

# The Positive Force of HR

An Interview with **Brigette McInnis-Day**,  
Executive Vice President, Human Resources, SAP

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Brigette McInnis-Day is responsible for overseeing SAP's largest organizational unit, Global Customer Operations (GCO). Prior to her current role, she served as the Head of Human Resources for the United States and the North America GCO team, a role she assumed upon her return to the United States after spending nearly four years as HR Director at SAP's global headquarters in Walldorf, Germany,*



*Brigette McInnis-Day*

*working as a member of the global HR Board Management team. Previously, she drove global strategic HR initiatives throughout the company aligning business units globally with SAP's commitment to its employees and leaders. Before moving to Germany, she was the lead HR Business Partner for the mid-market and ecosystem business in the United States. She joined SAP in 2002 as Director of Total Rewards for North America. Before joining SAP, McInnis-Day served as the Director of Human Resources at VerticalNet, Inc. and as Performance and Total Rewards consultant at Mercer Human Resources Consulting. She earned a Masters of Organizational and Industrial Psychology from the University of New Haven with Honors as a Graduate Fellow. She also received her Bachelor of Science from Ithaca College in Applied Psychology and Business Administration.*

**COMPANY BRIEF** *As a market leader in enterprise application software, SAP ([www.sap.com](http://www.sap.com)) helps companies of all sizes and industries run better. From back office to boardroom, warehouse to storefront, and desktop to mobile device, SAP empowers people and organizations to work together more efficiently and use business insight more effectively to stay ahead of competition. SAP applications and services enable more than 251,000 customers to operate profitably, adapt continuously, and grow sustainably. SAP is listed on several exchanges, including the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and the NYSE.*

## What makes SAP so special?

It's about the people – it's about the network you have and how you get things done via relationships.

It's also about the ability of our people to be agile, and the opportunities that are available to them as SAP continues to evolve as a leading innovator in the technology space.

## How has the HR function evolved?

Historically, it was more of a typical country-based HR function. From there, we evolved into a global organization. We are probably one of the first organizations within the services business to be completely global.

We can now respond to the needs of the specific leader. This means, if you're leading a global team or if you're leading a country unit, we can support you in creating the appropriate people experience.

It's about going from a very local focus to a very global focus, and engaging more with our people to make sure that our support is based on the nature of the business.

## How critical is it that leaders in HR maintain an open dialogue and access to the business leaders around the world?

You won't make it in HR at SAP if you don't understand the business. Our leaders rely on their HR teams to help them from a consultative perspective to drive the business and, from a people aspect, to understand how we drive the future of the organization. Because we are people-centric, we tend to be part of every business meeting.

## When you get to a certain scale, does it become more challenging to maintain the company's culture?

It's a different challenge as you get bigger. What is unique about SAP is that we allow exceptions. We cater to the needs of the local markets, the customers, and our people. So the culture does evolve, but there are some core aspects that remain strong. We see this when we acquire new companies. SAP's culture of empowerment does really stand out – you see it in the behavior of our leadership.

## How critical is it to track employee engagement?

It's one of our four strategic pillars for the company.

We run a people survey every two years, and we have high engagement scores at SAP. We also have high participation compared to the competition.

We have an open voice culture at SAP – people speak out, and the engagement ties to all the things we do.

Also, when it comes to being promoted, we focus on an individual's people survey results in addition to their business success. We look for well-rounded leaders and we look at coaching for our leaders. We tie that all into our objective-setting process.

## Would you touch upon the importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce?

Diversity is a must. Companies that excel in this area have better financial results, more innovation and outperform the market.

When we're in front of a customer, it's about how we present ourselves from a diversity and inclusion perspective. It's not just gender but ethnicity and differences in background, and how we deliver solutions to the customer. If we have very diverse thinking and backgrounds, we're giving them the best solutions possible.

It's important to have the right people in front of our customers because that's reflective of how we address their needs, and create value for them and for our brand.

## How critical is CSR as part of SAP's culture?

It's core to SAP's vision of making the world run better and improving peoples' lives. It's part of who we are.

This is how we articulate what we do. Instead of talking about the technology, we show the impact it can have in improving people's lives. This gives us leverage, because when you're speaking to our customers, or to top talent looking for a great place to work, they want to be associated with a company that has a higher purpose and really believes in it.

At day's end, whatever company you're in, it's rewarding to be doing something for the betterment of people and helping the world run better. This is what SAP, uniquely, can do.

If you don't have pride in where you work, you won't stay with the company. ●