

Ogletree Deakins HR Professional of the Year

ADRIENNE SIMS: MAKING IT PERSONAL

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

Dr. Adrienne Sims brings a breadth of experience and a passion for people to her role as senior vice president and chief human resources officer at Indiana University Health. Since joining IU Health in 2022 amid the pandemic, she's helped transform the HR strategy and its impact on team members. Among the examples are spearheading talent efforts (defining needs and developing solutions), boosting leadership programming and creating new employee recognition platforms.

A recent conversation between *BizVoice*[®] and Sims illuminates the path leading to her honor as the 2024 HR Professional of the Year.

BizVoice: What's spurred your interest in HR?

Adrienne Sims: "I'm technically an organizational psychologist by training. So, I originally started my career thinking in college that I'd be a clinical psychologist. But after minoring in business, I realized I had an affinity for business as well, and that there was a degree that would allow me to do both. (What appeals to me about HR) is really the psychology of organizations and focusing on people and how they operate in organizations and all of those things."

BV: Reflecting on your work at IU Health, what are some of the best practices or programs you've been key to implementing or enhancing?

AS: "One of the big things is creating a new talent strategy to elevate and strengthen our ability to attract, develop and retain the best talent. As part of that talent strategy, we're on a journey toward becoming an employer of choice. We have some immediate talent concerns, many of which are in the clinical space.

"So, it's looking at those roles and having to identify and build short-term solutions (as well as) mid-term strategies. We've got several different internally driven certification programs to take those who are unskilled or lower skilled and get them the technical



Adrienne Sims blends her passion for psychology and people in her human resources role at IU Health.

certifications they need to be able to drive increased mobility and compensation attainment as well. And then long term – doing a lot of partnering and collaboration and novel things."

BV: Describe a few best HR practices that any organization could potentially apply regardless of industry type or size?

AS: "One of the biggest things that's so important when it comes to HR is making sure the strategies that you develop are aligned to the business needs. So, starting with the business strategy in mind and then stepping back into what the people implications are. Is it a capacity issue? A capability issue? (Whatever the challenge, it's about) making sure that you're developing initiatives and strategies that align to the business priorities. Your HR efforts should be enabling business success."

BV: Looking to the future, what trends do you foresee as HR continues to evolve?

AS: "As we go forward, we'll be doing a lot more leveraging of AI (artificial intelligence) and using AI to sort of accelerate the ability to be more efficient and more effective in the design, development or execution of HR offerings. That's really exciting to me. It's going to be a cost-effective measure as well. It's going to allow us to do things in a much more automated way, much more quickly,

and get to some of the data and the insights that we need.

"(We always should) be thinking about how to leverage AI in a responsible way, but I think now there are enough guardrails out there. The future is bright with automation (to allow) AI to sort of enable HR to be more agile, to be more data driven and to be more effective in our delivery of solutions."

BV: Any additional thoughts on what propels HR at IU Health?

AS: "One of the things we're really focused on is strengthening and elevating the capabilities of our leaders. They're so fundamental to being able to create a high-performing work environment. We're spending a lot of time focused on investing in them, investing in their capabilities to sort of help drive and create the kind of culture we want to have.

"The other thing is that we try to do everything through the lens of our values. It's really important that we are always focused on our values, which are team, purpose, compassion and excellence. We're always thinking about what we're doing and how we're doing it and the extent to which it lines up with those values.

"It's key to our mission and key to our purpose, so we try to keep it at the forefront of what we do."