

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
PUBLIC SECTOR HR ASSOCIATION

Public EYE



JULY/AUGUST 2024
VOLUME 90 NO 4



REAL TALK ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:
Exploring the Public Sector Impact of AI

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See You in September: A Peek at What's in Store at PSHRA24

When this edition of *Public Eye* drops online, we'll be roughly four weeks away from [PSHRA Annual Conference 2024](#).

This year's event offers a packed schedule of concurrent sessions, dynamic keynote speakers, exciting exhibitors and plenty of opportunities to connect with and learn from HR professionals and thought leaders from across the public sector.

A few of those thought leaders share some insight in this issue, providing a sneak peek at what to expect at PSHRA24.

For example, one of the concurrent sessions in our [conference program](#) will focus on findings from an artificial intelligence-focused survey that PSHRA recently produced in conjunction with researchers from Nova Southeastern University and the University of Illinois Springfield.

This issue's cover story dives into the new report, [Exploring the Impact of Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI on Public Sector Human Resource Professionals](#), which surveyed 155 PSHRA members, combining their responses with qualitative insights from focus groups and individual interviews. Noting the “rapid advancement” of artificial intelligence and GAI as well as the opportunities and challenges AI offers government agencies at all levels, the report examines how AI and GAI tools affect HR tasks, focusing on adoption, readiness and perception among public sector HR professionals.

Overall, the research found that perceptions of AI and its workplace potential are positive among the PSHRA members surveyed. For example, more than 80% of respondents indicated they were comfortable or very comfortable experimenting with AI. More than half (53%) reported finding generative AI tools such as ChatGPT “easily accessible and beneficial.” More than 70% acknowledged that the rapid adoption of AI is significantly changing how they approach their work.

“Fear still exists around AI in the workplace, particularly fear about job displacement,” report co-author Romeo Solano, doctor of public administration candidate at the University of Illinois Springfield, recently told *Public Eye*. “But, there's also the perspective that, as AI becomes more prevalent in processes and functions [throughout the workplace], that fear is going to change into more of an outlook that AI can be used to improve what we're doing at work.

“And the human touch is always going to be needed in the public sector workplace,” Solano continued. “You can't displace human

interaction with AI. That is always going to be there for HR.”

Award-winning author, journalist, international speaker and workplace culture strategist Jennifer Moss will also be on hand at PSHRA24 in September, where she will deliver the Day One keynote address. In her Sept. 4 presentation, Moss will discuss the importance of creating a culture in which employees feel comfortable experimenting with new technologies and new ways of working, and the critical role that public sector HR leaders play in fostering this type of environment.



For example, Moss advises leaders to gain a better understanding of the causes of employee burnout, such as unsustainable workload, perceived lack of control and insufficient rewards for effort. She urges public sector leaders to determine how these factors may be playing a role in employee well-being and performance, “and consider an upstream approach to solving for them.”

Moss also lays out some steps that government agencies, including public sector HR leaders, can take to foster greater mental well-being in the workplace—providing mental health first-aid training, offering access to service and resources, and forming employee resource groups that offer peer support, for instance.

“All of these tactics are a great first step toward a strong culture of well-being,” she said. “But what I believe is the most vital component to a successful mental health strategy are leaders who model the behaviors that will lead to real change. Employees can't be what they can't see. If leaders refuse to be vulnerable and demonstrate a willingness to talk openly about mental illness, frontline workers will feel like they need to suffer in silence.” ●


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Public Eye is published bimonthly by the Public Sector HR Association, 1617 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 549-7100. Copyright ©2024. The July/August issue is volume ninety, number four of the bimonthly magazine of PSHRA.

Contributed articles of 750-1,500 words are welcome via email. *Public Eye* reserves the right to refuse and/or edit manuscripts submitted for publication. For further information, email publications@pshra.org or phone (703) 535-5248.

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**Coming up in the
September/October issue of
PUBLIC EYE**

**State of the Public Sector
Address: Unpacking the 2024
Local and State Workforce Survey**

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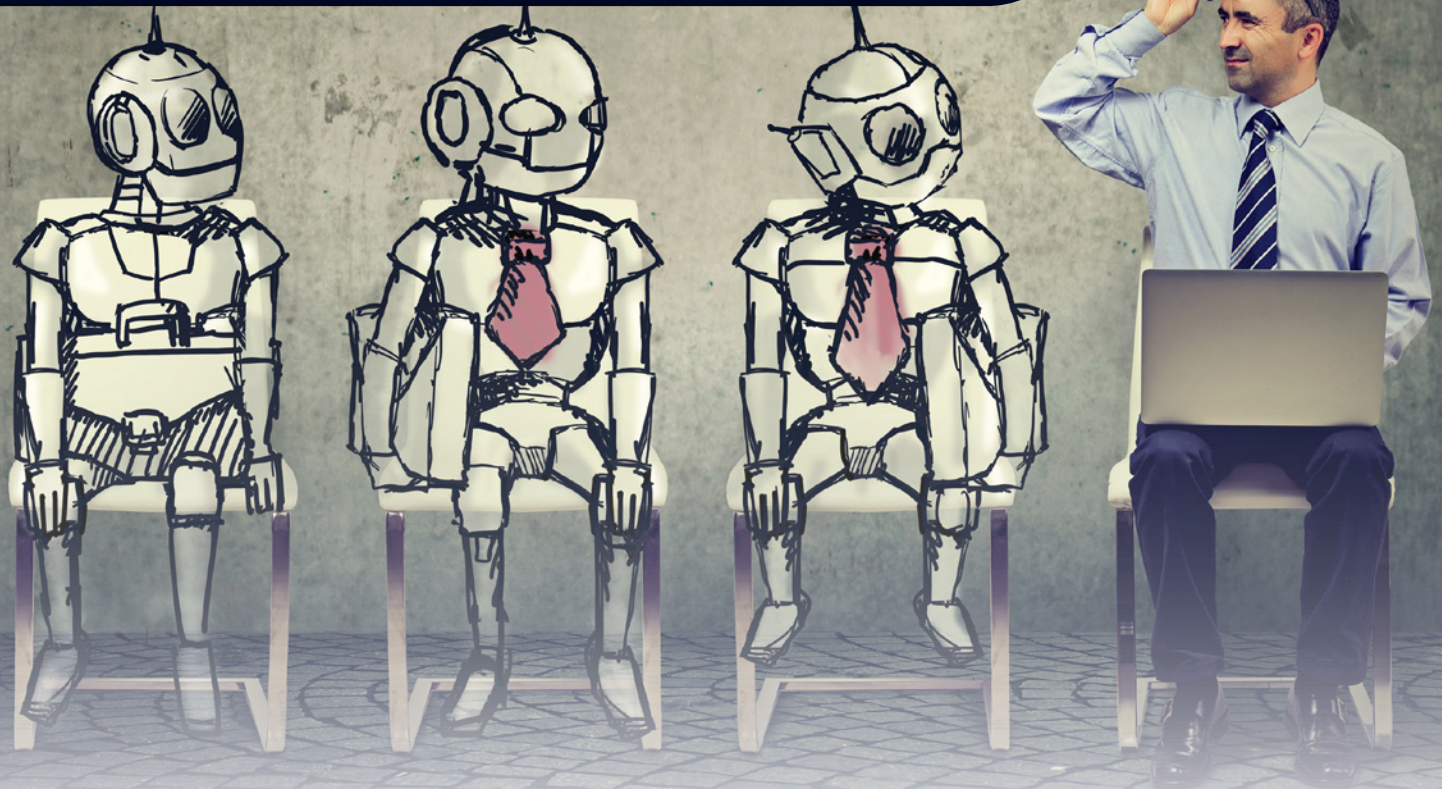
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REAL TALK ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:



Exploring the Public Sector Impact of AI

By Mark McGraw, PSHRA

The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace doesn't figure to slow down anytime soon.

