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Letter From the Conference Chair

I’m truly honored to have hosted this year’s virtual (and bigger than ever) Gartner ReimagineHR Conference, filled with insightful presentations and forward-thinking conversations with an amazing cohort of CHROs and HR leaders.

The past year has challenged HR leaders in new ways. COVID-19 affected every segment of the workforce differently — as some have thrived, others are still struggling to recover. As work shifts to a hybrid model, the workforce continues to diversify. As existing HR processes have evolved to support this model, the risk of driving inequality across the organization — and damaging talent and business outcomes — continues to grow.

This year at Gartner ReimagineHR Conference, we explored how HR leaders can meet the challenges of the new decade to build high-performing, equitable organizations.

We hope that all attendees left the conference feeling inspired and armed with the data-backed insights needed to face these new challenges and impact their organizations’ success.

I look forward to welcoming you back to Gartner ReimagineHR Conference in person in 2022.

Brian Kropp
Distinguished VP, Chief of HR Research and Conference Chair, Gartner
Conference Features

Explore the 2021 virtual program, which was filled with live, interactive and engaging sessions where attendees learned from Gartner experts, progressive HR practitioners and their peers in the easy-to-navigate Gartner Conference Portal.

Interactive sessions
Attendees joined interactive roundtables to discuss challenges with peers and share best practices, and participated in Ask the Expert sessions to get their questions answered by a Gartner expert.

One-on-one meetings
Attendees met with a Gartner expert for a 30-minute, private consultation to address their most pressing challenges and pressure-test their 2022 strategies.

Networking
In addition to interactive sessions, the new Braindate platform allowed attendees to connect virtually in small-group, peer-to-peer meetings on specific topics of their choice.

The CHRO Circle
This exclusive experience for CHROs enabled a high level of information exchange and peer interaction on high-priority topics during CHRO-only roundtable sessions.

Data-driven insights
Attendees received real-world examples and data-backed research across 35+ breakout sessions, and heard case studies from HR solution providers during Solution Provider sessions.

Top one-on-one inquiry topics
1. Critical skills and competency development
2. Future of work
3. Employee experience (EX)
4. HR function strategy and management
5. Current and future leadership
Attendee Demographics

The virtual Gartner ReimagineHR Conference 2021 brought together over 4,000 HR leaders from around the globe to discuss the trends shaping the future of work.

**EMEA**

**Job title level**
- VP: 37%
- CHRO: 13%
- Manager: 19%
- Director: 17%

**Top 5 industries**
- Banking, finance and insurance: 30%
- Manufacturing: 20%
- Technology and telecom: 11%
- Business services: 10%
- Government: 9%

**Top 5 countries**
- U.K.: 27%
- Germany: 9%
- South Africa: 7%
- Netherlands: 6%
- Switzerland: 6%

**Americas**

**Job title level**
- VP: 32%
- Director: 27%
- CHRO: 18%
- Manager: 14%

**Top 5 industries**
- Manufacturing: 22%
- Banking, finance and insurance: 20%
- Technology and telecom: 12%
- Business services: 10%
- Government: 10%

**Top 5 countries**
- U.S.: 82%
- Canada: 6%
- Brazil: 1%
- Mexico: 1%
- Australia: 1%
Gartner Keynote

The Equity Imperative: How Fairness Improves Performance

Brian Kropp  
Distinguished VP, Chief of HR Research and Conference Chair, Gartner

The recovery from the economic challenges induced by COVID-19 is “K-shaped”: Some segments of the labor force are excelling while others are struggling. As work shifts to a hybrid model, the workforce continues to diversify. Having been tasked with leading their organizations through this disruption, HR leaders increasingly face what may seem like dueling pressures: How do we ensure our organization is profitable and high-performing, and how do we do it in a way that is fair and equitable?

In this keynote, we explored key tenets of the equity imperative, and how HR leaders can aid in their organizations’ recovery and evolve HR processes to support a new, hybrid model — without running the risk of driving inequality further.

Key take-aways

Questions of inequity will be the biggest issues facing us as a society for the next five to 10 years. HR leaders have always dealt with questions of equity, but now:

- 5% of employed women globally lost their jobs due to COVID-19.
- 22% of employees say they live in a high-fairness environment, and 22% of HR employees!
- Ethnic minorities make up 10% of CEO population but 31% of the total workforce.
- The global wage gap is approximately 37%.

