

# PERSONAL FÜHRUNG



## “We Need to Embrace Fundamental Changes”

Sarena Lin, CHRO of Bayer AG, about sustainable corporate management and tomorrow's working environment

12.2022  
01.2023

### SOZIALKOMPETENZ

Richtig rekrutieren  
statt nachträglich  
reparieren

### BEST PRACTICE

\ Berlitz  
\ GETEC Energie  
\ GIZ  
\ Knorr-Bremse

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Sarena Lin, Labor Director and member of the Board of Management of Bayer AG, Leverkusen, is convinced that nobody wants to go back to the “old normal”. In our interview she describes Bayer’s approach to mastering the challenges of the future and keeping up with the pace of innovation, and what role HR plays in this.  
*Ralf Steuer / Christoph Stehr, Berlin*



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Mit dem Programm ONEHR hat der Weltmarktführer für Bremsysteme vor vier Jahren begonnen, seine HR-Struktur umzukrempeln. Die Eigenständigkeit der einzelnen Standorte wird gefördert. Die globale Vernetzung der Geschäftsbereiche jedoch stellt den HR-Bereich vor Herausforderungen.  
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Interim-Manager für die HR-Funktion haben volle Auftragsbücher. Sie entwickeln Strategien für das Recruiting oder für Change. Die Auftraggeber suchen flexible Problemlöser mit Prozesskompetenz.  
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# The People-Powered Enterprise

## How International Companies Manage New Work

You've probably heard someone at some time in a leadership position say, "Our employees are our greatest assets". What does it actually mean when they refer to people as "assets"? In this fast-paced world, especially over the past few years, even the term "employee" has changed. The emergence of new technological changes in organizations such as Quantum and Metaverse, together with the increasing power of the employee, are disrupting the way we work.

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It's a time when everyone is rethinking everything," says LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky. "Business leaders are rethinking their entire working models, cultures, and company values. Employees are rethinking not just how they work, but why." Workers are changing jobs, hoping for something more – more purpose, more flexibility, and more empathy, according to LinkedIn Global Talent Trends 2022.

### The Great Resignation

The global coronavirus pandemic, the war in the Ukraine, and everything surrounding these dilemmas, has inspired a reassessment of lives, priorities, and goals where employees place greater focus on health and work-life balance. The pandemic spurred employees to not only prioritize their well-being but to seek more

possibilities of where and when they work. This insistence on a new relationship with work is a fundamental trigger for what LinkedIn calls the Great Reshuffle, better known as the Great Resignation. "What employees value and how they want to work is changing and companies that can evolve to meet and exceed their expectations will not only attract and retain the best talent, but build forward-thinking and future-proof organizations. If you want to attract and retain the best talent, your organization needs to be in tune with employees of the future. That often requires changing how work gets done, eliminating outdated practices, and continually adjusting employee experience to match changing trends and demands" says Jacob Morgan – a futurist and one of the world's leading authorities on leadership, the future of work, and employee experience.



If an organization wants to attract and retain the best talent, it needs to be in tune with employees of the future.

When climbing the career ladder is seen as the only way for career development, it leads to competition, confusion, and frustration among employees and frequently fuels unwanted turnover.

The human resources sector is also experiencing a severe disruption. The persistent pandemic, the war and skyrocketing inflation, and the Great Resignation are just some of the issues HR professionals have had to deal with in recent years. Unfortunately, these disruptions are set to continue amid pandemic-fueled changes in workplace expectations, increased remote work opportunities, new generational mindsets, a competitive job market, and a struggling global economy where employee turnover has risen dramatically over the past few years. Joblist – US Job Market Report (2022) found that 68 percent of all employed workers plan to quit their jobs within the next 12 months. Because of these current unprecedented shakeups, human resources need to improve their understanding of how current challenges are impacting operations and work towards developing more adaptable workforce models (Owino 2022). The practice of human capital management (HCM) has become increasingly prevalent as people recognize that an organization's workforce is its greatest asset. As a result, HCM has become the driving force behind many new business practices as ever more smart leaders are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of HCM as a competitive advantage.

