Joe Rotella

From Activity to Impact: Improving Decision Quality for HR and Volunteer Leaders

HR leaders are constantly asked to evaluate new initiatives, programs, partnerships, and priorities — often with limited time, limited resources, and competing demands. In both professional and volunteer leadership roles, it's easy for well-intentioned activity to consume energy without delivering the impact leaders hoped for.

In this interactive session, we'll explore a practical framework for improving decision quality in HR and volunteer leadership. Drawing on real-world examples, we'll examine how confidence, ego, and sunk costs influence decision-making, and how simple tools such as measurable goals, milestone thinking, and scorecards can help leaders stay focused on outcomes rather than activity.

Participants will leave with practical approaches they can apply immediately to workplace initiatives, chapter activities, and strategic priorities — without adding unnecessary process or bureaucracy.

Learning Objectives
- Identify common decision traps faced by HR and volunteer leaders
- Distinguish between activity, outcomes, and true impact
- Apply a simple scorecard approach to evaluate initiatives and priorities
- Recognize how ego and sunk costs influence leadership decisions
- Use goals and milestones to improve focus, alignment, and follow-through

Speaker Biography
Joe Rotella is a leading thinker and professional speaker in business strategy, continuous performance management, and HR technology. He is a top-rated Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) speaker. He serves as Chief Value Officer for Delphia Consulting, a Human Resources and Payroll software consulting firm based in Columbus, Ohio. Joe is the co-creator of miviva, a continuous performance management application and has two patents-pending for the use of AI in performance management analysis.

Joe has over 30 years of experience in information technology, usability, and human resources. As Vice President of Development for the Human Resources Association of Central Ohio (HRACO), he teaches several modules of the SHRM Learning System in HRACO's CP/SCP Certification Review Course, including HR Strategic Planning, Employee Engagement & Retention, Technology Management, and HR Competencies. Joe is a cited contributor to the SHRM Learning System.

Annee Duprey

AI & HR: Where Algorithms Meet People

AI & HR: Where Algorithms Meet People explores the rapidly evolving intersection of artificial intelligence and human resources. This session demystifies AI concepts, highlights practical applications in HR, and examines both the opportunities and challenges AI brings to the workplace. Attendees will gain insights into how AI is transforming HR, the latest legal developments, compliance best practices, and ethical considerations. Attendees should come ready to discuss real-world scenarios and leave with practical guidance for leveraging AI while maintaining fairness, transparency, and compliance in employment practices.

Learning Objectives
- Recognize the Benefits and Challenges of AI in HR
- Understand How to Apply AI Tools Across the Employee Lifecycle
- Navigate Legal and Regulatory Considerations
- Learn Best Practices for Responsible AI Use
- Evaluate Real-World Scenarios involving AI in the Workplace

Speaker Biography
Annee is a partner in the labor and employment group at FBT Gibbons. Annee represents employers in all things relating to labor and employment law, including employment litigation, traditional labor work, and advising employers on day-to-day personnel issues. Annee regularly assists clients with litigation and advice regarding discrimination and harassment issues, navigating tricky FMLA and ADA issues, AI and privacy issues, and wage and hour compliance. Annee is a regular speaker on labor and employment trends, discrimination and harassment issues, and best employment practices. She also provides ongoing education and training to many clients, which allows employers and their staff to identify and address human resources concerns with confidence.

Robert Palmer Jr.

The Leadership Prescription: Fix What's Broken, Fuel What's Next

What If Leadership Had a Warning Label?
Side effects may include burnout, disengagement, and quiet quitting.

What if leadership came with instructions or better yet, warnings HR leaders could actually use? This session pulls back the curtain on the unintended side effects of how change is commonly led and why even well-intentioned initiatives can quietly drain trust, energy, and engagement. Through real scenarios and moments of insight, we'll explore how everyday leadership behaviors either accelerate momentum or create exhaustion and where HR has the power to intervene.

