

2024

Harver Leading Innovators For Talent (LIFT) Awards

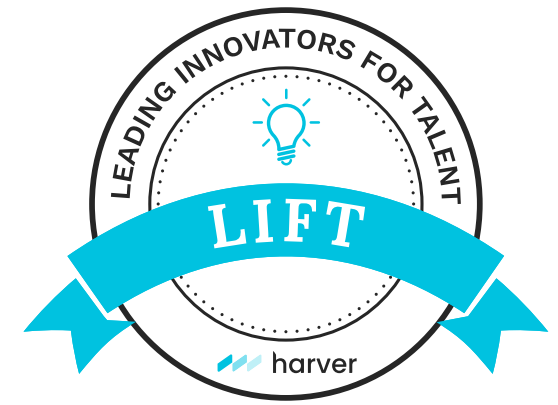


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2024

Harver Leading Innovators For Talent (LIFT) Awards

The Harver LIFT Awards honor individuals in the community who are innovating in the HR space, who are using technology strategically, and who see talent acquisition and management as a creative and human-centered endeavor. Nominations were received on behalf of organizations around the world.



AND THE WINNERS ARE

LIFT Awards

Matthew Allen

ROI Solutions, a
Connexus Resource
Group Company

Emma Blixt

Circle K

Alexandra Cohen

Blackstone

Mary Susan Costa

Working Solutions

Kristie Crespo

Gainwell Technologies

Ashley Diotte

Gainwell Technologies

Erica Dumont

KellyConnect

Marlin Gayfield

Hobby Lobby
Stores, Inc.

Rhonda George

TaskUs

Jeremy Grigaitis

IntouchCX

Anna McCord

Gainwell Technologies

Sarai Nieves

Gainwell Technologies

Claudia Pires

Qualfon, Inc.

Gregg Riefenstahl

Penske

Asma Sultana

Alorica

Jonathan E. Thompson

Johns Hopkins
University

Rain Villagonzalo

Qualfon, Inc.



LIFT AWARD

Matthew Allen

Director of Recruiting & Operations, ROI Solutions, a Connexus Resource Group Company



With over 20 years of experience as a manager and leader, I have consistently driven my teams to meet and exceed expectations. I excel in transforming underperforming performance indicators into positive outcomes. As the Director of Recruiting, I played a pivotal role in driving the company's rapid growth, increasing headcount from 800 to over 5,500 employees. Additionally, I managed a portfolio of \$35 million in operations revenue, contributing to a total company revenue of \$150 million. My extensive experience in the BPO industry has enabled me to build a strong portfolio of satisfied clients, leading to significant growth in my contracts.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I am most proud of my team's success in rapidly hiring a large number of employees. Most recently, we hired 1,000 new employees within a one-week time frame while maintaining a training show rate

of 95%. My team's ability to quickly hire the right people has led to constant recognition from our clients for our ability to provide them with the talent they need. While others struggled during the "Great Resignation," my company grew to its largest size in history. This achievement highlights our resilience and dedication to meeting and exceeding client expectations.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Recruiting and talent acquisition are more than just checking off required skills. If that were the goal, we could have a computer do it for us. Some of the best talent I have hired didn't fit the model of what we initially thought the perfect hire would be. We must remain open-minded when speaking with candidates to find the best fit for both them and the company. We achieve success when we view candidates as people, rather than merely checking off boxes for required skills.



LIFT AWARD

Emma Blixt

Senior Manager People Development Europe, Circle K



I have been working at Circle K since 2007 and started my career in the company as a Customer Sales Representative working extra shifts in one of our Stores in Stockholm Sweden, where I also live today. It has been a great journey being in the company for many years and having the opportunity to try different roles and grow in the company together with great teams. I am very passionate about making it easier for our front line heroes across our 3.000 stores across Europe.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I am incredibly proud that we have the opportunity to transform our recruitment and hiring process for front-line workers with technology that simplifies the lives of our candidates, store managers, and recruiters.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Change takes time, so it's important not to underestimate this process. Moving from a traditional way of recruiting with CV/Resume and trusting the technology is a big change! So it is important to involve end users early to ensure the product performs as well in practice as you hope it will. The early involvement from end users hopefully also creates ownership and trust in the process.