### Changing Career Landscape

In her book “Promotions Are so Yesterday” (2022), Julie Winkle Giulioni identifies that positions historically were the currency of growth and advancement, but this approach is no longer valid since the thinning in levels of middle management of the typical hierarchical pyramid limits

opportunities to move up. As people are living longer, working longer, and occupying positions on the organizational chart for longer, in most organizations there are not enough new positions to accommodate everyone who might want the traditional growth. It is no wonder so many employees today believe that career development is not happening. When climbing the career ladder is seen as the only way for career development, it leads to competition, confusion, and frustration among employees and frequently fuels unwanted turnover. Gone is the time of fresh college graduates being accepted into positions at the bottom of the corporate ladder and working their way up to eventually reach a position they will be happy in. Employees are starting to shape their own career paths by building their own ladder, trying different jobs, and even changing careers entirely. The importance for people to build a strong brand for themselves to have greater influence in shaping their career paths has never been so strong.

### Gig Economy

The global pandemic forced organizations to challenge their conventional ideas around work and most companies could indeed facilitate some kind of remote or flexible work previously thought impossible. At the same time, employees have realized the potential for different types of careers and work environments desiring options and choices with their work schedules instead of the nine to five in the corporate office. In a post-pandemic world, many job seekers are also looking towards the gig economy as an alternative to full-time positions.

Although the gig economy is not a new phenomenon, because of the recent technological boom, it is increasingly accessible to larger numbers of people worldwide—even creating new opportunities for employers to attract and cooperate with top talent on crucial projects that call for highly specialized skill sets.

The gig economy encompasses all sorts of contingent work arrangements such as freelancers, consultants, independent contractors and professionals, and temp workers. Gig economy statistics show a free-market system where organizations and independent workers engage in short-term work arrangements, and it is estimated that 36 percent of US workers are already involved in the gig economy and 33 percent of companies extensively use gig workers. The top three priorities across all types of voluntary gig economy workers are: spending time on more meaningful and interesting tasks, being self-employed, and fitting full-time work more flexibly around private needs. They also reported higher happiness and satisfaction levels with their work than those in traditional full-time employment in spite of the likelihood of sometimes working much more than 45 hours a week, and the risk of lower pay. Undeniably, the spreading of the gig economy is a worldwide phenomenon, and the number of participants is significant in almost any country in the world (Duszyński 2022).

### Evolving Employee Values

The present decade is the beginning of an era of human-focused company culture. Workers are now re-evaluating what matters



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most to them in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, prompting employers to focus on the well-being and personal satisfaction of their employees. Given that organizations are finding it increasingly difficult to find and keep good employees, they are adjusting their policies to ensure that employees feel cared about as human beings, not just as workers, investing in wellness programs, boosting their diversity and inclusion efforts, and making flexible work arrangements permanent. According to a LinkedIn survey, flexibility is a bestseller for Generation Z with 77 percent of them making it a top priority compared to Millennials 30 percent and Baby Boomers -31 percent. Employers and employees are building a new, more dynamic relationship based on trust and empathy (LinkedIn 2022).

Adopting a 4-day week is a business improvement strategy centered on working smarter rather than longer, and investing in the wellbeing of the most important asset to any business – its people. Based on a 100-80-100 model – 100 percent of the pay, 80 percent of the time, but critically in exchange for 100 percent of the productivity, statistics have found that 78 percent of employees with 4-day weeks are happier and less stressed. As the push for 4-day work-week is gaining support globally, the radical changes to office life have made the idea seem more viable to businesses around the world. Japan’s 2019 4-day week trial yielded a 39 percent increase in productivity. In recent years, many other countries, including Spain, Iceland, Scotland, Ireland, New Zealand, UAE, and Belgium, have also adopted a 4-day work-week and have recorded a noticeable increase in productivity (Tiwari 2022).

### Employee Experience

“Companies with better employee experiences have more engaged and productive workers, higher profits, and the ability to attract and retain talent. In today’s competitive talent landscape, companies can’t afford not to invest in employee experience” (Morgan 2014). Organizations are always looking for new and innovative ways to end attrition and attract stellar employees. One key factor to building a sustainable workforce is to deliver exceptional employee experience from even before the person starts a role.