For example, [2024 Microsoft data](#) finds the use of generative AI (GAI) nearly doubled in a recent six-month span.

In terms of public sector adoption of AI, [Forrester research shows](#) public sector leaders are looking to utilize artificial intelligence for purposes such as improving data discovery and quality, streamlining business operations and increasing automation.

Are you and your organization ready to harness the potential of this technology?

PSHRA® recently teamed with researchers at Nova Southeastern University and the University of Illinois Springfield to answer this question, and to get a sense of where public sector employers are on the spectrum of AI adoption, from an individual and an organizational standpoint.

The new report, [Exploring the Impact of Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI on Public Sector Human Resource Professionals](#), surveyed 155 PSHRA® members, combining their responses with qualitative insights from focus groups and individual interviews. Noting the “rapid advancement” of artificial intelligence and GAI as well as the opportunities and challenges AI offers government

agencies at all levels, the report examines how AI and GAI tools affect HR tasks, focusing on adoption, readiness and perception among public sector HR professionals.

A Progressive Approach to AI

The anxiety over AI's potential to change the way work gets done is well-documented.

In 2024, for instance, [Public Eye reported on survey findings](#) that showed 77% of 2,000 employed Americans were concerned that AI would cause job loss. Among this group, 44% said they were “very concerned” and 33% reported feeling “somewhat concerned.”

The research we recently conducted with Nova Southeastern and the University of Illinois Springfield finds that skepticism around AI still very much exists, at least in some pockets of the public sector workforce.

“Fear still exists around AI in the workplace, particularly fear about job displacement.”

— Romeo Solano

For example, 58% of the PSHRA® members surveyed reported feeling that their employees are afraid they will be replaced by AI. And, when asked to gauge their comfort level experimenting with AI, 44% noted they were either “not comfortable” or “very uncomfortable.”

Concerns about data use and storage were notable as well, with 38% rating their concern level on this front as “high,” and another 24% saying they were moderately concerned. In addition, the largest percentage of respondents (38%) rated their trust in AI-generated decisions as “low.”

All that said, overall perceptions of AI and its workplace potential are positive among the PSHRA® members surveyed. In addition to the 40% of respondents who indicated they were comfortable experimenting with AI, another 41% said they were very comfortable doing so. More than half (53%) reported finding generative AI tools such as ChatGPT “easily accessible and beneficial.” More than 70% acknowledged that the rapid adoption of AI is significantly changing how they approach their work.

“Fear still exists around AI in the workplace, particularly fear about job displacement,” report co-author Romeo Solano, a doctor of public administration candidate at the University of Illinois Springfield, recently told *Public Eye*.

“But, there’s also the perspective that, as AI becomes more prevalent in processes and functions [throughout the workplace],

that fear is going to change into more of an outlook that AI can be used to improve what we’re doing at work,” Solano added.

“And the human touch is always going to be needed in the public sector workplace. You can’t displace human interaction with AI. That is always going to be there for HR.”

Public Sector Potential

Agency HR leaders can play a key role in addressing the concerns surrounding AI on an individual and organizational level.

For example, HR can conduct position audits to assess the positions most at risk of being replaced, report co-author Travis Bland, associate professor and interim dean of the College of Health, Science and Technology at the University of Illinois Springfield, told *Public Eye*.

“This audit, coupled with an assessment of AI knowledge, capability and willingness to upskill, would provide a great starting point for providing targeted training,” Bland said, reiterating the need to equip employees with the necessary AI-related tools and training.

“HR really needs to play a strategic role here in preparing an already shrinking public sector workforce—meaning that many are choosing other sectors—for the future of work,” he said. “The worst thing HR could do is to try and alleviate the very real and valid concern [around AI] by suggesting that it is unfounded.”

The HR team can also communicate the ways in which AI can help lighten the load for the agency’s employees. Our research findings highlight several examples of AI’s utility.

For instance, 57% of respondents said that increased use of AI and GAI could make recruitment and selection processes faster. Twenty-two percent felt these tools could make recruitment and selection more transparent, and 21% said AI and GAI could make these processes more personalized.

In addition, 31% trust AI’s ability to consistently identify patterns in candidates’ behaviors that predict future job performance. The same number feel their organization effectively uses generative AI to identify skills and performances beyond traditional credentials in talent acquisition.

PSHRA® members have similar sentiments with regard to AI’s capacity to boost training and development efforts. For instance, 33% of respondents indicated that training programs recommended by AI are more relevant to employees’ roles and career goals.

“AI’s role in training reveals its potential to enhance learning and development, which is crucial for optimizing programs and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

A Q&A with PSHRA24 Keynote Speaker Jennifer Moss

By Mark McGraw, PSHRA

Jennifer Moss is an award-winning author of multiple books, a journalist and a workplace strategist who's worked with clients ranging from startups to Fortune 100 companies. She's also the scheduled keynote speaker at PSHRA® Annual Conference 2024. Moss recently sat down with *Public Eye* to talk about the importance of nurturing a positive culture in the public sector workplace, and to offer a preview of what PSHRA® conference attendees can expect to learn from her presentation at the event.

Public Eye: You will be delivering the opening keynote at PSHRA's annual conference this year (Sept. 4 – 6, 2024, Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, D.C.), where you'll address a gathering of HR professionals and thought leaders from across the public sector. Can you give us a preview of what attendees can expect to hear and learn?

Moss: First, I can't wait to join everyone at the PSHRA® annual conference this year. Attendees can expect a deep dive into the critical issues of workplace culture and well-being, specific to the public sector.

Given the unique challenges faced by public sector employees, fostering purpose, positive relationships and a sense of workplace community is crucial. We'll discuss what I see as the three major shifts that have changed work permanently and why that requires a complete rethink of how we've planned for the future of work. What are the implications of these shifts for talent management and organizational culture? And why are so many workers today untethered and wondering, "Why are we here?" as they grapple with a new priority framework?

We'll explore easy-to-operationalize solutions for managing the generational divides, responding to AI anxiety and technostress, rebuilding community to reduce loneliness, increasing belonging, recognition, engagement, retention and overall well-being.

Ultimately, the goal is to transform our workplaces into environments where well-being is prioritized, burnout is actively addressed and every team member feels valued and empowered. Attendees will leave with practical insights and strategies they can implement to foster a healthier, more inclusive work culture in their organizations.



Public Eye: You're an award-winning author of multiple books, a journalist and a workplace culture strategist whose clients range from startups to Fortune 100 companies. From a culture standpoint, what makes the public sector work environment unique, and what can public sector entities do to create a positive, winning culture within their organization?

Moss: From a culture standpoint, the public sector work environment is unique due to its inherent focus on serving the community and the public good. This workforce is often motivated by a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to making a positive impact on society. This is a double-edged sword. Mission-driven roles can be a buffer from burnout and it can be the central cause.

It's even more vital for leaders to prioritize a healthy workplace culture to ensure high organizational performance. Public sector employees are consistently interacting with people from their own community, so that end stakeholder is important to them.



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Knowing that their work matters and tying their efforts to a bigger picture goal is paramount. Leaders need to circulate the good news stories and it's imperative that they don't assume someone knows if/how they made a difference. Leaders must tie individual employees' efforts specifically to the positive impact.

Public Eye: And what is the public sector HR leader's role in cultivating this type of culture?

Moss: Generally, the kind of culture everyone wants tends to have high emotional intelligence and psychological fitness. Exceptional HR leaders are excellent at listening and actioning what they hear. They make decisions rooted in compassion. These leaders are excellent at corporate hygiene—which means they're focused on stress prevention versus downstream tactics that are consistently reactionary. Particularly because losing resources in the public sector is high stakes—an EMT or a firefighter shortage is life or death.

Healthy and high-performing HR leaders cultivate a culture of transparency and open communication. They normalize conversations about mental health—even more crucial for high-stress roles. They are excellent at building out well-being strategies that prioritize both physical and mental health safety.

Public Eye: Shifting gears a bit ... one of your areas of expertise is employee burnout, well-being and happiness. Recent data suggests that employee burnout is more prevalent among public sector workers than their private sector counterparts. What sort of advice would you offer government HR leaders in terms of helping to combat employee burnout among the public sector workforce?

Moss: We often suggest employees treat burnout with self-care. Most well-being strategies are geared toward these remedies, which are too far downstream. Instead, to truly eradicate the problem we must start by examining the six root causes of chronic stress:

1. Unsustainable workload
2. Perceived lack of control
3. Insufficient rewards for effort

4. Lack of a supportive community
5. Lack of fairness
6. Mismatched values and skills

I advise all leaders to better understand these six root causes of burnout. Determine how they may be playing a role in employee well-being and performance and consider an upstream approach to solving for them. For example, studies found that resilience trainings actually had a negative effect on employee well-being because employees described these tactics as tone deaf. Subjects shared, "I have no time for resilience trainings. Instead reduce my workload so I can have better work/life balance, which would result in me not requiring trainings to be more resilient to stress."

Public Eye: Many public service jobs—firefighters, 911 dispatchers, emergency and disaster response workers, for example—are inherently stressful, and recent research finds these types of frontline workers dealing with mental health issues at higher rates than other employees. What are some steps that government agencies, including government HR leaders, can take to foster greater mental well-being in the public sector workplace?

Moss: Mental health first-aid training, access to services and resources, more conversations about mental health, employee resource groups that offer peer support—all of these tactics are a great first step toward a strong culture of well-being. But what I believe is the most vital component to a successful mental health strategy are leaders who model the behaviors that will lead to real change. Employees can't be what they can't see. If leaders refuse to be vulnerable and demonstrate a willingness to talk openly about mental illness frontline workers will feel like they need to suffer in silence. ●

Mark McGraw is the editor of Public Eye and Of Public Interest. He can be reached at mmcgraw@pshra.org.



Steps on the Road to IPMA-CP Certification

By Jackie Little

The pathway to public sector HR certification is paved with diligence and commitment, and is lined with the beauty of new relationships and possibilities. The road leads to achievement, recognition and exciting opportunities. The [Public Sector HR Essentials course](#) is a certification study option that many HR professionals have used to successfully prepare for IPMA-CP certification.

Achieving public sector HR certification demonstrates a professional commitment to HR, and specifically to the practice of HR in the public sector. Earning HR certification also indicates a level of understanding about HR practices and concepts. The certification designation is often meaningful to individuals and to organizations seeking to hire an HR professional. In many

organizations, HR certification is a minimum qualification for higher-level HR roles.

Students in the Public Sector HR Essentials course come from a variety of backgrounds, in terms of geography, experience and education. I've encountered students who have been working in HR as functional specialists and are seeking to broaden their knowledge of HR. Others are transitioning from private sector HR into public sector work and want to focus specifically on the differences between private and public sector HR. Some individuals are brand new to the HR field and are taking the course and seeking certification for a solid HR foundation and learning opportunity. Whatever their path, the right preparation is crucial to reaching the end goal of achieving IPMA-CP certification.

The Course

This course is useful in your career journey, because it gives students an introduction to and deeper understanding of the many aspects of HR. It also gives students the opportunity to build professional networks and learn from each other. Our periodic group discussions add tremendous value and richness to the learning experience. In addition, the course provides an instructor resource for students to ask questions and seek guidance.

Over a period of approximately 13 weeks, the student travels through eight learning modules by reading from two assigned texts, participating in online discussion posts and joining four scheduled video conference meetings. Each class typically has 20 to 30 students. What I appreciate about the course is that it's flexible enough to accommodate busy professionals while providing structure to complete the learning at a reasonable pace. The course syllabus suggests spending one or two weeks of study time on each learning module. The learning modules include public sector basics, recruitment, selection, benefits, labor and employee relations, EEO/diversity, organizational development and compensation/classification.

Successful students enrolled in Public Sector HR Essentials typically dedicate the equivalent of two or three evenings each week for reading and study. While still a sacrifice for many, this pace gives students the flexibility to still navigate work and personal commitments.

The Exam

Upon completion of the course, the next step of the journey is to activate and administer the online exam within 45 days. This gives students time to prepare for the exam itself. There is no additional fee required to administer the exam, as this opportunity is included in the course registration cost.

There are several possible approaches to complete the course and study for the exam. The key is to find a method that works best for you and that has proven successful in your life. A tool that some find helpful is the IPMA-HR certification study guide, which can be purchased separately from the course.

Others have found study groups to be a helpful strategy on their path to certification. Some public sector workplaces encourage HR staff to enroll in the course and study together. This approach is helpful, because it builds camaraderie and momentum in the organization, optimizes the learning experience and maximizes the opportunity for students to apply what is learned into their everyday work. Even if a student's workplace does not have a study group available, students in a course can connect with each other and form their own online study group.

The 3.5-hour timed exam consists of 100 multiple-choice questions. The exam must be completed without the use of notes, textbooks

Regardless of your individual motivation for taking the course and seeking certification, I am confident that you will find value in the journey.

or other resources. Seventy percent correct is required to pass the exam, and notification is provided immediately upon completion. If the student is unsuccessful on the first exam attempt, the student can apply to retake the exam up to two times per calendar year, for a \$100 fee.