Fairness is not only the right thing to do for our employees, but it improves performance. Employees reporting a high fairness experience perform at a 26% higher level than those who don’t and are 27% less likely to quit.
Employees who report high fairness in the work environment also say:

They felt informed
Companies can guide the transparency conversation by making sure information is symmetrically distributed among all employees, and employees are provided with guidance on how and when to use information.

They felt supported
Research shows that employee perception of support depends largely on the support they receive in comparison to what other employees receive. How we frame the support is just as important if not more so than the actual support that we provide.

They felt considered
Companies can create a more equitable access to internal opportunities by enabling employees to leverage peer networks.

They felt acknowledged
Technology, when used properly, can help us monitor employee performance in a hybrid world to better identify high-contribution employees in addition to manager and peer input.

Want to dig deeper? Explore these related resources:

Article: What Is Work Really Like Today? Leaders and Employees See Things Differently
Article: 9 Work Trends That HR Leaders Can’t Ignore in 2021
Guest Keynotes

Around the World With “60 Minutes”
Lesley Stahl

In this keynote, Leslie Stahl, award-winning broadcast journalist and “60 Minutes” co-editor, discussed her professional and personal life as one of the first female television reporters. Stahl talked about covering the White House during the Carter, Reagan and George H.W. Bush presidencies, and then detailed her years covering the world as co-editor of “60 Minutes.” She also discussed the state of the news business and the difficulties of working and raising children.

Key take-aways
• “I tried so hard in my career not to think of myself as the first woman to do something. And maybe that was just because of the times that I got into the business. In those days, we, meaning the women, tried to be men.”
• “One of the things that I’ve learned is that I lost myself a little bit in trying to be what I thought the audience wanted. A real sense of authority, and the authority was male. At some point that changed, what became important was authenticity.”
• “You never know when the best day of your life is going to come. And if you think, ‘This is the best of it, it’s never going to get better,’ you’re probably wrong. It can get better, and it probably will. You will have many best days of your life.”

“Growing” Through, Instead of “Going” Through, Your Experiences
Yusef Salaam
Entrepreneur, Author, Trainer and Leader

In this session, award-winning motivational and transformational speaker Yusef Salaam shared his personal approach to “getting out” of the prison of the mind while serving a sentence as a member of the Exonerated Five for a crime he did not commit.

Key take-aways
• “Breaking out of the gravitational pull that is trying to get you to succumb to a reality that you have not chosen for yourself gives you a glimpse into the margins of life that Black and Brown folks find themselves.”
• “When you were born with a purpose, and for a purpose, the challenge is for us to vibrate at higher levels in order for that purpose to reveal itself to us.”
• “People that have gone through oppression have a better example and understanding of what exactly we need in order to survive.”
Agenda Tracks

At the conference, attendees explored an array of content and Gartner research specifically designed for CHROs and their direct reports, across seven agenda tracks.

**Track A. Reimagine the Role of the CHRO**
Get the insights and strategies you need to help your team build a high-performing, equitable organization as the nature of work continues to evolve. This track provided CHROs with guidance on how to reimagine the workplace to maximize equity, ultimately driving engagement and performance for their teams and organizations.

**Track D. Reimagine Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
The pandemic and the growing social justice movement have drawn attention to the urgent need to end discrimination, and to increase inclusion and equity both in business and society at large. In this track, DEI leaders learned the most innovative ways to accelerate their DEI strategies and partner effectively with all stakeholders to drive change.

**Track B. Reimagine Recruiting**
The hybrid workforce and changing skill needs are transforming our hiring needs and talent acquisition processes. The new work reality and last year’s events are also changing candidate behavior and expectations. In this track, recruiting executives learned about the most effective and equitable strategies to compete for internal and external talent.

**Track E. Reimagine Performance and Rewards**
The crises of 2020 highlighted how much employee needs vary within organizations. This track helped total rewards leaders design fair and transparent pay and performance strategies to meet these varying employee needs and build employees’ trust to drive the performance needed for recovery and growth.

**Track C. Reimagine Learning and Development**
The skills and capabilities employees need to succeed are evolving faster than the methods and technology we use to reach them. In this track, HR leaders discovered innovative and scalable strategies that redefine the role of learning and development in the future.
Agenda Tracks (continued)

Track F. Reimagine Talent Analytics
The events of 2020 placed new demands and expectations on talent data; so where does talent analytics go from here? As the function grows, talent analytics leaders need to answer questions like, how do I best organize the function? How can we design a strategy that delivers demonstrable value? How do we ensure that we are applying new techniques and tools in an effective and equitable way? This track explored these and other top-of-mind concerns for leaders with a stake in successful delivery of talent insights.