LIFT AWARD

Alexandra Cohen

Assistant Vice President, Human Resources, Blackstone



I have spent much of my career in the financial services campus recruiting and early careers space (always based in NYC). Throughout my career journey, I have been focused on leveraging technology to enhance recruiting processes, utilizing data to gather insights on who we are hiring, and seeking new ways to engage with our candidate pool and improve the recruitment experience. The campus recruiting and early careers space is both exciting and rewarding, and I am looking forward to witnessing its continued evolution and maintaining my active involvement.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

The team's ability to push the boundaries of traditional recruitment methods and embrace technology to always remain competitive in attracting the best talent in the industry.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Embrace the evolution. When implementing something new, it is crucial to continuously gather feedback and iterate throughout the entire lifecycle. As your organization grows and evolves, make sure the projects you lead are adaptable and responsive to those changes.

LIFT AWARD



Mary Susan Costa

Director, Virtual Talent, Working Solutions



With work spanning three decades in human resources (HR), my career has centered on recruiting and the related processes—both face-to-face and virtual. The early in-person engagement enabled me to better visualize the virtual HR that came later. That knowledge became increasingly important as the workplace went more global and remote. Those skills especially came into play during the COVID-19 pandemic, where traditional business models were turned upside down. The versatility of virtual HR, which is inherently more modern, positioned me well to adjust on the fly for Working Solutions as our virtual-since-founding model was able to continue operating when others could not. I could better serve the business, our clients, my team and the contact center agents, all 1099 contractors, that we hire. Flexibility is my operating philosophy. Mobility is my mantra. Combined, they drive speed to efficiency. I earned the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) designation in 1998. Since then, I have maintained my certification to contribute cutting-edge knowledge to the ever-changing work-at-home

space. That space, which exploded during the pandemic, has resized itself as companies today wrestle with getting the right ratio of virtual vs. in-office workers. As the corporate mindset tries to find a profitable-and-professional balance, the workers who embrace remote work as the new world order will never be the same. It is in that world all companies must now compete. At Working Solutions, I have had the privilege to be part of an industry-leading company in the work-at-home space. Being in the forefront, our business has developed the best practices, which others emulate, to find the most-skilled, home-based workers. In doing so, Working Solutions demonstrates great scalability and responsiveness as on-demand workforce needs fluctuate high and low. This fluidity benefits both clients and workers. As for personal facts, my home is in central Colorado, which allows me to spend a great deal of time in the outdoors. My deepest thinking and out-of-the box ideas come to me when exploring mountain trails on foot or horseback.

MARY SUSAN COSTA (CONT.)

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Working Solutions placed #1 in the FlexJobs 2024 Companies to Watch for Remote Jobs. The company makes the Top 10 consistently. This is the culmination of years of focusing our applicant profile, using assessment tools and providing live interactions with professional HR staff. The virtual tools and professionals work together to create a cohesive, streamlined application process that is positive, efficient and a real-world look into the jobs we offer. My team works to find the best fit for every client need, ensuring each candidate understands fully the work-at-home model and how they will contribute to the client's success. The close-knit team I manage is not only like family, but a high-performance team always seeking to improve. The retention we see is far beyond industry standards, where high attrition is the norm. For agents, Working Solutions regularly celebrates anniversaries of five, 10 and 15 years—all recognized by chief executive and founder Kim Houlne. There are even 20-year agent anniversaries. It is a testament to the continuous improvements my team makes to ensure a superior selection process. Fully vetted, vigorous and poised for ongoing success.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Talent acquisition and talent management are moving targets in our profession. The needs and requirements are ever-changing, depending on the client. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are key factors to consider in achieving the desired business outcomes. Success combines being both focused and fluid, and creating answers that are actionable and adjustable. So, where to begin? Start with the goals in mind. Survey all the parties involved, be they internal customers, clients, vendors or others. While information overload is a hazard, so is developing a program without shared objectives. Spell them for all to see. Say them aloud for everyone to hear. Overcommunicate to be clear. Also, be flexible. The first attempt is not likely to be the final product. And the final product itself may need to flex and change as you get closer to attaining your goals. By its nature, the virtual workforce is constantly changing. Being static is not in the best interest of the company nor the applicant pool. Be mobile, open-minded—and always, operational as the endgame. Move and make it happen.



