

Exclusively  
for the  
AEC Industry



EFCG

# HR Leadership Conference Agenda

May 4-6, 2026



JW Marriott Chicago

TRANSEARCH  
EXECUTIVE SEARCH & LEADERSHIP CONSULTING

**ABOUT EFCG**

EFCG is a global specialized M&A advisor and management consultant to architecture, engineering, and consulting (AEC) firms. Our mission is to provide a strategic edge to AEC firms to advance the industry through our end-to-end, integrated solutions that support executive leaders with their most critical strategic and financial decisions.

For 35+ years and counting, we have served as a retained advisor to 550+ firms, developed an extensive proprietary database of financial and business metrics from our clients, held more than 100 executive conferences, and advised on 250+ M&A transactions. The relationships we have formed with the executive teams at every major AEC firm make us a valued and trusted advisor.

**Management Consulting**



**550+**  
AEC Firms Advised

- Strategic Planning
- Corporate Financial Benchmarking
- Valuations
- Talent & Compensation
- Technology & Innovation
- Sustainability & ESG

**Mergers & Acquisitions**



**250+**  
M&A Transactions Advised On

- Sell- & Buy-Side Assignments
- Capital Structure Analysis
- Corporate Divestitures & Tech Spinouts
- Strategic & Private Equity Partner Engagement
- Integration Planning
- Due Diligence & Market Studies

**Leadership Conferences**



**100+**  
Conferences Hosted

- Analysis on AEC Trends from EFCG's Proprietary Industry Database
- Perspectives from Subject Matter Experts and Industry Executives
- Invaluable Peer-Networking Opportunities

**Advanced Data Analytics & Insights**



EFCG has developed a comprehensive proprietary database exclusively for the industry

**6** Annual Surveys

**8M+** Data Points Every Year

**500+** Database Contributing Firms

# WELCOME



## HR LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

May 4-6, 2026

### ABOUT EFCG'S HR LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Each year, AEC Industry HR leaders from firms of all sizes, markets, geographies, and cultures come together to share their insights and learnings on pivotal HR strategies, policies, and metrics. The agenda spans across topics from the building talent shortage to AI and automation inside HR.

All this exchange is augmented by EFCG's extensive expertise in talent strategy and financial analysis, which leverages our industry financial, compensation, and HR proprietary databases.

We are excited to announce that our 2026 program was again approved for credit hours from both the HRCI and from SHRM, a benefit unique to EFCG conferences.



#### Dates & Times

Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm CT

Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 8:30 am – 7:30 pm CT

Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 1:00 pm CT

#### Welcome Reception

**Time:** Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm CT

**Location:** JW Marriott Chicago  
151 W. Adams, Chicago, IL

#### Conference Venue

**Times:** Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 8:30 am – 7:30 pm CT

Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 1:00 pm CT

**Location:** JW Marriott Chicago  
151 W. Adams, Chicago, IL 30326



#### Wednesday Evening Networking Reception & Dinner

**Times:** Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm CT

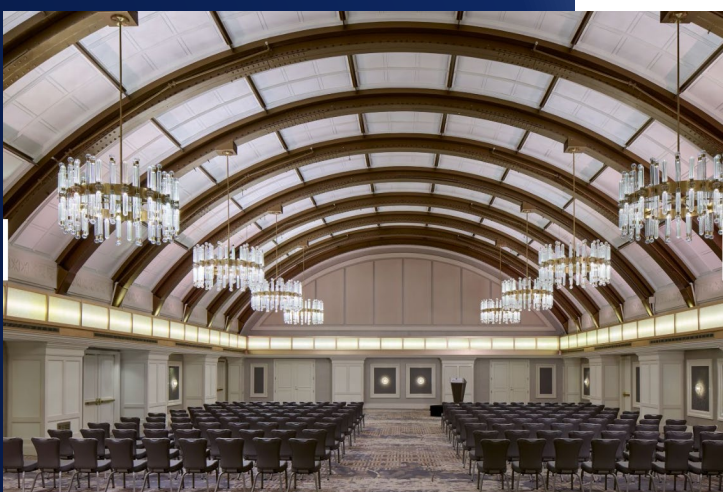
**Location:** Kindling, Wills Tower, 202 S. Franklin Street, Chicago, IL

#### Photography & Press

Recordings and images from the event may be used for live or on-demand sessions, EFCG materials, or by other participating firms in their own promotions. If you prefer not to be recorded or photographed, please let EFCG know in writing at [brogers@efcg.com](mailto:brogers@efcg.com). Press will be invited to the event and may publish articles on the event and its sessions.

