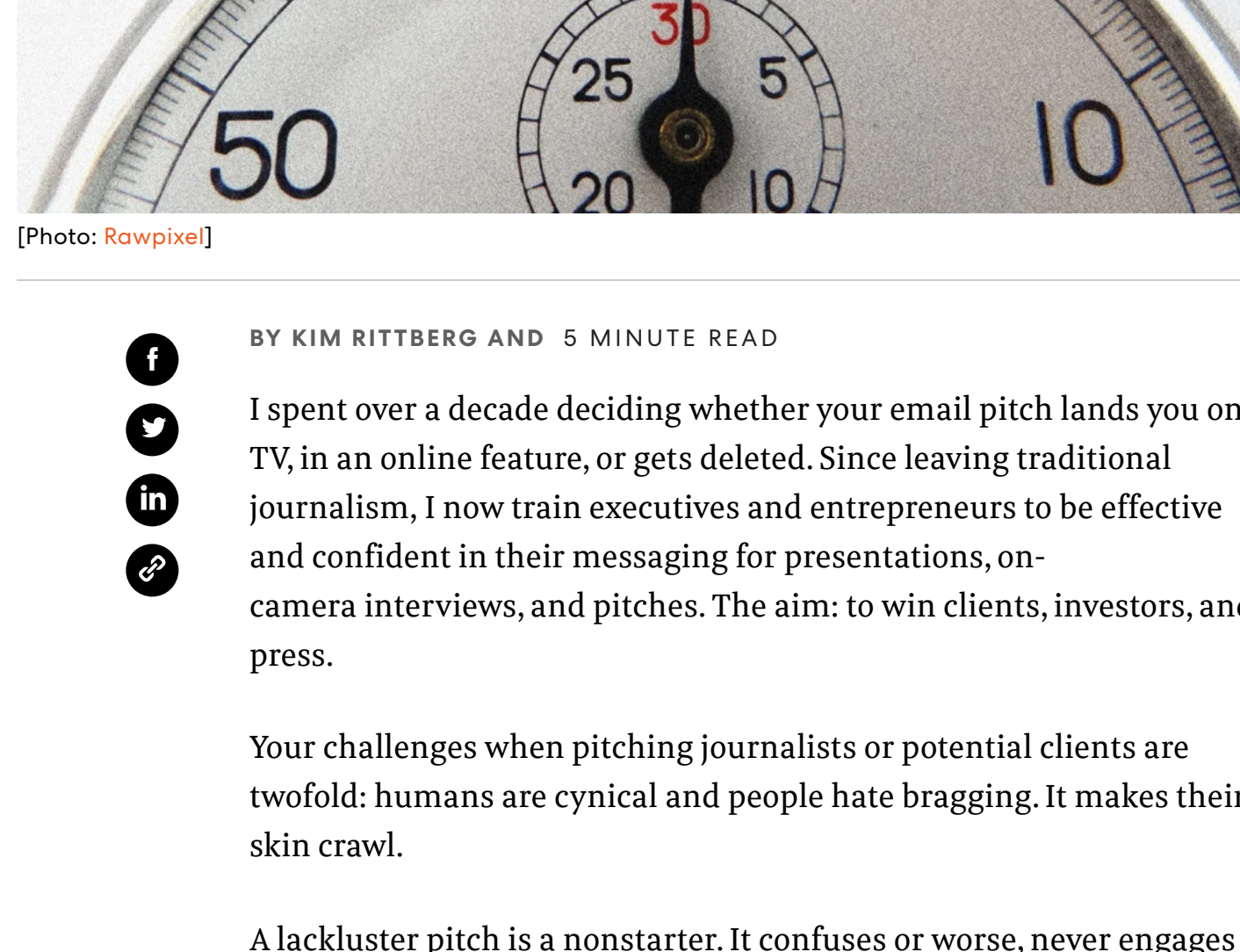


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# How to pitch yourself in 30 seconds

Humility doesn't pay the bills. Here's exactly how to get potential clients to say yes.