“When we speak about employee experience, we’re talking about the organization’s responsibility to establish and maintain the conditions so that great work is possible in the first place,” says David Bator, managing director at AWI. “This will look different for every organization, team, and individual.” Acknowledging employees for their hard work and commitment is another effective method for creating a memorable and personal employee experience. “Recognition is one of the most powerful tools to drive an experience of belonging. Frequent, meaningful recognition has a positive impact on every single pillar of belonging,” Bator says. And what gets recognized, gets repeated, so leaders are missing out on a real opportunity if they’re not leveraging recognition to drive the values, actions, and way of doing business they’re striving for (Johnson 2022).

Employee experience is the long-term redesign of the organization and about knowing what really matters to your employees.

It can be defined as “the intersection of employee expectations, needs, and wants”. Morgan points out that experience is subjective because human beings have emotions, different perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors so every organization in the world has employees who have their own experiences. It is in both the employee’s and the organization’s best interest if employee experience is seen as something created and affected by both the employer and employee and leading organizations have invested considerable time and resources into making sure they are implemented properly. One crucial point to remember is that employee experience can’t be created unless the organization knows its employees, which means leveraging people analytics and having a team of leaders who have the capacity and the desire to connect with people on a truly individual and human level (Morgan 2014).

### Skilling up the Workforce

Although the traditional pre-pandemic office is dying the buildings themselves are going through an office design renaissance and are re-emerging as employee experience centers. Organizations such as Amazon, Cisco, Samsung, Whirlpool, General Electric, Schneider Electric, Deloitte, Microsoft, LinkedIn, and many others are investing enormous sums of money into creating these employee experience centers, and for a very good reason. As the world of work continues to evolve and change, so do the environments in which the work actually gets done. It is in the interest of organizations to improve levels of employee engagement and Morgan recommends focusing on the



The ongoing disruptions have forced organizations to rapidly adapt their operations to meet the changing needs of their customers.

Career development, growth, and learning are among the top reasons employees accept, remain in, or leave a role.

technological, physical, and cultural environments around the employee. “Organizations that nail employee experience in all three areas are known as experiential. These organizations have a well-rounded experience that embodies culture, technology, and physical space. The three environments work together to create a place where employees are empowered, welcomed, and supported. In experiential organizations, employees are there because they want to be, not just because they need to be” (Morgan 2014).

The ongoing disruptions have forced organizations to rapidly adapt their operations to meet the changing needs of their customers. However, many employers are finding that their current workforce lacks the skills needed to meet these new demands. A McKinsey study reveals that a staggering 87 percent of companies are experiencing or will experience a skills gap within the next few years. McKinsey highlights technological advancements as the primary reason for the rampant skill shortage. Technology has changed day-to-day operations and requirements, and the upskilling programs in many organizations are yet to catch up. Now more than ever, HR professionals need to continuously assess their organizations’ skill requirements and take proactive action. For employers it means monitoring which skills – rather than job roles – they need to keep developing in order to stay competitive.

### Career Development

Employees are less inclined toward leaving when they know their employer is investing

in helping them grow professionally within the company. Explaining to employees how they can have a long future with the company and how their career path will unfold motivates many of them to make a long-term commitment. Unfortunately, in many organizations career development is simply not working well because it still operates as it has for decades, says Giullioni (2022). She points out that businesses have evolved in nearly every other dimension of organizational life but meaningful advances to career development have lagged, retaining outdated expectations causing frustration, disengagement, and dissatisfaction among employees. In fact, career development, growth, and learning are among the top reasons employees accept, remain in, or leave a role, states Giullioni. A Hay Group research shows that “room to grow” is one of the five keys to employee commitment and retention and a LinkedIn study of more than 6,600 working professionals found that 94 percent of employees would stay longer at an organization if they believed an investment was being made in their development. Retaining top talent is an increasingly critical priority, but it is just a drop in the ocean of the vast benefits that effective career development can deliver. It raises engagement, unlocks discretionary efforts, inspires greater job satisfaction, and improves performance according to Giullioni (2022).

Although employees perceive career development as a core job expectation of their bosses it is, however, one that many managers are not able to meet. Too many managers are fundamentally confused about how to best help others grow, yet how can people grow when promotions and moves

are so limited? How can the organization balance the needs that employees have to grow with the need their business has to perform? How can growth happen given today’s highly distributed and remote workforce? Understanding what is most interesting to each employee requires curiosity and a commitment to ongoing dialogue. Giullioni believes there are many ways that employees can grow in the company – the answer lies beyond, between, and besides the upward climb.

