



# GAME CHANGERS

**H**uman resources is considered a cautious sector by practitioners and outsiders alike. But there are those people in the industry dedicated to pushing it forward with innovative people-management practices. Here at *Workforce*, we call those innovators Game Changers.

*Workforce's* editorial staff selected the 30 winners of the fourth-annual awards program based on professional accomplishments and other achievements. They are a diverse group representing some of the best HR practitioners and strategists under 40 years old.

This year's class hails from arguably the most diverse and unique set of trades and backgrounds in the four years of Game Changers. Each year the *Workforce* editorial team has identified a trend that characterizes the group of award winners. Last year's group seemed to be full of practitioners focused on employee development.

This year, however, there is no clear trend to identify, no definitive stamp. Instead, like the practice itself, our winners cut a broad swath across HR. This international group of HR talent is making its mark in benefits, rewards and recognition, employee communications and a variety of HR practices. They come from a variety of industries such as technology, auto manufacturing, social services, academia and the federal government.

That these individuals are able to effect change in a field often criticized as being adverse to risk-taking truly makes them Game Changers.

Congratulations to each winner. —Max Mihelich



## LISA MITCHELL-KASTNER

Executive director of training, AT&T University, Dallas

As a telecommunications company, AT&T Inc. understands the

need for speed. Its product has to move as fast as its customers. But it's not just AT&T's services that have to be fast — being able to deliver flexible executive education programs that keep up with employees and industry changes is critical to keeping the company ahead of the curve. That's where AT&T University's executive director of training, Lisa Mitchell-Kastner, comes into the picture.

In 2013, AT&T's chairman announced plans to discontinue all landline communication in favor of cloud-based wireless services by 2020. In response, Mitchell-Kastner's team had to step up their game in leadership development, and did so by condensing the Leading With Distinction program from 17 months to five months.

"The faster we could align our teams on the strategy and educate our workforce on future trends and technologies, the greater impact we would have," Mitchell-Kastner, 37, said. "We not only found a way to execute faster without sacrificing quality — our executive team and employees have expressed almost entirely positive feedback, and getting everyone aligned faster will help keep us on track to transform the company by 2020."

But learning had to be accessible, too. When Mitchell-Kastner found that travel restrictions and work-life balance issues prevented 25 percent of general managers from partaking in live training, she launched a virtual program that would take learning to those outside the classroom. Not only did AT&T move closer to being cloud-based, but also, according to the company, it saved \$160,000 in travel costs for 32 participants.

For Mitchell-Kastner, 2020's all-wireless plans loom large in the not-so-distant future. "What I'm doing is simply putting into motion at AT&T University the operations, courses, interventions, and specific" Leading With Distinction modules that the company's leaders need, she said.

—Kate Everson