

Episode 327: CHRO Series - How is HR Structured Within Your Organization?



Intro: [00:00:00.99] Welcome to the Workology Podcast, a podcast for the disruptive workplace leader. Join host Jessica Miller-Merrell, founder of Workology.com as she sits down and gets to the bottom of trends, tools, and case studies for the business leader, HR, and recruiting professional who is tired of the status quo. Now here's Jessica with this episode of Workology.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:00:26.80] This podcast series on the Workology Podcast is focused on the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Human Resources Officer also called the CHRO or the Chief People Officer or the VP of Talent. That is a whole mouthful with a lot of different names and words and titles. Can you say that five times fast? The CHRO is an executive or C-level role that deals with managing human resources, as well as organizational development and implementing policies of change to improve the overall efficiency of the company. The CHRO podcast series on Workology is powered by Daily Pay and Ginger.com. The Workology Podcast is sponsored by Upskill HR and Ace The HR Exam. One of the reasons I really wanted to do this series is there's a lot of mystery around that CHRO role, and throughout this podcast series focused just solely on the CHRO, we have asked each guest about how HR structure within their organization, what the team size is for the HR team, and who the CHRO reports to, as well as who reports to them. Because we've talked to so many different CHROs from all different types of organizations all over the world, both US-based as well as international and multinational companies, these organizations and their answers, as you can imagine, we're very varied and also really insightful. So in this podcast episode that you're going to listen to here in a minute, I'm sharing excerpts from some of the best interviews on Workology as part of that CHRO series. You're going to be hearing from CHROs and Chief People Officers on how and where HR sits in their organization, what the structure is like, and then we're talking to organizations from large to small, so you're going to get everything in between as well as some multinational organizations. Listen in.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:02:23.68] Our first excerpt comes from Jenna Saporano. She's the Chief of Staff at Postali, LLC.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:02:31.03] You are doing a lot of different kinds of things, so let's talk a little bit about that and how your role as the CHRO works within that smaller company. You mentioned you on the executive team, but talk us through your job and maybe more about what you guys, what you're working on.

Jenna Saporano: [00:02:50.14] Yeah. So the way that our, you know, when you bring that up, I think about our org chart and the way that it works is our president oversees finance and our CEO oversees operations. And I kind of sit between the middle of them and I support initiatives that both of them are working on in those different areas. But then I, as a department of one, oversee the HR department as well as our internal

marketing department. So that's related to some background that they have coming into Postali and the role I've picked up this year. But I am, you know, constantly wearing multiple hats every single day, depending on what is needed. Jenna Saponaro: And, but my, my primary role, the thing that I'm making sure that I'm taking care of every day is our team. Their needs from a benefits perspective and our talent needs. So if we're hiring and always looking for the best people to add to our team, that's my number one goal each day. And then I'm helping organize our internal marketing efforts. And then whatever Jim needs from an operations perspective, supporting him there on organizational changes and improvements. And then, John, on some of the larger initiatives and kind of acting as a liaison too between our accounts consultant that we use and our benefits administrators. So kind of jump in between a lot of, a lot of different things on a daily basis.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:04:13.95] Our next excerpt from our series comes from Gealita Greenhill. She's the Chief People Officer at Murphy Hoffman Company.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:04:23.32] Can you talk to me about how your HR team is structured? You talked about, you know, this is one of the responsibilities that you've been charged with moving into this role, and I know that when we last talked, you were hiring for a new total rewards manager. So talk a little bit about the structure and then the new role. Like how, how do you decide how your HR organization is built and created?

Gealita Greenhill: [00:04:48.10] Yeah, great. I mean, this is I'm excited about this. I think, you know, coming in, we were structured in kind of that enforcer kind of administrative structure that, that you would say was typical in a, other period of time, right? And it was necessary. I mean, this is, if we look at our industry, you know, it's kind of behind many of, if you look at a consumer packaged goods or a technology company, but it wasn't structured to support the business operations. It was built to support the needs of the employee. You know, you get paid, you have benefits and all those things that we need. So that's at the core. If we didn't have that, we could do all the other what people call, you know, fun things. Sexy things, right? I think, so, think about more of, hey, if you call it you need something, it was more reactive. So the way we're structured today is to be more proactive with the business. So today we have an operations team that leads, that supports our dealership locations, any of our strategic business units and how they attract and retain talent. Right? Ultimately, they will be focused on how we groom talent up through the organization as well, but for today, that's, they're focused on the needs of that population.