LIFT AWARD

Kristie Crespo

VP, Talent Acquisition, Gainwell Technologies



I am a Talent Acquisition professional with over 25 years of experience in the field. I am passionate about working with people when they are at their most vulnerable: when they are considering a job change. I currently live with my husband and our 5 dogs in The Woodlands, Texas (just north of Houston).

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I am most proud of the work that Gainwell does to serve the underserved community. Our company provides technology services to Medicaid/Medicare programs for 50 states and territories nationwide. We feel good about our mission and the work we do is important.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

I have 2 simple rules for a good leader: 1. You have to genuinely care about your people. It's not something you can fake. 2. People fail because of lack of desire or lack of training/support. It's our job to give them everything they need to be successful.



LIFT AWARD

Ashley Diotte

Executive Recruiting Manager, Gainwell Technologies



My name is Ashley Diotte and I live in Virginia. I have 5+ years of experience as a Technical and Executive Recruiter, both in agency and corporate environments. I am currently the Executive Recruiting Manager at Gainwell Technologies. In addition to Executive recruitment, I also support our Corporate Security group. Since joining Gainwell in December of 2021, I have had the opportunity to partner directly with and support Executives in our C-Suite as well as other senior leaders across our entire organization (in the U.S). I am a full-lifecycle recruiter, and my duties start with establishing a working relationship with the leader(s), sourcing candidates externally, helping coordinate and manage interviews, through the offer and onboarding processes. I take on other duties and tasks as assigned/requested.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I am most proud of how my small team and I offer a white glove recruiting service that has received

accolades from senior leadership, including our CEO. We recruit for niche skillsets with tough requirements and have to pivot from one business to another on a daily basis. We provide an unmatched candidate experience from the initial screening call through verifying they've started on day 1.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Some advice I would offer someone that is starting a similar role would be to: Treat people the way you want to be treated. Always remember that that with each candidate you speak to and each role you fill, you are making an impact on someone's career (and their livelihood). Empathy is one of the most important characteristics a recruiter can have. At the end of the day, we are all human, and we need to treat candidates the way we would want to be treated if we were in their shoes.

LIFT AWARD



Erica Dumont

Director of Talent Acquisition, KellyConnect



I have worked in the HR field for 18 years and learned there is no joy greater than lifting others. At Kelly I have had limitless opportunities to do just that and have led recruiting teams for the last 9 years. Currently I lead a specialized team focused on delivering quality within the contact center space for KellyConnect.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Teamwork and Kelly go hand in hand; we draw inspiration from one another and work diligently towards creating a culture that challenges mediocrity and strives toward excellence. Recently we rallied together under an initiative to improve the candidate to employee experience. We dissected the processes, solicited feedback, and identified pain points contributing towards early attrition. The result was a successful revamp of our orientation, training & nesting programs.

“Great things in business are never done by one person; they’re done by a team of people.”

- Steve Jobs

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Always keep the project’s objectives in mind, communicate openly, and remain adaptable to changes and new insights that may arise along the way.

LIFT AWARD



Marlin Gayfield

Assistant Director of Management Recruiting,
Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.



I've spent nearly the last 15 years serving Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. in various roles, throughout store operations, the buying office, and the corporate office in Oklahoma City.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Hobby Lobby is a company that strongly encourages promotion from within. That's why you'll notice many of our corporate leaders, our Management Recruiters, and all of our store operations leaders started out in stores. Our team hires all those to operations leaders as Co-Managers and they grow their careers from there. With that being core to who we are as a company, we take great pride in being gatekeepers for the organization.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

I understand in the TA space that time isn't always our side, but it is very vital that we take the time to make sure the actions and steps that we take to build our teams, to build our processes, select your tools and ultimately to acquire talent. The time investments made upfront will pay dividends when it comes to employee engagement and retention.

LIFT AWARD

Rhonda George

VP of People Strategy, TaskUs



“Go be the value added for today and someone else.” - Rhonda George My statement above is a fundamental cornerstone of my career, that allows my contagious passion for people development to shine. I am an accomplished HR professional with over 25+ years of extensive experience across a broad range of HR / Recruiting functions in a complex growing industry. I have demonstrated the ability to lead enhanced organizational development, maximize efficiencies, and create operational advancements through the use of technologies, talent development, and process improvement; while vastly building an improved leading-edge HR culture. My deep passion to develop others, and create an inclusive environment and better processes, empowers me to continue to be a part of the award-winning HR/ Recruiting community.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

As an HR and DEI professional, I am most proud of our transformative DEI initiative that has significantly

improved our organization’s culture. Starting with a thorough needs assessment, we set clear, ambitious goals and integrated them into our strategic plan. Securing strong leadership support around our People First culture and empowering DEI champions at all levels has driven meaningful change. Our comprehensive training programs on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership have fostered a more inclusive environment. We revised policies and maintained transparent communication to build trust and engagement. Regularly tracking progress and making data-driven decisions has ensured continuous improvement. Our efforts have not only transformed our organization into a truly inclusive place but also set a powerful example for others. We are proud to have created a dynamic, equitable environment that values every individual.

RHONDA GEORGE (CONT.)

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

I would say don't be afraid to try something new! We spent so many years doing the same thing because that was all we knew and we thought it worked. After exploring what was out there on the market and what enhancements we could make, we just went for it. And we haven't looked back.

LIFT AWARD

Jeremy Grigaitis

Senior Director, Global Tools & Sourcing, IntouchCX



I am currently the Senior Director of Global Tools & Sourcing at IntouchCX, based in Vancouver, Canada. Over the past decade, I have spearheaded numerous cost-saving initiatives and led global teams to establish best practices in recruiting tools and solutions. I am particularly proud of my role in enhancing our technology partnerships, such as our collaboration with Harver, which has significantly optimized our recruitment processes and allows us to screen candidates at scale using scientifically proven assessments.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

We are most proud of our implementation of innovative recruitment technologies and strategies that have streamlined our hiring process, improved candidate experience, and significantly reduced time-to-hire. Our efforts in developing a robust global sourcing strategy have also led to substantial cost savings and increased operational efficiency across our global campuses.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

My advice would be to stay agile and open to new technologies and methodologies. Building strong relationships with key stakeholders and leading partners is crucial. Focus on creating a seamless and positive experience for candidates while continuously analyzing data to drive improvements. Lastly, fostering an inclusive culture that values diversity will not only enhance team performance but also attract top talent.

LIFT AWARD



Anna McCord

Talent Acquisition Manager/Operations,
Gainwell Technologies



I've been part of the Gainwell Technologies team for nearly 11 years, exploring various roles both within and outside HR. However, my passion has always been centered on enhancing staffing processes. Whether working directly in business operations or within HR, where I currently reside, I've seized numerous opportunities to broaden my skills and knowledge in unexpected areas. During a pivotal moment in my career, I crafted a quote that truly reflects my core values and aspirations: "I don't want to be ordinary; I want to make a difference. I strive to embody extraordinary qualities while remaining humble. My commitment is unwavering—I will never cease to listen, learn, and innovate to foster continuous improvement." This quote encapsulates my dedication to making a meaningful impact through constant growth and innovation.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

We have several initiatives that we are extremely proud of: Resource Fulfillment Team: We have established a Resource Fulfillment Team embedded within the business to serve as a single point of contact for HR escalations, strategic initiatives, and advisement impacting workforce management efforts. I am proud to lead this team and incredibly grateful to them for teaching me something new every day. Their dedication has made this initiative successful. The team's hard work has made them a sought-after partner for the business in staffing-related decisions. The positive feedback from the business underscores the need for such a team and makes all the effort worthwhile. Candidate Care Coordinator Team: We recently implemented a dedicated team for

ANNA MCCORD (CONT.)