[Photo: Rawpixel]



BY KIM RITTBERG AND 5 MINUTE READ

I spent over a decade deciding whether your email pitch lands you on TV, in an online feature, or gets deleted. Since leaving traditional journalism, I now train executives and entrepreneurs to be effective and confident in their messaging for presentations, on-camera interviews, and pitches. The aim: to win clients, investors, and press.

Your challenges when pitching journalists or potential clients are twofold: humans are cynical and people hate bragging. It makes their skin crawl.

A lackluster pitch is a nonstarter. It confuses or worse, never engages the target audience. Many pitches are uninspired or overly humble leading to an actively disinterested audience. So here's how to pitch yourself or your company in a way that hooks and keeps your audience's attention.

The cornerstones of a great pitch are messaging and confidence. If either one is lacking, it just doesn't work. While I no longer am a national TV journalist, I still contribute segments on TV and articles online. And I now host a top 1.5% podcast, *Mom's Exit Interview*, for which I receive hundreds of pitches.

## ABC FRAMEWORK TO SELL YOURSELF IN 30 SECONDS

Here's my ABC Framework to Sell Yourself in 30 Seconds. It works whether it's aimed for clients, press, in public speaking or in the catch-all "elevator pitch."

### A) Accolades

Everyone hates bragging. But what's worse than bragging? Having no clients. You're now screaming: *but Kim, bragging turns people off, everyone will think I'm a narcissistic jerk!*

First, I can tell you that if you are worried about seeming like a jerk, you probably are not one. Remaining silent about what you do and have achieved isn't just a deal-killer, it's a never-stepped-into-the-room halt. As first impressions are made in less than 30 seconds, you need to lead with your accomplishments. You won a prize for your product? *Lead with that!* You've been featured in 10 press outlets? *Start there!* I can't tell you how many people hoping to be featured on TV would wait until their fifth sentence to mention their boast-worthy achievement. They already lost my attention—and I was being paid to listen to pitches!

The people you are pitching do not know who you are, what you've done, what you're passionate about, and how you can apply your unique mix of skills and talents to them. So you have to tell them—clearly and succinctly.

#### How to build accolades into your pitch.

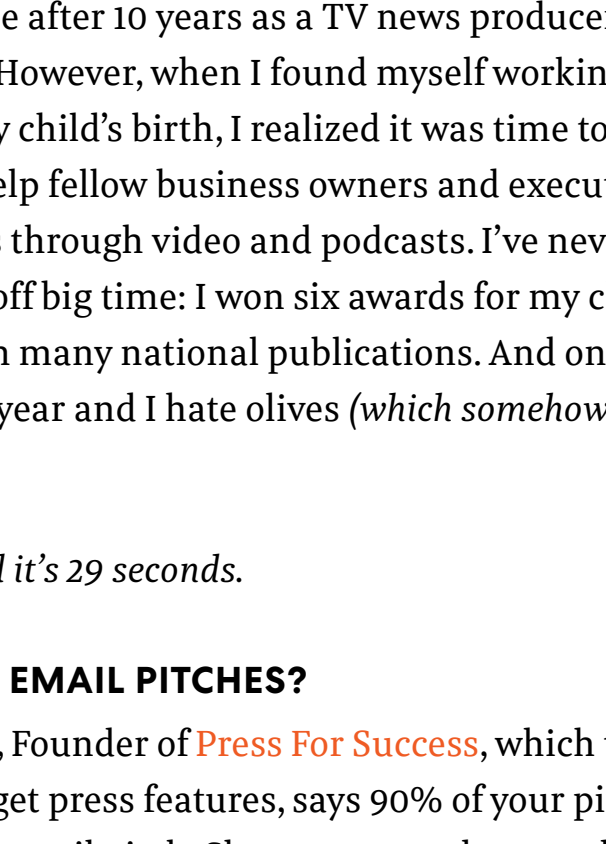
First, take stock of your accomplishments. These can be anything ranging from your sales figures to academic degrees and certifications to company growth to press features. Distinguish yourself in any way possible.

