

Top Ten Employment Law Challenges in 2025

7:15-8:15a | 600 | REPEATS Thu @ 8:30a

Trump Administration 2.0 has arrived, along with significant changes to the compliance environment for employers in critical areas such as DEI and immigration. This session will cover not only new developments impacting employers on the federal front, but also significant new legislation on the state and local level, and litigation trends in important areas such as discrimination, harassment and wage and hour laws. This session will also provide practical advice for crafting policies and procedures to address ongoing challenges affecting HR departments, including artificial intelligence, social media, and responding to increasingly disruptive weather emergencies. *Presented by David Barron Member, Cozen O'Connor*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

HR's New AI Toolkit: Automating Policies, Compliance, and Communication

7:15-8:15a | 601 | REPEATS Thu @ 8:30a

This session will explore how HR teams can leverage AI to streamline policy creation, enhance compliance, and improve internal communication, ultimately driving engagement & retention. Attendees will gain insights into practical AI applications and leave with a strategic roadmap for implementing AI-driven automation in their HR operations. The session will include a demonstration of the 'Art of the Possible' for using AI to automate policies, ensure compliance, and optimize communication as part of a broader strategic planning approach. *Presented by Steve Senterfit, President, Smartbridge*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Stop! In the name of the Law- Avoiding Retaliation Remixes

7:15-8:15a | 602 | REPEAT of Wed @ 3:45p

With retaliation continuing to be the most filed charge with the EEOC, how do you keep your workplace from becoming part of these statistics? In this engaging and interactive session, we will break down the biggest retaliation pitfalls, address how to respond to complaints without missing a beat, and best practices to keep your workplace legally in tune and compliant. Don't let a misstep turn into a costly mistake- join us for tips on how to stop retaliation before it starts! *Presented by Marina Guerra, Outreach and Education Coordinator and Rayford Irvin, District Director, US EEOC*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Promoted! Now What? Ensuring First-Time Managers Are Ready to Lead

7:15-8:15a | 603 | REPEAT of Wed @ 3:45p

The workplace continues to evolve, and so do the expectations placed on leaders. With hybrid work models, AI-driven decision-making, and shifting employee expectations, first-time managers must be equipped with the right skills to lead effectively. HR professionals can use this pivotal opportunity to ensure these new leaders are prepared to navigate the complexities of today's workforce. This session will explore practical strategies to enhance the development of first-time leaders, ensuring a foundation for organizational success. Attendees will leave with actionable insights to build confident, capable, and future-ready leaders.

Presented by Abby Casey, SHRM-CP, PHR, Senior HR Consultant, Energize HR

TRACK: Learning & Development

The Emotionally Intelligent Leader: Turning Pressure into Clarity and Confidence

7:15-8:15a | 604 | REPEATS Thu @ 8:30a

In today's high-stakes environment, leaders are expected to perform, pivot, and problem-solve—often under intense pressure. But when stress takes over, even the best leaders can fall into reactive patterns, leading to miscommunication, poor decisions, and fractured trust. Emotionally intelligent leaders don't just manage pressure—they transform it into clarity, confidence, and control. This high-energy, interactive experience introduces The EQ Reset, a powerful framework for pausing under pressure, assessing emotions with precision, and leading with intention. Through real-world scenarios, hands-on exercises, and breakthrough mindset shifts, leaders will learn how to regulate emotions, build trust, and navigate challenges with composure. Master the ability to stay cool under pressure, harness emotions as a strategic advantage, and make decisions that inspire confidence. Walk away with a personalized EQ action plan and the tools to lead with resilience, empathy, and unwavering clarity. Ready to lead with emotional intelligence? *Presented by Mike Lejeune, CERS, CPC, CTS, President, Lighting the Path LLC*

TRACK: Learning & Development

Strategic HR: Aligning Business Operations and HR

7:15-8:15a | 605 | REPEATS Thu @ 8:30a

HR practitioners often talk about wanting a proverbial 'seat at the table', to be in the room where important decisions are made and difficult problems are tackled. To be a real strategic partner for the business, HR professionals must be willing to put aside traditional HR models and understand how re-imagining HR programs to be true business operations processes is a must. Come join this open floor session to hear the journey of how leaving traditional HR behind may be the next leap you need to make!

Presented by Brandon Caldwell, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Chief Operating Officer (COO), CSE Electric

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Compensation Strategies

7:15-8:15a | 606 | REPEAT of Thu @ 3:45p

In today's competitive labor market, compensation isn't just a cost—it's an investment with the potential for significant returns. Join Philippe Asselin, Chief Consultant at BalancedComp, for an insightful session on crafting compensation strategies that maximize ROI on your largest expense: the cost of labor. Discover how to align employee rewards with business objectives, navigate 2025's shifting workplace dynamics, and address challenges like pay equity, remote work policies, and talent retention. You'll leave with actionable ideas to engage your workforce like investors, foster transparency, and build a sustainable compensation philosophy that adapts to economic cycles. Whether you're managing compensation for growth or stability, this session will equip you with tools to make every dollar count. *Presented by Philippe Asselin, MS HRM, MS TPI, Chief Consultant, BalancedComp*

TRACK: Strategic Planning, Total Rewards

Dealing with Toxic Behavior Patterns

7:15-8:15a | 607 | REPEAT of Wed @ 9:45a

Whether it's loud or quiet, we have all dealt with toxic behavior at some point in our lives. Maybe your boss is micromanaging. Maybe a teammate withholds important information. Maybe the Vice President changes data, then blames you when the spreadsheet doesn't work anymore. How do we notice toxic behavior sooner? What can we do while we make an exit plan? How can we see these people before we ever hire them? This session shares practical strategies for identifying unproductive behavior, then strategies to interact and deal with the toxicity (at least for a while.) *Presented by Alise Isbell, MABC, President, Write Wise Communications, LLC*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