Designed for HR leaders who shape culture and guide transformation, this session focuses on practical, actionable shifts that can be applied immediately. Attendees will leave with a sharper lens on their impact, renewed confidence in how to coach leaders through change, and clear strategies to help organizations move forward without leaving people burned out behind.

Learning Objectives
- Diagnose Leadership Behaviors That Create Burnout and Disengagement
- Strengthen Trust and Psychological Safety During Change
- Shift Leaders From Control to Influence
- Reduce Change Fatigue While Improving Adoption
- Integrate Recovery and Wellbeing Into Leadership Practices

Speaker Biography
Robert Palmer Jr. is a seasoned Human Resources and DEI leader with 15 years of experience across education, nonprofit, and professional services organizations. He currently serves as Director of Human Resources for The Motz Group, where he leads people strategy, workforce planning, employee relations, and culture initiatives that align organizational growth with a people-first approach. With a background in psychology, Robert brings a human-centered, strategic lens to leadership, change management, and organizational development.

Robert's commitment to advancing the HR profession and inclusive leadership extends well beyond his corporate role. He previously served as Director of Development for Cincinnati Pride, is the Conference Chair for the Ohio State HR Conference and currently serves as President-Elect of CincySHRM. Through these leadership roles, he helps shape statewide and local HR strategy, professional development, and inclusive programming that elevates the impact of HR leaders and organizations alike.

Known for his strong presence, authenticity, and sense of humor, Robert is a highly sought-after speaker who has presented at conferences across the United States for more than a decade. He is passionate about developing leaders, building inclusive cultures, and helping people reach their full potential. At the core of his work is a simple but powerful mission: to make people better individually, collectively, and organizationally wherever he goes.

James Atkinson

AI in HR: Unlocking Potential, Overcoming Barriers

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing HR, offering new ways to streamline processes, enhance decision-making, and improve the employee experience. Yet, many organizations are still navigating the challenges of adoption, with a significant gap between AI's potential and its practical application.

This session dives into research spanning 138 HR tasks to uncover where AI is delivering real value today. Explore how automation and AI assistance are reshaping workflows, the human factors—like skills gaps, confidence, and workplace anxieties—that influence adoption, and the organizational barriers that can slow progress.

Beyond the research, this session offers a unique opportunity to learn from your peers. Share experiences, challenges, and successes with fellow HR professionals to gain practical, real-world insights. Attendees will leave with a blend of research-backed strategies and peer-driven perspectives to confidently navigate the rapidly evolving AI landscape and lead their organizations into the future.

Learning Objectives

- Identify Key Areas of AI Impact in HR: Understand where AI is currently delivering measurable value across 138 HR tasks, including automation and AI-assisted workflows, and how these advancements are transforming the HR profession.
- Overcome Barriers to AI Adoption: Explore the human and organizational factors—such as skills gaps, confidence levels, and workplace anxieties—that influence AI readiness, and learn strategies to address these challenges effectively.
- Leverage Peer Insights for Practical Application: Gain actionable, real-world insights by learning from the experiences, challenges, and successes of fellow HR professionals, combining these with research-backed strategies to confidently lead AI initiatives in your organization.

Speaker Biography

James Atkinson is the VP, Thought Leadership at SHRM, where he leads research and content teams uncovering key insights on the challenges and trends affecting HR and the workplace. James has more than 15 years of research, data, and product experience, having spent a decade in various leadership roles within the HR industry. Prior to SHRM, James was the Vice President of Data Products at Payscale, where he was responsible for the overall strategy, development, and delivery of data products for compensation professionals. He also spent 9 years at Gartner, finishing his tenure there as the Managing Vice President of Data Products for the HR research and advisory practice. Across his career, his teams have created award-winning research and data products for HR executives and their teams on topics including learning and development, total rewards, recruiting, talent management, HR strategy, and HR technology. This work has been featured in top business journals and media outlets such as Harvard Business Review, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and Fortune.

James holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan and an MBA from The Ohio State University.