Career development is fundamentally one of the most intimate and important relationships a manager has with her / his employees. It has the power to instill deep trust and loyalty along with high levels of personal and professional satisfaction in the workplace says Giullioni. The quality of the growth to help others to achieve is directly proportional to the quality of the manager-employee relationship and there are countless ways to enhance this quality. Fostering a culture of psychological safety and inclusion, and building and reinforcing trust are central to building a relationship that supports meaningful development (Giullioni 2022). “The role of a manager or a leader in today’s world is not necessarily to drive work, but more to engage the workforce, to drive passion rather than work”, states Michael Griffiths, Workforce Development Practice Lead at Deloitte.

In his book “The Future of Work” (2014), Jacob Morgan developed a concept called “The Evolution of the Employee” (Fig. 1) that shows how the mentality of the workforce is changing. The Covid pandemic accelerated this evolution making it a pres-

AI isn't just the future – it's the present. Now that the metaverse has arrived, the AI revolution is gathering even more pace, opening up a new world of opportunities.

ent-day reality. As the line between work and private life becomes more diffused, future employees prefer more flexibility in their worktime and place yearning for more autonomy and flatter hierarchies. This allows them to contribute their own ideas, collaborate with more stakeholders within the organization, create and collaborate in projects to boost the productivity of the organization, learning new skills as needed using technical devices they are familiar with in their private lives to communicate quickly and promptly in order to get the job done. For the future employee, leadership isn't about a person's job title – it's about their ideas, visions, and mindset which means that every employee can become a leader on their own terms. With so much information at their fingertips, the focus on knowledge is being replaced with the focus on adaptive learning making continual learning and staying adaptable vital. Employees who know how to learn and how to apply that learning, and continually evolve and adapt to new information, will be the people who succeed (Morgan 2014).

### Communication and the Metaverse

AI isn't just the future – it's the present. Now that the metaverse has arrived, the AI revolution is gathering even more pace, opening up a new world of opportunities. The metaverse was first seen as the future of entertainment, fashion, gaming, and even partying, but it is predicted that a large proportion of people will be in the metaverse in some way by 2030. Many social media and tech companies such as Meta Platforms (formerly Facebook) and

### The Evolution of the Employee

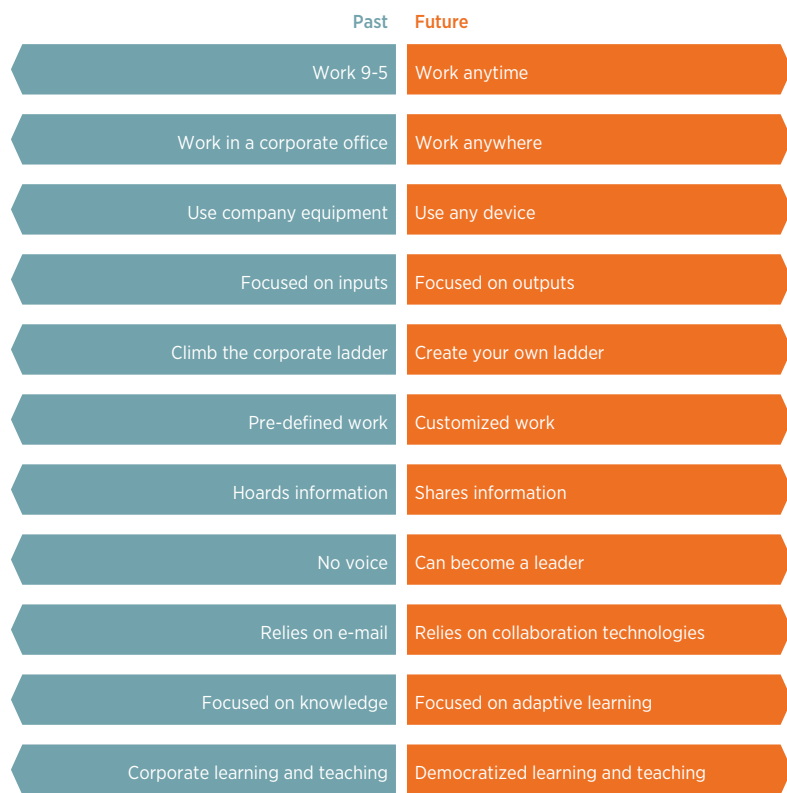


Fig. 1 | Source: Morgan 2014

Microsoft are investing heavily in Social VR to create platforms where people can connect socially or work remotely. The metaverse is an opportunity for many companies to offer more effective or efficient ways to do things such as train workers, provide services, advertise, and connect with colleagues or friends. Tech companies that are focused on metaverse development are using this comfort as a stepping-stone

