

VISION

SUSI TAKEUCHI | *Chief Human Resources Officer*

UCLA  
HEALTH

# UCLA HEALTH

## UCLA HEALTH HR LEADER TAKES *passionate approach to* IMPROVING *the* WORKPLACE

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**W**hen Susi Takeuchi was interviewing to be chief human resources officer at UCLA Health, her husband needed a second opinion due to complications from a kidney transplant.

She approached the chair of the UCLA Health search committee, a former kidney transplant surgeon. He referred her husband to Dr. Jeff Veale, who was able to see him the next day. Veale researched the appropriateness of the procedure, checked the credentials and reputation of the surgeon, and followed up after the surgery was performed at UCI Health, where Takeuchi was CHRO at the time.

“The doctor went above and beyond what we expected and confirmed that UCLA Health is so exceptional that I had to be part of it,” she says.

Now, more than seven years later, she wants others to know UCLA Health is a great place to work. In 2020, the health care network was recognized by three publications for excellence in its workplace. In 2021, four publications honored it. In 2022, it was eight, including Forbes, Becker’s Hospital Review and Newsweek.

“We developed a strategy seven years ago to be an employer of choice,” Takeuchi says. “We have good principles about our work environment and use best practices to attract and retain our employees.”



**SUSI  
TAKEUCHI**

*Chief Human Resources Officer*



## **Pandemic provisions**

UCLA Health is a Southern California health care network comprised of hospitals including the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Medical Center Santa Monica, Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA and the UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital. Its UCLA Medical Group provides primary care services at more than 260 clinics in the Los Angeles area.

Takeuchi leads HR for UCLA Health's hospitals, clinics, medical research and medical school. Like other health care organizations, the network is facing labor challenges, she says. However, UCLA Health has also been fortunate in that its turnover rate has remained the same at 13 percent since the COVID-19 pandemic started. While Takeuchi is pleased by that statistic, she says the turnover rate for first-year employees throughout the system has increased.

During the height of the pandemic, Takeuchi and her team helped UCLA Health add retention incentives and benefits including extended paid time away for COVID reasons while there were no layoffs. Takeuchi worked with the city of Los Angeles and mayor's office to get stipends for childcare for employees with lower wages and free daycare at a local recreational center. Free meals were also provided, and UCLA Health medical residents volunteered services to employees including childcare, dog walking and grocery shopping.

## Welcome aboard

Takeuchi and her team are currently working to retain more first-year employees with the new “People Goal” program, as she calls it. It will launch in April with half-day workshops for leaders with direct reports.

The workshops are designed to help managers better onboard new employees—and to understand the strengths and talents a new hire has and how to put them to best use. For instance, the workshop will suggest managers identify peer mentors to help new staff get acclimated.

While she expects those steps will help new hires better understand their jobs and work environment, Takeuchi says the workshops will also provide data from surveys of new and departing employees. This can inform managers on how to create a specific onboarding plan tailored to the new employee and understand the reasons why employees leave.

Managers will then create their own employee onboarding and retention plans, Takeuchi says.

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*Susi Takeuchi is helping  
UCLA Health attract  
and retain employees  
by improving benefits  
and incentives as well  
as management training  
to onboard new hires.*

#### **Partnering on DEI**

In 2021, UCLA Health appointed Dr. Medell Briggs-Malonson as chief of health equity, diversity and inclusion for the UCLA Hospital and Clinic System and Dr. Dave McIntosh as chief of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion for the system's school of medicine.

Among the initiatives Medell Briggs-Malonson, McIntosh and Takeuchi have worked on is UCLA Health's recent membership in the Healthcare Anchor Network. HAN is a network of health systems seeking to improve health and well-being by addressing economic and racial inequities in the communities they serve—including through local hiring and internal workforce development. Working with HAN will enable UCLA Health to create a program for future leaders targeting a diverse employee pool, Takeuchi says.

UCLA Health is also implementing a new applicant tracking system that streamlines and automates recruiting, interviewing and hiring by eliminating manual tasks, providing dashboards and minimizing the potential for biases caused by artificial intelligence.



Longtime organization partner Talent Plus Inc. is assisting with the hiring processes by providing predictive assessment tools for applicants for management positions. For example, the scientific assessment for managers identifies leaders who develop people and move projects forward with a focus on how a leader relates to others, establishes rapport and addresses conflict in interpersonal relationships, Takeuchi says.

