

Debra Walls

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Human Resources Leader

Strategic Human Resources executive with deep expertise in driving culture, scaling talent strategies, and guiding organizations through transformation and growth. Proven track record leading M-A integrations, building high-performing teams, and aligning people initiatives with business objectives in life sciences, private equity, and technology. Recognized for advancing organizational effectiveness, fostering employee engagement, and delivering measurable business impact through innovative HR leadership.

Skills

Strategic HR Leadership | Organizational Development | M-A and Change Management
Talent Acquisition and Retention | Total Rewards Strategy | Employee Engagement | HRIS and Analytics
Culture Building | DEI Initiatives | Policy and Compliance | Workforce Planning Initiatives | Organizational Effectiveness
Learning and Development | Business Acumen

Technical Skills

SAP | Workday | ADP | Paycom | HRIS Systems | LinkedIn Recruiter | Microsoft Office Suite
Ethics and Compliance Platforms | Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) Suite | LMS Platforms - DDI
Towers Watson and Mercer Compensation Benchmarking

Career Highlights

- Redefined HR's role as a strategic business partner at Fishnet Security, increasing internal stakeholder satisfaction and driving alignment between people strategy and company objectives.
- Enabled 75%+ headcount growth at Synexis by developing scalable recruiting infrastructure, implementing an employer branding strategy, and optimizing onboarding processes to reduce time-to-productivity.
- Achieved 100% success rate in legal challenges, including a 12-0 jury verdict in a high-profile discrimination case and multiple EEOC charge closures—protecting company reputation and minimizing legal exposure.
- Built a national commercial sales team from the ground up in under 60 days to support Aratana's flagship product launch—hiring and onboarding 30+ reps across key U.S. markets.
- Passed U.S. Department of Labor OFCCP audit with zero findings and led company to be named a "Best Place to Work" in both 2011 and 2013, based on employee engagement survey data.
- Maintained employee engagement and retention through executive turnover and a private equity acquisition at Dechra, successfully stabilizing culture and ensuring business continuity during transition.

Professional Experience

Dechra - Global veterinary pharmaceuticals and animal health company

2021 - June 2025

Director, HR Business Partner - North America Commercial

Led comprehensive HR strategy for U.S., Mexico, and Canadian commercial teams, total employee count of 350; driving 20% growth in commercial headcount and keeping turnover low - 7% last year.

- Aligned talent acquisition, employee engagement, and leadership development with aggressive business growth, increasing retention.
- Partnered with global HR to standardize policies and performance frameworks, enhancing cross-border compliance and operational consistency.
- Directed post-acquisition integration following a private equity buyout, sustaining 92% employee engagement during transition.

Synexis, LLC.

2020 - 2021

Innovative air and surface purification biotechnology (Dry Hydrogen Peroxide technology)

Senior Director, Human Resources

Served on executive leadership team to build scalable HR infrastructure supporting 75%+ increase in employee base.

- Launched employer branding initiatives, reducing time to fill rate from 30 to 12 days.

Aratana Therapeutics, Inc.**2014 - 2020**

Animal health biotech (acquired by Elanco)

VP, Human Resources, 2017 - 2020**Director, Human Resources, 2014 - 2017**

Established full-spectrum HR function supporting 150+ employees — from recruitment and compliance to talent strategy and compensation.

- Launched Ethics and Compliance hotline and policy framework, resulting in zero reported concerns and zero legal fines.
- Guided C-suite and board-level compensation strategy, improving executive alignment and retention.

Fishnet Security - Cybersecurity firm serving Fortune 500 clients**2010 - 2014****Director, Human Resources**

Managed 12-person HR team delivering talent acquisition, employee relations, and performance management across 500 national employees.

- Spearheaded organizational change projects reducing employee turnover by 10% and boosting engagement scores by 20%.
- Successfully navigated multiple legal matters, including discrimination cases, with zero verdicts against the company.

Pfizer | Wyeth | Fort Dodge Animal Health - Global pharmaceutical and animal health leader**2003 - 2010****Director, HR | Compensation and Benefits**

Managed divisional international comp and benefits programs – aligning with corporate global business units. Drove post-merger integration across acquired businesses, transitioning all employees to assigned business.

Additional Experience

HR leadership roles at JCAIR | Goodrich Corp.; CNA Unisource; Lord Corporation; Thyssen Krupp; K D Lamp Company - managing full-cycle HR functions including talent acquisition, employee relations, and workforce planning.

Education**MBA, Master of Business Administration - Human Resources**

Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH

BS, Bachelor of Science - Organizational Leadership (Graduated with Honors)

Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN