She has over 20 years of recruitment, employment brand, HR operations and strategy, M&A and consulting experience. Lehua has worked for some of the world's most recognised brands including Gallup, TD Ameritrade and most recently at Ceridian, where she helped the organisation successfully enter multiple new markets through eight acquisitions in 18 months.

Judges comments

Lehua's interview was really insightful. We particularly loved hearing about her vast experience of M&A on a global basis.

Finalist insights

"We are creating a partnership with both Slack and Teams. Meeting people where they're at with the ability to open jobs, schedule interviews and provide feedback as a starting point with this new integration. We are removing barriers that become traditional obstacles for recruiters and hiring managers to create a boundless environment. Whether it's allowing you to plug into different systems, whether it's allowing your data to do the talking back and forth or whether it's meeting people where they work.

Last year, we established what we call an 'employee board'. The voice of the employee. So it's not just company leaders or HR that is listening, it's really a cross representation of the company. We have created a panel to represent the 'employee brand'. They meet together on their own, and then once a month, they check in with myself and our CEO to make sure that they're getting the business updates they need to recommend solutions that will address our employees greatest needs."

Judges comment

Punith is a stand-out TA leader. There were so many wow-moments in his interview, we couldn't count them. He should write a book!

Finalist insights

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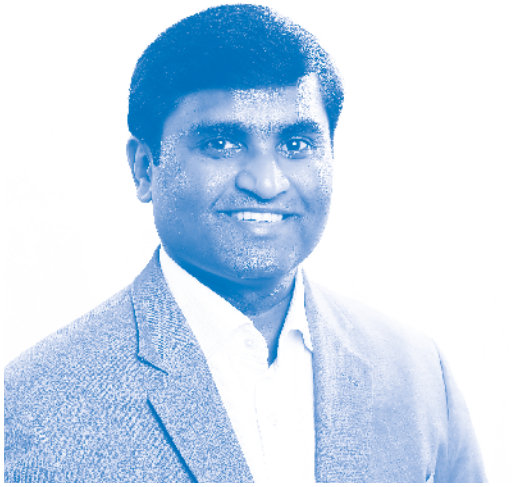
I had the opportunity to set up a diversity TA team with a focus on bringing in a diverse pipeline at top of the funnel. From my personal perspective, diversity hiring is everyone's responsibility, and we need to drive top-down communication from the senior leadership team to all employees. Secondly, we need to clearly articulate 'why' diversity hiring is more important than focusing on numbers.

We identified and implemented a tech assessment tool at the enterprise level for tech talent, and we eliminated tech phone screens which resulted in consistent quality throughput, increased candidate experience and hiring velocity.

We implemented the strategy 'Everyone is a recruiter' to business leaders. The goal is to leverage the senior and hiring teams as the company's brand evangelists to attract diverse talent. We primarily covered – how to rock your profile, how to leverage first degree connections and how to share content and company stories with prospects.

"



Punith Suvarna

Vice President, Global Head of Talent Acquisition
– PayPal

Punith is an innovative thought leader and a results-oriented global executive leader of talent acquisition. Presently he is the VP, Global Head of Talent Acquisition at PayPal where he is responsible for global talent aquisition strategy to drive growth and scale through innovative approaches to global hiring. Formerly, he has held senior positions in the HR and talent acquisition space with Adobe Inc, LinkedIn, Adobe (India), Bank of America, Ness Technologies, Symphony Services and i2 Technologies.



Kimberly Ta Vuong

Global Talent Leader
– *Tiktok*

Kimberly is a HR and talent leader with over 20 years of experience in strategic leadership across talent acquisition, employment brand, early career, project management, programme development, talent management, HR business partners and operations management.

Judges comments

Kimberly is a passionate and enthusiastic talent leader. We loved talking about her experience of hyper-scaling TikTok.

Finalist insights

"We built out an e-learning product that educates the wider team on DEIB, the interview process, do's and don'ts and best practices. So that everyone can be more well-rounded in their approach to interviewing and considering candidates.

In a very hyper-growth stage, we were able to build a structured interview that helped us hire faster without the hiring manager involvement. A hiring manager is one person, right? And for them to be a part of every single meeting and discussion, they are spread so thin, especially when you're growing so fast.

I think that candidate calibration is really important when your leadership teams and your interviewers have a really strong commitment to giving specific feedback. Naturally, you're going to have a better end result than someone who just gives you one word or says "no, that's not a fit". You have to gather knowledge and information on both sides.

"

Judges comments

Jan is a forrthright talent leader who is passionate about educating recruiting professionals as his legacy. His books are world-renowned and it's a pleasure to speak to someone as forward-looking in approach.

Finalist insights

"

If you really build a network of people who are experts in the field, who value your expertise, who are connected with you and who you have a real relationship with, you will be able to be a way better recruiter than any recruiter that's using AI because we are entering the time where there'll be so much noise and so much spam, that it will be very hard to reach out to any candidate out there.

Finding the way to excite people is connected with knowledge and that knowledge is connected with marketing, writing, copywriting and psychology. You will not get the knowledge by generating those things through AI. You will get the knowledge through learning, reading and testing, and if you are not doing those three things, you will be the first person who will be replaced in future, and you will be replaced by AI. You will not even be a good recruiter, you will be an average recruiter or not even a recruiter, but an AI operator.

I believe the majority of companies and TA teams are failing because getting data from their ATS is one of the key challenges, and explaining the data - to your leaders, to your hiring managers, to other people - is another challenge. So communication is and always will be a challenge for the majority of companies and TA teams. It always surprises me that TA teams are not able to properly explain to their hiring managers that I approached a thousand candidates, only 50 were applying, only 12 say yes, and I'll only give you ten, because they will see those ten not the thousand.



Jan Tegze

Author
– 'Full Stack Recruiter' & 'Job Search Guide: Be Your Own Career Coach'

The accomplished author of the bestseller "Full Stack Recruiter" and author of "Job Search Guide: Be Your Own Career Coach," Jan has extensive experience in talent acquisition and has demonstrated expertise in managing international teams and establishing successful recruitment processes. With a deep understanding of full lifecycle recruiting and innovative sourcing techniques, Jan is a sourcing trainer, recruitment expert, blogger, speaker, LinkedIn Top Voice and career coach with a passion for helping others succeed in their careers.



AJ Thomas

Chaos Pilot & Head of Talent
– X, The Moonshot Factory

AJ is currently the Chaos Pilot and Head of Talent at X, the Moonshot Factory. Previously, she served as the Head of People Products and led X's human experience design team. She is an advisor to a portfolio of startups working in web3, sustainable battery technologies and future of work. AJ is a key contributor to developing talent for the future which has shaped her unique approach to coaching and leadership. She has deep experience in executive and leadership capacities at several enterprise technology and startup companies like T-Mobile, Adecco, Iron Mountain, HP Enterprise (Nimble Storage), Ten-X and Auction.com.

Judges comments

AJ is one of the most innovative and creative people in TA today. Her experience is wide-ranging inside and outside of people teams, giving her unique perspectives on tough challenges.

Finalist insights

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There's the T-shaped people that stay within their industry, but they go broad and they go deep. I consider myself a little bit more Z shaped because I borrow from concepts, philosophies and parallel universe teams, and I bring that back into my main thread. Because also as a Z shape, I see the through line for me being the people and culture work. That is what powers organisations, that is what powers teams, and the teams power the missions.

If you have stakeholders, have them hold the stake literally. One example of this was when I was trying to get more resources in the HR Support center in a mid-sized company. It was hard for the team at the time because we were on the verge of burnout. So I reached out to my leader at the time and proposed a three day "what's it like to work at the HR Call center" experience. He was answering phone calls, going into Workday. We had put together use cases for him and we eked out resources from that. We brought him in to hold the stake, literally.

The root of all frustration is misaligned expectations. And so how do you set the expectation to say, we are going to go through this change, this is what it's going to look like? And then how do you follow that on? And then how long is that going to take? Driving change requires that you understand the operating system, that you're data informed, and that you're getting at the root of misaligned expectations.

"

Judges comments

Elin is a passionate and articulate TA leader. We loved talking about data, technology and the future of TA in our conversation.

Finalist insights

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Data is integral in helping leaders make decisions. Without it, you're really flying blind. Data will tell you the whole story. You then work backwards to figure out how to diagnose the problem and evaluate the possible solutions.

Change always needs a compelling story. There's no change without a narrative and a marketing pitch. You can have the greatest transformation initiative, but unless people are bought in, you're not going to get wide adoption.

There's a lot of creative ways you can combat the challenges of DEI, whether it's from university recruiting - which in my experience is usually the biggest source of diversity for any big company - to how do we ensure that the people we're bringing in are developing and growing at the same equitable rates within the organisation.