to the next version of “virtual meetings”. In his blog, Bill Gates wrote: “Within the next two or three years, I predict most virtual meetings will move from 2D camera image grids (...) to the metaverse, a 3D space with digital avatars. The idea is that you will eventually use your avatar to meet with people in a virtual space that replicates the feeling of being in an actual room with them.”

Most HR leaders have already seen the ripple effects of the global pandemic on managing the workforce.

## Workers in the Center



Fig. 2 | Source: Deloitte 2020

leap into a pre-existing career path, or dive into the world of entrepreneurship. Why this sudden change?

In a Microsoft survey almost one in five respondents say their employer doesn't care about their work-life balance, over half feel overworked, and 39 percent feel exhausted. Most HR leaders have already seen the ripple effects of the global pandemic on managing the workforce. Employees at all stages of their careers are taking a long, hard look at every aspect of their lives, starting with their jobs. The mindset and priorities have shifted, causing millions of employees to leave companies and roles they aren't happy with and looking for more meaningful and purpose-driven careers. This new reality might necessitate a variety of adaptations such as increasing pay, relaxing certain job qualifications, improving schedule flexibility, rethinking strategy and tactics, enhancing career training or other perks, strengthening referral systems, and streamlining candidate experiences. It indicates that employers should regularly conduct sectoral benchmarking and salary plan reviews to be competitive in this fragile environment.

## Hiring Trends for the Future

The ever-present challenges of recruitment, retention, and productivity loom larger than ever before. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4.3 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs in August 2021. These staggering numbers are the reason behind the labor market phenomenon known as The Great Resig-

nation (Messir 2022) and as it continues, there is an obvious domino effect, which is creating more job openings. This abundance of job opportunities has placed job seekers comfortably in the driver's seat – a very powerful position that allows them to take a more discerning look at the opportunities previously unavailable to them. For them, there is no better time to make a long-awaited career change and take the

Perks have taken on heightened importance with benefits include mental health coverage, wellbeing programs, family caregiving support, financial planning, onsite childcare receiving new attention, while allowances for home offices and remote technology have also found new currency. But are these incentives enough to entice talent without proper recruitment tactics? To cope with these labor market trends, organizations across industries will need to rethink their

A quantum organization will be agile, responsive, and adaptive because it has no boundaries, being a nonhierarchical system in which every element of the system is defined through its relationship to all other elements.

employer value propositions or risk losing valuable talent, but it can't be a "one and done" effort. It means constantly innovating sourcing strategies that will probably require a change in philosophy, with employers always recruiting, whether a given position is open or not by analyze turnover trends and recruit ahead of the need while creating a ready source of candidates to draw from immediately when the occasion arises (Fig. 2).

### Quantum Organizations

In his book "Quantum Organizations: A New Paradigm for Achieving Organizational Success and Personal Meaning", Ralph Kilmann, a professor of management at the University of Pittsburgh, has a new way of helping managers think about self-transformation in their organizations. He argues that over the past century organizations have done well using narrow specialization, but problems are now so complex and interconnected that the usual ways of coping are no longer enough. The emergence of the quantum organization comes at a time to fill the gap that the new generation of workers are still missing. A quantum organization will be agile, responsive, and adaptive because it has no boundaries, being a nonhierarchical system in which every element of the system is defined through its relationship to all other elements. Therefore, it will have infrastructures and a culture that encourage and build relationships between leaders and employees, employees and their colleagues, divisions and functional groups, and the organization and its larger ecosystem – customers, the community, society as a whole, and the natural environment. It is constantly able to adapt to the complexity and rapid change that challenge all organizations today: technological, social, and geopolitical, changing customer and employee needs and expectations (Zohar 2021).

