

A Part of Business Strategy

An Interview with Andrea Ledford,
Senior Vice President, Human Resources, NCR Corporation

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming her current post, Andrea Ledford served as NCR's Vice President of Human Resources for the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA). Before joining NCR in February 2006, Ledford was Symbol Technologies' EMEA leader of Human Resources and held a variety of leadership roles at Cisco Systems in EMEA, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America. Her background also includes positions in the areas of international human resources, compensation and benefits, and leadership development with Storage Technology, United International Holdings, and Synergen. Ledford holds an Executive M.B.A. from INSEAD University in Fontainebleau, France and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Colorado.



Andrea Ledford

COMPANY BRIEF Headquartered in Duluth, Georgia, NCR Corporation (www.ncr.com) is a global technology company leading in how the world connects, interacts, and transacts with business. NCR's assisted- and self-service solutions and comprehensive support services address the needs of retail, financial, travel, health care, hospitality, entertainment, gaming, public sector, telecom carrier, and equipment organizations in more than 100 countries.

How has the HR role evolved and how do you define the role?

The HR role has evolved 150 percent. There are some companies that might still do old world HR. I'm lucky to be working with Bill Nuti (Chairman, CEO, and President) and his leadership team in that I'm working with people who value HR and understand the value of the HR organization as it relates to the business strategy.

The HR organization is truly in partnership with the business to achieve its strategic initiatives and it has a more important role than just traditional hiring and payroll that were the focus of the old world of HR.

In HR now, it's hiring, training, and developing, and it's retaining, rewarding, and recognizing people through their entire career. As the world becomes smaller and businesses and technology are more competitive, the role of HR is to develop the workforce plan and strategy, defining where you want to be, and

what competencies and skills you need to have to be more competitive in the future. Your company cannot remain stagnant or you will lose to the competition as you vie for talent.

Also, learning has evolved. It is critical to teach people how to use new technologies in order to remain competitive, helping them stay up-to-date on the products and the tools, and how to market them to the right customers. It isn't just classroom training; it's using the technology and NCR's self-service methodology that provide videos on

your phone or a resource on your iPad so our employees can work on training day-to-day.

As your workforce evolves, you end up with people that are longer tenured as well as a new generation coming onboard. People's requirements in terms of benefits and compensation vary globally as different people and cultures have different priorities. So it requires designing programs that are going to retain and motivate people in their work.

Is it tough to put metrics in place to make sure you're having the right impact?

Employee engagement is a key metric. There are many studies that have shown that improved employee engagement improves the bottom line.

I've always frowned upon employees who focus only on what the company can do for them. I take the employee metrics from the engagement survey and try to turn it back to the employees. I go over the results and then ask them for their ideas about what they can do to improve their role and surroundings. We support their initiatives within reason, but I want that engagement to come from within the organization. It emphasizes that we're listening to them, but we are also looking to them for where we need to focus next, while reminding individuals that they have the power to change – just as leadership has the power to support that change.

With such a broad global focus, how have you put the communication mechanism in place to keep the messaging consistent for the whole company?

It's important that we communicate constantly to the level of what we call mind-numbing consistency. You can never communicate enough and you want everyone to feel comfortable communicating the same message.

We're continually addressing the need to give our managers the confidence that, wherever they're located, they can spread the corporate message and address issues, talk about challenges, and tie the strategy of the company to their specific region and to the specific individual that may be repairing an ATM, for instance.

Are we going to see a different type of workforce in the future?

We need workers who are starting to think differently and driving disruptive innovation across all industries. For example, it is important for any company to assemble a great team of skilled engineers who are thinking innovatively about how to make that next product or how to use more cost effective resources.

Our challenge as a company is to always be more productive. We're challenging our people to make our products less expensively and more efficiently but still with high quality. To do that, you have to have an innovative workforce that includes top engineering talent.

How critical is diversity and inclusiveness within NCR's culture and how do you define those two?

Inclusion is a better word than diversity. We're in 90 countries and with our partners we're in 190 countries – and we have 22,000 employees. So when I hear about diversity, particularly as it pertains to U.S. companies, they always focus on race and gender. But diversity can be so much broader than that, be it age, religion, culture, or being physically challenged.

Inclusion is something we're looking at broadly in terms of how to provide for people.

Are young people today interested in working for companies that have a strong focus on corporate responsibility?

We have to market and rebrand ourselves as a company around our innovation and where we're going. The current generation is looking for innovative and exciting jobs, but they also evaluate your culture in terms of your global social responsibility. For instance, they like to see companies operating in a green environment, which we're doing in our Columbus, Georgia manufacturing plant. It is the only LEED- and Green-certified retrofitted building in the U.S.

Employees are also looking at what companies are doing for others and so they pay attention to things like what we're doing through our NCR Foundation with micro-banking for women in India and our Red Cross disaster relief employee matching grant. ●