"



Elin Thomasian

Formerly Global Head of Talent Acquisition – *UKG*

Elin is a progressive talent leader with experience leading global cross-functional talent access teams across talent acquisition strategy, operations, recruitment branding, career advising, and diversity & equity. Her mandates have included executive, professional, early talent recruiting as well as talent marketplaces and mobility programs within a skills driven framework. She is tech forward in developing and executing solutions to streamline and optimise HCM platforms and job architecture whilst leveraging agile methodology.



Sarah Tilley

Senior Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition & Development – *ServiceNow*

Sarah is the Senior Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition and Development for ServiceNow, the digital workflow company making the world work better for everyone. She is responsible for leading a newly integrated talent organisation which includes all external recruitment and internal mobility, learning and development, talent and succession planning, and all efforts to lead ServiceNow forward on a skills-based talent strategy. Prior to ServiceNow, Sarah spent sixteen years at the Walt Disney Company where she led enterprise talent strategies and efforts.

Judges comment

Sarah is a strategic and inspiring TA leader. It was fascinating to hear about recruiting across all of the Disney companies, skills-based hiring, and how ServiceNow uses the Now Platform across it's people org.

Finalist insights

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In a previous role, we recognised that we had a pipeline problem in terms of bringing more junior, less experienced technologists into the organisation, and that was chronic across all of our business units. We created a programme that allowed us to really focus on how we distinguish the good from the great in terms of that raw talent.

You've just got to show up. You've got to be communicating constantly to your team. In my experience, like just having candid conversations often with your team about, hey, look, this is a scary moment, right? Let's support each other, or let's think about what can be gained from this. In our world, it changes non-stop and no one ever gets fully used to that.

Hearing it's importance consistently, and often, and in a vocal way, from leaders of the business matters most in terms of making progress from a diversity, inclusion and belonging perspective.

"

Judges comments

Clarisce is one of the most technically adept candidates we interviewed for the list. She had recently been innovating with a software engineer friend to build an interesting AI tool to give candidates real-time status updates throughout the process. We were also impressed with her advanced DEIB strategies which have had true impact on various marginalised communities, she is clearly a global expert on this topic.

Finalist insights

"When I join an organisation I'm looking at how we can use automation and AI to improve the human experience in the recruiting process.

I think the hiring system is broken, so I've tasked myself with fixing it and creating a quality experience for people finding new roles.

I did a project with Fenty for the trans community, where new employees were sent makeup packages (signed by Rhianna) when they got a role. We also did an extensive project with incarcerated individuals, helping them back into the workplace."



Clarisce Tolston

CEO
– *Higher Good*

Clarisce is an innovative, high-energy-competent, and insightful executive with a focus on talent acquisition and DEI with extensive, multifaceted experience, healthcare and biotechnology. She has a demonstrated record of leading teams and campaigns to further the organisation's goals. She showed strengths in critical sourcing, c-suite executives, H1B Visa, global recruitment, onboarding, candidate experience and retention strategies that strengthen the organisation.



Scott Tomtania

Vice President,
Global Head of Recruiting
– *Cloudflare*

Scott Tomtania is VP and Global Head of Recruiting at Cloudflare, leading the organisation's recruiting efforts since 2017; Scott has been instrumental in Cloudflare's growth, helping scale the team over the past half decade, notably prior to its IPO and through the COVID-19 pandemic when Cloudflare sped up its hiring while a vast majority of companies cut back. Prior to joining Cloudflare, Scott was with Facebook where he managed product design recruitment as well as content strategy and design. Before joining Facebook, he was the head of international staffing at Twitter for four years.

Judges comments

Scott came across to us as an outstanding leader, brimming with positivity who achieves fantastic results in DE&I and change management.

Finalist insights

"We leverage our own platform, Cloudflare TV, where we talk about recruiting practices, best practices, and how to interview. We built a community.

How do I manage change? I would say that firstly being fiercely aligned to the vision was key. Number two, knowing that information is going to change very quickly and learning to be adaptable myself. And then the third element of it, which I fully embrace that's about me personally, is positivity.

We started building communities with all the talent that was laid off early on from various companies - particularly diverse talent - which has been paying off slowly. We've also invested heavily in diversity events, diversity initiatives, diversity training, diversity sourcing. So the vast majority of our investments this year are focused on diversity - because we strongly believe in it."

Judges comments

Andrew is a thoughtful and passionate TA leader. We loved talking about high bar recruiting across his career.

Finalist insights

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We created an internal tool using machine learning at Goldman before it was a thing, to give us some efficiency gains on the assessment at the top of the funnel. One of the biggest challenges is just sorting through all the noise, so we were able to make some gains using AI and ML.

I enjoy creating an environment to encourage personal development. I want to demonstrate that we're a learning organisation. So by this, I mean do what it takes to get the skills to survive and thrive in a future state.