Track G. Reimagine HR Tech
A shift to hybrid work has evolved employee expectations and requires new approaches to HR technology solutions. In this track, HR leaders learned about the contribution HR technology brings to HR strategy and service offerings by having an employee-centric value proposition at its heart.

Read what attendees had to say

“Overall, the conference exceeded my expectations and I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend. Great speakers, showcases and research!”

“Incredibly well-organized and orchestrated!”

“Good tech, great speakers, easy interactions during sessions and with exhibitors.”
Featured Session: The Future of Well-Being

Over the last few decades, well-being has expanded, both in terms of offerings and goals. However, the 2020 global pandemic has made well-being programs more important than ever given new work environments and diverse employee needs. This session outlined the evolution of holistic well-being and examined its purpose and scope in 2021 and beyond.

While the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated well-being issues, Gartner research shows that companies are working to alleviate this in ways we call responsive approaches:

- Adding/expanding well-being offerings (most companies are in this stage)
- Closing the participation gap (e.g., increase employee understanding, reduce stigma and apathy, reduce time and effort required to participate)

In addition to interactive sessions and keynotes, attendees gained access to 35+ breakout sessions led by Gartner experts. Explore a few of the most popular sessions from the 2021 conference.

Covid-19 Exacerbated Well-Being Issues

- Experienced Higher Burnout
  - Yes: 85%
  - No: 15%
- Have a Worse Work-Life Balance
  - Yes: 40%
  - No: 60%

n = 3,690 employees worldwide

Source: 2021 Gartner Workforce Resilience Employee Survey
The Future of Well-Being (continued)

Research shows that such responsive approaches can increase employee wellness but reach a point of diminishing returns, especially during disruptions.

The recommendation is not necessarily to stop offering wellness programs — of course the best first step is to close any obvious gaps across core wellbeing pillars to meet benchmarks for talent outcomes. But once you have that foundation, we need to apply preventative approaches:

- **Provide radical flexibility**
  Empower employees to establish new norms around how (work style based on type of work and team alignment), where (location and country/state) and when (freedom to determine work schedule) work gets done.

- **Reduce work friction**
  The 4 friction points most critical to address as part of preventative well-being:
  1. Misaligned work design (e.g., outdated processes and team structures)
  2. Overwhelmed teams (e.g., too much work, teams not working with the right people or information)
  3. Legacy systems and trapped resources don’t reflect how resources need to move today
  4. Rigid processes: centralized and standardized process aren’t flexible enough to experiment and responsive culture

- **Drive empathetic management**
  Help employees navigate the new work environment by providing managers with conversation starters, guides and guardrails to help them build connections and detect early signs of distress.
The Future of Well-Being (continued)

Key take-aways

• Understand the reasons why employees do not participate in well-being programs as well as the strategies to address each. Make sure you are covering the critical first step in a “responsive” approach by adding and communicating programs.

• Identify underlying drivers of poor employee wellness and redesign work and people processes to prevent future problems.

• Offer radical flexibility, not just flexibility in when and where individuals get to work, but flexibility in all aspects of work, helping employees feel autonomous in making decisions about what works best for them.

• Actively engage employees to find work process pain points, removing high-impact friction points.

• Drive empathetic management by equipping managers with clear guidance on what to do, and more importantly, what not to do, in order to effectively support employees’ mental and emotional health.

Want to dig deeper? Explore these related resources:

Webinar: The 3 Hybrid Work Challenges Driving Employee Fatigue

Article: Knowledge Workers Aren’t the Only Ones Who Want Flexibility: Here’s How to Offer It to Others
# Featured Session: Building a Skills-Based Organization

**Rachael Marshall**  
Senior Principal, Advisory

Skills-based organizations structure their talent decisions around employee skills, not roles. By reconsidering their talent management processes, these organizations break roles into tasks to minimize disruption from mobility and to increase organizational resilience. In this session, attendees learned what it takes to be a skills-based organization, how to start building one and what challenges you can anticipate along the way.

Skills shortages are getting worse, and companies usually combat this by “buying talent,” or hiring from outside the organization. This creates a very small candidate pool. Furthermore, some organizations have no skills data. Some have this data, but it’s not standardized or is stored across many systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Shortages Are Getting Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees need more skills ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual increase in total skills required for a single job in IT, finance or sales since 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... and new skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly one in three skills needed for a job in 2018 will not be needed by 2022.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 760,170 S&P 100 job postings (January 1, 2018 through February 9, 2021)  
Source: Gartner TalentNeuron™ Compound annual growth rate from 2018 to 2022
Building a Skills-Based Organization (continued)

Skills-based talent management allows for centralized skills data to save resources and share consistent skills insights.

