



Brooklyn Miller (third from the right) on a recent visit to a new facility in McAllen, Texas, to tour the site and meet staff. (Photo courtesy of Envision Cold.)

POST-PANDEMIC AND PRO-AI: HUMAN RESOURCES IN 2025

HR leader Brooklyn Miller on recruitment, retention, and the emergence of AI.

By Alexandra Walsh

The height of the pandemic in spring 2021 was a time of intense focus on the role of human resource leaders, and *COLD FACTS* featured the first cover article dedicated to the work of HR teams. Their training, skills, and ability to improvise and think outside the box were tested like never before. On a typical day, HR's attention could pivot from vaccines to social inequity to virtual recruiting and onboarding, all while serving as a consoler, therapist, and cheerleader.

Fast-forward four years, and HR leaders face many of the same problems, with one big difference: artificial intelligence.

Although still in its early stages, one HR expert supports the idea that AI will revolutionize the human resources industry.

COLD FACTS recently interviewed Brooklyn Miller, the Chief Human Resources Officer at Envision Cold, about recruitment and retention trends, AI, remote work, and other current topics.

Q: Can you share any emerging trends or patterns in recruitment and retention?

A: I currently work for a forward-thinking cold storage operator and developer. From my perspective, the most significant trend for corporate-based indirect labor is remote work. We have approximately 30 corporate employees who have the option to work from home. During the hiring process, being able to offer remote work doesn't restrict us to a specific geographic area. However, in our industry, an important aspect of work-from-home policies is that they do not apply to the front-line workers.

I came from a fully remote role, so I understand what it's like to waste time commuting to town. We offer many positions that are

eligible to work from home. There's no doubt it's a strong selling point when recruiting corporate-level leaders.

Down the road, I see a need for hourly, remote administrative staff. You'll be able to tell if they're working or not, and I think it can be a positive for both the company and employee – however we are not there quite yet.

That being said, remote work would never have been a conversation before the pandemic.

Q: Did any changes implemented during the pandemic remain part of your HR culture?

A: We see now the many positives of having part of your workforce work remotely. Work-from-home policies greatly expand our geographic recruiting reach. Before the pandemic, our recruiting was limited to the Atlanta, Georgia, area. Now, corporate-based candidates can come from nearly anywhere, and we can have staff all over the country.

Q: Does the company have a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy, and have there been any policy changes in recent months?

A: The company has acquired 11 operations, none of which had any DEI policies. We now have five staff on the HR team, and we are proud of the progress we have made on the DEI front.

We have a section on DEI in our employee handbook, have a very diverse workforce, and my entire staff is female. One thing we are passionate about is encouraging people to take roles at different sites and levels, and that has led to our first female General Manager.

We have one HR manager who oversees four sites along the U.S./Mexican border, where most team members do not speak English. She is bilingual, and in her previous role, she was a DEI coordinator. Because of that, she brings a fresh perspective to our HR initiatives. When it comes to DEI, due

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to our diverse workforce, we're in a good position simply by choosing the right people for the job.

Q: Can you offer examples of how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used in recruitment? Do you have any concerns about AI in HR?

A: My team's understanding of technology is deeper than mine, which encouraged me to explore tech.

If you spend a lot of time writing policies, as I do, AI is your friend, and I'm a fan. I love to write, and many of our policies come from traditional writing methods. But once you start working with AI, there's no going back ... the communication aspect is incredible.

Artificial intelligence also has a role in recruitment. We have just one recruiter who hires at every level from C-suite executives to forklift operators. I think AI will be a huge time saver in the form of resume screening. While still in its early stages from a recruiting perspective, it's not very expensive and could reduce hours in our recruiter's day. I worry we might miss something on a resume, but the time saved makes it worthwhile.

We are excited to explore more AI applications. I work for a forward-tech looking company, and so far, they're open to letting us try new things in the world of AI.

And, it's helpful that it doesn't cost much.

Q: Can you share an HR case study or program?

A: In terms of labor efficiencies, we see our company as forward-thinking and recognize the need for a job-sharing program – where two (or more) workers share the duties of one full-time job, each working part time – as well as warehouse administrative remote work, but what message does that send to the majority of our team — the core and heart of our organization — the guys in the freezer?

We want to offer more than just a job to our front-line workers. The goal is for them to gain the industry skills they need to advance beyond the freezer, if that's what they want. For example, that could be a lateral move to shipping and receiving or a transition to an office role.

I'm proud of creating a career path for warehouse team members, and it is essential to our investors. There are significant pay increases in the conduit to supervisory and leadership roles. It's also been beneficial in retaining the best workers. ☞

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