STERLING SNAPSHOT

David Topp

Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), David Topp joined Sterling in March 2021 to lead our global HR team.

Can you briefly describe your background?

I graduated from Purdue University with a BA in Supervision and Organized Leadership. After graduating, I started working in operations management for a transportation and warehousing organization before moving into my first human resources and safety role.

After completing my masters at Cardinal Stritch University, I moved into the Head of HR role where I established the HR function and team within the organisation.

I then went on to work for various US based organisations, before accepting a global HR role for a speciality food ingredients manufacturer. This role was my first experience of working for a global organisation which presented opportunities to work outside of the US. This provided me the background and experience for my current role at Sterling.

What does your role as CHRO at Sterling entail?

My role as CHRO is to ensure that we have a people, strategy and resources in place to support the current workforce while focusing on the future of our organisation and incorporating these activities alongside business-as-usual responsibilities.

How has your previous experience supported you in your role today?

I've worked for a range of organisations who have experienced rapid growth, so this has really prepared me for the speed at which Sterling is growing. When I joined the business in 2021, we were three sites with 790 employees. We've grown to over 1,500 employees across six sites, which is a significant achievement.

A key part of attaining this growth was understanding our vision and ambitions for the future. The HR team has worked with the executive and site leadership teams to understand the structures we need in place in order to make our growth vision a reality.

Fast Facts

ROLE

Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)

STARTED AT STERLING

March 2021

EDUCATION

MS in Management, Cardinal Stritch University

BA in Supervision and Organized Leadership, Purdue University

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What are some of your key priorities as CHRO?

As Sterling continues to grow, our aim as a global HR team is to ensure we build consistent programmes, tools and processes across our sites, with the aim to create an environment where our people enjoy what they do and are proud to say they work at Sterling.

We want to look at how we can continuously modernise the HR function, particularly through leveraging technology. We are working to provide a range of platforms where employees can request and access information or complete trainings anytime or anywhere.

Lastly, we want to ensure Sterling is seen as 'the place to work'. We will achieve this through enhancing our employee experience; ensuring that our people have relevant training and development opportunities, and helping them to feel connected to Sterling by showing the positive impact their work has with our customers.

What progress have you made so far?

By the end of 2025, all sites will be using the same global HR platform which will enhance information sharing and keep us more consistent as a global organisation.

We understand how important it is to give our employees a voice and an opportunity to provide feedback to our executive team, especially as we grow. We therefore introduced an employee engagement survey and the feedback we receive through these surveys allows us to develop plans and implement changes that will improve our employees' experience and ensure that their needs are being met.

Finally, we are developing the Sterling Academy, which will be rolled out globally over the next three years. This will provide employees with an understanding of, and support them through, career progression opportunities available to them at Sterling. The programme will offer training and development courses which will let our employees learn new skills to support their future career development, subsequently improving the service they're able to provide to our customers.

How does your role benefit our customers?

Being a contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO) means people are critical to what we do. Our people and their expertise and knowledge appeals to customers. As an HR team, we must make sure we are attracting the right people in order to service our customers and again, prepare our business for the future. Our work within the HR function helps to empower our people to be successful in their roles, which will enable all of us to continue to delight our customers.

It is important we ensure that we are welcoming people who share our values into our organisation, to help maintain our unique family-oriented culture. It's important to our talent acquisition (TA) team that they find individuals who can interact well with our teams and have the ability to work cross-culturally. To do this, the TA team develops strong relationships with the hiring managers to understand their exact requirements within a vacant role. It's important that a candidate has the skills and knowledge necessary for a role, but it's just as important that they are the right fit for Sterling.

How do you approach integrating new sites into the Sterling network?

When we acquire a site, we take a collaborative approach, rather than telling them how they need to operate going forward, and we work with them to establish best practices and gradually integrate them into the Sterling network. We are very open to new ideas and are very careful to ensure that everything we do fits within our values and culture.

Culture to me is the most critical component of integration. If we don't bring people along on the journey with us, they as individuals or Sterling as an organisation will not reach its full potential.

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