Buyer persona: Head of People Paloma

ICP: SMB (100-500)

Name: Paloma

Role: Head of People

Location: San Francisco, CA

Related titles: Dir of People, VP of People, Director of People Ops, Chief People Officer

Works at: Company X, SMB 150

Age: 42

Reports to: CEO

Education: MA, Industrial organizational psychology

Background: Talent management and leadership development

Qualities: "Builder" by nature; not afraid to experiment; authenticity; high EQ; equal parts strategic and tactical; business and data-focused

Motivations: Be a change agent who takes company into the future; empower managers and their teams; get a "seat at the table."

About

Paloma spent her early career specializing in talent management for mid-market and enterprise organizations in the Bay area. Today, as head of people in a high-growth tech startup that hasn't yet invested in defined L&D and talent acquisition roles, she holds the full stack of people ops. She spends more time on "traditional" HR activities—compensation, benefits, compliance, etc.—then she'd like, given her natural inclination toward talent development and culture-building, but she's well-positioned to move into a C-level position once the company receives more funding and she can carve out a dedicated L&D team.

The rise of the global pandemic in 2020 and its aftermath required Paloma to pause many of the initiatives she had planned and instead focus on addressing concerns about employee safety, shifting to remote work, maintaining a high-performance culture in uncertain times, and proactively fostering equity, inclusion, and diversity.

Goals

- Spend less time dealing with fire drills and compliance/HR issues so she could focus on "designing work" so that employees are present, engaged, and proud of what they do

- Attracting and retaining top talent, as well as the long-term performance and success of her hires hires
- Demonstrating ROI for her investments so that the CEO has confidence that what she's bringing to the table is actually working
- Reduce attrition rates and improve engagement score

Challenges

- Securing the budget and resources she needs (it's a constant uphill battle)
- Serving multiple internal stakeholders (employees, leadership team, CEO/COO), often with conflicting interests and priorities
- Exponential pace of change
- Addressing daily fire drills, which chips away at her capacity to tackle L&D and D&I initiatives
- Being perceived by members of the c-suite and executive team as being an "HR" person
- Saturated with sales calls from vendors who all look the same
- Carving out time for research, so she often must take researching recommendations from lower- and mid-level roles

Watering holes:

Publications
- McKinsey Featured Insights
- MIT Sloan Management Review
- Delloite Insights
- Coqual
- The HR Digest
- HR Grapevine
- HR Zone

Podcasts
- Redefining HR
- HR Happy Hour

- HR Hire Up
- Manager Tools
- What Great Bosses Know
- HBR Ideacast

Events
- Fast Company Most Innovative Companies Summit
- HR Transform Spring Summit
- SIOP Annual Conference
- Hr Tech
- Delloite Impact
- SHRM Annual Conferenc

Messages that resonate:

- Given her background and experience, Paloma already knows how critical leadership development is - she just doesn't have any time or capacity to devote to it. For her, what makes Strive compelling is that it does for her what she would otherwise need a dedicated L&D team to support.
- While Paloma gets how important leadership development is to the success of the organization, she has a hard time getting through the c-suite's biases towards traditional trainings. Provide her materials and information she can use to "sell" Strive internally.
- Paloma will be less interested in the curriculum and content and more interested in what implementation looks like and how it can be successful without her close involvement
- Paloma will want to know: What's the scope of the program? What is the bottom-line impact it's going to have? How expensive is it? How efficiently can she administer the program? Will it actually work to develop managers?

Buyer persona: L&D Leader Lynda

ICP: Mid-Market (750)

Name: Lynda

Role: Head of L&D

Location: New York, NY

Related titles: Head of Learning

Works at: Company X, Mid-M (750)

Age: 36

Reports to: Chief of People Operations

Education: MS, Education

Background: Instructional Design

Qualities: Detail-oriented; passionate about education; comfortable with technology; strong business acumen; social by nature with high EQ; loves to share knowledge

Motivations: Wants participants to be genuinely engaged in the programs she develops; improve ROI; reduce attrition

About

As head of her company's newly developed L&D department, Lynda is responsible for staff training and professional development for all 750 employees. The CEO is looking to Lynda to create a learning strategy that will improve employees' skills and competencies, help business units achieve their key objectives, and keep culture consistent during a period of rapid change. Creating curriculum for emerging leaders has taken a backseat to Lynda's most pressing priorities, namely senior management training and general talent development training—both of which must be highly customized to her company's culture and product—but it's on her radar. While Lynda's job is challenging, she enjoys applying her lifelong passion for education to a professional environment where her efforts have a real-world impact.