Upon passing the exam, the student is now a public sector certified professional, using the IPMA-CP designation. Congratulations on reaching your destination!

Recertification

To maintain one's certification, HR professionals must earn 50 recertification points within a three-year period and submit a recertification application. There are abundant opportunities to earn recertification points. Points can be earned through employment, attendance at conferences and workshops, association membership, volunteer leadership with PSHRA, preparing and giving presentations, publishing articles, HR employment and innovative HR work. Thankfully, taking the exam is a one-time experience, and is not required for recertification.

Regardless of your individual motivation for taking the course and seeking certification, I am confident that you will find value in the journey. Explore new learning, discover new friendships, achieve new heights. Strap on your hiking boots, grab your backpack and let's go! ●

Jackie Little is the chief human resources officer at The Island Institute in Rockland, Maine. She can be reached at jlittle1104@gmail.com.

Introducing Digitized Exit Checklists at Cumberland County



By Mikala Glanton

At Cumberland County, in-person exit interviews have been made available to separating employees for many years.

In 2019, however, we introduced digitized exit surveys as part of our offboarding practices. We implemented our current offboarding process in October 2022, for a number of reasons. First, we sought to improve our overall offboarding efficiency by automating as much of the process as possible. We also wanted to increase our exit survey return rate and improve the quality of the feedback and data we received from departing employees.

The process today is more self-propelling. For example, an employee tenders his or her resignation to a direct manager. The direct manager notifies the department administrator, i.e., HR liaison, and the department administrator initiates offboarding in NeoGov, which automatically assigns the separating employee an offboarding portal and checklist.

Increasing Survey Return Rates

Prior to implementing an offboarding checklist in NeoGov with an exit survey step, we had a manual process in place; one that was specifically centered around the completion of an exit survey. When this system was in place, employees would tender their resignation, the department notified HR and the HRIS manager emailed separating employees with an exit survey link included.

The implementation of NeoGov's offboarding portal improved the process in several ways. First, we made the process more efficient and collaborative by returning ownership to the department.

Secondly, I believe we can attribute an increase in the return rate to a simple fact about human behavior: a separating employee is more likely to follow a link included in a checklist assigned by a person from their department in an administrative role than they would be to follow a link provided in an email from a distant HRIS manager they've never met in person.

From 2019 to September 2022, we sent 714 surveys and received 201 completed surveys at a 28.2% return rate. From October 2022 until today, we have a return rate of 40.5%, well above the return rate prior to the implementation of an offboarding checklist.

The increased return rate could also be attributed to an improved exit checklist. Prior to the new process, the employee receiving the exit survey link was dependent on a single employee in county HR. Today, the department administrator or the county HR team can assign a checklist with a primary goal of completing the whole list prior to the exiting employee's last day of work.

One other factor I believe contributes to increased exit survey participation is the timing of the tasks on the checklist, meaning when each task is due or must be completed by the separating employee, which is driven by the future separation date.

The first two tasks are timed to be completed in the first 7-10 days of a traditional two-week resignation period. The request to complete a survey is the last task before returning all company assets and is due within the last three days of employment. We find most employees are more comfortable providing honest feedback closer to their last day with the organization if not on their last day, even when assured that their responses are anonymous.

In addition, the ratio of separating employees to administrative individuals decreased significantly when we returned ownership to the department administrator/HR liaison. The decreased ratio between separating employees and administrative person contributed significantly to the reduction in the number of surveys not sent.

Asking the Right Questions

We used the offboarding checklist implementation as an opportunity to improve the quality of questions we were asking,

thereby improving the quality of feedback we receive. We went from 15 yes-or-no questions to questions with a wider range of response options and qualitative, open-ended questions.

For example, we went from including a yes-or-no question that asked separating employees if they would rate their work environment as being efficient and productive to inserting a question that asked them to rate their experience as a Cumberland County employee as excellent, above average, average, below average or poor.

Providing this wider range of options gives us a more vivid picture, as opposed to a boxed-in yes-or-no response, limiting the employee to only rating their perception of the work environment instead of providing insight into their perception of their entire experience as an employee.

Another example of improving the quality of questions was the addition of a question that asks departing workers to provide their specific recommendations for helping Cumberland County to improve its organization to retain more employees in the future.

We ask these deliberate, intentional questions to accomplish a few goals:

- Gathering feedback on the employee experience to identify areas for improvement.
- Understanding reasons for employee departures and address any underlying issues.
- Gaining insights for enhancing employee retention strategies.

One important thing to mention about initiating offboarding in NeoGov is that, when offboarding is initiated, the separating employee is provided access to an offboarding portal in NeoGov Onboard, which not only includes the offboarding checklist and its due dates, but also includes helpful resources such as a document of answers to frequently asked questions and guidance for how the employee can manage their retirement benefits and/or 401(k) account. We're intentional in our efforts to empower the employee from beginning to end.

The Importance of Knowledge Transfer

The first item on the offboarding checklist is a step to initiate a knowledge transfer. This step is critical for the department to facilitate, so knowledge is retained in the department to manage for future employees.

Including knowledge transfer in the offboarding process helps department managers to minimize disruption when an employee leaves the organization. Formalizing the knowledge transfer process and providing managers a knowledge transfer checklist helps managers facilitate a smooth knowledge transfer, effectively capturing departing employee knowledge, minimizing disruption and safeguarding continuity of service to the public, the community we serve.

Ultimately, I would describe HRIS's role in this process as functional

oversight. HRIS processes the termination personnel action for every separating employee and therefore can ensure offboarding is being initiated for every separating employee in NeoGov.

We established a consistent process using checklists and technology to ensure all steps are followed and to keep relevant departments informed on their effectiveness in executing their role in the process.

I can't overemphasize the importance of prioritizing a positive offboarding experience. We're not just saying goodbye to an employee, we're also building a network of potential brand ambassadors and future recruits. That is partly why we strive to make the offboarding process professional, respectful and positive.

We know that happy former employees are more likely to recommend our organization to others seeking jobs. They could potentially spread positive word-of-mouth through online reviews, social media, or conversations with friends and family. This positive buzz could attract talented candidates to the county.

For managers, I believe that working collaboratively with the departing employee on knowledge transfer can foster positive relationships within the team. It shows departing employees their contributions are valued and helps remaining team members feel more confident taking on new responsibilities.

For HR, when knowledge transfer is initiated by managers, the department administrator/HR liaison has less pressure to scramble and document everything at the last minute. This frees them up to focus on other aspects of the offboarding process, like ensuring the employee understands when their benefits end or how to roll over their 401(k).

For the agency, smooth knowledge transfer minimizes disruptions and delays, ultimately saving the agency time and money. The departing employee's valuable knowledge and expertise are captured and preserved, benefiting the organization. This knowledge can be readily accessed and used to train future employees or improve existing processes. By capturing different approaches and perspectives through knowledge transfer, the agency can foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. Demonstrating a commitment to knowledge transfer shows the agency values its employees and their contributions.