"A particular kind of organization will thrive in this era – it's called the people-powered enterprise. Every organization relies on people to produce business results, but what makes people-powered organizations different is that they view their people as equal partners in value creation, leveraging their people data to understand the explicit connection between people and the goals and objectives of the business." (Visier 2022) During the current Great Reshuffle, employees are saying, "We can do better" – companies can too (LinkedIn 2022). ●

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# “HR Is Playing a Key Role Enabling Sustainability”

Sarena Lin, CHRO of Bayer AG, about sustainable corporate management and tomorrow's working environment



Sarena Lin, 51, has been a member of the Board of Management and Labor Director of Bayer AG, Leverkusen, since February 2021. As Chief Transformation and Talent Officer, who was born in Taipei / Taiwan, she is responsible for HR, Strategy, and Business Consulting. Lin studied Computer Science, Strategy, and International Relations at Harvard University, Boston, and Yale University, New Haven. From 1998 to 2011, she worked at McKinsey and held roles such as Managing Partner in Taipei as well as Partner in New York. She then worked at Cargill in Minneapolis until 2017, most recently as President of the Feed and Nutrition business. Prior to joining Bayer, Lin worked at Elanco, where she became a member of the Executive Committee with responsibility for Transformation and Technology.





One of the objectives of Bayer's research is to overcome difficult agronomic challenges.

Bayer's initiatives in Ukraine are happening in close collaboration with HR and the teams on the ground.

**The war in Ukraine draws attention to one of Bayer's core businesses, the agricultural sector. Cultivation and protection of crops are essential for world nutrition. Bayer does an important job here. How is this discussed among employees and how does HR management contribute to these discussions?**

**Sarena Lin** We as #teambayer are still shocked by the attack and ongoing war in Ukraine and know that we, as a system critical business that supplies essentials for the food production system, have a big responsibility for the world population. This is closely linked to what our employees are feeling – proud of our relevance and working toward our company vision of “Health for all, Hunger for none”. Since March 2022 our employees and leaders already put our core values into action by showcasing: strong levels of self-organization through donations and offering shelter to those in need; active leadership through our crisis team where HR plays a critical role, seeking quick solutions to ensure the safety and security of our affected employees, both physically and financially; focused support for rebuilding of Ukraine, including future targeted investments and donations, as well as a critical demining machine. All those initiatives are happening in close collaboration with HR and the teams on the ground. Despite the challenging situation for our colleagues in Ukraine – we know that we must stand up for our values and do everything in our power to mitigate the visible effects of war.

**For several years glyphosate and Monsanto dominated the headlines of Bayer. How did the workforce cope with that?**

**Lin** Obviously, it is challenging when those discussions become the prevailing external topic when people think about Bayer. The

biggest challenge is that the public discussion about glyphosate is rarely fact-based and objective. Being confronted with the common prejudices about it was not easy for our employees. It is important that we follow the principle of being transparent with the facts, educating our employees not only about the scientific facts, but also keeping employees informed about the legal proceedings and allowing for open exchanges. This helps all of us to be better prepared for open and fact-based conversations with colleagues, friends, and relatives.

**You have ambitious sustainability goals – and apparently you are pursuing them successfully: In the benchmark report of the CA100+ investor initiative for 2021, Bayer scored best among 166 companies evaluated. And the ESG rating agency ISS ESG praised Bayer as “Climate Outperformer”. How does HR contribute to your sustainability strategy?**

**Lin** We are very proud of our achievements in ESG. It is great to see our “100m x3” initiatives – supporting smallholder farmers, expanding access to healthcare for underserved communities, and providing women in low- and middle-income countries with access to modern contraception – are making progress and are seeing impact. However, we also know that there is much more to be done.

### **Focus on the Social and Governance Component**

HR is playing a key role enabling our sustainability strategy. We are strongly linked to our sustainability unit and in particular focus on the Social and Governance component. Here we are strongly driving Inclusion & Diversity with our recently launched

2030 I&D commitments. This includes the goal of gender parity throughout management, but also striving for adequate representation of nationalities, sexual orientation, generations, and disabilities within our workforce. We also have been conducting annual analysis of gender pay equity to provide transparency, as well as to holding ourselves accountable for progressing on this important topic. Ultimately, HR plays a key role in creating sustainable leadership.

