

## Trend Watch

For years this magazine has stepped lightly over most HR topics in favor of subjects deemed closer to the heart of readers' work: training, development, talent management, and other efforts to increase people's ability to work smarter.



But in our interview for this issue with Mike Mussallem, CEO of Edwards Lifesciences, we encountered one more instance of a trend we see brewing: companies are outsourcing many of their administrative HR functions such as payroll and benefits administration, but keeping the work that makes a difference to strategy—talent management, employee engagement, and training and development, for example. And in Mussallem's case, he specifically sought out an HR executive who would focus on growing talent. As he put it, "I want someone with a development mindset as the head of HR."

I wouldn't take one CEO's preference as evidence of a trend if it were not for several recent studies of HR outsourcing among lots of big companies. They all say pretty much the same thing—the focus of HR departments is shifting toward work that supports strategies and builds leadership, and the rest is being outsourced. For the hard facts, see the Intelligence article on page 10. And for more on Mike Mussallem's philosophy of putting top talent in critical jobs, see pages 30 and 38.

These facts about shifting priorities also support another trend we have our eyes on: the steady upward creep of responsibility for employee development. Companies such as The Gap and Walmart have created executive-level positions for managing talent. They see a skills gap coming as older workers retire and the numbers of capable younger workers dwindle, and they understand that growing talent drives performance. Their response has been to move the work of finding, attracting, developing, and motivating employees to the level of strategy.

These are welcome developments for training professionals who have looked longingly at the seats of power in organizations and failed to attain them. Could this signal the end of a reason to grouse about not having a seat at the table?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Galagan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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