In the end, this can enhance the employer brand and attract top talent in the future. I believe having managers initiate knowledge transfer sets the stage for a positive and productive offboarding experience for everyone involved. It minimizes disruptions, improves efficiency, retains valuable knowledge, and ultimately strengthens the organization. ●

Mikala Glanton is HRIS division supervisor at Cumberland County, N.C. He can be reached at mglanton@cumberlandcountync.gov.

Research Focuses on Issues Still Facing LGBTQ Workforce

By Mark McGraw, PSHRA



June marked Pride Month, a monthlong commemoration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQI+) community that is “part celebration and part protest,” Brooke Sopelsa and Isabela Espadas Barros Leal [recently wrote for NBC News](#).

Noting the “massive parades and parties” often associated with Pride Month, “the rallies, marches and political actions can be just as important to draw attention to the issues still facing the [LGBTQI+] community,” they wrote.

New data from Randstad finds that those issues certainly still exist in the workplace.

The HR consulting firm recently surveyed more than 2,000 members of the LGBTQI+ community in seven countries, in an effort to evaluate how much has changed for LGBTQI+ employees in the past five years, both positive and negative. The results show “a mixed picture, with pockets of progress,” [according to a statement from Randstad](#).

Indeed, the survey findings suggest that equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging initiatives and policies “have gone some way to enabling LGBTQI+ workers to be themselves at work,” according to Randstad.

For example, just over half (51%) of respondents said they feel their employers have taken meaningful action to create an equitable workplace for LGBTQI+ employees.

On the other hand, 41% of LGBTQI+ workers surveyed said they have faced discrimination or prejudice at work throughout their career. The same number said they face less discrimination than they did five years ago, while 28% indicated that discrimination had actually worsened in the past five years.

In addition, one in three respondents (32%) reported feeling more isolated in the workplace than they did five years ago. That sense of isolation deepens among younger generations of LGBTQI+ employees. More than a third of both Gen Z and Millennial workers said they feel more isolated at work than they did five years ago, compared to 27% of Gen Xers and 27% of Baby Boomers saying the same.

This type of discontent is affecting LGBTQI+ workers’ performance on the job, and is leading some LGBTQI+ talent to pursue other career opportunities. For example, 36% of respondents feel that not being able to be themselves at work impacts their motivation and productivity.

Meanwhile, around one in three survey participants said they have quit a job due to feeling uncomfortable at work. One-third of respondents believe their sexuality or gender identity has negatively affected their career, with 40% feeling that worries about discrimination have impacted their career progression.

Such findings underscore “a clear need for greater support and inclusivity in workplaces,” according to Randstad, “to benefit not

only LGBTQI+ individuals, but also the organizations themselves, especially when labor markets are experiencing talent scarcity.”

Supporting Transgender Workers

A more recent [Monster poll](#) that focused specifically on the workplace experience of transgender or gender-nonconforming workers found that many of these employees have encountered similar bias.

The survey of 1,609 U.S.-based workers found 19% of respondents identifying as transgender or gender-nonconforming. Among this group, 59% indicated they have felt discriminated against or treated differently at their place of work.

Further, 31% said they feel that no progress has been made in the past year with regard to trans worker rights or inclusivity in the workplace, with 17% saying that inclusivity in the workplace has actually gotten worse in that time.

Education may be playing a role in these trends, according to Monster, noting that 72% of respondents said they have not received transgender awareness and/or inclusivity training or education in the past year. A larger number, 79%, indicated they do not have, or are not aware of, LGBTQI+ employee resource groups or equivalent groups in their workplaces.

The survey also asked respondents about areas in which employers could do more to support trans workers. For example:

- 68% of trans or gender-nonconforming workers say more policies should be in place to support trans workers, while only 17% of cisgender workers agree.
- 62% of trans or gender-nonconforming workers say more inclusive healthcare coverage for trans workers is needed, while only 17% of cisgender workers agree.
- 62% of trans or gender-nonconforming employees say more training and education for cisgender workers is needed.

“Trans identifying or gender non-conforming workers and cisgender workers have a clear disconnect,” according to Monster researchers, “when it comes to identifying areas within the workplace that have room to improve regarding transgender rights and inclusivity.” ●

Mark McGraw is the editor of Public Eye and Of Public Interest. He can be reached at mmcgraw@pshra.org.

Appeals Court: County to Pay for Transgender Employee’s Gender-Affirming Surgery

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit has upheld a lower court’s ruling that the Houston County, Ga., Sheriff’s Office discriminated against a transgender employee by declining to pay for her gender-affirming surgery.

Houston County Sgt. Anna Lange, an investigator for the Houston County Sheriff’s Office, sued Sheriff Cullen Talton in 2019 after she was denied coverage for the procedure. [According to the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund \(TLDEF\)](#), which represented Lange, she had worked in law enforcement for 26 years, with 17 of those years spent serving as a sheriff’s deputy in Houston County.

In 2017, Lange came out to her employer as a transgender woman, according to TLDEF, adding that Lange was diagnosed with gender dysphoria by her healthcare provider and was subsequently prescribed transition-related care.

In 2022, U.S. District Court Judge Marc Treadwell ruled that the county’s refusal to cover Lange’s prescribed gender-affirmation surgery amounted to illegal sex discrimination under the

Civil Rights Act of 1964, [noted GPB News](#), adding that Treadwell’s order cited the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2020 decision finding that a Michigan funeral home could not fire an employee for being transgender.

In Treadwell’s ruling, he ordered Houston County’s insurance plan to pay for Lange’s gender-affirming surgery, a procedure she eventually underwent. A jury awarded Lange \$60,000 in damages; Houston County sought to undo Treadwell’s order and the damage award that Lange received.

“Today’s victory is a win not just for me,” said Lange, in a statement, “but for all transgender Southerners who deserve equal access to life-saving transition-related care.”



Public Sector HR's Role in Climate Change Adaptation

By Trenton Molina

Climate change presents an unprecedented challenge, with far-reaching implications for ecosystems, economies and human health. Public sector agencies are pivotal in leading the charge toward climate change adaptation. Through a multifaceted approach that includes resilient infrastructure, early warning systems and adaptive policies, these agencies are key players in safeguarding communities from climate-related threats.

The human resource function is central to the success of these initiatives, and the role of public sector HR in building capacity, fostering innovation and ensuring effective implementation cannot be overstated. Here are just five ways that public sector HR teams can play a crucial part in climate change adaptation.

1. Building Resilient Infrastructure

Public sector efforts to build resilient infrastructure are vital for climate change adaptation. These initiatives encompass the construction of flood defenses, such as seawalls and levees, to protect against rising sea levels and storm surges. HR departments are pivotal in these projects by ensuring the recruitment of skilled engineers, project managers and environmental scientists.

For instance, the [Dutch Delta Works](#) project, renowned for its advanced flood protection systems, highlights the importance of specialized talent in achieving infrastructure resilience.

