



The CHRO as CIO (Chief Innovation Officer)

Posted by Joe Fournier

Just as kids head back to school after Labor Day, the calendar of conferences, convenings and learning forums begins to ramp up. The return on taking time away from your desk to meet with peers, exchange ideas with thought leaders and polish functional knowledge is generally positive. In a few days, hundreds of human resources leaders will convene in Chicago for the 55th annual [American Society for Health Care Human Resources Administration](#) (ASHHRA) meeting and exposition. They will invest time on three themes to “**Connect, Innovate, Transform,**” – the tagline for the conference.



These topics are the cornerstones of our daily work and conversations at InveniasPartners. Heading into 2019, InveniasPartners heard from health care leaders across the nation that transformative leaders are needed urgently in health care. Specifically, leaders who can orient their organizations and people toward the future while respecting and building on their rich cultures, traditions and foundations.

CHROs are well suited to lead transformation efforts given their experience driving strategy and people development efforts to strengthen a performance culture. One company that recognized the CHRO as a transformative leader is Aon plc, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. In October 2018, Aon formed a New Ventures Group to identify, incubate and deliver new sources of value for their clients. As part of the launch, Aon tapped its CHRO [Tony Goland](#) to become the firm’s Chief Innovation Officer. CHRO as CIO – an exciting development!

As InveniasPartners consultants prepare to meet ASHHRA members heading to Chicago, we believe leadership teams and CHROs should focus on four themes:

- **Leading in the Digital Era:** Each day, health care leaders and their organizations must address changing market conditions and consumer preferences while integrating technology into care and service delivery. Leaders must adopt a digital mindset and ensure their people have the skills and expertise to use sophisticated IT systems to the fullest. [Gartner](#) notes that “many business leaders are looking to HR to lead their digital transformation.” Agreed! HR professionals have an unprecedented opportunity to lead their organizations in preparing people to operate effectively in an increasingly digital environment through workforce planning, organizational design and education and talent development.
- **The Intersection of Innovation and Culture:** Establishing and fostering an environment where innovation thrives requires an unwavering commitment from the CEO, every leader and each employee to four basic principles – clarity of purpose, forward thinking, creating blame free environments and modeling innovative behaviors. Health care leaders and HR professionals have an unprecedented opportunity to build dynamic and diverse cultures marked by innovation and inclusion. Make sure to draw (or refresh) your own innovation roadmap and focus on the principles noted above.
- **Stewarding Cultures of Wellness and Innovation:** Savvy employers understand that wellness in life can impact their employees’ productivity and organizational profitability by reducing healthcare costs and benefiting their communities. At its core, wellness is about improving people’s lives—mentally, physically and professionally. As innovation accelerates, all industries need leaders who are ready to shape the future of their organizations and provide for the well-being of their people. It’s time to meet people where they are and enable them to be their very best in life as professionals with healthy habits and lifestyles.
- **People Powered Partnerships:** The traditional boundaries are blurring between organizations such as hospitals, health systems and payers and new, entrepreneurial enterprises that are entering the health care marketplace. Considering how we characterize the mission (and success) of an organization, I realized that they are—and must be—woven together by a common thread—a laser focus on people. So, how do companies from the provider, payer, private equity and venture

capital communities—all with different missions, traditions, beliefs and industry behaviors--*really work together* to improve the overall health our county, our communities and our people? By focusing on **people—employees, customers and communities**.

Looking at the ASHHRA conference agenda, these four areas will also be explored and likely fuel continued discussion over dinner at one of Chicago's famed restaurants. If you or your colleague plan to attend sessions, we encourage you to ask yourself a few questions:

1. How do the tools, proven techniques and my own expertise of human resources support change and foster success in my organization?
2. How well prepared are our leaders, both administrative and physician, managers and staff for the future of work in health care?
3. How can the human resources team innovate to support organizational strategy as it moves toward the future?

Enjoy Chicago and the opportunity to invest in yourself. Think digitally, spark innovation, be well and connect with people at ASHHRA and every day.

To learn more about our executive search and talent advisory practice, or if you would like information on developing a transformational culture, please drop me an email at fournierj@inveniaspartners.com and we can exchange notes.

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