**Under the motto “Future Strategy for Germany”, your new “Gesamtbetriebsvereinbarung” aims to secure sustainable employment growth at the home location from 2025 onwards. What are the main contents of this package?**

**Lin** The Future Concept 2025 is centrally integrated into our broader group strategy to strengthen the role of Germany for Bayer. We aim to proactively address challenges Bayer is facing in Germany to create a basis for sustainable, competitive, and growing employment in our home country from 2025 onwards. This whole commitment was developed closely between business, HR, and employee representatives to ensure all perspectives were heard. We are very proud about the key contents across all our businesses, for example leveraging our network of external scientific and governmental partners, building up an e-commerce hub, strengthening internal re-skilling and attracting external talents for digital and R&D roles in Germany.

**Leadership today means, above all, guiding employees through the transformation, converging values to them, and linking them to a growth perspective for the company. Have you prepared your executives for this key role?**

Digital tools are essential with two major opportunities within HR: better talent management and better employee experience.

Future talents will have more confidence in demanding how they work, what they work on, and how they develop.

**Lin** Yes. Our leaders are the key to unlock a sustainable transformation. We have articulated a set of leadership expectations for One Bayer to unify and optimize how we lead, coach, and drive performance. We aim to foster an inclusive environment helping us to build trust, have courageous conversations, enhance our speed of execution, empower our teams, and role model our inspirational purpose. We have taken our top leaders through a set of leadership training programs earlier this year, and we are in the middle of rolling out an innovative, virtual leadership program to the rest of our 10K people leaders.

### Engage. Shape. Perform.

More broadly, we are expecting our leaders to lead the cultural transformation for the organization, a transformation we called “Engage. Shape. Perform.”, with the goal of making us a more agile, efficient, and empowered organization.

#### What can digital tools contribute to transformation? What are your experiences with this?

**Lin** When we think about the goal of an organizational transformation, we aim to create competitive business products and solutions that benefit society, create an environment where employees are productive and engaged at work, as well as a workplace where processes are efficient, and decisions are fact-based and analytically sound. Digital tools are essential to all these aspects with two major opportunities within HR: better talent management and better employee experience. Artificial Intelligence is an integral part of the future of talent management, contributing to better sourcing of diverse talents, predicting

successful candidates, calibrating performance, and providing insights to succession planning. It also brings more objectivity into the process, which is key in establishing the inclusive and diverse environment we aim for. Better employee experience—by integrating app-based tools that allow intuitive self-service and real time information look up. Digital tools allow for much more seamless and enjoyable employee experiences and frees up valuable time of HR professionals to focus on talent strategies and development.

#### What is the future of working at Bayer? Where and how do we work – and how do we manage?

**Lin** First and foremost, “future of work” is here now. We won’t go back to the “old normal”. We need to embrace the fundamental changes around the way we work, where we work, and how we work and collaborate. We are rethinking the technologies we use to work and are redesigning workspaces to allow for focused and creative exchange to happen. We are giving more freedom to our employees by enabling remote work, as well as establishing virtual assignments and hiring select talents where we are location agnostic. At the same time, it is key to strike the balance of continuing to encourage employees and teams to foster an exciting workplace, so people want to come together recognizing the benefits of physical connectivity and cultural building.

#### Create a More Fluid and Dynamic Work Environment

The future of work speaks to a more self-advocating workforce. Future talents will have more confidence in demanding how they work, what they work on, and how they

develop. It is going to be the job of our leaders and HR to create a much more fluid and dynamic work environment.

#### The boss is the coach – does that also apply to Bayer?

**Lin** Yes, and it is an integral part of how we want our future leaders to accelerate our cultural transformation and live up to their role as coaches and mentors. Our leaders need to build up the muscles of inspiring with a shared vision, motivating with tangible actions, building organizational capabilities, coaching, and creating an inclusive environment for success, and role modelling and enabling others to follow.

#### The challenges facing talent management are changing, and strategic HR planning is becoming increasingly important. How do you respond to that?