Managing the Risk of Your Globally Mobile Talent

7:15-8:15a | 504

This session explores key behavioral, physical and environmental risk factors that can impact the performance of your globally mobile employees: international assignees and their families, global business travelers, and short term or rotational assignees. Not only are risk factors explored, but different approaches to mitigating risk are also introduced, specifically the role of assessment, training and development in leveraging performance and ensuring a positive return on investment. *Presented by Mercedes N. D'Angelo, Senior Manager, Intercultural Solutions, IOR Global Services*

TRACK: Global HR

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TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Getting Buy-In as an HR Leader: How to Persuade Decision Makers in Your Organization

8:30-9:30a | 602

One of HR professionals' most significant challenges is convincing executive leaders and internal stakeholders to adopt the strategies, policies, or tools we know can move the needle for our employees and organizations. But even our best ideas and the hours we spend researching, planning, strategizing, and preparing won't matter much if we can't communicate our ideas persuasively. In this session, you'll learn how to tailor your pitch to decision-makers, overcome common objections and feel more confident in your communication choices. *Presented by LeAnne Lagasse, SHRM-SCP, HR Consultant and keynote speaker, LeAnne Lagasse Coaching and Consulting*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Seize the Data: How Workforce Planning & Analytics Boost People Sustainability

8:30-9:30a | 603

With increased regulatory demand for talent metrics, coupled with executive concern about the gaps between current and desired skills, HR is under pressure to build a future-ready workforce. As such, today's strategic HR agenda must include discussions of how to maximize both individual and aggregate people sustainability and what data needs to be presented to internal and external stakeholders to illustrate that commitment. This session will illustrate how workforce planning and analytics can significantly improve how organizations determine the right investments for building people sustainability, what data should be used to measure impact, and how the broader HR function can translate these concepts into a sustainability mindset. *Presented by Mick Collins, Vice President, Go-to-Market, SAP SuccessFactors*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

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TRACK: Learning & Development

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TRACK: Strategic Planning

Everyday/Average/Heroes

8:30-9:30a | 606

Discover how to understand your everyday employees and how you should approach what they need from you. Understand the fallacy of chasing averages and benchmarks as a means to make decisions and instead liberate your thinking and your long-term benefits strategy. Embrace the realization that the best benefits, if not properly communicated, are worthless. Hear techniques to better the efficacy of your programs overnight. *Presented by Andrea Baldrice, Chief Sales Director, HUB International Colorado*

TRACK: Total Rewards

The Belonging Advantage: Building a Culture Where People Thrive

8:30-9:30a | 607

A strong sense of belonging in the workplace drives productivity, engagement, and innovation—critical elements for long-term success. Yet, many organizations struggle to embed belonging into their culture in a meaningful way. This session will explore practical strategies for fostering a workplace where employees feel valued, connected, and empowered to contribute their best work. Drawing from real-world examples, we'll examine how prioritizing belonging strengthens leadership, retention, and collaboration while addressing common challenges that arise in the process. Beyond immediate culture improvements, we'll discuss the long-term impact—how today's investments in belonging shape an organization's effectiveness, sustainability, and overall success. Attendees will leave with actionable insights to build a more inclusive, people-first culture that enhances both employee experience and organizational outcomes. *Presented by Sherry Fultz, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, CCP, CBP, Head of People and Culture and Lauren Kureska, SHRM-CP, People and Culture Manager, Houston Endowment*

TRACK: Strategic Planning, Diversity & Inclusion

Ten Essentials to Know Before Anyone in Your Organization Testifies in a Deposition

8:30-9:30a | 608

Every battle is won before it is ever fought. In few places is this truer than in depositions. Frequently, cases are won or lost before a single witness is sworn in to testify. When your business is defending a lawsuit, adequate preparation of your employees for their deposition testimony is essential to help position the case for a favorable settlement, summary judgment, or a trial victory. Attorneys may handle the depositions, but it will benefit every HR professional to know the critical elements of employee preparation for deposition testimony. *Presented by Joseph Gagnon, Regional Managing Partner – Houston, Fisher & Phillips, LLP*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Unraveling the Myths and Misconceptions about Employer Health Plans and What's Truly Driving Costs

8:30-9:30a | 609 | REPEAT of Wed @ 3:45p

Although many popular ideas about medical plans are based on truths, the complicated issues involved are often misunderstood or oversimplified to the point of being false or misleading. This session seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how many decisions plan sponsors make often have unforeseen and detrimental consequences. As decision-makers, you are tasked with improving organizational health, satisfying recruitment/retention needs and managing the bottom line. This session presents a counterintuitive yet actionable approach to meeting these objectives. *Presented by Dave Ross, Director, National Benefits Strategy, Brown & Brown*

TRACK: Total Rewards

How to Avoid a Bad Termination

8:30-9:30a | 610

In today's workforce, employers must manage employee expectations by informing employees about their performance (good or bad) and, in worst-case scenarios, terminate them. This session will help HR mitigate risks and legal issues when managing employee expectations and firing them. Terminations occur in all sizes - whether you terminate one employee for insubordination or a large division of employees during a planned reduction in force. This session will also help HR professionals learn how to plan, ensure compliance with state and federal laws that apply during the termination process, and mitigate unavoidable risks.

Presented by Ruth Willars, Partner, Monty & Ramirez LLP

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Is Talent Acquisition Really That Hard? "We Can Do Hard Things!"