Early warning systems are essential for mitigating the impacts of climate-related events such as hurricanes, floods and wildfires. These systems rely on advanced technologies and data analytics to provide timely alerts to at-risk populations. HR's role in this context involves recruiting and training personnel proficient in meteorology, data science and emergency management. The success of Japan's sophisticated earthquake and tsunami warning system demonstrates how well-coordinated human resources can enhance community preparedness and response.

2. Implementing Climate-Adaptive Policies

The formulation and implementation of climate-adaptive policies are critical for guiding public sector actions toward sustainability. Policies promoting sustainable land use, water conservation and energy efficiency are integral to climate change adaptation. HR departments facilitate this by ensuring that policymakers, urban planners and environmental lawyers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. The effectiveness of [Sweden's comprehensive climate policy framework](#), which integrates environmental considerations into all levels of governance, underscores the impact of strategic HR management.

3. Creating Flood Defenses

Flood defenses are among the most direct measures to combat the adverse effects of climate change. HR departments are instrumental in staffing these projects with civil engineers, hydrologists and construction experts. Additionally, HR can foster continuous professional development to keep the workforce abreast of the latest technologies and methodologies. [The Thames Barrier in London](#) is a prime example of how well-managed human resources can lead to the successful implementation of large-scale flood defense systems.

4. Developing Drought-Resistant Crops

Agricultural adaptation is crucial for ensuring food security in the face of climate change. Public sector agencies are actively involved in the development and promotion of drought-resistant crops through research and development (R&D) initiatives. HR supports these efforts by recruiting agricultural scientists, biotechnologists and agronomists. The success of [drought-resistant maize varieties in sub-Saharan Africa](#) illustrates the critical role of HR in advancing agricultural resilience.

5. Promoting Sustainable Land Use Practices

Sustainable land use practices are essential for mitigating climate change impacts and preserving natural resources. Public sector initiatives often include reforestation projects, soil conservation programs and urban green spaces. HR departments contribute by ensuring that environmental specialists, foresters and urban planners are effectively deployed. The urban forestry program in Curitiba, Brazil, for instance, showcases the importance of strategic HR management in promoting sustainable land use.

Ultimately, the public sector's role in climate change adaptation is multifaceted and indispensable. From building resilient infrastructure to developing drought-resistant crops, public sector agencies lead various initiatives to mitigate climate change impacts. HR departments are central to these efforts, ensuring that the right talent is recruited, trained and deployed to meet the challenges posed by climate change. By fostering innovation and ensuring effective implementation, HR enables the public sector to protect communities and the environment in the face of increasing climate risks. ●

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DOL Proposes Rule to Protect Workers from Extreme Heat



NASA scientists [recently confirmed](#) May 2024 as “the warmest May on the books, marking a full year of record-high monthly temperatures.”

[Other researchers have warned](#) that 2024 could ultimately go down as being hotter than 2023, when [temperatures reached record highs](#) across the United States.

The effects of this type of extreme heat on outdoor workers—including those throughout local, state and federal government—can be fatal. In 2023, for example, [lawmakers pressed for heat protection policies](#) for United States Postal Service (USPS) mail carriers in the weeks after USPS mail carrier Eugene Gates Jr. died shortly after collapsing while delivering mail on his route in a Dallas-area neighborhood. Exposure to extreme heat was believed to have played a part in Gates Jr.'s passing.

More recently, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has taken steps designed to shore up heat protections for workers on a much broader scale.

On July 2, the DOL released a proposed rule that aims to protect roughly 36 million indoor and outdoor workers from the health risks of extreme heat, and would “substantially reduce heat injuries, illnesses and deaths in the workplace,” [according to a DOL statement](#) announcing the proposal.

If finalized, the rule would oblige employers to develop an injury and illness prevention plan to control heat hazards in workplaces affected by excessive heat, according to the DOL. The plan would also mandate that employers evaluate heat risks and institute requirements for drinking water, rest breaks and control of indoor heat, as well as requiring a plan to protect new or returning workers not acclimated to working in high temperatures.

In addition, the proposed rule would compel employers to provide training, have response procedures for situations in which employees experience symptoms of heat-related illness, and take immediate action to help a worker experiencing signs of a heat emergency, according to the DOL, which encouraged the public to submit written comments on the rule once it is published in the Federal Register.

Does Your Organization Know What It Needs To Know?

By Robert J. Greene and Peter Ronza

A utility worker makes a new connection for a recently modernized hotel using existing plans. The reception area floods. When trying to solve the problem, the employee is unable to determine what inconsistencies exist between the plans and how the last hookups were made. Everyone who worked on the system in the past has retired or left.

Or, a recruiter is asked by a hiring manager to find someone with credentials exceeding those in the job posting. The recruiter already has candidates meeting the qualifications, but the manager insists there had been an agreement that this position required more than other positions in the unit with the same job title and description. The manager has agreed to the higher start rate demanded by the preferred candidate. The recruiter is reluctant to go “off book.”

What these scenarios demonstrate is that the knowledge possessed by an organization must be adequate for achieving its objectives. If employees do not know what they need to know, it is not likely they will be able to do what is needed for success. This reality makes managing critical knowledge a key activity.

Today’s labor market turbulence may persist for a long time. As turnover increases and recruiting remains difficult, organizations are finding that the knowledge required to execute strategies may be lacking in their workforce. The frustrating conditions during the pandemic contributed to increased levels of early retirements. Labor shortages in critical occupations have caused more people to consider changing employers. Until those with critical knowledge have left, organizations may not realize that they are the sole possessors of critical knowledge and that increased turnover may exacerbate knowledge inadequacy.

Rigorous systems for identifying critical knowledge, knowing who has it and who should have it, and appropriately disseminating knowledge are absent at many organizations. This forces them to try to respond after critical knowledge has been lost. Most organizations should be able to identify their exposure to loss of knowledge

they cannot afford to lose if some kind of mentoring or shadowing process is in place. A planned approach can enable the departing employee to either document the knowledge or transfer it.

Yet tacit knowledge presents a challenge. We often can do something without being altogether sure how we do it, especially if it has been routinized through experiences. Habitual behavior is not only difficult to break, but also difficult to explain in a way that enables someone without the experience to now possess that knowledge.

What Gets Done and How it Works

Since the Middle Ages, blacksmiths have developed apprentices by having them work side by side with them over extended periods. But, given the pace at which technology is evolving, this approach has become less feasible. Even focused skill training cannot cover everything, and knowledge that exists only in someone’s head (perhaps subconsciously) is unlikely to be transmitted. Theoretically, much of the knowledge about how something should be done can be converted into an algorithm that others can use. Yet people may be challenged to create such an algorithm.

Processes that need to be performed in the same way every time are the best candidates for algorithmic creation or robotic replacement of people. But trying to transfer knowledge related to the “what, how and when” can become challenging if the person performing the work must evaluate the result after each action and decide what to do next.