#### Attire

Business casual



Photographs from The JW Marriott Chicago Website

*(All Times in Central Time)*

**6:00 pm – 7:30 pm**  
**Burnham Ballroom**  
**Foyer**

**8:30 am – 9:00 am**  
**Chicago Room**

**9:00 am – 9:30 am**  
**Chicago Room**

**9:30 am – 10:45 am**  
**Burnham Ballroom**

**10:45 am – 11:15 am**  
**Burnham Ballroom**  
**Foyer**

**11:15 am – 12:00 pm**  
**Burnham Ballroom**

## Monday, May 4, 2026

### **Conference Welcome Reception**

Join us for the official opening of the 2026 HR Leadership Conference. This casual gathering sets the tone for the days ahead, offering a chance to meet fellow attendees and connect with the EFCG Team. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and drinks as we begin a memorable and enriching experience ahead.

## Tuesday, May 5, 2026

### **First-Time Attendee Breakfast**

It is our pleasure to welcome new attendees to our event each year. This is a unique opportunity to connect with fellow first-time attendees as you head into the day's events.

### **Breakfast Meet-and-Greet**

### **Session 1: EFCG AEC Industry Overview: Critically Assessing the Data**

In this opening session, EFCG will share what EFCG's proprietary AEC Industry Overview Report is signaling for 2026 and 2027, and what it means for how firms lead their people. EFCG Managing Partner Rebecca Zofnass will ground the discussion in the latest industry performance and forward expectations, then translate those signals into the workforce realities leaders are navigating from capacity constraints to evolving delivery models to the accelerating impact of technology on how work gets done. As performance increasingly depends on attracting, developing, and retaining the right teams, this analysis will dive into where to invest, how to build capability, and how to protect long-term firm value.

**Presenter:** Rebecca Zofnass, EFCG Managing Partner, Strategy & Corporate Finance

### **Morning Coffee Social**

### **Session 2: Culture Starts at the Top: HR's Partnership with CEOs and Executive Teams**

Culture is not shaped by intention alone. It is built and reinforced through leadership behavior, decision-making, and alignment at the top of the organization. In this panel discussion, HR leaders share how they work alongside CEOs, CFOs, COOs, and other executives to intentionally shape firmwide culture from the top down. Panelists will explore what effective partnership looks like in practice, how accountability for culture is shared across leadership roles, and where misalignment can undermine even well-designed people strategies. Attendees will gain insight into how HR can influence culture as a business driver while navigating the realities of executive dynamics and organizational change.

**Moderator:** Julie Hasiba, EFCG Managing Partner, Talent & Compensation

#### **Panelists:**

Andrea C. Bernica, President, Chief People Officer, Black & Veatch  
Carlos Echalar, Chief Human Resources Officer, CDM Smith  
Jennie J. Jamrock, Consultant-Business Partner, Jensen Hughes

*(All Times in Central Time)*

**12:00 pm – 12:45 pm**  
Chicago Room

**1:00 pm – 1:45 pm**  
Burnham Ballroom

**1:45 pm – 2:00 pm**  
Burnham Ballroom  
Foyer

**2:00 pm – 2:45 pm**  
Burnham Ballroom

**Oriental Room**

**Tuesday, May 5, 2026**

**Lunch**

**Session 3: Smart HR: Leveraging AI to Elevate the Workforce Experience and Business Outcomes**

AI is no longer a theoretical future state. It is actively reshaping how AEC firms operate, manage talent, and support employees. This session begins with a focused look at emerging AI trends and technology strategy, presented by EFCG’s Technology & Innovation Practice Lead Marcus Quigley. His insights will be followed by a candid panel discussion with HR leaders who are navigating adoption in real time. Together, they will explore where AI is delivering meaningful value today, where caution is warranted, and how thoughtful implementation can enhance employee experience while driving measurable business results.

**Presenter and Moderator:** Marcus Quigley, EFCG Partner, Technology & Innovation

**Panelists:**

Karen P. Cosentino, SVP, Chief People Officer, Barge Design Solutions  
Brenda Greig, Chief Human Resources Officer, Ardurra Group  
Jan Sipsma, Chief People and Strategy Officer, GHD

**Refresh Break**

**Session 4: Breakout Sessions**

**4A: Myth or Fact: AI will Significantly Impact Headcount**

AI is often framed as either a cure-all for the talent shortage or a direct threat to jobs. The reality for AEC firms is far more nuanced. In this session, EFCG will share industry-specific analysis on how AI is expected to reshape roles, capacity, and productivity across the workforce, highlighting where AI may meaningfully augment work, where it may ease talent constraints, and where people remain irreplaceable. The presentation will be followed by a discussion inviting attendees to reflect on how their firms are already experiencing these shifts and how they are thinking about workforce planning, skills evolution, and the opportunity for an AI-enabled future.