There are a lot of tools that I've invested in to create efficiency and enhance productivity. There's a learning culture that helps perpetuate that. And you can do that through learning circles, peer-to-peer sharing and just getting a team together to talk about what works and what helps them.

"



Andrew Trout

Head of Talent Acquisition – *FalconX*

Andrew currently serves as the Head of Talent Acquisition at FalconX, a digital asset and web3 company backed by Accel, Tiger Global, Lightspeed and B Capital. Previously, he was Head of Talent at Wing, a division of Google X. He also served as the acting Head of People during his tenure. His team scaled the organisation globally to enable Wing to be the leader in last mile and drone delivery. Andrew has held Talent and People Operations roles at Goldman Sachs and Square. He spent the first 10 years of his career in executive search, most recently at Heidrick & Struggles.



Alice White

Director, Google Recruiting – *Google*

Alice's long career in recruiting leadership includes a run in retained executive search with Heidrick & Struggles followed by a transition to in-house recruiting in the life sciences with Allergan and Danaher. Her most recent big pivot was into tech with Blizzard Entertainment. She currently sits in the centre of the action for AI with Google where she leads a large group of recruiters across executive and non-tech hiring for Google. Along the way she led hiring for Google's AI research lab, DeepMind and also worked in Google's secretive and exciting Moonshot Factory called X.

Judges comments

Alice is a true leader. She's calm, visionary and it's easy to see that she would be a great person to work for.

Finalist insights

"

Innovation is what energises me. So when I have a role that feels like it's something that's in maintenance mode, that's not as appealing to me. I've typically found innovation where you don't think it's going to happen. Sometimes it's on the simple things that you think you already have well in hand. Most recently within my current environment at Google, I've tackled things like hiring committees to see if we can go faster. I've looked at things that are right out in front that people assume have to be the way they are, and then question them. So, for me, it's that questioning.

If you see something really messy, that's usually a spot where if you can simplify and get to something that looks and feels like a more elegant solution, then that's where real change happens.

If something's a problem, like if there's a fire off in the distance, please don't wait to tell me about the fire until you know how it started, how contained it is, what's going to happen next? Just let me know there's smoke, because as long as I know there's smoke, then I can give you air cover. If something escalates quickly then I can say, 'Oh, actually, I'm right on that, and we're looking into it', and then I can quickly let you know.

"

Judges comments

Daniel is an insightful and strategic TA leader. We particularly loved his impact on diversity hiring through a huge program hiring veterans and at-risk people. Truly impactful on a societal scale.

Finalist insights

“

How can we not only find and identify those diverse candidates, but how can we have our in-house stakeholders be open and receptive? How can we change the internal mindset of hiring managers and teams to figure out “how we can help out this person?” or how can you take somebody that has a military background, for example, that doesn’t always translate super cleanly to the private sector and apply their skills to a specific role? How can we help them to find jobs, how can we build training and skilling programs so that we can actually hire that profile at scale?

I think the biggest accomplishment is when people you have worked with previously want to come back and work with you again, either on your team or as a peer. I take that as the biggest achievement of saying like, Hey, I worked with that person and I loved it. It’s something I want to recreate. It’s something I want to have happen again. To me, those are the biggest wins.

Whenever you jump into a new situation, it’s figuring out what is the biggest thing that can help it to impact that company or that stage that the company is in, to help them be successful.

”



Daniel Whitney

Vice President of Global Recruiting – *Outreach*

Dan has spent the last 25 years working in various roles in talent acquisition at Microsoft, Starbucks, Tableau and is currently the VP of Recruiting at Outreach.io. His management philosophy is to foster a culture where every member of the team has the opportunity to perform at their highest-level, day in and day out. He does this through providing a healthy mix of long-term career growth and hands-on tactical coaching.



Melissa Wilhelm

Global Vice President of Talent Acquisition – *MongoDB*

Melissa has spent the last 25 years of her career in recruiting for tech companies. She fell in love with recruiting when she joined Tectura Corporation early in her career. Later Melissa joined Microsoft, where she spent the next 10 years in various leadership roles supporting the sales organisation. From there she moved to Google where she spent six years leading core tech functions in both sourcing and recruiting, followed by two years at Amazon as the Director of G&A Recruiting. In 2021 Melissa moved to MongoDB to take her dream job as the Global VP of Talent Acquisition for a smaller and rapidly growing tech company.

Judges comments

Melissa is a highly experienced TA leader. She leads with empathy, drawing from her own experience of a major relocation to align TA strategies with the real-life experiences of the target candidate groups.