When complex processes are involved, one approach for continuously assessing current practices is to evaluate what was done and reflect on how it worked—what happened, why it happened and what might have been a better response to the conditions that materialized.

These reviews fall short of algorithmic prescriptions of optimal behavior but can improve the capability to utilize an “act, assess, adapt, act” decision-making process. Making decisions in a dynamic environment must be more like navigating in white water rather than executing a fully planned voyage. As technology evolves, analytics can be used to do causal analysis to determine the factors/actions that have led to success or failure.

Strategies For Managing Knowledge

Agencies should continuously assess the adequacy of the current pool of critical knowledge and consider actions that lessen their exposure to unanticipated losses of that knowledge. Tacit knowledge should be rendered explicit where possible.

It may be necessary to ensure investments are made to protect the knowledge base from becoming inadequate. Risk management principles can guide decisions about how necessary such investments are relative to the cost of making them. “Lean and mean” may result in a “lean and inadequate” staff. But it is often difficult to get training approved when it is aimed at what might transpire, rather than fixing an immediate operational problem. Management must realistically recognize what the cost of losing critical knowledge might be and make investments that pay back more than they cost.

Some agencies have established processes for determining what knowledge might be lost when employees decide to leave. Exit interviews ask for employees to pause and reflect on everything they know that someone else must know. But given the nature of these interviews and the likely mindsets of the departing employees, this is a recipe for inadequate transmission. Job descriptions help if they are accurate and complete, but they are not enough. Even comprehensive reviews of work policies and procedures rarely suffice.

Creating knowledge management systems generates an inventory of what is known. These inventories can be of an encyclopedic nature, enabling employees to “look up” things they need to know. A “knowledge yellow pages” can also be created that identifies the “go-to” individuals who possess the know-how that is required. Building these systems has become easier, due to the evolution of technology for cataloging information. But these systems must contain the most critical knowledge to be effective. The fact that employees are encouraged to contribute their job- and process-related knowledge does not mean they will.

Many compensation and career management systems encourage competitive rather than cooperative behavior. The U.S. education

system teaches us that it is better to be first in your class than in the middle, and performance management systems repeat that message.

So, sharing one’s unique knowledge with others in the same merit pay budget may not be prudent. If the organization has a history of retaining the best performers during layoffs, assisting peers may seem irrational. Psychological safety has been shown to be a prerequisite of knowledge sharing. Cultural assessments should be made to ensure a cooperative mindset is promoted and rewarded. Adding “contributes to the effectiveness of others and the unit” as a rating factor in performance appraisals can provide the right type of encouragement. Recognizing and rewarding actions that help the organization acquire, retain and effectively manage the required knowledge can be a powerful reinforcement of sharing behaviors. ●

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A MATTER OF TIME:



Determining Anchor Days for Teleworkers

By Tina Stevens

Our agency, the Virginia Risk Sharing Association, has 57 employees. Of these workers, seven are fully remote, with five being brought on as remote employees and the other two relocating out of state after being hired.

Since the pandemic-era transition to more hybrid work models, we've found that our employees who work remotely some days prefer to do so on Mondays and Fridays. The majority of our staff are required to be in the office at least three days a week.

Since we hold periodic all-staff meetings and events, what day should we require our workers to be in the office?

Our leadership team was faced with that question as we wrestled with deciding when to require workers to be on site at our Glen

Allen, Va., headquarters. Given that our employees with hybrid schedules have shared their preference for working remotely on Mondays and/or Fridays, the choice to have everyone on site on Wednesdays was an easy one.

To date, we haven't encountered many challenges to holding employee staff meetings, holiday parties and events hosted by our Employee Club on Wednesdays. All staff, except those who are fully remote, are already in the office on Wednesdays. When we have all-staff meetings where important information is being conveyed, we set up a conference call line or Teams meetings for remote employees to participate.

As far as our HR team is concerned, I am in the office five days a week. HR is still very much a paper factory, and I need

access to files and information that is not housed electronically. Additionally, I feel it is important for HR to be available in-person whenever an employee needs to speak with me. They are far more likely to just stop in my office than to try to reach me via Teams or a phone call. That face-to-face connection cannot be replaced—you cannot hand a tissue to a remote worker or high-five someone remotely!

Our managing director and several other department heads also come into the office five days a week. Many of us are from the Boomer generation and have not adapted fully to a work-from-home model. Our safety consultants and our member services representatives, however, can work remotely as often as needed. These positions routinely travel around the state meeting with our members. They do not have set days to be in the office, typically only coming in to pick up materials or to attend the occasional employee event.

Ultimately, an agency needs to look at the types of positions it has and look at the services it provides to the community. Obviously,

some jobs just cannot be performed remotely. Community members expect a lot of value from their taxpayer dollars. And an agency with fully remote staff working in a different state from the main location has additional considerations. Obtaining workers' compensation insurance and appropriate tax withholdings and any state-specific requirements must be taken into account. In the end, it comes down to implementing a comprehensive telework policy that meets the organization's specific needs. ●

Christina Stevens is the director of human resources with the Virginia Risk Sharing Association in Glen Allen, Va. She can be reached at tstevens@vrsa.us.

BEST OFFICE BUDDIES: The Importance of Forging Workplace Friendships

Since the arrival of the coronavirus in early 2020, Gallup has studied the role of workplace friendships in helping employees maintain their mental well-being, and has determined that, while forming these on-the-job bonds is crucial, many workers don't have a "best work friend" to help pull them through the tough times.

In June 2022, for example, **Gallup found** that just 21% of employed American adults said they "definitely" have someone they consider their best friend on the job. That number represented a 6% drop from 2022. Close to half of workers who said they did not have a best friend at work also indicated they were looking for a new job, compared to 37% of those who said they did have a best work friend.

Two years later, having a best work buddy is more beneficial than ever, **according to Gallup**.

Earlier this year, Gallup stressed the importance of forging friendships in the workplace, even as more organizations embrace remote and hybrid work models.

"For many employees, the pandemic caused traumatic experiences and other profound difficulties, particularly for healthcare and other frontline workers and educators," Gallup's Alok Patel and Stephanie Plowman wrote in January 2024.

"These employees found the social and emotional support from their best friends at work to be more critical than ever to get them through these challenging times," they continued.



"Other employees who were thrown into the world of remote or hybrid work found that their best friend at work helped keep them informed, accountable and connected to their team. For instance, an employee can ask their best friend at work 'dumb' questions about changes to how things get done, without fear of embarrassment."

Conversely, employees without at least one colleague with whom they feel close **became more isolated** working from home in the COVID era, Gallup noted.

"And, because they lack collaboration and a sense of responsibility to a best friend at work, their performance may have dipped too," Patel and Plowman wrote.

"Whether in the office or the virtual world, a best friend at work is a necessary source of connection and support."

● MEET THE MEMBER

Julie Trimbell Does What Comes Naturally

By Mark McGraw, PSHRA

Julie Trimbell's Wisconsin roots run deep. She was born and raised in the state's capital city of Madison, and attended college at the University of Wisconsin (UW), where she earned a bachelor of business administration degree in HR management, and operations and information management from the university's business school.

