

Kerry Mitchell

Kerry Mitchell has been the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) at Milwaukee County since November 2011. She leads change initiatives that touch all aspects of Human Resources and the workforce: talent acquisition, organizational development, employee relations, employee and retiree benefits, learning & development, diversity & inclusion, leadership development, compensation and HRIS.

Prior to her work at Milwaukee County, Mitchell served as an HR Director for U.S. Bank, where she worked for nearly 20 years in a variety of Human Resources leadership roles. She is an active member of TEMPO Milwaukee, where she chairs the Placement Sub-Committee for the Mentor Circle Program. Mitchell holds a Masters Degree in Management and Organizational Behavior, and a Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Business.



2012	2016
<p>HR is Decentralized and Fragmented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matrixed reporting structures • No employee training function / programs for years • No compensation oversight for years • Poor service reputation • Lack of consistent, documented processes • No goals or performance measurement • Viewed as a transactional function • Average days to fill a job: 180 	<p>HR is Centralized and Performing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated employee learning & development function • 30+ classroom training sessions developed / rolled out for employees • Hundreds of online learning opportunities now available through our new Employee Development Center • Vision, mission and values are established • Significant, positive feedback from internal customers • Operating as a business partner to each department • Average days to fill a job: 90 (50% improvement)
<p>No Internal Communications Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of employee communications during or after Act 10 • No central place for employee policies • Excessive use of e-mail announcements 	<p>Improved Employee Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published a first-time employee handbook, including input from employee focus groups • Published an ongoing, monthly employee newsletter • Consolidated random messages into one weekly employee communication
<p>No Centralized Employee Relations Function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Relations staff reported into business units, not HR • Employees saw HR as part of management • Lack of trust in HR's ability to be neutral when resolving issues 	<p>Centralized Employee Relations Function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant increase in the number of concerns employees trust HR to help resolve • Launched employee brown bags and learning sessions • 2016 Employee Engagement initiative, including a survey and action planning
<p>Antiquated and Inequitable Compensation System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay ranges were not tied to the competitive market • Ranges were in a decades-old structure referred to as a step system that drove inequities, and our inability to attract and retain talent • Employees not rewarded for their excellent results 	<p>Modern Compensation System Proposed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed and completed a two-year analysis to ensure all positions are assigned job grades consistently • Designed a modern pay range structure to replace the old one, to ensure our compensation is tied to the market • Recommended approximately 500 salary increases to range minimum, as part of the migration to the new salary ranges
<p>Fiscal Crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County faced major structural deficits • Post-employment benefit liabilities expected to pass \$2 billion • Facing staff eliminations, cutting benefits, or reducing services 	<p>Fiscal Stability and Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR created several innovative solutions, and collaborated with multiple County stakeholders to stabilize benefit costs • Made our programs and workforce more sustainable • This unprecedented collaboration resulted in a decrease in OPEB liabilities in excess of \$650 million • Launched new programs for employees, such as Wellness and Tuition Assistance
<p>Lack of Employee Onboarding Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New hires entered the County in multiple different ways, receiving inconsistent information • Inefficiency due to significant duplication of efforts Countywide • High turnover during first 6 months of employment 	<p>Centralized Employee Onboarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new hires are welcomed together, with consistent information, and are provided a wide variety of tools and resources to help ensure success • New Hire turnover has decreased 44.1%
<p>No Employee or Manager Development Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programs nonexistent for a decade • Little focus on employee learning & development or career growth • Limited understanding of the role, responsibility and accountability of managers to lead effectively 	<p>Created Exceptional Learning & Development Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed and delivered more than 30 new classroom learning topics • Implemented an Employee Development Center that includes hundreds of online training courses • Designed and facilitated three certification programs: Leadership Excellence, Management Development Program, and a LEAD (Leadership Education And Development) Program
<p>Extraordinarily Complex Pension System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple processing errors over decades • Continual plan-tweaking, resulting in 51 different versions of the Plan to manage 	<p>High Integrity and Focus on Operational Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuilt the staff • Incorporated new operational processes • Actively seek to uncover problems and correct them
<p>General Lack of Trust at Milwaukee County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees received information primarily from the media • Act 10 	<p>Improved Work Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented Open Communications policy for problem resolution • Established and built an Employee Relations team • New accountabilities for managers to lead effectively