8:30-9:30a | 611

A much welcomed shapeshifting has taken place in Talent Acquisition (TA) over the last decade, and it has become even more noticeable in the last 5 years. There is an appetite for TA to move beyond its transactional origins, and evolve as a partner in all aspects of the business. When planning for forecasted needs and understanding the talent gaps, meet elevating the hiring manager and candidate experience, a seat at the table is earned. *Presented by Shameka Dukes, SHRM-SCP, Sr. Director, Corporate Talent Acquisition, Sysco Corporation*

TRACK: Talent Management

Overcoming Barriers to Direct Contracting to Improve Access and Hold Down Cost of Healthcare

8:30-9:30a | 501

Fallacies about barriers to direct contracting are rampant in the HR community. Success stories and strategies to overcome these perceived barriers will be presented. The opportunity for direct contracting to assure fiduciary duty is being met will also be discussed. *Presented by Cristin Dickerson, MD, CEO and Founder, Green Imaging*

TRACK: Total Rewards

Medicare 101: The Transition to Medicare

8:30-9:30a | 502 | REPEATS Thu @ 9:45a

Alright everyone, buckle up for "Medicare 101"! Today, we're diving deep into the often-murky waters of Medicare, equipping you to guide your employees with confidence. We'll start by mastering the do's and don'ts of Medicare communication, ensuring clarity and avoiding costly missteps. Then, we'll unravel the complexities of HSAs and COBRA in relation to Medicare, clarifying how these crucial benefits interact. Finally, we'll examine the current legislative trends and potential future changes impacting Medicare, giving you a strategic overview of the evolving landscape. This isn't just about compliance; it's about empowering your employees to make informed healthcare decisions. Let's transform Medicare from a source of anxiety into a manageable, understood benefit. *Presented by Jason Stevens, Chief Executive Officer, Stevens & Associates Insurance Agency, Inc.*

TRACK: Total Rewards

Navigating Increased Worksite Inspections and Compliance in 2025

8:30-9:30a | 503

Join us for an insightful session as we dive into USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security ("FDNS") site visits and overall worksite inspections. We will explore the role and anticipated expansion of FDNS in business immigration as well as the function other agencies including ICE, HSI and DOL WHD have in enforcement proceedings. Learn about compliance strategies, how to prepare for unannounced FDNS site visits, and best practices to adopt to mitigate risks and limit liability as a result of hiring and employing undocumented workers. This session will equip HR professionals with the knowledge and tools to stay compliant and proactive in the face of increased scrutiny. *Presented by Ashima Chock, Partner and Min Kim, Partner, Attorney-at-law, Chugh LLP*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

The Art of Approachability: Building Bridges, Creating Connections

8:30-9:30a | 504

In this interactive workshop, the audience will discover the keys to becoming more approachable and fostering meaningful connections for ultimate trust building. Through engaging exercises, real-world scenarios, and actionable tools, participants will learn how to quickly build rapport, appreciate diverse perspectives, and leverage emotional intelligence to create stronger, more collaborative relationships. By the end, attendees will leave inspired, equipped with practical strategies, and ready to transform their approachability into a superpower for leadership success. *Presented by Elena Sarango-Muniz, Founder & CEO, Sarango Executive Coaching LLC*

TRACK: Global HR

Connecting the Dots with Practical Insights - Three Mission Critical HR Issues

8:30-9:30a | Unique Zone | REPEATS Thu @ 9:45a

And now for something completely different: Join us for a lively, engaging, interactive, roving-mic, problem-solving session tailored to your most pressing HR challenges. This session will provide practical guidance and actionable steps to tackle key HR topics while incorporating real-world experiences from our expert panelists. Mission-critical, "right now" issues around Recruiting and Retention, Change Management, and the Increasing Scope of HR Responsibility will be unpacked and critiqued with roving thought leaders and live feedback from the room. *Presented by Rod Branch, PHR, SHRM-CP Chief Human Resources Officer, ARC/XIS Builder Services; Jared Hamilton, Certified EQ-I 2.0, Vice President, People Operations, Calvetti Ferguson, Liz Townsend, Certified Coach, Partner, Allen Austin*

TRACK: Talent Management

That's Awesome...Now What! - Performing at World Class

9:45-10:45a | 600 | REPEAT of Wed @ 3:45p

Let's face it, we live in a world that constantly asks, "What have you done for me lately?" As HR professionals, performing at a world-class level every day can seem daunting. But in this transformative session, we will explore ways to elevate your HR and team performance to exceptional levels. By examining key practices from world-class athletes, leaders, and organizations, you will gain practical strategies to achieve and sustain high performance. Enhance your professional effectiveness, foster strong team dynamics, and align your corporate purpose with impactful achievements. *Presented by Mitch Beckham, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, CHRO, Webber*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

When Mental Health Enters the Workplace: A Deeper Dive into Navigating the Nuts and Bolts...

9:45-10:45a | 601

Join partner DeAndrea Washington as she discusses the rise of mental health-related issues affecting employers since the pandemic. Not surprisingly, mental health-related complaints of discrimination filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have been on the rise and now employees expect more from their employers when it comes to mental health support. So, what can you do to address the mental health crisis sweeping the nation and your workplace not only to minimize the chances of getting sued but to positively impact the lives of your workforce? This session will help employers effectively manage compliance obligations, including steps to determining whether an accommodation is required and nuts and bolts of the interactive process and steps to determining. Topics include when and how mental health conditions trigger disability laws; providing necessary workplace accommodations; and best practices to comply with the ADA, FMLA, and other interacting laws. *Presented by DeAndrea Washington, Attorney/Partner, Spencer Fane LLP*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Leading Organizational Transformation by Developing a Strategic Narrative