Gealita Greenhill: [00:06:13.77] Then we have the talent management and development group that really is charged with building the capabilities of our current team employees and our future. The ones who come on, how do we advance them through the organization so they build our talent pipeline? And that will require some learning building somewhere, but then also outsourcing that capability so we can get through it faster. We also have kind of our total rewards space where we're looking at compensation, benefits, engagement, different ways to incentivize as well as reward the effort that our employees are making, that they participate in the same type of profit and success that the company has. And so that was the best structure. And when I spoke to you, I was looking for Total Rewards leader to provide some grounding and foundation for our team as we go on that journey. And I'm happy to report that they will be starting in May. So I'm thrilled about this person joining our team, has wonderful experience, and the key thing I was looking for in this candidate was really a desire to lead and develop.

Gealita Greenhill: [00:07:36.46] So there's a skill set that we are not strong in, and we have people who are dying to have more challenge and to build on their skill set, so it was important for me not just to choose a practitioner that is strong in total rewards and comp and ben, but one who wants to take us to the next level, but also bring a team along to do that and so we can build that capability and strengthen our team. And so I'm thrilled to have them join us in May. It was a long search just because it's such a key role for us in our, you know, what we talked about, we're rolling out another human capital management system and so they'll be extremely involved in that as well, which is a large undertaking no matter the size of your company. So that's how we're structured. It's structured on ensuring that we meet the, meet, meet the needs of the business today. But then also we're preparing it for the future. So we have more evolution to be made, but that's the first phase of that evolution, and I'm thrilled to, to get into it. It's a year delayed because of the pandemic, so, it's pent-up energy from me and the team to get us there.

Break: [00:08:53.90] Let's take a reset. My name is Jessica Miller-Merrell, and you were listening to the Workology Podcast, which is sponsored by Upskill HR and Ace The HR Exam. We're sharing some of the best responses from our podcast guests in our CHRO series about how their HR team and organization is structured. The CHRO podcast series on Workology is powered by Daily Pay and Ginger.com.

Break: [00:09:17.55] Every employee has different mental health needs from preventive behavioral health coaching to therapy and psychiatry. Ginger offers effective, convenient mental health care for any level of need. All from a smartphone. Learn more. Visit [Ginger.com](https://ginger.com).

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:36.07] Our next interview excerpt is with Adriana Bokel. She's the Chief People Officer at Pega.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:41.20] I wanted to talk more about your Global HR team because you have employees in many different countries, and talk to me about how your HR team is structured.

Adriana Bokel: [00:09:51.25] Sure. Yeah. So one of the things before I even talk about the structure, just as good information to have, is that we do all our recruitment in-house. So a lot of the people that we have are in recruitment, we call here talent attraction. So for the six thousand employees that we have, we have about a hundred and fifty people into people function. And from that group, about half of that is involved in our talent attraction, either through being recruiters themselves or recruiting coordinators that support their recruitment. We hire about a thousand to a thousand four hundred people every year, and that is mainly the group that supports that. So, I have a specific group, so I'll talk about, a little bit about my direct reports because that helps understand the structure. So I have, Pega is divided into two main functions. One, I would call the go-to-market business, which is our sales, our technical solution consultants, our marketing, our business operations. So this is about half about three thousand employees. The other half is what we call the technology and the corporate functions. So I build that structure, my structure around that business structure. So I have two heads of what we call here Talent Advisory, which I think outside is usually called HR

Business Partners. So I have one that supports that go to market, ones that supports technology and corporate functions. And I did the same for my talent attraction. So I have one leader that supports that go-to-market in recruitment and one leader that supports the, the team in the technology and the corporate functions. So these are four leaders. They all report to me and they have global organizations under them, mostly by region.

Adriana Bokel: [00:11:54.34] So they have groups that are in, in Europe and a team that are in APJ and, of course, a team in India. So, but this is by, within those functions. I also have what traditionalists call Center of Excellence, or COEs. So I have one leader that, that supports us on the I&D. And we call here on purpose inclusion and diversity rather than diversity and inclusion, because we truly believe inclusion comes first. And then I have somebody who is supporting all our talent programs and under talent programs, I include talent management, what we call here talent branding or employee, like employer branding. I also have their, our onboarding efforts. We also have the talent recognition or talent experience. So that's part of what we call talent programs. And of course, the leadership development and learning is part of that. And then I have one more group that is, supports what we call here People Services, which is the traditional HR Operations. And that whole group of people services includes comp and ben, includes the people operations, includes people analytics. And we also just recently opened for the first time and started a people relations function as well, which is led by the People Service leader. And, and I do have a Chief of Staff. She does a lot of the organizational design work with me and organizational effectiveness and survey, and I would not be able to do as much as I do without her. So that is my group and my team. And under them, their organization is often through, either, mostly in the COEs, they're global roles and in the talent acquisition and talent advisory, they have a regional set up under them.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:14:01.18] And then as far as who do you report to in the organization?