all new hires in the US and India. This initiative aims to deliver a first-rate onboarding experience for all candidates across Gainwell and to alleviate our Hiring Managers of administrative onboarding tasks. One of the key benefits of this team is the expected annual savings of 12,000 hours across Gainwell, allowing managers to focus more on billable/client-facing activities.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Know Your Why: Understand the core purpose and goals of the project. This will guide your decisions and keep the team aligned. Build a Strong and Diverse Team: Surround yourself with a team that brings diverse perspectives and strengths to drive the project forward effectively. Engage Stakeholders: Listen and learn from all stakeholders to make informed decisions. Their insights are invaluable for the success of the project. Be Agile: Be ready to pivot quickly when needed. Flexibility is key to addressing challenges and adapting to changes. Have a Robust Communication Strategy: Develop a bulletproof communication strategy and plan. Clear and consistent communication is crucial for keeping everyone informed and aligned.

**LIFT AWARD**

Sarai Nieves

Resource Fulfillment Lead Talent Acquisition,
Gainwell Technologies



I am currently located in Puerto Rico but grew up in Michigan. I completed my college education in Florida, where I proudly earned my bachelor's degree. I then pursued further education, obtaining a Bachelor of Business Administration with an emphasis in Project Management from Grand Canyon University in Arizona. For over seven years, I have worked with Gainwell Technologies, initially starting in supporting call center roles and later transitioned into talent acquisition. During my tenure, I have taken on recruitment roles and expanded my scope to build connections within the military community. This has significantly enhanced the business's visibility and brought in employees with diverse and valuable military experience. Additionally, I have worked to highlight and integrate the military community within our organization, leveraging their unique skills to benefit our business.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I am immensely proud of my work in establishing meaningful connections with the military community, a group outside of my own experience. My passion for this community began in childhood, driven by a deep admiration for those who selflessly serve our country. This passion intensified as I witnessed my sister's challenges within the military, highlighting the critical need for advocacy and support. These experiences have fueled my dedication to fostering strong relationships and support systems for military personnel transitioning to civilian careers, ensuring they are recognized and provided with the opportunities they deserve.

SARAI NIEVES (CONT.)

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Starting in talent acquisition with a focus on military recruiting involves understanding military culture, terminology, and structure. Build relationships with veteran organizations and networks, and learn to translate military skills into civilian job requirements. Highlight veterans' transferable skills such as leadership and teamwork, and provide them with support during their transition. Stay informed about trends in the veteran job market and use targeted job boards. Develop a strong employer brand that appeals to veterans and be aware of legal aspects and benefits associated with hiring them. Day-to-day, you'll source candidates, screen resumes, conduct interviews, and collaborate with hiring managers to match veterans with suitable roles. Streamline your talent acquisition processes to efficiently manage candidate pipelines and ensure a positive recruiting experience. These steps will help attract and retain talented veterans effectively.

LIFT AWARD



Claudia Pires

SVP, Global Person Office, Qualfon, Inc.



I am a global business leader with 20+ years of experience in strategic human resources and organizational development, operating over multiple cultures and countries. My passion is to help individuals and organizations define strategic goals, develop talent, drive change, and achieve results. I am Brazilian by birth and American by choice. I live in sunny Tampa, FL with my husband, two teenagers, and two Yorkies.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

All the elements of our People to Person strategy that support Qualfon's mission to "Make each person's life better".

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Be very intentional and able to articulate a clear connection between your project and the organization's strategy.

LIFT AWARD



Gregg Riefenstahl

Director Staffing Operations, Penske



As our staffing team has grown, I am most proud of the new systems and process we have been able to put in place from a selection and candidate experience perspective.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Creating an environment where change is accepted and teams' willingness to look at it as a positive.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Start with the end in mind. What are your overall goals and accomplishments you are looking to achieve.