9:45-10:45a | 602 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

Organizational transformation is the process of evolving a business to meet new challenges, seize opportunities, and respond to shifting market conditions. This process often requires reevaluating how the business functions, which can involve changes to its culture, processes, technology, and business models. By undergoing transformation, a business can gain a competitive edge, stay aligned with emerging technologies and customer needs, and reinvigorate its workforce. In this session, we'll explore how TDECU, Houston's largest credit union, is driving organizational transformation through reimagining its culture and building a strategic narrative to drive performance, engagement, and adoption. *Presented by Andrew Clements, M.S., Director, Talent and Transformation, TDECU*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

He Said, She Said - Investigating Complex Sexual Harassment Cases

9:45-10:45a | 603

One troubling allegation, two completely different stories, zero eye-witnesses. Participants will walk through a full hypothetical sexual harassment case to learn how to investigate and draw a conclusion when the parties' stories conflict. *Presented by Marla Moore, Attorney Investigator, Marla Moore, PLLC*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

The Power of People Analytics: Turning Data into Strategic Insight

9:45-10:45a | 604

As HR evolves into a more data-driven function, people analytics is becoming essential for making informed, strategic decisions. According to SHRM's 2023 report *The Use of People Analytics in Human Resources*, 82% of HR professionals use analytics to assess retention and turnover, and 71% apply it to recruitment and hiring. Some organizations are now leveraging AI to identify high-potential employees by analyzing the profiles of past top performers—enabling focused development and retention strategies. Looking ahead, predictive modeling for workforce planning is emerging as the next frontier. Join this session to explore how to harness these tools to shape the future of your workplace. *Presented by April Kinchen, PhD, SPHR, Assistant Professor and Program Director of the MS-SHRM and MS-SHRM-PA, Houston Christian University*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

HR and AI: Partners in Crime or Just Frenemies? (Hint: It's All About Adoption)

9:45-10:45a | 605

In today's rapidly evolving workplace, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Human Resources (HR) is no longer a futuristic concept but a present reality. Yet, despite its potential to revolutionize HR practices, many organizations remain hesitant, viewing AI as a complex and intimidating force. This presentation, "HR and AI: Partners in Crime or Just Frenemies? (Hint: It's All About Adoption)," aims to demystify AI in HR by exploring current adoption rates, showcasing practical use cases, and highlighting why embracing AI is not just an option but a strategic necessity. We will uncover how AI can enhance HR functions, improve decision-making, and ultimately drive organizational success, transforming AI from a perceived adversary into a valuable ally. *Presented by Tracy Frazier, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, The Winner's Circle and Suzanne Speak, Vice President of Human Resources, Baylor Genetics*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Coaching-Centered Leadership: Enhancing Engagement & Retention Through Empowerment

9:45-10:45a | 606

Today's HR landscape demands leaders who can inspire commitment, loyalty, and top-tier performance. In this 1-hour, educational session, Johanna Watson—CEO of ARTEMIS Partners—reveals how a coaching-centered leadership approach leads to stronger engagement and improved retention. Attendees will learn to foster resilience, accountability, and a spirit of collaboration. Johanna's proven methods—combining real-world case studies, interactive discussion, and step-by-step coaching frameworks—demonstrate how to develop, empower, and retain talent across diverse organizational environments. *Presented by Johanna Watson, CEO, Artemis Partners*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

The Art & Science of Recruiting: Crafting Your Organization's First Impressions That Last

9:45-10:45a | 607

In the fast-paced world of talent acquisition, skilled recruiters are the key to making the first impression that sets the tone for the entire candidate experience. A great recruiter doesn't just know how to fill a job – they understand the intricate balance between the art of human connection and the science of data-driven decision-making. This session will dive deep into both the creative and analytical sides of recruiting, equipping HR professionals with the tools they need to build highly effective, successful recruitment strategies. By the end of this session, you will have a better understanding of how to train and develop recruiters who can confidently navigate the evolving landscape of talent acquisition, use data to refine their approaches, and provide exceptional candidate experiences. You'll also leave with a framework for measuring recruitment success, enhancing collaboration across HR functions, and building a long-lasting, positive employer brand. *Presented by Reagan Kelley, MSSW, CSW, CLC, Director of Talent Acquisition, National HR Consulting Services, Marsh McLennan Agency*

TRACK: Learning & Development

A Big Win for Businesses and Benefits

9:45-10:45a | 608

A rare opportunity to hear from a DC insider about this important federal legislation and how it impacts every business in America. As registered DC lobbyist, founder of the Foundation for Government Accountability, and the Health Access Healthcare Cooperative, Tarren played a integral role in the codification and rebranding of Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangements (ICHRA) into CHOICE Arrangements – Custom Health Option and Individual Care Expense – a logical name for what experts expect could replace most group health insurance over time. He will unpack the legislation, take questions, and talk about its positive impact on businesses, jobs, and employee health benefits. As a founding affiliate of the Health Access Healthcare Cooperative and the founder of Scoop Health, Art will discuss the real challenges and opportunities that businesses face when transitioning to a CHOICE Arrangement, as well as the types of companies that will benefit the most from the new CHOICE legislation. *Presented by Tarren Bragdon, CEO, Health Access Solutions and Art Goetze CEO, Scoop Health*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations, Total Rewards