Talent Plus President Makenzie Rath says the partnership with UCLA Health is an example of how predictive assessments enable the health care network to hire and develop top talent.

“Helping people understand their talents and those of team members goes a long way to creating a high-performing culture,” Rath says. “Managers gain insight that helps them offer ongoing development—it’s a crucial part of the equation.”



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### **An occupation and a passion**

Though Takeuchi has been working in HR for nearly 40 years, it's a wonder she stuck with it as her first role was at Southern California Edison, an electric utility where employees routinely dealt with unhappy customers.

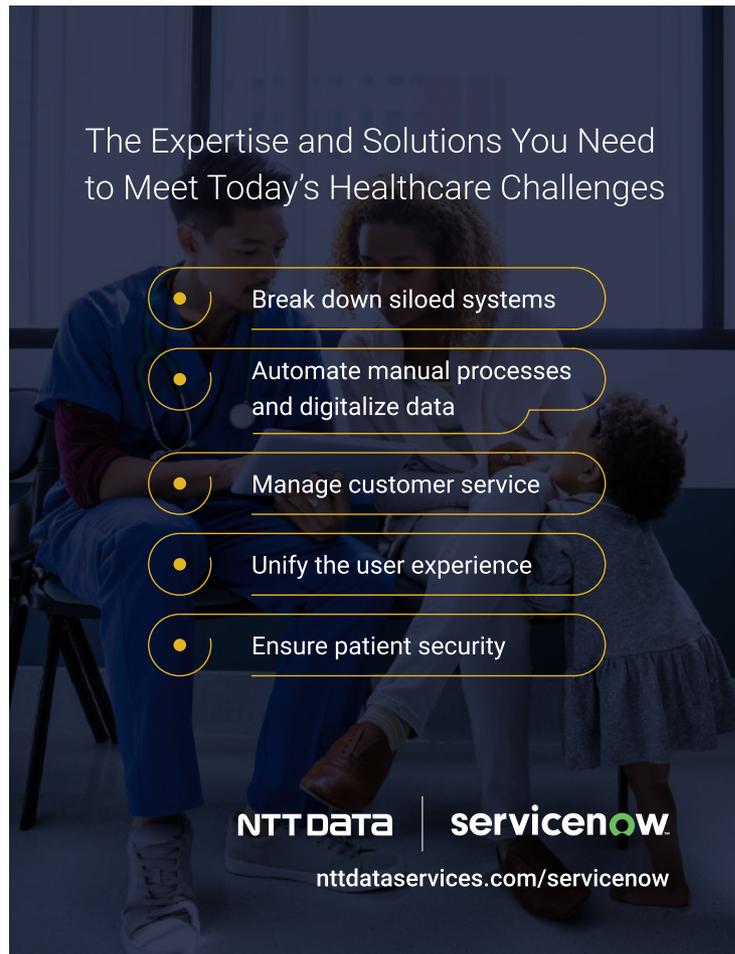
"I started there right after graduating high school," she recalls. "My intent was to quit my HR job and go to college full time. But even though I worked in a challenging industry, I loved HR so much that I said, 'OK, I can do both.'"

While working at Southern California Edison, Takeuchi earned her bachelor's degree in business from California State University, Fullerton and her MBA from California State Polytechnic University-Pomona. She became manager of executive development at the utility before leaving in September 2001 for the Capital Group.

“Southern California Edison gave me the real foundation of HR,” she says. “I got to do a different HR job about every three years. I just kept learning and advancing.”

She joined Capital Group, an investment management company, as its assistant vice president of HR and senior HR manager and was promoted to HR business partner in June 2008.

Takeuchi enjoyed her time there because she developed close connections with the staff, but says she found the true purpose and connection for her work when she joined UCI Health in July 2012.



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She recalls being in between meetings at its cancer care center when she passed a woman in a corridor who was simultaneously pushing a stroller and helping her mother walk after getting a treatment. When Takeuchi looked towards the hospital, she saw a helicopter landing with a patient.

“I felt the connection to helping save lives with my work,” Takeuchi says. “HR can be done in any industry. Now at UCLA Health, I’m doing my passion in an industry I’m passionate about.” •



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