Goals

- Demonstrating that her L&D investments (both custom and off-the-shelf) "work" both through quantitative data and qualitative feedback from participants and their managers
- Providing leadership teams the tools, processes, and systems they need so they can run their departments effectively without centralized oversight
- Providing a leadership program and certification process to ease the transition from individual contributor to supervisor

- Ensuring her new department is competitive, which means keeping an eye on the competition to see how other L&D leaders are handling leadership dev and organizational learning
- Monitoring the quality of training programs

Challenges

- Securing budget for third-party L&D solutions, which often requires "pulling strings" in part because of c-suite's expectation that every program by customized to the company and its values
- Getting the commitment of the CEO and senior management team; leadership development is time-consuming and costly and cannot happen without senior-level support
- Getting employees and leaders to participate in the training programs she either creates or invests in

Watering holes

Publications
- [McKinsey Featured Insights](#)
- [MIT Sloan Management Review](#)
- [Delloite Insights](#)

Podcasts
- [Manager Tools](#)
- [What Great Bosses Know](#)

- [HBR Ideacast](#)

Events
- [SIOP Annual Conference](#)
- [Hr Tech](#)
- [Delloite Impact](#)
- [SHRM Annual Conference](#)

Messages that resonate

- Because she's so busy, Lynda will want to know that Strive does the heavy lifting of developing emerging leaders for her so she can focus on building customized learning experiences for senior leaders
- Lynda knows that people learn differently, so she'll want to hear how our program caters to different learning styles
- Lynda genuinely cares about the quality of the programs she creates and invests in and, given her background in instructional design, may be more interested in our curriculum and content than other buyers.

Buyer persona: Head of D&I David

ICP: Ent (2k)

Name: David

Role: Head of D&I

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Related titles: Chief Diverisity Officer, D&I Program Manager, Director of DE&I

Works at: Enterprise (2k)

Age: 48

Reports to: CHRO

Education: MBA

Background: HR

Qualities: Authentically committed to diversity; able to conform to corporate expectations while challenging the status quo; loves to empower others; highly social with an inclusive mindset; "lives values out loud"; able to be vulnerable; comfortable with discomfort

Motivations: Genuinely wants to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging and empower individuals across the organization; also driven to show how improvements to diversity increase company profit

About

While David company has always taken matters of diversity seriously, the company formalized a dedicated role to advance conversations about diversity and inclusion in the wake of the #metoo movement of 2017—which happened to be a time of exponential growth for the company. Since he joined, David has proactively pushed for change, taking diversity beyond a hiring consideration and anti-discrimination practice, to a company-wide conversation and initiative. Demands on David's time and capacity nearly tripled in the aftermath of the BLM protests of 2020, making his role more critical to the company's culture and success than ever. He'd like to seize the opportunity to optimize organizational culture and more clearly align diversity and inclusion goals with business outcomes, but other priorities vie for his time—namely, overseeing complaints, responding to policy changes that impact affected groups, and supporting and guiding hiring managers. Despite the challenges he's up against,

David is passionate about his work; as a minority himself, he sees his work as a calling, not just a job.

Goals

- Ensure diversity agendas are successfully implemented and in line with biz objectives
- Create and implement plans to promote diversity
- Develop training programs to enhance employee understanding on inclusion issues
- Act as HR regulators for diversity issues
- Empower underrepresented employees
- Show the value of DE&I initiatives and the impact diversity has on the bottom line

Challenges

- Getting other c-suite members to shift their thinking from diversity as a hiring and HR/anti-discrimination consideration to a critical predictor of employee engagement and productivity and a catalyst for innovation
- Gaining the trust of employees, some of whom have seen his function as a "check-the-box" role, others of whom are reluctant to share their experiences to someone in the c-suite
- Adjusting to new demands on his time in the wake of 2020, from both leadership and staff alike
- Securing the budget and team he needs to be successful
- Having uncomfortable conversations
- Collecting data - it's been difficult for David to get reports on promotion rates broken down by gender and ethnicity
- Including an external component to his strategy

Watering holes

Publication
- [Harvard Business Review](#)
- [Strategy + Business](#)
- [McKinsey Featured Insights](#)
- [MIT Sloan Management Review](#)
- [Delloite Insights](#)

Podcasts
- [Redefining HR](#)
- [HBR Ideacast](#)

Events
- [SIOP Annual Conference](#)

- [Delloite Impact](#)

- [SHRM Annual Conference](#)