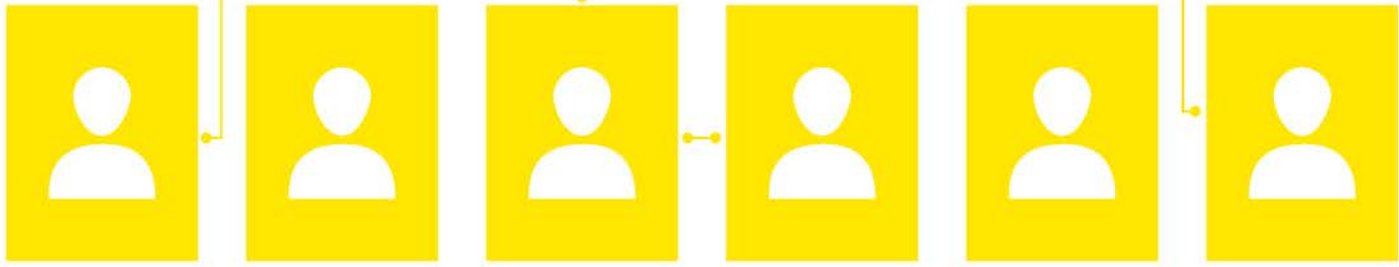
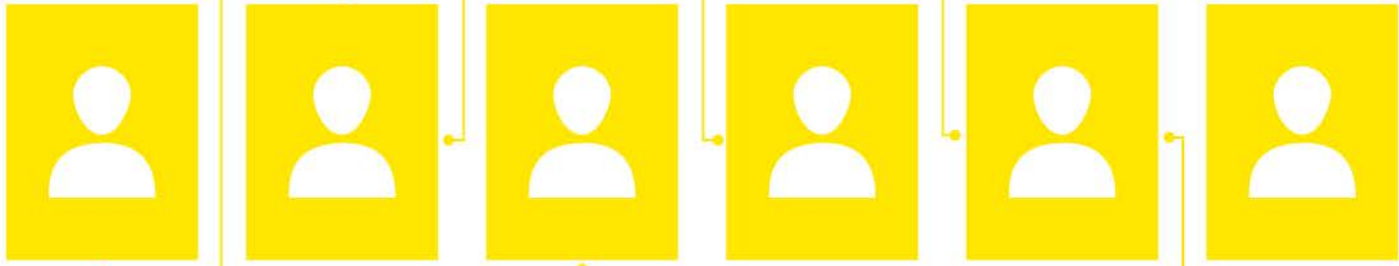
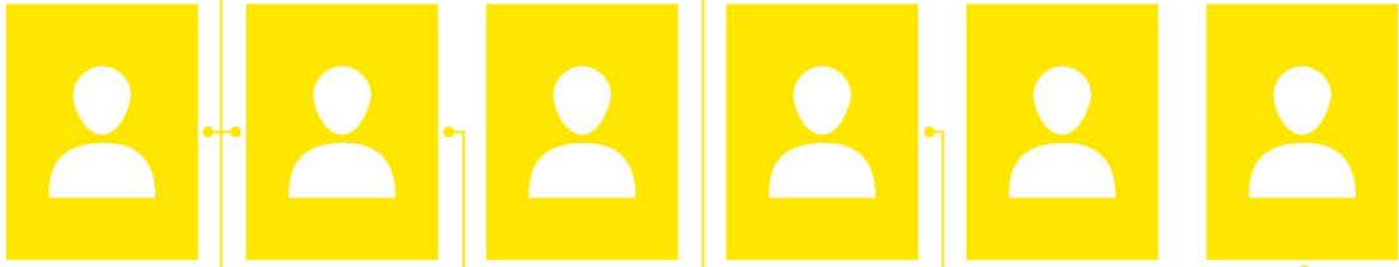
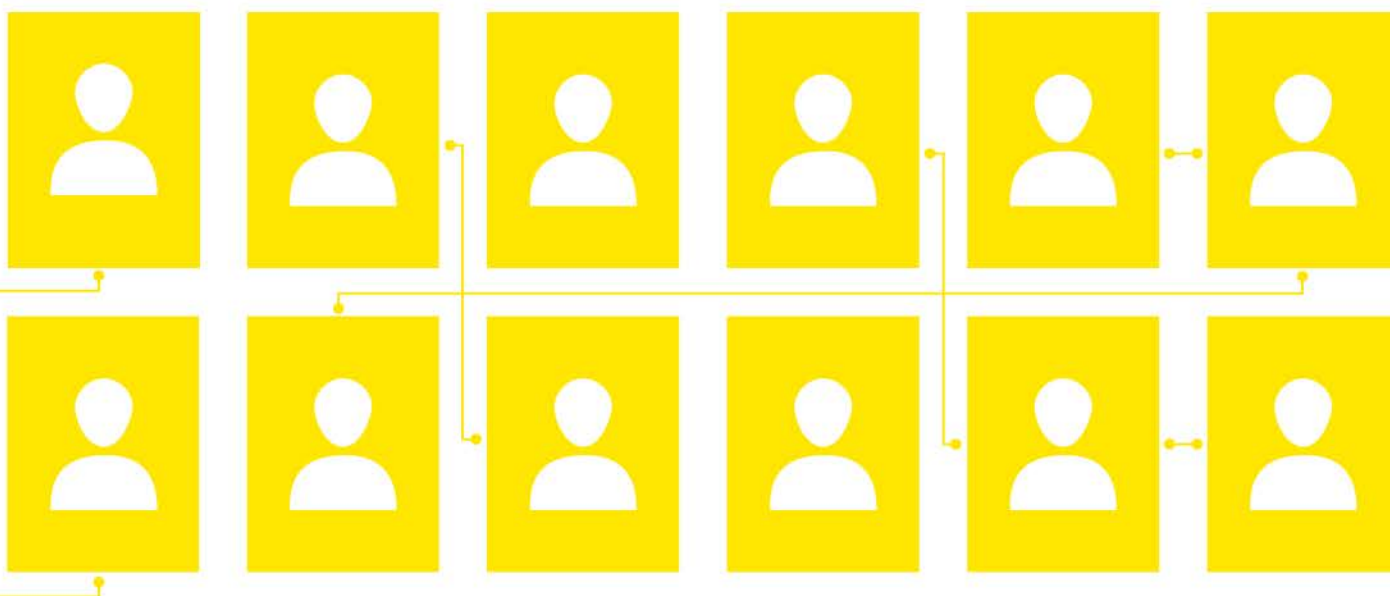


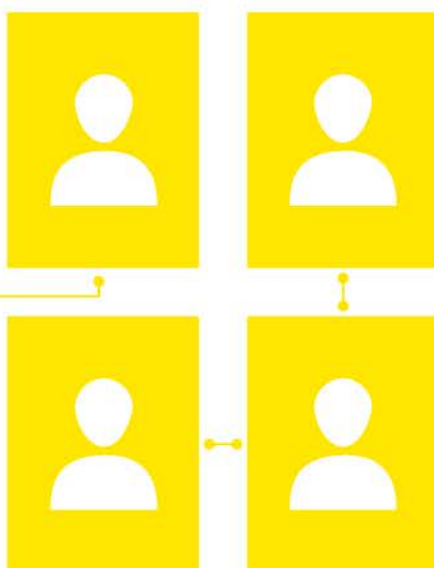
SMARTER HR





Annie Hammer knows the talent game is as hot as ever, which is why she's helping Pontoon leverage tech tools in new ways to help global clients

By ZACH BALIVA



Pontoon, the global workforce solutions firm, is known for applying innovative methods to solve complex problems. Its global technology and analytics director, Annie

Hammer, recently had a client with a unique challenge: the large, multinational company needed hundreds of contract employees.

After failing to find those employees in the local workforce, the client started using many suppliers. It rushed to hire temporary workers from various countries and about thirty employers of record. At work, the employees struggled to understand and adapt to company culture. After hours, they felt isolated and alone in a new and different culture. When the company came to Hammer, she found a new way to deploy tech tools to transform the situation and drive results.

To help solve the problem, Hammer implemented Avature DNA, an enterprise social network that enables organizations to better support and shape their company culture. The system lets employees create their own profiles and connect with their colleagues. They can search, follow, tag, post, and engage with one another online to discuss everything from project specs to apartment rentals, arranging social outings after work, and sharing restaurant recommendations. Organizations are able to post branded automated announcements and other targeted messaging all within the platform. In this case, the client designed targeted ads to suggest further job opportunities to temporary employees as their assignments neared completion.

