



People Pioneers 2022



What's Inside

4



Why we're here: What it means to be a People Pioneer

There's no handbook for what the world has faced over the past two years. In 2021, more than half of HR leaders surveyed by [Gartner](#) said their employees were suffering from change fatigue, resulting in the need for stronger initiatives to establish trust and build cohesive teams.

And as organizations of all kinds rushed to respond and support evolving employee needs, HR leaders have stepped forward to guide the way by answering questions like: How should teams work together in a pandemic-driven world? How can companies best support people both in and out of the office, especially as the two remain closely connected in remote and hybrid work environments? What's the best way to grow and retain people amidst the Great Resignation? How can organizations build a diverse workforce that continues to attract top talent?

In doing so, these leaders have become true pioneers.

They've pushed the boundaries by finding new and creative ways to ease friction in how work gets done, help people at all levels feel valued, build diversity into their cultures, and drive sustainable growth for their companies. They've redefined what HR looks like and its role in the organization by introducing new processes, programs, and technology to achieve these goals.

Most importantly, they've solidified HR's position as an essential strategic partner at any organization.

The inaugural People Pioneers Award is designed to honor these HR leaders for their tireless efforts to support employees during extraordinary times and their positive impact on their companies.

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Meet the 2022 People Pioneers

The 2022 People Pioneers are a group of 10 senior HR executives nominated by their peers and selected by a committee from ChartHop for their distinguished work around:

- Ensuring pay equity across dispersed teams
- Introducing more diverse hiring practices
- Improving employee engagement through development programs
- Revamping benefits in a pandemic-driven world
- Coaching executive team members through unprecedented times
- Reimagining performance reviews for high growth environments

Read on to meet each of the award winners and learn about their efforts to drive change.



Adriana Roche

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, MURAL

Adriana is the Chief People Officer at MURAL, which offers a digital-first visual collaboration platform. Over the course of 18 months, Adriana helped scale the company from 150 people to 800 thriving MURAListas, all while maintaining the company culture. Specific initiatives implemented to drive this incredible scale in a sustainable way include:

- **Investment in competitive** compensation and world class benefits
- **Doubling down on onboarding** to make sure MURAListas ramp up and feel they belong faster

- **Introducing virtual and creative events** to increase cohesion across the company
- **Defining collaboration and communication practices** across the company so everyone can do better (and more fun!) work
- **Investing in the development of managers** as catalysts of change
- **Investing in DEI strategies** such as celebrations, ERGs, and training

Adriana also serves as a coach to MURAL's leadership team and CEO by sharing best practices from her executive search background and scale-up expertise from time spent at Google, Dropbox, and Segment. Overall, team members describe Adriana as “the pulse of the company” for her work to bring collaboration, fun, and creativity to MURAL's global employees every day.

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Devin Blase

VP OF PEOPLE, TRUEWORK

Devin is the VP of People at Truework, a software company that provides instant income and employment verifications for over 35 million U.S. employees. Leading by example and never afraid to roll up her sleeves alongside her direct reports, Devin's immense impact was evident as she transformed the Truework's People department in 2021.

Specifically, building toward world-class performance management guided much of the 2021 People roadmap Devin laid out.

This effort included implementing pay bands, leveling for all roles, formal career pathing for every employee, and bi-annual performance reviews.

Throughout these efforts, Devin demonstrated a clear passion for both people and processes, which led her down the path to introducing new technology to support the People team's programs. First, Devin migrated off a PEO and onto an HRIS, allowing Truework to offer more competitive benefits to employees and do so more efficiently. Second, she implemented people analytics tool ChartHop to lead more collaborative headcount planning and give all recruiters and stakeholders a single source of truth. Following these changes, she continues to look for ways to leverage technology to improve collaboration.

The company began to feel the deep impact of these changes at the end of 2021 when Truework not only won a few "Best Places to Work" awards, but also saw their employee NPS scores increase significantly.



