



Presents

2026 HR Forum

February 11, 2026 | 8:30am - 5:00pm | Center for BrainHealth

8:30am – 9:30am Registration & Breakfast (1 hour)

9:30am – 9:40am Opening Remarks (10 minutes)

- **Carolyn Simons**, Founder & President, Curated Talent Solutions

9:45am - 10:25am Exponential Growth Through Transformational Talent: Turning People into Accelerators

(40 minutes)

“Transformational Talent” should comprise an outsized importance in any organization. In competitive markets, the window to build differentiation and capture market share can be narrow; speed is critical. Combining technical depth with entrepreneurial agility is an invaluable combination in scaling life sciences companies. Firms that view human capital as a strategic lever, not a transactional necessity, will consistently outperform.

- **Derick Haire**, Managing Director, Edgewater Talent
- **Rodney Moses**, Managing Director, Edgewater Talent
- **Amy Rojas**, Principal, AG Rojas & Co

10:30am – 11:10am Founder to CEO: Scaling Leadership and Growth Through the CEO & Investor Lens

(40 minutes)

Transitioning from founder to CEO is one of the most critical—and challenging—inflection points in a biotech company’s lifecycle. In this session, a biotech founder who has successfully stepped into the CEO role joins an experienced investor who has partnered closely with early- and growth-stage companies to share candid lessons from both sides of the table.

- **John Vandermosten**, Senior Biotechnology Analyst, Zacks Investment Research
- **Heather Antioquia**, Vice President, Program Development, Xontogeny
- **Christopher Marlett**, Co-Founder & CEO, MDB Capital Holdings, LLC
- **Daniel Wagner**, COO & Chief Commercial Officer, Otolith Labs

11:15am – 11:55pm AI and HR: Purpose, Use, and Guardrails (40 minutes)

Explore how AI is transforming HR functions, from recruitment to performance management. Learn practical applications, best practices, and critical guardrails to ensure fairness, transparency, and compliance in AI-driven HR initiatives.

- **Derick Haire**, Managing Director, Edgewater Talent
- **Rodney Moses**, Managing Director, Edgewater Talent
- **Russell Allen**, CEO, BiotechExec
- **Andy Najjar**, COO, FutureSolve

12:00pm – 1:00pm Lunch & Networking Break (1 hour)



Presents

2026 HR Forum

February 11, 2026 | 8:30am - 5:00pm | Center for BrainHealth

1:05pm – 1:45pm Compensation in Context: Aligning Pay with Market Conditions (40 minutes)

Understand how to structure competitive and equitable compensation programs. This session covers salary benchmarking, incentive strategies, and market trends, helping HR leaders ensure pay structures attract, retain, and motivate top talent.

- **Mitch Barnes, MBA**, Senior Manager, Human Capital, Deloitte
- **Lisa Shumpert**, Founder, Illuminated HR Solutions

1:50pm – 2:30pm Benefits 101: How to Build and Manage Employee Programs (40 minutes)

Discover the fundamentals of employee benefits, including health insurance, retirement plans, PTO, and wellness programs. Learn how to select, implement, and communicate benefits effectively to meet employee needs and stay compliant with regulations.

- **EJ Herring**, Vice President, Employee Benefits Advisor, Brown & Brown
- **Kimberly Rotto, PHR**, Vice President, Human Resource Outsourcing, Lockton Companies

2:35pm – 3:15pm Developing Your People Managers and Supervisors (40 minutes)

People managers and frontline supervisors shape the everyday employee experience—yet they are often promoted without the tools, confidence, or mindset needed to lead effectively. In this session, we will explore why investing in manager development is not just an HR initiative, but a strategic business decision with measurable returns. We will break down how strong managers reduce turnover, elevate performance, strengthen culture, and protect organizations from risk.

- **Stefan Werdegar**, Director of Client Solutions, Talent & Leadership Consulting, TSP, a Syneos Health Company (moderator)
- **Bob Benkowski, MBA**, CEO, DesignPlex Biomedical
- **Irma Croteau, MEd**, Director of Human Resources, Swiss American CDMO
- **Samantha Fowlkes**, Vice President of Clinical Operations, Caris Life Sciences

3:20pm – 3:25pm Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

- **Eric Moore**, Chief Communications Officer, BioNTX

3:30pm – 5:00pm Networking and Talent Meet & Greet (1 hour and 30 minutes) (Lobby)

Connect with students and job seekers exploring opportunities in your company and field. Take this opportunity to engage emerging talent and build meaningful connections that could shape your organization's future.

5:00pm

Adjourn