**Presenter and Facilitator:** Ethan McCue, EFCG Senior Analyst, Strategy & Corporate Finance

**4B: Inside the Boardroom: Assessing Board Structure, Engagement and Effectiveness**

As the AEC industry evolves, boards are playing a more influential role as strategic partners to executive teams. In this session, EFCG will share key findings from its latest proprietary survey on board composition, engagement models, and governance practices, highlighting emerging patterns across firms. Panelists will discuss how these dynamics impact the HR function based on their experiences working closely with and on boards. The session will conclude with an interactive roundtable where participants explore how their own boards are evolving and share what has been most effective in building strong HR-board partnerships.

**Presenters and Moderators:**

Julie Hasiba, EFCG Managing Partner, Talent & Compensation  
Adeline Orcutt, EFCG Senior Analyst, Strategy & Corporate Finance

**Panelists:**

Mina Biggs, Chief People Officer, Hanson Professional Services  
Keri Kocur, Chief People Officer, VHB

*(All Times in Central Time)*

**2:00 pm – 2:45 pm**

**Biograph Room**

**2:45 pm – 3:00 pm**

**Burnham Ballroom  
Foyer**

**3:00 pm – 3:45 pm**

**Burnham Ballroom**

**3:45 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Burnham Ballroom  
Foyer**

**4:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Burnham Ballroom**

**Tuesday, May 5, 2026**

**Session 4: Breakout Sessions (Continued)**

**4C: Navigating Pay Transparency Laws and the Impact on Compensation Strategy**

As pay transparency requirements continue to expand and evolve across jurisdictions, AEC firms are being challenged to reassess how their compensation strategies align with both regulatory expectations and internal equity goals. This interactive session will explore the practical implications of pay transparency laws, including how firms are adapting salary structures, job architectures, and communication practices. Through a facilitated discussion, participants will share how they are approaching compliance, managing employee expectations, and maintaining competitive and equitable compensation programs in an increasingly transparent environment.

**Presenter and Facilitator:** Dimitri Milionis, EFCG Senior Vice President, Talent & Compensation

**Refresh Break**

**Session 5: Blueprint to Leadership: Developing People Leaders from Technical Talent**

AEC firms have long excelled at developing technical expertise, but preparing high-performing individuals to lead people requires a different playbook. This session examines how firms are identifying leadership potential earlier, supporting the transition from technical contributor to people leader, and redefining what successful leadership looks like in a modern AEC environment. Attendees will explore practical frameworks for development, accountability, and support that strengthen leadership pipelines without diluting technical excellence.

**Moderator:** Dimitri Milionis, EFCG Senior Vice President, Talent & Compensation

**Panelists:**

Andrea Donahue, Chief Human Potential Officer, Haley & Aldrich  
 Lisa Ponder, Chief Human Resources Officer, Spheros Environmental  
 Alex Wiles, SVP, Human Resources, Schnabel Engineers

**Refresh Break**

**Session 6: HR Leaders Lessons Learned**

Every HR leader's career is shaped by moments that test judgment, resilience, and values. In this attendee-favorite session, experienced HR executives share the defining challenges that influenced how they lead today — from difficult organizational changes to pivotal leadership decisions. Through reflection and candid discussion, panelists will surface hard-earned insights and practical lessons that attendees can apply within their own firms as well as within their own personal evolution.

**Moderator:** Julie Hasiba, EFCG Managing Partner, Talent & Compensation

**Panelists:**

Joe Hockenberry, Chief People Officer, Weston Solutions  
 Jim Horn, Chief Human Resources Officer, Ulteig  
 Heather Horvath, Human Resources Director, All4

(All Times in Central Time)

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Kindling, Willis Tower  
202 S. Franklin Street

## Tuesday, May 5, 2026

### Evening Networking Reception & Dinner



Join us for an evening networking reception at Kindling, a vibrant venue in Willis Tower featuring live-fire cooking, wood-fired plates, and handcrafted cocktails in the heart of Chicago. Enjoy great food, great drinks, and even better conversation in a warm, energetic setting designed for connection and community.

### About CareerSMITH

CareerSMITH is a full-service recruiting firm focused exclusively on the Engineering, Construction, Government, and Energy industries. Our deep industry knowledge and proven search process enable us to identify and present candidates who meet our clients' exact needs. We take a consultative, relationship-driven approach to every engagement and specialize in recruiting highly sought-after talent across all functions, from C-suite and executive leadership to senior technical roles. CareerSMITH delivers industry-leading retention results: 100% of placed candidates remain with clients after one year, and 95% after three years. Our team averages more than 20 years of search industry experience, and we stand behind our work with a guarantee.



