

The People Experience

An Interview with Reginald Odom, Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer, HSS

EDITORS' NOTE Reginald Odom joined the executive team of HSS as Senior Vice President, Chief People Officer, in 2021. He has more than two decades of experience in the field of Human Resources Management, with more than 15 years in healthcare. Immediately prior to joining HSS, he served as Chief Human Resources Officer at Physician Affiliate Group of New York (PAGNY). Before that, he served as Vice President of Medical Center Employee and Labor Relations at NYU Langone Medical Center. Earlier in his career, Odom served as Associate General Counsel for NYU Hospitals Center. He has also served as Assistant General Counsel for Mount Sinai/NYU Health. Odom began his legal career as an Associate at Proskauer Rose LLP. Prior to attending law school, he worked for five years in various locations of the U.S. in a Human Resources Generalist capacity for Olin Corporation. Odom earned his BS degree from the School of Industrial & Labor Relations at Cornell University, and his JD degree from the Hofstra University School of Law where he was a member of the Hofstra Labor Law Journal, holding the position of Notes and Comments Editor.



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Human Resources Officer (CHRO) interchangeably, there are key differences between the two.

Although both positions are responsible for overseeing the overall HR functions within the organization, the focus of a CPO is on people and culture. The role is more attentive to developing a great employee experience from application and hiring to onboarding, and throughout the employee lifecycle. A CPO also focuses on developing workplace strategies that define and translate a

company's culture to cultivate a connected and engaged workforce.

What are the leadership lessons of stewarding talent and culture at HSS?

A culture that values diversity and inclusion is key to attracting and retaining top talent. Leaders in world-class organizations must prioritize building a culture that embraces differences, promotes equity, and fosters a sense of belonging for all employees.

Developing a strong talent pipeline is essential to provide a steady stream of skilled and motivated employees. Leaders must focus on identifying potential future leaders and developing them through training and mentorship programs. This will ensure that the organization has the bench strength to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain its competitive edge.

Communicating a clear and compelling vision inspires employees and creates a sense of purpose that drives them to excel. Leaders must be able to articulate the organization's mission, values, and goals, and ensure that every employee understands their role in achieving them.

Impactful leaders encourage a culture of innovation. World-class organizations are often at the forefront of their industries because they foster a culture of innovation. Leaders must be open to new ideas, support experimentation, and encourage employees to take calculated risks in pursuit of new solutions and approaches.

Finally, leaders must be committed to ongoing learning and development. They must be willing to listen to feedback from employees and stakeholders, embrace change, and continuously seek out ways to improve

their organization's talent and culture. By applying these lessons, leaders can build a culture of excellence that attracts and retains top talent, fosters innovation, and sets their organization apart as a world-class leader in their field.

Will you highlight your focus on collaborating with leaders across HSS to direct and support diversity, inclusion, cultural competency and diversity-oriented workforce development initiatives?

To collaborate on developing and maintaining a diverse workforce, first leaders must build trust and establish relationships. Leaders must take the time to connect with their counterparts in other areas of the organization, engage in active listening, and demonstrate a willingness to learn from and support one another.

Collaborating leaders should agree on clear goals and metrics for initiatives to ensure that everyone is aligned around the same objectives. This will help to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions.

Leaders should also prioritize continuous learning and development to stay abreast of the latest research, trends, and best practices related to diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency. They can do this by participating in training programs, attending conferences and seminars, and engaging with experts in the field. Additionally, it is important for leaders to share their knowledge and resources to support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives by pooling resources and sharing best practices.

Finally, celebrating successes and recognizing progress in advancing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency is important. This can help build momentum and maintain support for these critical initiatives.

What advice do you have for aspiring leaders across the healthcare landscape?

Develop strong communication skills. Stay informed and knowledgeable. Build a strong team. Focus on patient-centered care. Embrace innovation. Finally, be a champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion: promote diversity in hiring practices, create an inclusive workplace culture, and address disparities in healthcare outcomes for marginalized populations. ●

What have been the most important choices you have made on your path to leadership in healthcare?

Some of the most important choices I have made throughout my career include maintaining a mindset of continuous learning, stepping forward to embrace opportunities to lead, and always seeking guidance from other experienced leaders. To be effective, leaders must be nimble; they have to take calculated risks, shift gears, and explore alternatives. To make real systemic changes, leaders must explore and embrace new approaches to get things done. I have found that, although the new often feels daunting, it can result in incredible rewards.

Your title – Chief People Officer – differs from that of your predecessor – the more traditional Chief Human Resources Officer title. What was the purpose for this change?

While some organizations use the titles of Chief People Officer (CPO) and Chief