Although Avature DNA was designed for permanent employees, Hammer's team proved its value for contract hires. The move illustrates both Hammer's willingness to chart new territory and the importance of key

technology partners that enable Pontoon's best-in-class workforce solutions. The DNA platform comes from Avature, a software as a service company that provides a highly configurable enterprise platform for talent acquisition and talent management.

"We're not a tech company. We're not building these products. It's critical that we find innovative partners," Hammer says. The right network of providers allows Hammer to pull from Pontoon's ecosystem the à la carte tools that are suited for start-ups and multinationals alike.

Before Hammer joined Pontoon, she worked for companies such as Marathon Oil and Hickory Farms. Then, she spent five years as a client services analyst for Taylor Nelson Sofres. Those experiences are foundational to Hammer's approach as she looks to bring consumer marketing service delivery methods to HR. "Most companies know how they can care for their customers. We're working to help them understand how they can improve outcomes by caring for their employees in the same way," she explains.

Technology is an important part of the discussion. Pontoon works with more than 150 companies operating worldwide. Hammer and her team work to ensure they identify the right tech tools and then configure those tools in a way that supports the HR goals of each specific client. "Technology should do the heavy lifting so our teams can work with business owners to deliver the right HR and recruitment solutions," she says. Hammer relies on a team of subject matter experts in North American, Europe, and Asia that evaluate, implement, and support new technologies and applications.

When Pontoon delivers HR services, it examines clients' people, processes, and technologies. Hammer works with her



Annie Hammer has spent more than seven years with Pontoon, starting as a business analyst and growing her career up to the leadership role of global RPO technology and analytics director.

Annie Hammer

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colleagues to provide customized tech-enabled solutions that make recruitment and employee engagement easier.

One client turned to Pontoon after struggling to fill hourly positions at O'Hare International Airport. Before outsourcing recruitment, the client suffered high attrition rates. Pontoon took a focused approach on sourcing and recruitment to identify the right type of talent. Pontoon launched a 120-day pilot program, customized the client's recruitment process with fully automated tech tools, launched targeted social media campaigns to increase brand awareness, built a multichannel online registration approach, and filtered all data through Avature's Candidate Relationship Management tool. The results were staggering. By deploying these tools, Pontoon increased new hires by 300 percent and reduced attrition by more than 20 percent in just ninety days. Additionally, the changes reduced overtime and temp labor spend by \$2 million as the company implemented the strategy across all North American locations.

Pontoon combines disparate tools to deliver a new breed of HR solutions beyond basic tracking functions. "Tools like the ones we use from Avature help our customers engage their candidates early and stay connected throughout the entire hiring process from first contact to onboarding, and beyond," Hammer says. "We're moving away from just tracking to a platform for full engagement with all HR stakeholders—candidates, recruiters, hiring managers, employees, and more."

With Avature, recruiters become marketers—they can launch branded landing pages, send targeted e-mail or SMS campaigns, and post social media messages that all deliver relevant content to help attract and engage passive talent. They can deploy fully branded sites that enable candidates to easily express their interest in the organization, apply for jobs, or even schedule an interview. New technologies like Avature's are also enabling social to be at the core of HR, allowing employees and organizations to be more connected, bringing the company culture to life, and boosting engagement.

With clients of all sizes that operate in various parts of the world, flexibility and scalability are especially important for Pontoon. The company uses solutions from multiple vendors to provide experiences tailored to their



internal clients, their external customers, and their candidates or employees. In its search for sophisticated software, Pontoon chose Avature as its main technology partner. The Avature platform makes a convoluted, overwhelming, data-heavy process faster and easier, as it allows the HR team to focus on engagement and service delivery from the very first time they connect with a candidate to hiring, onboarding, and beyond.