It was during her time at UW where she discovered her affinity for HR.

"After taking the core business classes, I found HR came naturally to me, and it was an interesting field with a lot of variety," Trimbell recently said during a Q&A with *Public Eye*. While her first post-college position was in a more corporate setting, she's spent the past two-plus decades in the public sector—11 years in HR with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), and 13 years with the City of Madison, including her current role as an HR analyst. In her conversation with *Public Eye*, she told us what attracted her to government HR, what precipitated her family's fateful move back to her home state and how she and her HR team at the City of Madison are taking on their biggest challenges.

Public Eye: Some members tell us they came to be an HR professional as a "happy accident." But you hold a BBA from the University of Wisconsin (UW) School of Business in HR management, and operations and information management. When did you know that HR was the career path for you, and what led to that epiphany?

Trimbell: When I started college, I thought I would be a math major. But after three semesters of calculus and more advanced math classes, I decided it just wasn't for me. The UW was building a new business school at the time, and I thought that would be a good option to pursue, as business professionals are needed everywhere. Accounting seemed like a good path since math came easy to me, but after taking the core business classes, I found HR came naturally to me, and it was an interesting field with a lot of variety. I had a short internship in a training department right after graduation and that provided me with the experience I needed to get my first HR position, which was a true generalist role, getting my hands in most areas of HR. It was a great first HR job to learn so much and build a foundation of knowledge.

Public Eye: You've spent 20-plus years in the public sector—11 years in HR with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), and 13 years with the City of Madison, including your current role as an HR analyst. But you did start your career out of school as an HR administrator with Planar Systems, an Oregon-based digital display manufacturer. What drew you to government HR?



Julie Trimbell and husband John have strong Wisconsin roots, but love to travel as well.

Trimbell: This you could say was by accident. I had moved from Wisconsin to Phoenix, Az., when my boyfriend at the time (now my husband) moved there. I moved without a job lined up, so I was applying everywhere. DPS invited me to test and interview, and I was offered the job. In that position I was able to dive deeper into classification, compensation, hiring and even supervision. I hadn't really thought much about public sector employment before that, but I really enjoyed working with such passionate employees who want to serve others. I worked with a lot of law enforcement personnel there, and it was very fulfilling hiring them to serve the residents throughout the state of Arizona.

Public Eye: And what took you from Arizona (back) to Wisconsin?

Trimbell: My family decided to move back to Wisconsin when my daughter was seven, so we could be closer to family. I applied for a few different HR positions in the public sector and accepted a human resources analyst 2 position with the City of Madison. I didn't know at the time, but this move was very significant as it gave us four years with my father and eight years with my mother before they passed. It also gave my daughter the opportunity to develop a strong bond with her cousin, who is two weeks younger than her.

Public Eye: What can you tell us about your current position with the City of Madison, and some of the biggest challenges you and the HR team are facing?

Trimbell: I am currently a human resources analyst 3 serving 11 different agencies, including the Fire Department, the Mayor's Office and our new Office of the Independent Police Monitor. My primary responsibilities are hiring, classification/compensation and strategic planning with supervisors and managers. I also provide training and leadership to other analysts and serve on various teams. Right now, I'm a project manager for a compensation study that we've hired a consultant to complete.

Our biggest challenges, like many others, are attracting enough applicants and having lower wages than many of our competitors. We are surrounded by some big corporations, such as the American Family Insurance Headquarters, Exact Sciences (Cologuard) and Epic Systems (MyChart), all of which pay significantly more than a government budget can afford. We also compete for employees with other large employers, such as the UW, the State of Wisconsin and UW Health.

Public Eye: And how are you taking on those challenges?

Trimbell: We hired a full-time talent acquisition specialist to serve as our primary recruiter. They are doing outreach to passive applicants, building community partnerships, attending events and fairs, and finding new recruiting sources where we can advertise. In terms of compensation, we are offering bonuses for some of our seasonal positions and we're hoping the results of the compensation study will improve wages in positions where it's really needed.

Public Eye: On a more personal note, what sort of hobbies and interests keep you busy away from the office?

Trimbell: I enjoy spending time with my family and playing with our two black labs, Luna and Ginny. I'm an avid sports fan watching and attending Wisconsin Badger football, basketball and volleyball games, as well as the Packers, Bucks and Brewers. I also love to travel. I just got back from a two-week vacation, which included a cruise from Rome to Greece and Turkey and a week-long adventure through Italy. ●



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ensuring employees acquire future skills,” according to the report. The authors also noted that, while 33% of participants find AI-recommended training more applicable to employees’ duties and career objectives, just 18% also reported that employees were learning and retaining more from these new AI-powered methods, which reveals the need for broader experience with AI-specific training.

Will HR Lead the Way?

Understanding how public sector HR practitioners feel about AI is “critical for assessing overall acceptance and enthusiasm for these technologies,” the report noted. “HR professionals’ perspectives can significantly influence the broader organizational culture and willingness to adopt AI. Positive views can drive innovation, while skepticism may hinder progress.”

Overall, the PSHRA® members taking part in this survey see AI positively, and many have already begun using artificial intelligence for a number of tasks. In fact, 85% consider themselves either early or moderate adopters of artificial intelligence. Sixty-four percent of the public sector HR leaders polled view generative AI as “an essential skill, similar to using basic software tools.”

How is public sector HR utilizing the technology? More than one-quarter of respondents reported using generative AI to significantly reduce administrative overhead, allowing more focus on strategic and high-level tasks. Forty-three percent said they are comfortable using AI tools to optimize operations, while 45% reported experimenting with and learning from AI solutions “to drive end-to-end value,” according to the report.

The agencies for which these government HR leaders work, however, might be at a different place on the AI adoption curve, according to the report authors.

“There’s a big distinction between individual [public sector HR professionals] and the organizations they work for,” said report co-author Adam Williams, chair and associate professor in the public administration department in Nova Southeastern University’s H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship.

“The PSHRA® members we surveyed tend to be more innovative with regard to AI, and they’re more willing to be early adopters,” Williams told *Public Eye*. “The organizations they work for, on the other hand, are not necessarily as innovative.”

The differences between the HR professionals surveyed and their organizations largely lies in the skepticism surrounding ethics, policies, resources and uses, such as best practices for AI-human collaboration, continued Williams.

“For HR professionals, the best ways to alleviate these concerns are through knowledge, training, policies and developing usage guidelines,” he said. “In general, public sector organizations hesitate to adopt newer technology until it is seen as effective, usually through adoption in the private sector.

“Through a better understanding of what AI and GAI functionalities are, and through providing more tailored training for organizational leadership and staff, HR professionals can help ease some of the concerns surrounding usage,” Williams concluded. “Likewise, working to develop clear policies and guidelines for usage within one’s organization can demonstrate boundaries and promote the importance of human-AI collaboration, as well as how important people are, regardless of the AI functionality.” ●

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