Finalist insights

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We developed an onboarding and mentorship programme for new starters that wasn’t focused on their role. We had volunteers from across the company who twice a month took the time to sit down and just engage with them. We prepared resources - a list of local ethnically diverse grocery stores, churches, barbershops, daycares etc. What we found was attrition was reduced significantly because people felt like they belonged to a community, not just belonged to the company and so when I think of innovation, I think of this.

Everybody in the company, every single one of us, is a diversity recruiter.

Don’t be afraid to hire people smarter than you. Focus on what you can learn from the people around you.

”

Judges comments

Brad is a leader on the cutting-edge of new technologies. He struck us as a leader who truly delivers on the strategy, shown by great results in many areas.

Finalist insights

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We're using generative AI to drive efficiencies - from creating customised interview questions to generating job descriptions. We are looking at getting more efficient so we can get faster.

We built a Glassdoor campaign around our diversity and inclusion initiatives and increased our score last year by 26% and diversity is now one of our highest scores. The more practical piece was training hiring managers about bias, making sure that we're holding them accountable for having diverse talent pools and interviewing panels.

We've changed almost everything we do in terms of how we go to market with our knowledge base. We have brought in product marketing and sales engineering to demo our product for the team. TA now has access to the same enablement content as the sales team. People were a little nervous about in the beginning, but now they really enjoy having collaboration opportunities to learn.

"



Brad Williams

Senior Director,
Head of Global Talent Acquisition
– *Forcepoint*

Brad has over thirty years' experience in talent acquisition, with the past twelve in corporate recruiting. He was one of the first talent acquisition leaders at Wayfair, helping them scale from 650 to 10,000 employees in seven years. At Cybereason, Brad rebuilt a talent acquisition function who played a key role in expanding their headcount from 375 to 1,400 in three years, in addition to managing the human resources function for the US and EMEA during part of his tenure. Currently, Brad is the Global Head of Talent Acquisition at Forcepoint, a 2,500-employee cybersecurity business focused on secure access service edge (SASE) solutions.



Tracey Wood

Head of Talent Acquisition EMEA – *RS Group*

Tracey is passionate about the role TA can play, partnering with leaders to ensure a seat and voice at the table to influence creative business strategies that deliver results. She thrives on creating and developing TA strategies focused on attraction and employer brand, influencing with commercial insights and data, whilst always striving for impact aligned to market conditions. Tracey has lived experience across startup, scaleup, fintech and corporate - both in-house and RPO - across multiple industries within EMEA.

Judges comments

Tracey is a TA leader with experience across the full breadth of companies. She drawns upon this range of experience to deliver great results with a human touch.

Finalist insights

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TA is not a standalone kind of business. It needs to pull on the resources of the rest of the team. Working with the other areas of the business to drive that talent attraction piece has been key.

Understanding the reasoning, why are we doing this? If you understand the why yourself then it's a lot easier for you to manage other people through those processes. If there's a decision that's being made, then if I understand it, even if I don't agree with it, then I'm able to do my best to support that change, drive that change, communicate that change, whether it affects me personally, or my team, or another area of the business.

To navigate the ambiguity of what the business actually wants to deliver, I've always thought that it's best to lean into colleagues and say, can you help us get this right? That has worked well for me.

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Judges comment

Keren is a data-driven and strategic talent leader. We loved hearing about high-impact projects across her career.

Finalist insights

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For new markets, I created a formula where I said, if we screen X amount of people every week and we get X amount of interviews every week, we will get to X amount of offers, and then I could literally build a timeline and a calendar. It’s basically math, you need to really understand the numbers.

I made sure that my team is diverse because if you have a non-diverse team they don’t really understand diversity. They will really make the effort and won’t make the easy hires that are usually not diverse.

We created a sourcing party every week centred around diversity. So every week someone from the team brought a profile where we could find great talents that are diverse and all the team helped them.

I built an office in India from scratch. I had to do everything, find an office and learn the culture, hire the executive team, hire the recruiting team and build relationships with agencies. It was a huge and amazing project. I hired 350 people in less than six months.

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Keren Yakir Harel

Formerly Global Vice President of Talent Acquisition – *Afiniti*

Karen is a recruiting leader with over 20 years of experience within the tech industry. She has led cross-regional recruiting and employer branding teams for multiple global corporates, such as Meta, Microsoft and Nice Systems. She is a hands-on leader who can drive strategy and execution with equal ease. She uses data to guide her decisions and lead departments through transformational change.

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