There are ways to make bragging more palatable—mix your accomplishments into a story, or say them with a wink and a nod. My trophies are visible onscreen as part of my Zoom background; when I mention to a potential client that I've won six awards, I jokingly point to my trophies, *Vanna White-style*, to make it lighthearted. And more importantly, I mention how that brag-worthy statement can help them. My clients are proud to work with someone who has won awards, and I'm proud to have won them—why shouldn't your accomplishments be part of your pitch?

Humility doesn't pay the bills.

### B) Business

After countless pitches, I was still wondering: *What does this person do? What are they selling me? As a journalist, How could I include them in a story? And as a podcast host, What will they say on my show?*



Be clear and concise when you state what you do. Make clear the transformation a client can expect and make sure to remove jargon. If you're pitching a journalist, most journalists tell stories to huge audiences, not niche experts, so you need to be very clear.

And make sure to include your "why." What has driven you to start your company, or if you're an executive, what's led to your success in rising the ranks? Former TODAY show producer *Patrice Poltzer* who is now a Storytelling & Founder Marketing expert says "so many founders lead their pitches with the what and the how, but the real connection happens from understanding the why." She encourages founders to start their pitch with "a vulnerable moment, a real moment so that their audience is able to quickly connect to them. Because once you have someone's attention, then they will be willing to listen and learn about your product or service."

### C) Confidence

Confidence is exuded not just from what you say but your body language—from the very first second.

This means you need strong eye contact, straight posture, and a smile from the get-go. Positivity can be spread through *emotional contagion*, so leave any negativity at the door. Ideally, connect in a human way. Tell a story, and leave a "conversational coot hook," a turn of phrase, or something about you that someone could connect with you about.

For example, my 30-second pitch using my ABC Method would be: I launched the digital video unit for *Us Weekly* magazine, leading to its \$100 million sale after 10 years as a TV news producer that included a stint at Netflix. However, when I found myself working in the delivery room during my child's birth, I realized it was time to launch my own business and help fellow business owners and executives become thought leaders through video and podcasts. I've never looked back and it's paying off big time: I won six awards for my client and have been featured in many national publications. And on a personal note, I did a solo gap year and I hate olives (*which somehow is very polarizing!*).

*\*I timed this and it's 29 seconds.*

#### WHAT ABOUT EMAIL PITCHES?

Sabina Hitchen, Founder of *Press For Success*, which teaches business owners how to get press features, says 90% of your pitching the press will *begin* as an email pitch. She recommends not to lead with your company name first. "You're wasting valuable real estate on your (currently unknown) company name. Instead, use that space to hook someone, or be clear on the timely story or tips you're sharing." She also recommends being clear and not aiming for a "clever newsletter subject. And keep it to 2-3 sentences or you're likely oversharing irrelevant information."

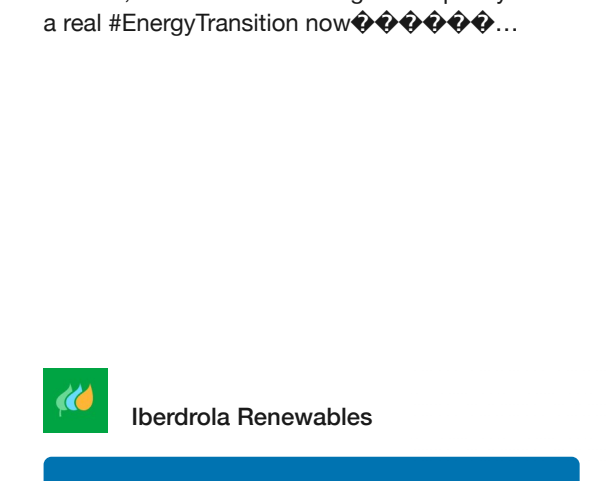
After you formulate your ABC pitch, then practice it over and over. In the mirror. Yes, it will feel awkward. Then practice it with trusted people, colleagues, friends, and family. By the time you can say it in your sleep, pump yourself up and inject some natural energy back into it.