What to Expect When You're Expecting... An Employee to Sue

9:45-10:45a | 609

For most businesses and human resource representatives a lawsuit or discrimination charge is a nightmare. Many businesses are completely unprepared for these circumstances even when they suspect that an employee may be preparing to file a lawsuit or charge. Unfortunately for these employers, many of them only begin to prepare for a lawsuit after mistakes have been made and the damage has largely been done. Even at this stage some employers are still reluctant to act in the hope that the problem will simply go away. This is the wrong response regardless of the initial circumstances. Attendees in this session will review some of the most common pitfalls that occur before a lawsuit or charge, proactively preparing for a claim, mistakes that are made once one a possible claim is known, and the steps that are necessary to take once a lawsuit or charge is filed. *Presented by Brett Holubeck, Attorney, Fisher & Phillips, LLP*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Leader Led Culture Shift in a Volunteer/Staff Employee Population

9:45-10:45a | 610

In today's dynamic and rapidly evolving world, the ability to lead during important culture shifts is critical skill. This session explores the strategies and tools leaders need to drive cultural transformation within their organizations, by aligning team/leadership values, behaviors, and attitudes with the overarching vision. Participants will learn how to assess the current culture, identify areas for growth, and implement actionable steps to foster inclusivity, innovation, and resilience. We will share a real-world case study about the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's Leadership Development Program which involves leaders from the 35,000 volunteer population; as well as the 140+ staff population and how this program is creating "ripples" of change throughout the organization. *Presented by Tamara Atkins, SPHR, PCC, Managing Principal, Strategic Visions and Mel Underhill, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Chief Volunteer and Human Resource Officer, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Beyond Therapy: Elevating Workforce Mental Health Through Better Care Pathways

9:45-10:45a | 611 | REPEAT of Wed @ 9:45a

As mental health continues to be a top concern for today's workforce, employers are under pressure to offer solutions that go beyond surface-level support. Yet many workplace programs still rely solely on traditional therapy-first models, delaying effective care for employees who may need more complex or immediate support. This session will examine the current state of mental health in the workplace, its impact on organizational performance, and how employers can adapt their strategies to meet the growing needs of their employees. Attendees will compare various approaches to employee mental health, including psychiatric-first models, integrated therapy, and EAP wraparound services, to learn how access to care, speed, and personalization drive better outcomes. We'll share key insights from industry data, emerging care models, and real-world examples to help HR leaders and benefit professionals enhance mental health programs that are both impactful and sustainable. *Presented by Faisal Tai, MD, CEO & Founder, PsychPlus*

Solving Immigration Puzzles: Real-World HR Scenarios and Best Practices

9:45-10:45a | 501

Immigration challenges are an inevitable part of managing a diverse and global workforce. From handling visa max-outs and lotteries to managing PERM recruitment and I-9 compliance, HR professionals face a wide range of scenarios that require careful attention and strategic solutions. This presentation explores real-world immigration scenarios HR teams commonly encounter and provides actionable best practices to address them effectively. Topics include managing sensitive issues like terminating foreign-born employees, supporting visa-dependent workers during corporate restructuring, and ensuring compliance in remote work arrangements. Attendees will gain practical insights to anticipate and resolve common immigration challenges, develop systems to stay compliant and aware of changes, and support employees while safeguarding the organization's immigration strategy. Join us to sharpen your skills in solving immigration puzzles and leave equipped with the tools to confidently tackle these challenges.

Presented by Emily Neumann, JD, Managing Partner and Steven Brown, JD, Partner, Reddy Neumann Brown PC

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

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Presented by Jason Stevens, Chief Executive Officer, Stevens & Associates Insurance Agency, Inc.

TRACK: Total Rewards

Benefits as Brand: Differentiating Your Employer Brand with Targeted Benefits Strategies

9:45-10:45a | 503

In a job market where competition for talent is intense and employee expectations are higher than ever, benefits are a sometimes overlooked, but critical component of the employer brand. Treating benefits as a one-size-fits-all solution falls short of differentiating your organization or delivering an exceptional employee experience. Instead, the opportunity lies in adapting your benefits offering to reflect your industry, workforce demographics, and evolving employee needs, turning them into a cornerstone of your brand identity. This session will explore how HR leaders and benefits practitioners can elevate benefits beyond compliance and retention to shape the company's brand and culture. We'll also examine communication best practices for benefits engagement—leveraging elements from strategies like hyper-personalization, continuous feedback, and alignment between employee needs and business goals. *Presented by Tim Pratte, CEO, Selerix Systems, Talent Management*

TRACK: Total Rewards

Are you thinking about ditching your job evaluations globally? Think twice

9:45-10:45a | 504

Internal equity is a basic compensation principle that has been on the list of HR International governance topics for decades. However, it was not until recent years that pay equity made it to the top must-have conversations in the many US states and countries globally. Therefore, the resurgence in the use of global job evaluation in recent years as a tool to aid in internal equity. This session will explain why global internal equity is much more than a governance must-have. I will provide ideas on how to get it right, and how it is linked with your talent strategy, company culture and even your company performance. *Presented by Mariana Uzcategui, MBA, Founder, OUR Talent Group*

TRACK: Global HR

Connecting the Dots with Practical Insights - Three Mission Critical HR Issues

9:45-10:45a | Unique Zone | REPEAT of Thu @ 8:30a

And now for something completely different: Join us for a lively, engaging, interactive, roving-mic, problem-solving session tailored to your most pressing HR challenges. This session will provide practical guidance and actionable steps to tackle key HR topics while incorporating real-world experiences from our expert panelists. Mission-critical, "right now" issues around Recruiting and Retention, Change Management, and the Increasing Scope of HR Responsibility will be unpacked and critiqued with roving thought leaders and live feedback from the room. *Presented by Rod Branch, PHR, SHRM-CP Chief Human Resources Officer, ARCXIS Builder Services; Jared Hamilton, Certified EQ-I 2.0, Vice President, People Operations, Calvetti Ferguson, Liz Townsend, Certified Coach, Partner, Allen Austin*

TRACK: Talent Management

LUNCH & KEYNOTE SPEAKER – DR KEVIN DALEY**THE CORPORATE CHAMPION - Elevating Your Professional Game**

12:30-1:30

Leveraging his dual expertise from leading the Harlem Globetrotters and excelling in Corporate America, Kevin presents a dynamic blueprint for transcending average and achieving excellence across any industry. This engaging keynote or workshop propels corporate professionals to peak performance through compelling stories and strategies from both the court and the corporate world, focusing on leadership, culture, and results for enduring success.