Structuring talent strategies around skills, not just roles, resulting in a more adaptable workforce and enables you to keep up with skills needs.

**Key take-aways**

- Share ownership for skills throughout the organization by facilitating a skills-sensing network that monitors skills during existing talent processes.
- Gather dynamic skills data by creating an imperfect skills taxonomy and collecting only sufficient skills data.
- Reset talent decisions defaults from roles to skills by training leaders to break down roles into skills.
- Embed skills in talent processes by starting with existing skills-centric processes and expanding slowly to processes with high-downstream impact.

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**How to Start Building a Skills-Based Organization**

1. **Key No. 1**
   - Share Ownership for Skills Throughout the Organization

2. **Key No. 2**
   - Gather Dynamic Skills Data

3. **Key No. 3**
   - Use Skills, Not Just Roles, in Talent Decisions

4. **Key No. 4**
   - Embed Skills in Talent Management Processes

**Source:** Gartner

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**Want to dig deeper? Explore these related resources:**

- Webinar: Future-Proof Your Workforce Strategy: Build Skills and Fill Gaps
- Article: 4 HR Talent Strategies for the Postpandemic Labor Market

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Featured Session: Developing Future-Ready Leaders

Jerome Mackowiak
Director, Advisory

With shifting workforce models, business pressures and skill needs, CHROs must evolve their leadership development strategies. Building a scalable, impactful experience for today’s business world requires a clear vision of leadership success and resource-efficient development offerings. In this session, attendees learned how to scale leadership development to strengthen current and future generations of leaders.

Leadership Expectations Are Changing

- 84% of HR leaders say it is more important for managers to develop soft skills.
- 40% of organizations have changed or revised their leadership criteria or expectations within the past year.

Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Leader Survey
Source: 2021 Gartner Diversifying Leadership Survey
Developing Future-Ready Leaders (continued)

How do we equip our leaders with the skills and support they need today to drive future organizational success? Consider these three imperatives:

1. Evolve leadership development strategy to keep pace with the changing demands of leaders.
2. Manufacturing company GAF used a four-step model to create agile leadership across the organization. View the graphic to understand each step.

4 Steps to Creating an Agile Leadership Model

- **Choose Representative Leaders**: Involve diverse leaders from across the business
- **Create a Broad Model**: Remove constraints on defining great leadership
- **Refine the Model**: Cull and sort behaviors for impact
- **Shape the Model for Usability**: Acknowledge tensions in applying the model

Source: Adapted From GAF
Develop leaders’ soft skills to meet employees’ needs as well as business needs.

Many leaders admit that they feel ill-equipped for vulnerable conversations. Here are six characteristics of empathetic leaders:

1. Prioritizes people over processes.
2. Asks, doesn’t tell.
3. Embraces growth mindset.
4. Safeguards confidentiality.
5. Creates transparency.
6. Contextualizes employee mindset.

Scale leadership development to suit today’s global, hybrid and dynamic environment.

Leadership development is hard to scale. This results in inconsistency leadership development (which is a big attrition driver!). Some factors to consider:

• Access to development experiences differs by geographic location
• Development is siloed within business units
• Skill needs vary for leaders across levels

Key take-aways

• Evaluate your leadership model for its agility and refine it for a more inclusive definition of leadership that highlights the traits and behaviors your organization would like to reinforce.
• Establish psychologically safe spaces for leaders to develop skills and experience navigating challenging, sensitive topics.
• Redesign leadership development experiences to increase accessibility and inclusion in a hybrid environment.

Want to dig deeper? Explore these related resources:

Webinar: Future-Proof Your Workforce in the Face of Competitive Pressures
Article: Build Organizational Resilience for Today and Tomorrow
After reviewing the research and recommendations presented at Gartner ReimagineHR Conference 2021, attendees can develop clear action items to implement in the future.

To get the most from the conference experience and to share insights with colleagues, we suggest these next steps:

**Revisit**
session content in the Conference Portal.
EMEA | Americas

**Recap**
the notes you made during the presentations and create a 30-, 60- and 90-day action plan with your team.

**Circle back**
with your new connections to keep the conversation going using the hashtag #GartnerHR.

**Follow up**
with us with questions/comments about the research covered at the conference here.
Save the date for next year’s Gartner ReimagineHR Conference

15 – 16 September 2022
London, U.K.

24 – 26 October 2022
Orlando, FL

→ Learn More

Continue the conversation with #GartnerHR