ABC your way to success. *See what I did there.*

*Kim Rittberg is an award-winning Digital Marketer who helps professionals become thought leaders utilizing video and podcasts. She offers on-camera media training, public speaking and video and audio services and spent 15 years as a media executive before launching her own business. You can grab Kim's free download to "Pitch yourself in 30 seconds" here.*

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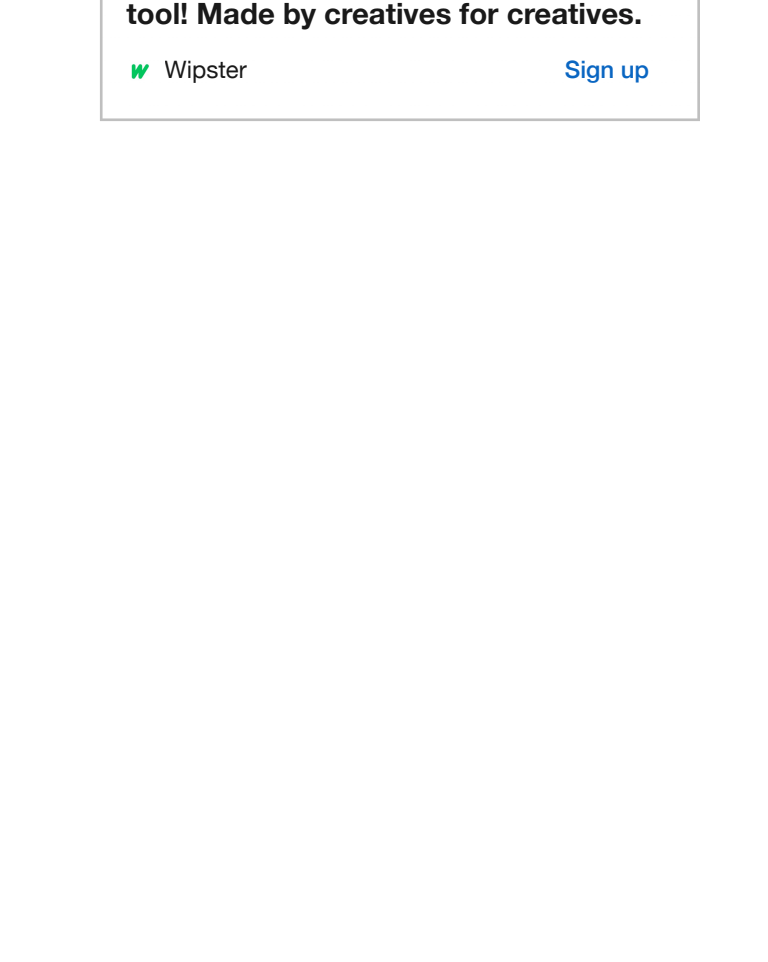
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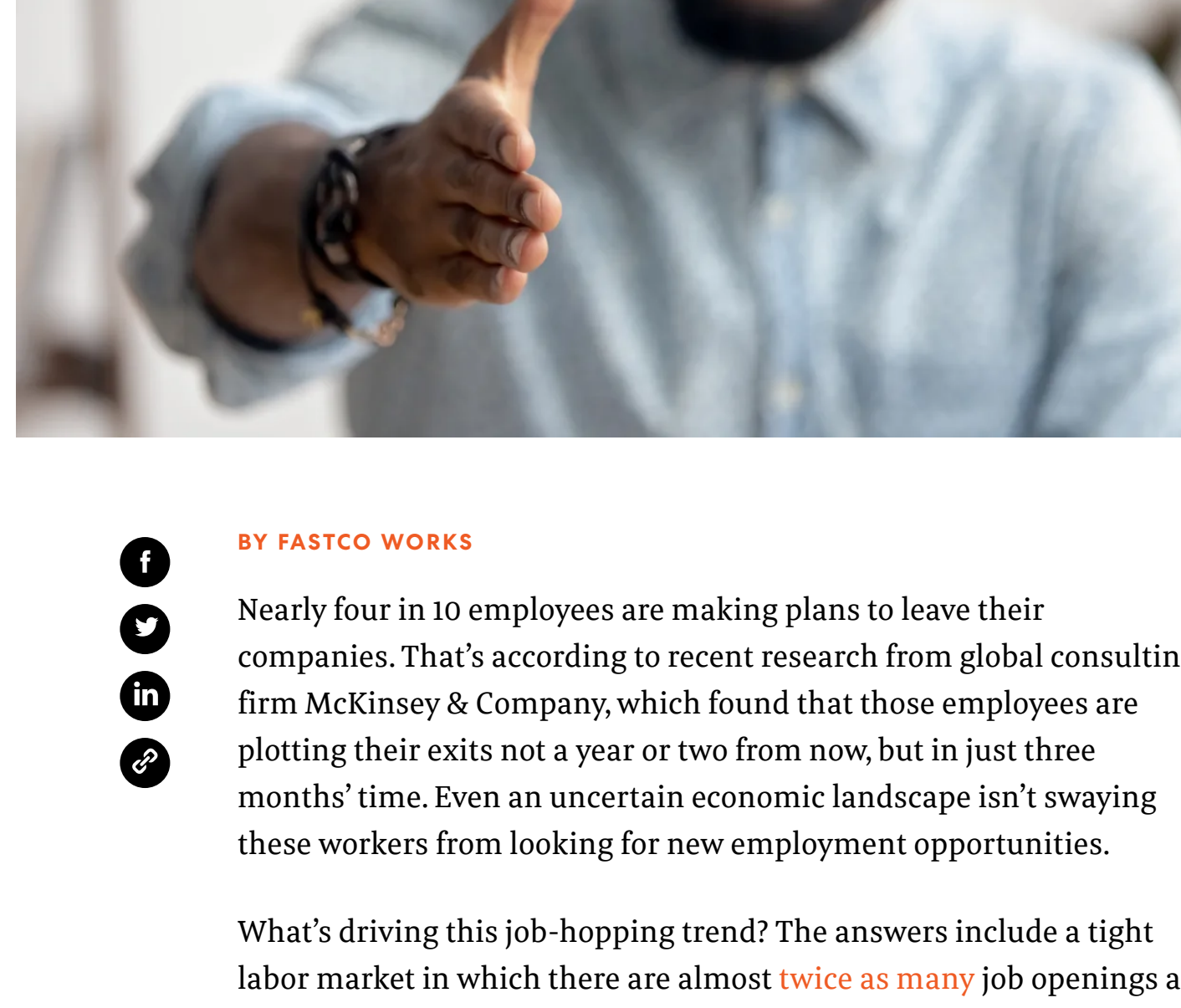
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06-23-23 | MCKINSEY & COMPANY

