

Interview with Nicola George, L&D HR Program Senior Manager

Why do you love Human Resources?

HR touches absolutely every person in the organisation as well as the organisation itself – what an impact we can have. It's incredible really to be in a profession that can do that. It really matters to me knowing what my purpose is and how it fits into Ipsen's strategy and that I am part of shaping Ipsen's future.

In your opinion, what does your diverse experience bring to your current role?

Tolerance, patience, a desire to try and understand different viewpoints and knowing that there's so much I have yet to learn. Hopefully this means I don't jump too quickly to conclusions or assume I am always right. If you think about why we do the jobs we do at Ipsen and who we do it for, you realise that patients don't fit one mould. Our patients and employees are diverse and so I passionately believe that to have diversity of thought and experience is critical in order to best understand and serve them.

My current role is a global role and touches people across Ipsen from every country and function. Sometimes you don't know what you don't know and so having others input is critical, for example, thinking about the different cultural aspects and how the message is going to land.

Which of your roles is your favourite?

I imagine it will seem very cliché to say the one I am doing now but the truth is I have always loved my work, whichever role I take. I think that is because I believe that I have the possibility to make it my own. The person doing the job before me will do it differently to me as will the person doing it after me. It's satisfying to see what mark you can leave. All of that being said, as I go through my career, I have a much clearer view of the roles that interest me as well as those that don't meaning I am far more discerning now.

What would you describe as your main career achievements?

When I think of this question, the first things that came to mind are the things I have done when I felt really stretched. For example, I was the HR lead in closing a unionised site with 130 people and was determined to treat every single person with respect and really listen to them. This is where I learnt to see people as people and treat them as individuals (ensuring fairness of course). Post the site closure, the senior union leader wrote to the CEO acknowledging the way that HR had dealt with such a huge life altering decision for them all and that made me proud.

If you could give advice to your HR colleagues about owning their career, what would it be?

Explore, Be Curious, Be Bold, Be You.

When I look back, I wish I'd learnt more about the different roles out there. My advice would be to talk to people, ask them what they do, ask them to describe a typical day, ask them what skills they need for their role, ask them about the impact they make. We think we know each other's roles yet there's always something to discover when you take the time and ask. It may just be your next role you are finding out about.

Don't be afraid to admit what you don't know, we're all still learning, and no-one expects you to know everything. Speak up and ask for help if you want to learn or develop something.

Above everything, be you. Listen to others' guidance, consider it but ultimately it is your career, not Ipsen's. That means be honest about what you do or don't want so that Ipsen knows your direction of travel. This is particularly important for alignment with our succession plans and the proactive support Ipsen can offer.

What could Ipsen HR do more of to continue supporting career development of the HR community at Ipsen?

Moreso than any other company I have worked in, I have felt Ipsen's hand supporting on career development. Having a key "career" moment has been powerful (2023 Career Month) and should be continued each year and we should continue to take this for ourselves too, not just as a roll-out to non-HR.

Whilst there is always more that can be done for us, we need to step up and own our own careers and development. Ipsen HR can come up with lots of wonderful initiatives such as DevelopMe for HR, but it needs us as individuals to want to do it because we're worth it.

If you were not in HR, what would be your dream job?

I love working in HR and know that people are my thing. If I had to do something else, I would say teaching or coaching. It gives me a lot of satisfaction seeing others develop and grow and I think these former years set foundations for life. To help positively shape these foundations or to help people understand these foundations is a very interesting area to me.

Is there anything that you would like to share with us?

Moving from a Regional to Divisional to Global role took some adjustment that I hadn't foreseen particularly around the team part. I felt a very strong sense of team in my Regional role and felt a sense of loss when I first moved to a Divisional role. I would still highly recommend moving from one to the other as the benefits have definitely outweighed that initial adjustment period and I have learnt so much and feel I can make a bigger difference. If I was asked to give advice, I would recommend spending more time focussing on forming relationships.

I'd like to finish by saying that we are a team, together. If we keep that in mind, using the best of each of us, we can't fail but deliver the best for our patients.