LIFT AWARD

Asma Sultana

Vice President - Global Talent Acquisition, Alorica



A corporate career of 24 years in Human Resources in which I have handled diverse portfolios and aspects of the HR function while being a SME for Talent Acquisition | Talent Strategy & Talent Management. Partnering with Business to understand the people strategy and building the HR & TA strategies based on the organizational goals has been at the core of my professional journey. Over the years my experience has ranged from Talent acquisition, HR BP Lead, Talent Strategist, Leadership Hiring, Leadership development, managing and growing talent; providing the best employee experience; building and managing world class teams; driving diversity, equity and inclusion strategies; culture immersions, deciding compensation strategy, employee relations and being trusted advisor and partner for business; change management, M&A etc. I am a problem solver and a solution provider. Collaborating, influencing, being the go-to person for any talent related need, where the way has to be found

amidst ambiguity are my strengths. Building and working with diverse teams in global multi-cultural and matrix environment has been my forte.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Delivering hiring batches week on week with 120% fill rate, Impact Sourcing, Driving DEI initiatives in Hiring, Infusing AI in Hiring, Build – Buy – Borrow Model, Virtual Walk In Drives Targeting Tier3 Cities / States, Skill to Succeed Program for Under Privileged Students – Hire: Train and Deploy RPO Model for Key account with quick turn around Communities Outreach

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Be Resilient, as It anchors leaders in their core values, aiding them in overcoming challenges.

LIFT AWARD



Jonathan E. Thompson

Director of Talent Acquisition Strategy,
Johns Hopkins University



I am currently the Director of Talent Acquisition Strategy at Johns Hopkins University (“JHU”). I have been at JHU for over 11 years and in Talent Acquisition for almost 20 years. I enjoy designing, developing, and delivering talent acquisition strategies and solutions to meet business objectives. One accomplishment was implementing Harver Checkster in 2018 to automate our reference checking process which has saved time and improved the quality of our references.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

Overseeing a team that helps hire top talent to help Johns Hopkins achieve its mission to educate its students and cultivate their capacity for lifelong learning, foster independent and original research, and to bring the benefits of discovery to the world.

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

Get references from current users and talk to industry experts to help inform what questions you should be asking.

LIFT AWARD

Rain Villagonzalo

Sr. Director, Talent Acquisition, Qualfon, Inc.



A talent acquisition senior leader with 17 years experience in recruitment for call center operations. I'm currently the TA Lead for Qualfon Philippines and Guyana. My industry expertise includes BPO and captive, customer service and financial operations. Recruiting experience includes end-to-end management of volume, exempt and specialized hiring. I also have leadership experience in LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and an active involvement in pushing for DE&I agenda in the Philippines.

What work are you/your team most proud of?

I'm immensely proud of how the team has seamlessly embraced and implemented technology in our selection process. It only took us a little over a month to execute the transition: from calibration, standardization, testing, adaptation and mastery of Harver assessments as part of our selection process. And after the launch, things got even better. We realized the magnitude of the synergy and efficiency

we were getting by instating a reliable technology tool in our process. This helped our Recruiters save time from the initial stage of the process so they can spend more quality time in candidate conversations. By taking into consideration candidate behavior, our hiring process became more inclusive. This helped us achieve an average of at least 70% completion rate of our online assessments (remote takers). The collaboration between our team and Harver team was also something worth celebrating. To this day, we continue to work closely with Harver team to improve the dashboards and analytics, which are pivotal in our strategic planning (shoutout to Chanel, Megan, Eric and Fredy!). I would attribute this success to: 1. Qualfon team's agility and openness to transformational change and 2. Qualfon leaders' (our global TA lead and our exec team) wholehearted support. Harver has helped us make effective hiring decisions, while putting our clients and candidates at the heart of what we do.

RAIN VILLAGONZALO (CONT.)

What advice would you give to someone starting on a similar TA/TM/DEI project?

First, it's best to always start with the "Why". Define the problem statement clearly, be transparent with the intention, and present the big picture to everyone involved. An informative townhall session will be suitable. Once that is established, 2. Continue with the "what's-in-it-for-me". All participants/stakeholders in the process should feel that they are part of the creation steps. 3. Always put your clients and customers (candidates) at the center of what you do. Lastly, the tone-at-the-top is paramount. Executive leaders' support will make or break any transformational project.

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