# Playing to win: The new rules for leading talent in 2023

How savvy business leaders manage human capital to drive performance



BY FASTCO WORKS

Nearly four in 10 employees are making plans to leave their companies. That's according to recent research from global consulting firm McKinsey & Company, which found that those employees are plotting their exits not a year or two from now, but in just three months' time. Even an uncertain economic landscape isn't swaying these workers from looking for new employment opportunities.

What's driving this job-hopping trend? The answers include a tight labor market in which there are **twice as many** job openings as job seekers. They also include changes in what employees expect from their employers, and the ways in which technology has upended when, where, and how we can work. Disruptive shifts like the evolution of the gig economy, which has blurred the lines between employer and employee, have given workers even more options. "All of this has created a big tension for organizations to try to understand a path forward," says Brooke Weddle, a partner at McKinsey & Company.

Unfortunately, many companies haven't acted quickly enough. As McKinsey notes in its "The State of Organizations 2023" report, companies have been grappling with these issues for several years, but have still struggled to keep up with the new contours of the labor market. Companies that once had little problem attracting new hires are finding it more difficult to find new talent—even amid a volatile economic environment. "Many companies will continue to struggle for a single reason: They don't understand why their employees left in the first place," says Patrick Guggenberger, a partner at McKinsey & Company and one of the report's authors.

For employers that do recognize what motivates today's workers—and adapt their strategies accordingly—that's good news. McKinsey's research shows that those companies aren't just winning the competition for talent. They're outperforming their peers in the marketplace as well.

#### ADAPTING TO THE NEW REALITY

At the beginning of the Great Recession, many companies reached for traditional levers to attract and retain talent. They upped compensation, dangled more senior job titles, and promised a higher ceiling for advancement. While this approach may have given companies a short-term boost, it didn't address the root cause of the talent squeeze—and left many companies to solve the same problems repeatedly.

By contrast, the companies that are having more success navigating the tight labor market are paying attention to how employees' expectations were changing—and are taking steps to adapt. That has meant tailoring their value proposition to appeal to different segments of the workforce, from working parents in their forties to single employees in their twenties. It's also meant modifying their hiring pitch—and benefits packages and workplace culture—accordingly. "It's about finding the right combination of attributes to meet the very individual needs of employees," Guggenberger says.

Companies have always focused on employees as individuals but haven't always applied a strategic lens to managing employees and attracting new talent. But McKinsey research found that today's successful companies are realizing the benefits of a more individualized approach. Employees these days want to feel valued and be inspired by the company's leadership. They want to feel a sense of belonging in the workplace and have a better work-life balance that keeps burnout at bay.

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Companies with strong focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with employee mental health and wellness, see dividends in the form of stronger employee attraction and retention and higher productivity. And companies benefit from more strategic approaches to matching talent that may not be quite even going so far as to hire promising talent that may not be quite ready for the job. "The organizations that can focus on people as much as performance experience outside gains in what they're able to achieve," Weddle says.

#### CHANGE STARTS AT THE TOP

To play by the new rules of attracting and retaining employees, C-suite leaders—including the HR execs who are increasingly shaping key leadership discussions—play a critical role. "The CHRO [chief human resources officer], CFO, and CEO are the triad of thought leadership for an organization," Weddle says. "They're critical to making connections between how you allocate financial capital and how you can activate human capital."

At Mars, Incorporated, which is profiled in the McKinsey & Company report, activating human capital means empowering associates to innovate, act, and grow in service of a common purpose. Mars identifies its professional development opportunities as a core competency. "Since joining the company more than 20 years ago, I have had far more access to training and mentorship than I have experienced at any other company," says Paul Wehrauch, CEO at Mars. "As a CEO, you must personally lead transformation and be willing to transform yourself. Only then will the rest of your company follow your lead."

These days, volatility is a feature, not a bug. Organizations need to be adaptable to keep pace with the constant—and sometimes seismic—shifts in their industries and the world at large. Applying the resilience lens to attracting and retaining talent is one way that companies can ensure they're ready for what's to come. "We're seeing research that points to adaptable and resilient leaders—from senior executives to middle managers—driving more dynamic, high-performing organizations," Weddle says. "And that's critical for today's environment."

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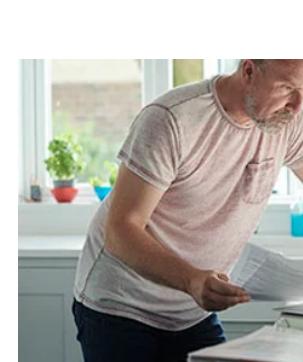
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