TRACK: Learning & Development

What the Business Wants from HR

2:45-3:45p | 600 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

Increasingly HR has become a key player in many organizations. But some HR functions and leaders still struggle to find their places "at the table." Drawing from the research of leading global consulting firms, this session will highlight the top five capabilities that business leaders want from their HR leaders. In this interactive and practical session, participants will be challenged to think through those attributes that could lead to greater success in their HR roles and impact, whether leader or individual contributor. *Presented by Phillip Weiss, Founder, Iridium Leadership Development*

TRACK: Learning & Development, Strategic Planning

Let's B.O.O.G.I.E!

2:45-3:45p | 601 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

Employees need motivation now more than ever! Our role as HR Practitioners is to empower leaders to lead and equip them with the tools to help employees grow, develop and succeed. Sometimes that results in producing absolute rockstars, sometimes it requires polishing a few rough diamonds to help them shine, and other times - well, we must help underperforming employees get involved elsewhere. In this session we will explore the performance management life cycle and provide useful tips and recommendations for each stage - to help you Be Outstanding, all while entertaining you with some of your favorite 70s tunes!

Presented by Maria Carter, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, President & CEO, MSB HR Compliance Consulting LLC and Nicole Cruz, SPHR, PHR, SHRM-CP, HR Business Partner, ConocoPhillips

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

We Got Recognition All Wrong

2:45-3:45p | 602

Through three years of engagement survey data; focusing on the efficacy of employee recognition; our company was disappointed to see a major recognition initiative was seemingly having no significant impact on recipient's engagement levels as respects job meaningfulness; a significant driver in employee retention. However, when looking into the engagement levels of those who gave recognition, or exercising gratitude, we realized then we were looking at impacts of recognition all wrong. Find out what we discovered and what to do NOW! *Presented by Jared Hamilton, BCC, Chief People Officer; Principal-Hamilton Executive Coaching, Calvetti Ferguson; Hamilton Executive Coaching*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

Bulletproof Leadership

2:45-3:45p | 603 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

Leading has never been harder. Division is more common than unity. Disagreement and aggression have moved from the realm of politics into the breakroom. Performance and profitability seem to have taken a backseat to personal attacks and public shaming. But you can change that. Not globally, but in your organization at least. It's just a matter of learning a few new skills and applying them with courage and conviction. This course will teach you the skill set you never knew you needed, you will learn how to combine the very best in proven leadership practices and de-escalatory framework wrapped in a bulletproof culture. Bulletproof leaders are humble, self-aware and use their style and strengths to influence others to the greater good. You will leave this session with confidence to be a better leader and create a positive work culture for your team. *Presented by Tim Keck, Vice President, Senior Strategic Advisor, SafeHaven Security Group, LLC*

TRACK: Talent Management

Like, Share, Comply: Social Media Trends and the Cross-Roads with Employment Law Regulation

2:45-3:45p | 604 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

In this session, we will explore the intersections of social media and employment law. Participants will gain insights into the legal risks associated with employee social media use, employer attempts to govern the same, and management strategies for handling these risks effectively. We will delve into current and anticipated workplace trends emerging from social media use and examine their implications on employment law issues. Through real-world examples, attendees will better understand the challenges with navigating the evolving digital landscape while identifying issues for consideration regarding legal compliance and fostering a positive work environment. *Presented by Jessica Craft, Of Counsel and Luke MacDowall, Shareholder, Littler Mendelson P.C.*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Inclusive Leadership: Empowering Teams and Elevating Performance

2:45-3:45p | 605

Inclusive leadership is the cornerstone of a thriving, high-performing organization. As businesses refine their diversity and inclusion strategies, sustained success depends on leaders who cultivate cultures of belonging, mitigate bias, and align employees with organizational purpose. This session explores the strategic role of inclusive leadership in driving engagement, retention, and business performance. Gain actionable insights to equip leaders at all levels with the skills to foster trust, a culture of openness, and authentic connections—creating workplaces where employees feel valued and empowered to contribute at their highest level. Engage in a dynamic session that will equip you with strategies to transform workplace culture and drive sustainable success. *Presented by Lillian Davenport, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, MGSCC, Principal, Chief Empowerment Officer, End View Solutions, LLC*

TRACK: Strategic Planning, Diversity & Inclusion

The Do's and Don'ts When Handling Requests for Accommodation under the ADA

2:45-3:45p | 606

An employee's request for accommodation under the ADA requires a response. In this session, we will discuss how to navigate implementing the correct response after receiving a request for accommodation. First, we will cover what must be accommodated under the ADA. Next, we will cover what proof, if any, is necessary for an employer to grant a request for accommodation. Additionally, we will discuss both best practices and common errors employers make when responding to accommodation requests. Finally, we will discuss recent case law addressing accommodation requests. *Presented by Stephen Hart, Attorney at Law and Christopher Agboli, Attorney at Law, Jackson Lewis, P.C.*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

