

Making a Meaningful Difference

An Interview with Patti Clarke,
Chief Talent Officer, Havas Group

EDITORS' NOTE Patti Clarke is responsible for leading talent & cultural strategy for the group's 20,000+ employees in over 100 countries. Clarke is a key strategist in spearheading innovative talent programs that enable employees to live Havas' collaborative culture. She has led initiatives on network mobility, high-potential leadership development, global onboarding, global employee engagement and employer branding. Most recently, she has launched Femmes Forward, Havas' global leadership development and advancement program for director-level women, as well as "All In," a global D&I initiative. Her experience includes a 20-year career at Dun & Bradstreet, where she was Chief Human Resources Officer for nine years and also ran global internal communications. She led D&B to industry honors as one of Fortune magazine's "Most Admired Companies." Before joining Havas Group, Clarke ran her own consulting business with a focus on helping private-equity backed companies develop their talent management capabilities.



Patti Clarke

COMPANY BRIEF Havas Group (havasgroup.com) is one of the world's largest global communications groups. Founded in 1835 in Paris by Charles Louis Havas, the Group employs 20,000 people in over 100 countries and is one of the largest global advertising groups in the world. Havas is one of the most integrated groups in its sector with a regional structure that places the client at the center of the organization. This "client centric" approach enables Havas to better satisfy and anticipate its clients' needs. Havas consists of three main operational divisions: creative, media, and healthcare and wellness.

What is at the core of Havas' culture?

We are a highly collaborative organization. Every day there are teams working together across agencies and capabilities within each of our 60+ villages and also with other teams across the globe. Each village has its own unique distinctions, but they all are focused on our common vision: To make a meaningful difference to businesses, brands, and people. Our vision comes to life in terms of the work we do for our clients and we are also focused on it manifesting in the environment for our employees.

Does Havas' focus on hiring the best talent result in a certain level of diversity or do you need to have processes in place in your hiring efforts to build a diverse workforce?

Creating a diverse and inclusive global workforce does take focus and prioritization. Our agencies are leading on a wide range of D&I initiatives including, recruiting, ethnic and cultural representation, gender equality, pay equity, disability, wellness and more. We leverage and partner with

industry organizations, universities and other groups to help advance our objectives and we also share best practices among agencies. I also think our being centered on "meaningfulness" creates a natural attraction for millennials and Gen Z for whom purpose is really important in their decisions around work.

Will you highlight Havas' focus on providing opportunities for women at senior levels in the company?

We actually are in a quite favorable position when it comes to women running agencies and networks. If you look at our four networks – the creative network, the media network, BETC network, and the health network – two of the four are run by women. Additionally, 44 percent of our CEO, President, Managing Director/ Partner titles are held by women.

The opportunity area for us is around developing and advancing more senior manager and director-level women into the executive ranks. It's a key focus for us and the reason why we developed our Femmes Forward program which has now been delivered in London, New York, Paris, APAC, Iberia and, most recently, a cohort from our U.S. agencies. Through the mix of leadership, skill development and exposure to inspirational women leaders, we believe we have an opportunity to bend the curve in this area.

As the first chief talent officer for Havas, how do you define the role?

We're all about creating innovative and collaborative learning and development experiences. Our global talent offering includes hi-po leadership development, cultural mobility opportunities, employee engagement plans, global onboarding to Havas Group and enhancing our employer brand. We've also recently initiated our Global D&I program "All In" as well as our Femmes Forward program.

Our NextGen program is a year-long program that is developing the next group of senior executives for Havas. We also give employees an opportunity to have global and cultural experiences through our Lofts program, which is a month-long immersion in another agency in another country.

The employees that participate in these and other programs are grateful for the experience and quite often return with a new perspective on their role and the global network. Our leadership has seen this benefit and understands that these types of programs are essential to keep our employees motivated and engaged. Finally, they connect people all across our network, which helps us be better for our clients.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Havas and has it been what you expected?

After 20 years at Dun & Bradstreet, the last nine years as the chief HR officer, I felt it was time to challenge myself in a different way. When this opportunity came about, I was really curious because six years ago, the industry was in a real state of change with digital, etc. I came into the business on the creative side which was very fresh and interesting.

My second motivation was that I wanted to work more closely with the people. As the chief HR officer of a public company, in addition to leading the cultural strategy, I spent a lot of time in board meetings, working on restructuring plans, and on implementing policy and changing regulations. All these are very important, but can limit how much you are able to engage directly in the programs that grow and develop employees. So, for me, it was also about the opportunity to get closer to the development work for employees.

Fast forward six years and I couldn't be happier with the decision I made. I think this is an amazing industry with a mix of all types of skill sets and people, from data analytics gurus to beautiful creative artists. This keeps the "gas in my tank" every day and really energizes me.

As we move forward, we have such an opportunity through our work with employees to be even more impactful with the execution of our vision to make a meaningful difference to brands, to businesses, and to people. ●