8:45 am – 9:30 am

Palace & Oriental  
Rooms

## Wednesday, May 6, 2026

### Roundtables with Breakfast: Employee-Owned Firm & PE-Backed Firm Topics

#### Employee-Owned Firm Roundtable

Designed for employee-owned firm leaders, this roundtable provides a dedicated forum to explore the unique dynamics of operating and growing employee-owned firms. Attendees will discuss shared challenges, opportunities, and practical strategies amongst peers.

#### PE-Backed Firm Roundtable

This focused roundtable is for leaders from PE-backed firms to discuss the distinct strategic needs shaping their business environment. Participants will exchange insights, compare experiences, and share best practices with peers navigating a similar ownership structure.

### General Breakfast Reconnect for All Attendees

9:00 am – 9:30 am

Chicago Room

9:30 am – 10:30 am

Burnham Ballroom

### Session 7: Post-Merger Integration in Practice: What Actually Drives Success

Successful post-merger integration does not happen by accident. It requires deliberate choices, clear priorities, and sustained focus on people. This session shifts the conversation from integration theory to execution, examining what truly differentiates successful PMI efforts in the AEC industry. Drawing on recent transactions and advisory experience, including highly acquisitive firms and a recent EFCG-supported transaction, panelists will discuss how alignment, culture, communication, and leadership discipline shape outcomes long after the deal closes.

**Presenter and Moderator:** Jessica Zofnass Barclay, EFCG Managing Partner, Mergers & Acquisitions

#### Panelists:

Susan Blaskovich, Chief People Officer, IMEG  
Kevin Brown, Chief Human Resources Officer, Consertus  
Regan Isaacs, Director, Human Resources & Talent Development, Olsson

*(All Times in Central Time)*

**10:30 am – 10:45 am**  
Burnham Ballroom  
Foyer

**10:45 am – 11:30 am**  
Chicago Room

**11:30 am – 11:50 am**  
Burnham Ballroom  
Foyer

**11:50 am – 12:35 pm**  
Burnham Ballroom

**12:35 pm – 1:00 pm**

## Wednesday, May 6, 2026

### Morning Coffee Social

### Session 8: Roundtable Discussions by Firm Size: Analyzing and Optimizing HR Team Organizational Structures

There is no one-size-fits-all HR structure, but there are common challenges that emerge as firms grow and evolve. In this interactive breakout, attendees will be grouped by firm size to assess their current HR team models, identify structural strengths and gaps, and envision what “right-sized” support looks like for their organizations. Through peer discussion and shared analysis, participants will leave with practical insights to inform future conversations with executive leadership about scale, capability, and impact.

**Facilitator:** Nina Nesselbush, EFCG Analyst, Strategy & Corporate Finance

### Refresh Break

### Lunch & Session 9: Future-Ready Total Rewards: Building Capability Through Benefits, Development, and Experience

This closing session will offer a forward-looking view of how AEC firms can evolve total rewards to strengthen the employee value proposition as generational expectations shift and the pace and nature of work continue to change. The session will highlight EFCG insights and data on benefits trends and investment patterns, and will be augmented by a fireside chat with a generational expert and researcher who will explore what is shifting, what may endure, and the practical implications for HR leaders as they plan investments and priorities over the next five years.

**Presenter and Moderator:** Dimitri Milionis, EFCG Senior Vice President, Talent & Compensation

**Panelist:** Paul Goudreault, Founding Partner, Enorine Partners

### Closing Coffee & Lunch Conversation



Share ideas and exchange information with fellow attendees as we wrap up the 2026 EFCG HR Leadership Conference and look forward to reconnecting at the 2027 EFCG HR Leadership Conference.



**Early Registration!**  
HR Leadership 2027  
May 10-12, 2027  
Park City, UT

### Upcoming EFCG Leadership Conferences



**Tech Leadership**  
June 15-16, 2026  
Chicago, IL



**CEO**  
September 30-October 2, 2026  
Chicago, IL



**Tech Workshop**  
June 17, 2026  
Chicago, IL



**Rising Leaders**  
February 25-26, 2027  
Dallas, TX

*(All Times in Central Time)*

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4B: Inside the Boardroom: Assessing Board Structure, Engagement & Effectiveness

4C: Navigating Pay Transparency Laws and the Impact on Compensation Strategy

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