Adriana Bokel: [00:14:05.80] So I report to the CEO, the founder and CEO, Alan Trefler, and that is something personally very important to me before I joined Pega and often now as well. When I get reach out, I wouldn't consider today a role of a CPO or Chief HR Officer that it doesn't report to the CEO. I find it that this really is very telling and this is such an important role that touches so many other parts of the organization and their reporting lines and that connection to the CEO is very important.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:14:42.54] I'm just fascinated by all the interviews that we've done and, and then, of course, who reports to who and how the organizational structure is. So I can see, you're talking and I'm listening and I'm drawing a picture of your organizational chart within HR while you're talking. And I hope that others are learning because there's so many different ways to structure the HR organization.

Adriana Bokel: [00:15:06.60] And I think the most important thing really it's not the right or wrong. I think what is important for, for HR leaders is really to structure their own organizations in support of the business. And depending on what the business strategy is or their business set up, that is how your organization

needs to be mirrored, rather than trying to do something that is the traditional HR, because at the end of the day will not work for the company.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:15:38.34] Our last and final excerpt interview is with Terri Lewis. She is the CHRO at One Call.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:15:46.20] One of the things I wanted to ask you about and honestly, I'm fascinated by this is the structure of the HR team. So I wanted to talk with you, 2,500 employees, what's the structure of the HR team and where does your business, where does the business of HR fall into the company's org chart?

Terri Lewis: [00:16:05.46] Absolutely. So from, I'll take the second piece first. From the standpoint of the business of HR. I'm a direct report into the CEO and, and the board of directors, so that is important to me that that was set at the beginning as an expectation that we have that equivalent seating, as operations, as finance, as IP, et cetera, right? So that's important. That sets a tone for the organization that the business of people is as important as the business that we do, and that our people are what power that. So that's where we sit. And then when you look at my team, I've set it up in a somewhat classical, centers of excellence or COE model. I have an HR operations organization that owns the HR information system and people data, payroll, compensation, benefits. I have an internal communications organization. I have a talent organization, and talent owns both recruiting as well as learning and development. And then I have a group of HR business partners that make all that come to life as the first points of contact, single points of contacts for all things HR within the business. So relatively classical in that way, but it works, and if it works, you shouldn't break it. That was not the way that it was when I got here. And so that has been something that we've moved into over the past several months while I've been in the role and it's working. Now, it is something that I look at regularly and I'll be 100 percent honest with you, I am in the process right now of decoupling, recruiting from learning and development, because we need to have an increased focus on both of those areas. And I want a leader over each of those that's going to be absolutely focused on making sure that we're doing the right things, given the current environment from a staffing perspective. And as we continue down our career path journey for our employees, even more focused on a lot of the things that we need to do there to continue to improve the career journey for our colleagues.

Closing: [00:18:00.73] Hands down, this is my favorite series, the CHRO series ever in the history of seven years on the Workology Podcast, it is my favorite. It is so interesting to dive into how a role like the CHRO, whose experience more closely connects them to the strategy and operations of the overall business with the rest of the company, as well as the leadership team. I love hearing how their teams were built, where their HR functions sit within the organization and what their reporting structure looks like. It just gives you and hopefully me, I'm learning, you're learning so many insights into how the CHRO role operates. This podcast is sponsored by Upskill HR and Ace The HR Exam. This whole episode is part of our CHRO series, which is where I get to nerd out about the Chief Human Resources Officer position, and this is powered by our friends at Daily Pay and Ginger.com. Thank you for listening. I hope that you enjoyed this continuation of our CHRO series. Let me know who you'd like to hear from, what you'd like to hear more about on the Workology podcast. This podcast is for the disruptive workplace leader who's tired of the status quo. My name is

Jessica Miller-Merrell, and until next time you can visit [Workology.com](https://www.workologypodcast.com) to listen to all our Workology Podcast episodes.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:19:21.40] Personal and professional development is essential for successful HR leaders. Join Upskill HR to access live training, community and over a hundred on demand courses for the dynamic leader. HR recert credits available. Visit UpskillHR.com for more.