**Lin** We are not only transforming business and culture within Bayer but are looking at setting up our HR function for future success. With the buildup of our new Integrated Talent Experience function, we aim to be recognized as the best life science company that develops and accelerates the impact of talents. We therefore are approaching talent management through three major angles: attracting the right talent by leveraging remote and virtual working practices, focusing on critical strategic skills while reimagining the way we conduct Talent Acquisition across the world; developing future leaders with a development led culture as foundation, driving performance differentiation across all levels and more strongly focusing on high quality succession planning; building on technology to allow for automation of standard processes while leveraging AI to enable better, faster, and more inclusive talent decisions



Bayer is investing and collaborating with promising start-ups in actively driving the aspired change. These start-up companies are also sources of inspiration for how Bayer wants to foster collaboration and innovation across the Group.

**As a global group, Bayer was confronted with the issue of Diversity & Inclusion at an early stage. How did it develop in recent years, where are you today, and what is the next step?**

**Lin** Inclusion & Diversity is not only deeply integrated into our values but also a key focus area for me and my teams. As mentioned before, we set and communicated our I&D commitments for 2030 to drive the needed change and measure ourselves on the development. By setting clear targets across all areas, we are committing to specific actions, such as initiate targeted development programs, mitigate potential bias in the talent management processes, and strengthen I&D capabilities in the organization. We are already being recognized worldwide for our I&D efforts. We were named by Fiercepharma as the #1 Pharma company for DEI 2022 in the U.S., and as the most inclusive place to work in Brazil in 2021, to name a few. And in the German Diversity Index, we have improved again this year and now rank sixth among Dax companies. Great progress so far and still a lot of work ahead of us.

**You are a great example of diversity in a large company – how do you use your own CV to not only preach diversity, but to culturally integrate it into HR policies as an integral part?**

**Lin** It comes down to leading by example – walking the talk. Relentlessly driving the execution of our I&D plan, including reviewing all critical talent processes to remove any biases, ensuring diversity in interview slates as well as interview panel. And being very intentional in how we discuss talent in all situations. Personally, I am actively engaged in our Business Resource Groups as well as various leadership gatherings to

share our vision, enable discussions, and to motivate our leaders and employees to be excited about a more diverse, inclusive future.

**Your unit “Leaps by Bayer” supports start-ups in biotechnology with money and know-how. Is this a pure investment or do you expect it to be something like a rejuvenation for the corporate culture?**

**Lin** Leaps by Bayer is focused on tackling fundamental breakthroughs and shift core paradigms in our industries. We aim to tackle ten Leaps that could have greatest impact on humanity – most of which are not possible today. Therefore, we are investing and collaborating with promising start-ups in actively driving the aspired change. These start-up companies are also sources of inspiration for how we want to foster collaboration and innovation across the Group. For example, how do we encourage agile experimentation and celebrate failure; how do we encourage each other to challenge status quo; or how do we foster external collaboration and work jointly across industries and regions to create the best possible outcome.

**In 2021, Bayer spent a total of 5.3 billion euros on research and development.**

**What is HR doing to keep up the pace of innovation?**

**Lin** We at Bayer are extremely proud to live to our purpose “Science for a better life” and therefore, the R&D investments are crucial for the development across all our business.

**More Reliable, Effective, and User Friendly**

Within HR we are investing heavily in building up our Employee Experience Plat-

forms, collaborating with external AI driven companies to improve our Talent Management approach, developing new state of the art real-time talent cockpits as well as to work together with IT to transform our HR system landscape to be more reliable, effective, and user friendly. This will be a key enabler for our leaders to combine data-based decisions and talent development sustainably. We are also investing in experimentation with new talent models. How do we really do strategic skills planning? How do we identify and assess potential? How do we evolve our HR operating model beyond the traditional Ulrich model to keep up with the changing talent and organization needs?

**Bayer is one of the founding members of the “Jugend forscht” competition. How hard is it today to get young people interested in science and technology?**

**Lin** It is more important than ever that we encourage and excite young people to explore the frontiers of science and technology. At Bayer, we are doing a lot to trigger young people’s interest in the fascinating world of science. In Germany, support for “Jugend forscht” continues to be part of this, while in other countries it is our “Science Makes Sense” initiative. Added to this are the diverse activities of our Bayer Science and Education Foundation. ●

**Interview: Ralf Steuer and Christoph Stehr**



Bayer helps smallholder farmers in low-income countries produce enough high-quality food for themselves and others.