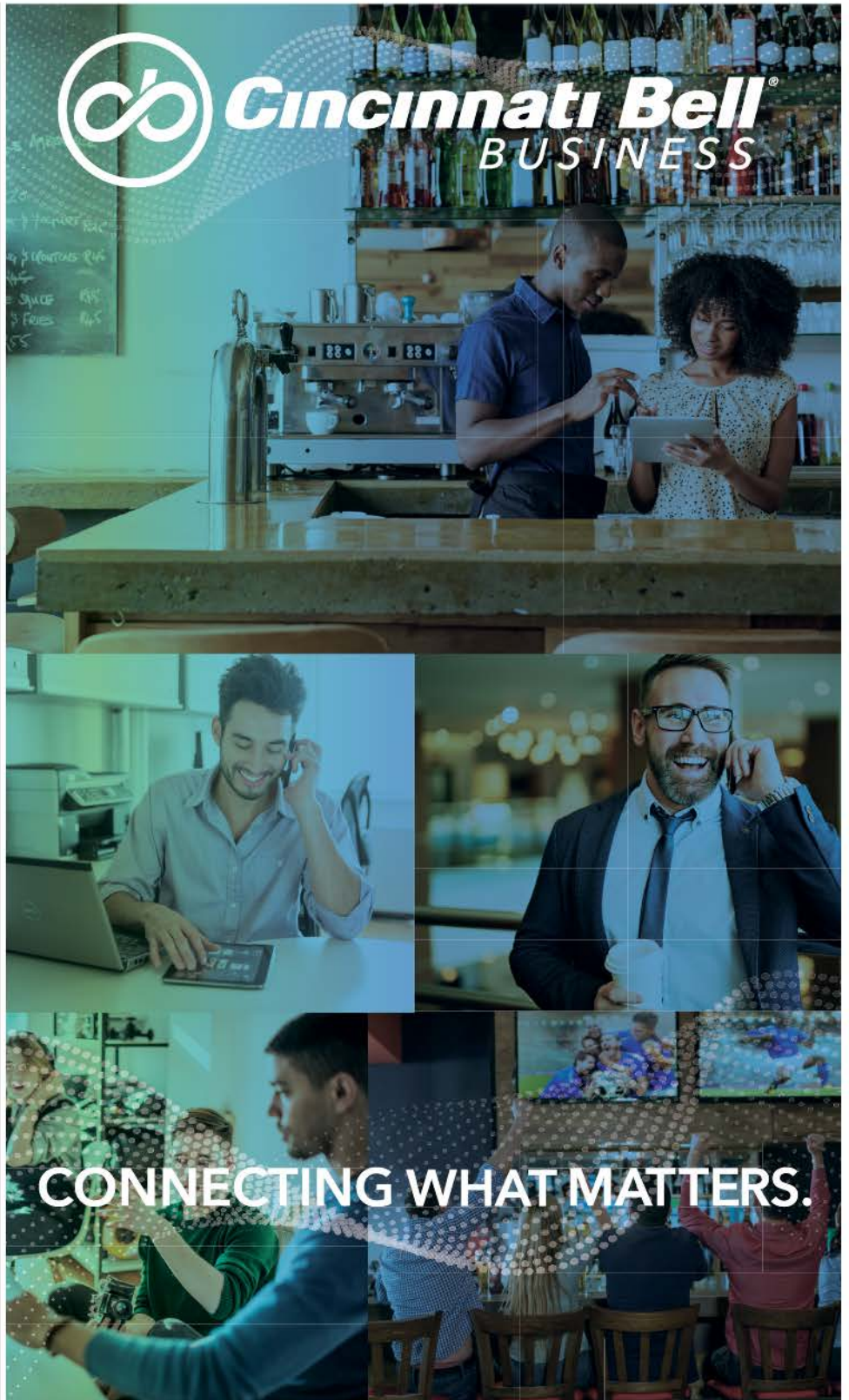
"Avature works in the background and lets us focus on building relationships as we help our clients attract candidates, make the right hires, and retain the best talent," Hammer says. Thus, Avature has enabled Hammer's vision to bring consumer marketing service delivery methods to HR.

As she works in human resources, Hammer is noticing a few trends in the industry. "Pontoon's clients are realizing that technology and social media are uniting to form the new core of HR," she says. "Everything is becoming more connected, and businesses should take the opportunity to engage in new ways."

While some companies fear for the negative aspects associated with embracing the digital revolution, Hammer says the advancements are inevitable. Companies that embrace the shift stand to reap the rewards as they find new ways to care for employees throughout their entire tenure with the organization.

As Pontoon moves forward, she's dedicated to finding new ways to implement the latest technologies to enable great HR solutions.

"We're not just looking for the next shiny and fun thing. We're analyzing business problems and finding the right new technologies that can address and solve those problems," Hammer says. Currently, her team is pondering how chatbots and virtual reality tools could fit into Pontoon's ecosystem. As they deploy these and other advancements, the technology and analytics team will continue to help Pontoon clients win the fierce and unending battle for talent. ■



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