Holly Danko

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, UNISON

As the Chief People Officer at residential equity agreement company Unison, Holly has put a significant emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She has led the effort to build DEI into Unison's culture by creating a dedicated DEI committee, discussing DEI efforts at bi-weekly company meetings, and changing Unison's internal policies and recruiting practices.

Some of the most notable changes Holly led Unison's People team to implement include:

- **Adding a clause to job descriptions** encouraging candidates from all backgrounds to apply even if they don't meet 100% of the job requirements. This change was based on studies that show women are less likely to apply for jobs for which they are not fully qualified.
- **Ensuring that recruiting panels are diverse** for each role, both in terms of gender and race, and also by department. This effort helps the team get diversity of mindset while hiring candidates.
- **Running job descriptions through a gender decoder** program that identifies any unconscious bias and informs the team if they're weighting the job description towards a particular gender. Then they use this information to revise the descriptions accordingly.
- **Ensuring that underrepresented talent**, men, and women are interviewed for each open role.
- **Implementing a structured immigration process** and gladly paying for all visa sponsorship, immigration costs, and green cards for employees with a certain tenure.

All of this work led to 10 new DEI specific initiatives launched in 2021 alone, which helped Unison achieve an employee base of 46% female and 51% underrepresented groups – both of which are well above average for high-growth fintech companies.



Elizabeth Raymond

HEAD OF GLOBAL TALENT, NEXTHINK

As Head of Global Talent for Nexthink, an IT service management company, Liz balances a high-intensity, high-growth, high-expectation business environment with practices of wellness, mental health, and genuine care for people – all with the aim of making working for Nexthink exceptional.

Over the past year, Liz has led her organization through a strategic review to mature Nexthink's analytics, processes, and tech stack. She believes people leaders deserve powerful tools and budget prioritization because talent is everything.

At the same time, Liz has focused on creating a space of belonging, wellness, and camaraderie among Nexthink's employees by leading meditation and other intentional wellness exercises.

For example, when Liz learned that one of Nexthink's Agile Coaches in Switzerland was also a mindfulness teacher, she connected with them to build a plan and launch a program for their employees. They started with Introduction to Mindfulness sessions hosted globally for more than 700 Nexthinkers, which were followed by weekly and monthly Zoom mindfulness sessions held in the US and EMEA for those seeking to build upon their practice.

Liz's goal as a teacher of mindfulness and meditation is to focus on making these practices more accessible by building habits over time that lead to long term change. She has also infused these practices into large group meetings at Nexthink, starting with mindful moments or a simple breathing exercise.

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Nadia Vatalidis

VP OF PEOPLE, REMOTE.COM

Nadia is the VP of People at Remote.com, which makes hiring international teams easy through global payroll, tax, HR, and compliance solutions for distributed teams.

Under Nadia's leadership, the Remote.com team grew from 50 people to over 600 people in less than a year. She has led the team to achieve this significant growth by revamping the talent acquisition process and continually pushing the envelope to create an environment in which all teammates feel welcome and valued, regardless of their identity. Now, Remote.com boasts industry-leading time to offer metrics and a candidate satisfaction rating of over 85%.

To keep up with this growth, Nadia has also led an effort to implement Remote.com's first compensation review to ensure market pay of teammates. Specifically, Nadia knew that having comprehensive compensation data and benchmarking as well as job levels would be important to delivering on Remote.com's promise of pay equity and making sure that everyone on the team felt fairly compensated for their work. Nadia broke down this work into three key efforts:

- **Implementing compensation benchmarks and training** the recruiting team on how to use the company's benchmark scales and job levels to share compensation ranges with candidates in their first interview.
- **Introducing a bi-annual compensation review** in alignment with performance reviews.
- **Leading a full gender pay gap** analysis and market pay gap analysis as part of the compensation review to eliminate any gaps that existed.

These efforts are the first iteration of compensation and performance reviews at Remote.com, and Nadia plans to iterate on the process in 2022 to keep improving efficiency and inclusivity. And because transparency is a value for Remote.com, Nadia has been able to make all of her team's work in this area publicly available [here](#) for others to learn from.



Nyala Khan

VP OF TALENT, EMPLOYER BRAND,
AND EXPERIENCE AT EDEN HEALTH

Nyala is the VP of Talent, Employer Brand, and Experience at Eden Health, a primary care and insurance navigation company. In this role, she tackles all her day-to-day and long term directives with a sense of passion and dedication, and she believes in people long before they even do themselves.

To start, Nyala has brought a DEI-centered mindset to Eden Health, leading the effort to grow the team from 100 to 300 employees in 2021 with a composition of 65% women and 40% minorities by the end of 2021. She has done so by intentionally focusing on

driving diversity, equity, and inclusion, going beyond tactics like name-masking that statistically continue to produce a highly homogenous candidate pool.

Nyala has also taken on the role of culture builder, instituting a fully sponsored benefits program, and creating a biweekly Discussion Forum in the aftermath of the George Floyd tragedy to give employees a space to discuss all matters that impact their lives and communities.

In looking to instill compensation equity at Eden Health, Nyala led the team in reviewing and auditing their data to ensure that no employee had a compensation difference of more than \$3,000 within any given role/level.

Ultimately, Nyala is all about impact, driving toward solutions quickly and with purpose.

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Karen Kuhn

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE
OPERATIONS, ORDER

After founding the People Operations department for purchasing platform Order, Karen immediately hit the ground running with effective, engaging, best-in-class people operations strategies to increase company morale, performance, and bottom line.

By gathering feedback through a listening tour with each team member in her first 30 days as well as an anonymous engagement survey, Karen was able to identify key areas that were impacting employee engagement, like compensation and diversity, equity, and inclusion. These insights led to a handful of initiatives that moved the needle on engagement and retention for Order, including:

- **Accelerating hiring** for understaffed teams.

- **Offering market adjustments** to everyone on the team whose existing compensation was not in line with market benchmarking during the mid-year review cycle (in addition to promotions and merit increases).
- **Transforming the culture committee** into the Culture & Inclusion Committee, which began focusing not only on employee engagement but also DEI programming.
- **Implementing career laddering** across the organization to give people insight into what they need to do in order to be successful in their roles today and what they need to accomplish/demonstrate in order to move on to their next step.

As a result of these initiatives, the overall engagement score went from a 75 to an 80 between Q2 and Q4 and the turnover rate at Order decreased by 20% within six months of Karen joining.

Additionally, Karen rolled out company-wide processes, policies, and expectations to deliver more meaningful, effective, and psychologically-safe people operations. These include everything from the first applicant tracking system, which granted access to new talent pools and allowed the team to manage candidates in a way they hadn't before, to implementing new technology to capture performance reviews, engagement surveys, and weekly check ins so that managers have regular insight into how their team members are doing.



Steve Weiss

VP OF HUMAN RESOURCES, ARVINAS

Steve Weiss is the Vice President of Human Resources at Arvinas, Inc., a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company. Steve has led the organization to implement a multi-faceted HR strategy that aligns with the business. He is known for his business and financial acumen, pragmatic, “fit for purpose” approach, and strategic thinking that has translated to effective programs and practices to attract, develop, and retain top talent.

Steve’s positive impact is seen in Arvinas’ ability to prioritize employee health and safety during the pandemic and create a total benefits and compensation package that consistently attracts top talent in a competitive market. Notably, Arvinas maintained a single digit turnover percentage

in 2021 in an environment and industry where 20–30% turnover is not uncommon. This accomplishment is a true testament to the strong culture Steve led the entire HR and leadership teams to institute and maintain under the strain of aggressive growth and incredible environmental challenges given the pandemic.

One example of this is Steve’s work to completely revamp the performance management model over the course of 2021. This effort focused on forward-looking employee growth and development vs. a more narrow and retrospective performance management model that required considerable resources, time, and focus to determine ratings. Arvinas’ new model looks at employee performance in the context of development, career pathing, and meeting future talent needs, allowing the company to better leverage employees’ passions, interests, agility, and potential to meet emerging critical business needs.

