

## **BUSINESS INSIGHTS**

Terry Simmons, vice president of Global Purchasing at Baxter International, reveals how he works with Human Resources to achieve company-wide success.

Simmons describes Global Purchasing as “the third leg of a stool,” the other two legs being the customer and the employee. Together, the legs balance and support the corporation. Baxter’s Global Purchasing division spends \$5 billion worldwide managing 35,000 suppliers. Just shy of 200 employees with over 50 percent of those positions located outside the United States, the Purchasing team has a unique set of challenges. Simmons says his role as vice president of the function, in addition to staying on top of cost savings initiatives, involves keeping that three-legged stool level.

Three facets of Global Purchasing--its global presence, unique staff development needs, and retention considerations--inform how Human Resources collaborates with Simmons’ area.

### **Global Reach**

No longer U.S.-centric, Global Purchasing relies on HR to help develop a culturally diverse and inclusive purchasing workforce. This includes using the best approach to adapt formal documentation to a global environment and to understand the needs of an around-the-clock staffing model. “We are mindful that the team is global and that necessitates expanding our 9 to 5 mentality,” Simmons says.

Global Purchasing’s worldwide scope means the function works closely with HR to ensure employees’ safety and well-being as they travel. HR also helps monitor the impact of travel on the employee community..

### **Training and Development**

HR’s involvement in the strategy to align Global Purchasing employees with the area of the world in which they work includes focusing on how staff performs their work and how performance is measured. “HR plays a role by implementing the best productivity tools to ensure the team has the right tools to do their job effectively and efficiently,” says Simmons. “Together we’ve become more agile in our ability to modify the purchasing curriculum for training and development.”

He notes that the role of a purchasing professional “has evolved from a single competency of negotiating price to one that is multifaceted, with a broad span of competencies including global project management, communications expertise, and full knowledge of the business portfolio.” HR recognizes and quantifies these skill sets and recruits people with the right organizational, individual, and leadership competencies to fulfill that new role. Simmons notes, “With HR, we are assured of getting the right person in the right role, and that enables us to define a clear learning path on an individual basis.”

### **Retention**

“Challenge people to exceed their goals, while at the same time knowing when to pause and celebrate success. Occasionally pausing to recognize a job well done prevents burn out.” says Simmons. Balance is key to HR’s approach to retention. According to Simmons, “It’s about balancing the work environment with the work to be done and the training and development needs for individuals to perform at their best.”

Not surprisingly, retention is top of mind for Simmons. He says, “It’s one thing to train people for their current role; it’s another thing to provide an environment that’s both challenging and motivating enough to keep them.”

HR’s interaction with Global Purchasing to retain the right people for the right positions is complementary to the company’s global presence and fits well into the training and development programs to support an effective and balanced workforce that consistently achieves its goals. Simmons concludes, “The competency reviews, the training curriculum, and the retention efforts—HR plays a large role in that success.”