The Strategic HR Playbook: Aligning People and Business Goals

2:45-3:45p | 607 | REPEATS Thu @ 4:00p

Are you ready to unlock the true potential of your HR function and drive your organization to new heights? Join us for a dynamic and insightful session that will transform the way you think about HR strategy! In "The Strategic HR Playbook: Aligning People and Business Goals," you'll discover how to seamlessly integrate your HR initiatives with your organization's overarching business strategy. This session is packed with real-world examples, actionable insights, and cutting-edge techniques that will empower you to become a strategic partner in your company's success. *Presented by Michelle Rasmussen, SHRM-SCP, Head of HR, MediaCo*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

From Problem-Focused to Solution-Focused: Revolutionizing Talent Development and Feedback

2:45-3:45p | 608

Transform your organization's feedback culture from deficit-focused to solution-driven through an innovative approach that converts both stakeholders and adversaries into committed allies. Based on positive psychology principles and real-world implementation across manufacturing and corporate environments, this session shows how to create psychological safety through transparent dialogue, drive behavioral change through measurable commitments, and establish common language that bridges organizational divides. Participants will learn practical tools to implement strength-based development that delivers measurable results, build networks of invested allies across organizational levels, and generate lasting cultural transformation through solution-focused coaching. This comprehensive program combines positive psychology foundations with tactical steps, equipping HR leaders to revolutionize talent development approaches. Discover how leading companies accelerate high-potential development, improve cross-functional collaboration, and create sustained behavior change - even with initially resistant stakeholders. *Presented by Darin Coble, MSHRM, Executive Coach & Fractional CHRO, Versa Business Partners LLC*

TRACK: Talent Management

Not Just Fun and Games: Designing Teambuilding That Works

2:45-3:45p | 609 | REPEAT OF Wed @ 7:15a

Sure, laser tag is fun, but will it help a team to function together better? In this interactive session, learn how to identify the root issues underlying most teambuilding requests, design a collaborative session to address those issues through active team participation, and facilitate in a way that puts the Team back in teambuilding. *Presented by Kelli Nottingham, MA, CTACC, Facilitator, Coach, Training Consultant, Nottingham Professional Development*

TRACK: Learning & Development

From Design to Delivery: Creating a Seamless Experience for Maximum Engagement & Employee Satisfaction.

2:45-3:45p | 610

In today's dynamic workplace, the traditional approach to employee benefits communication—transactional and periodic—falls short of meeting evolving employee expectations. Employees now seek meaningful engagement and personalized experiences, turning communications from monologues into genuine dialogues. This session reveals the paradigm shift necessary to transform employee benefits communication into a strategic tool for employee satisfaction and organizational success. Join us to explore the critical components of an effective communication strategy, learn to integrate best practices such as data-driven decision-making, year-round engagement, alignm *Presented by Misty Guinn, Sr. Manager Communications Strategy, Emptyrean*

TRACK: Total Rewards

From Crawl to Run: The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Turns Two

2:45-3:45p | 611

On June 27, 2023, the Pregnancy Workers Fairness Act ("PWFA") and subsequently issued EEOC regulations imposed new requirements on employers to provide reasonable accommodations for known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, and associated medical conditions of qualified employees and job applicants. This presentation provides an overview of the PWFA and update of recent legal developments so the HR professional can better identify the risks of discrimination under the PWFA and reduce employer exposure to litigation. *Presented by Pamela Williams, Esq., Principal and Juliana Gaige, Esq., Associate, Jackson Lewis P.C.*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Executive Compensation Cheat Sheet for HR Leaders

2:45-3:45p | 501

As an HR Leader with a seat at the management table, you are expected to be well-versed in executive compensation, especially in a publicly traded company. We will make sure you are up to date on the terminology, concepts, laws, and common practices in executive compensation, helping you move from listener to participant in the conversation between the Board, their consultants, and management. *Presented by Jenny Midyat, SHRM-SCP, CCP, VP Total Rewards, ChampionX*

TRACK: Total Rewards

Project Retain: Increasing Veteran and Military Spouse Retention

2:45-3:45p | 502

Texas, home to over 1.6 million veterans and 28,000 annual military transitions, plays a critical role in integrating veterans into the civilian workforce. Houston, with the second-largest city veteran population in the nation, is a central hub for addressing these challenges and opportunities. While veterans represent a diverse and skilled talent pool, many face significant barriers in employment and retention. Despite a 3.6% veteran unemployment rate (Texas Workforce Commission, 2023), 69% of veterans report job-hunting as their primary struggle, and 43% leave their first civilian job within a year. This underscores the urgent need for veteran-specific onboarding, transition support, and retention strategies in Houston and across Texas. By prioritizing veteran hiring and retention, Houston can lead the charge in enhancing economic growth, supporting veterans' long-term success, and solidifying Texas' reputation as a veteran-friendly state. This initiative provides a blueprint for meeting the workforce needs of veterans and employers alike. *Presented by Mia Garcia, Executive Director, Texas Veterans Network, Combined Arms*

TRACK: Diversity & Inclusion

Managing Global Immigration in Mergers and Acquisitions

2:45-3:45p | 504

Large Global transactions involving multiple countries are very complicated especially when it comes to employee immigration. Will employees' work permits still be valid after the transaction? Each country has its own unique and complicated set of immigration rules that dictate whether employment can continue or not. In this session we will look at principles related to immigration in various types of company transactions and help you design strategies for closing the deal without impacting any of your valued employees. *Presented by Maryna Solodka, GMS-T, Global Mobility Manager, ChampionX*

TRACK: Global HR

HR Horizons: Learning to Lead

2:45-3:45p | Unique Zone

Last year, HR Houston launched a powerful new program designed specifically for mid-career HR professionals ready to grow into the next level of leadership. This session offers a behind-the-scenes look at the journey—directly from program participants—sharing how the experience has transformed their approach to leadership, strategy, and influence. Discover the real-world skills they're developing, the mindset shifts that are unlocking their potential, and the meaningful ways they're preparing to lead with impact in an ever-changing HR landscape. If you're ready to elevate your career and make a lasting difference, this session will inspire your next step. *Moderated by Chelsea Littleton, Webber. Panelist: Melissa Curry, Mason Road Sheet Metal, Inc.; Leah Pierre, Houston Texans; Nate Vera, Group 1 Automotive; Megan Young, Thompson Hanson + Tiny Boxwoods*

TRACK: Learning & Development

What the Business Wants from HR

4:00-5:00 | 600 | REPEAT of Thu @ 2:45p

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TRACK: Learning & Development, Strategic Planning

Engaging and Inspiring Stakeholders: Building Relationships to Make Differences When You're Not in Charge

4:00-5:00p | 601

Frequently, HR management and development professionals, whether internal or external, must drive critical organizational behaviors and performance by influencing others who have authority. Your effectiveness depends on the relationships you build with your stakeholders and your ability to deliver results that are meaningful to those stakeholders. Based on thirty plus years of global consulting experience, Jay will use insightful models, humorous anecdotes, and interactive discussions to help you establish and sustain an effective internal or external consulting function in the HR management and development space.

Presented by Jay Clancy, MS, Learning Consultant, University of Houston

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Leading Organizational Transformation by Developing a Strategic Narrative

4:00-5:00p | 602 | REPEAT of Thu @ 2:45p

Organizational transformation is the process of evolving a business to meet new challenges, seize opportunities, and respond to shifting market conditions. This process often requires reevaluating how the business functions, which can involve changes to its culture, processes, technology, and business models. By undergoing transformation, a business can gain a competitive edge, stay aligned with emerging technologies and customer needs, and reinvigorate its workforce. In this session, we'll explore how TDECU, Houston's largest credit union, is driving organizational transformation through reimagining its culture and building a strategic narrative to drive performance, engagement, and adoption. *Presented by Andrew Clements, M.S., Director, Talent and Transformation, TDECU*

TRACK: Strategic Planning

Bulletproof Leadership

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TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

Coaching Fundamentals for Leaders: The Leader-as-a-Coach Mindset in Elevating Engagement and Performance

4:00-5:00p | 605

While professional coaching is unique as a profession, coaching as a skill is essential for fostering motivation, retaining top talent, and building high-performing teams. We've developed an efficient system for training leadership cohorts in applied coaching psychology, giving them easy-to-use tools and frameworks for having effective coaching conversations in a tenth of the time of traditional ICF coach training programs. This session will introduce HR leaders to a simple, actionable framework for having better coaching conversations and a blueprint for building a coaching culture within their organizations. *Presented by John Marshall, PCC, NBC-HWC, Owner, Lead Coach, Humessence LLC*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

Turning Conflict into Collaboration: The Power of Perspective

4:00-5:00p | 606

Conflict is inevitable in leadership—whether in accountability conversations, performance reviews, or feedback sessions. The problem? Most leaders either avoid conflict or approach it with the wrong mindset, leading to frustration and missed opportunities for growth. In this session, you'll explore the principles of productive conflict, helping leaders shift their perspective to tackle challenges with confidence, respect, and flexibility. You'll discover practical coaching techniques—such as the “Four Positions” method—that expand perspectives, remove obstacles, and foster real teamwork. Walk away with actionable strategies to transform workplace conflict into stronger relationships, deeper collaboration, and better business outcomes. *Presented by Guillermo Mendoza, International Speaker, Executive Coach & ICC Trainer, Impact Coaching Solutions*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

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TRACK: Strategic Planning

Getting Your Remote Team to Communicate & Connect

4:00-5:00p | 608

In the post-pandemic world of remote work, getting your team to actually talk—whether it's on the phone or (gasp) face-to-face—can feel like pulling teeth! While virtual work comes with plenty of benefits, the challenges of disconnected communication are becoming more apparent to many companies these days. This session dives into actionable strategies to help you and your leaders reignite connection and foster meaningful verbal communication within their remote teams. *Presented by Glenn Taylor, MS, PCC, Certified Coach / Facilitator, Skybound Coaching and Training*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention

Live streams and soap operas . . . HR in the age of influencers

4:00-5:00p | 609

In this session we will discuss current trends and best practices to help you navigate the complex and everchanging employment environment faced by employers in 2025 (and beyond). These range from conducting investigations when the influencer is your complainant (or alleged bad actor). Addressing discipline and terminations in the age of social media. What to do when complaints are taken to the web versus HR. All of the above bring into focus the intersection of labor and employment law, free speech, protected speech, privacy rights, and even property rights. *Presented by Collin Warren, Esq., General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer, and Leslie Jeanes, HR Director, APM*

TRACK: Employment Law & Labor Relations

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS: Tips, Tools and Real-World Solutions

4:00-5:00p | Unique Zone

Employee Relations (ER) is about more than just enforcing policies—it's a strategic function that plays a vital role in mitigating risk, supporting leadership, and fostering a positive workplace culture. In this session, seasoned ER professionals will share practical tools and insights to help you assess your organization's risk tolerance and understand how it shapes your ER approach. Learn how to move beyond the "policy police" mindset and into a more proactive, people-centered model of employee relations. Panelists will discuss how to identify early warning signs, build strong management capabilities, and approach performance and behavior issues with both accountability and empathy. *Moderated by Jane Cheeks, City of Houston. Panelists: Alex Ellis, Worley; Jamon Harrell, Businessolver; Mike Garcia, Spec's; Laura Evans, Memorial Hermann.*

TRACK: Engagement & Retention