Overall, Steve approaches the “human side of change” with mindfulness and careful thought about impact to both the business and individual. This has been especially impressive given the company’s growth, as Steve increased the team size by 65%, hiring more than 120 people in 2021 and forecasting an additional 60% in employee growth in 2022.



Giuliana Zara

HEAD OF PEOPLE, APER

As the Head of People for Aper, a cloud commerce platform for banks, Giuliana has led the company through tremendous growth.

Specifically, Giuliana collaborates closely with functional leaders to build out thoughtful headcount plans and execute on those plans strategically. A key part of this effort was introducing new talent acquisition practices to help attract top talent, especially as the company expanded into new markets. For example, Giuliana worked closely with leaders

across the business to organize an efficient hiring schedule and prepare information about their areas of focus. She also led the effort to define a new onboarding process to support this growth in headcount and ensure a smooth transition for all new hires. This work has led to Aper doubling the team size year over year.

Along the way, Giuliana has maintained a focus on nurturing those employees once they join the team. Some of her key efforts to do so include:

- **Launching** a formal feedback process
- **Defining** a new compensation and benefits strategy
- **Establishing** processes to strengthen Aper's culture and values
- **Implementing** people metrics to track turnover, employee NPS, and exit survey feedback, among other key points of interest

This focus has resulted in an impressive 80% reduction in employee churn and 50% increase in employee NPS for Aper under Giuliana's leadership.



Danielle Fillimon

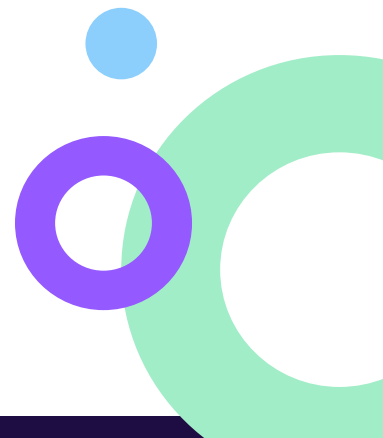
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, STATESPACE LABS

As Chief People Officer for game developer Statespace Labs, Danielle has fostered a company that is enthusiastic about inclusivity, growth, and open communication. She allows not just her direct reports, but anyone in the company to feel supported and empowered in their day to day work.

Danielle has been on the front lines of Statespace's people function for just under three years. During this time, she has cultivated a team environment that makes everyone love what they do. Her love for helping others shows up in how she empowers her team to grow and motivates them to step outside the box and take on new challenges. She believes that everyone is an extension of another person and fosters a culture of learning from each other.

A believer in continued education, her people are given the space and encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities in their focus area.

She is a fearless leader that takes pride in growing others.



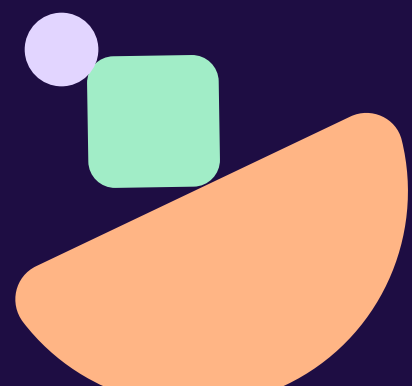
The future of HR has arrived

The future of HR has arrived. How organizations operate and support their people is changing for the better, and the HR leaders who stand at the frontlines of the employee experience are introducing tangible, impactful initiatives to propel this change forward.

The 2022 People Pioneers have already made significant progress in areas like DEI, hiring, benefits, development, and more, and they've done so by taking new and creative approaches to these all-important topics.

Along the way, they've set a strong example for what the new role of HR can look like, which is critical at a time when 98% of HR leaders say the pandemic has transformed their role and 70% say it's led to one of the most challenging years of their career.

Going forward, People teams at organizations of all kinds need to keep pushing the boundaries on how HR operates to deliver the best possible experience for their employees and, as a result, their companies. Following the examples of confident leadership, clear direction, and innovative approaches to problem-solving set by the 2022 People Pioneers offers a strong foundation from which to start.



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