



CATAPULT
EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

HR CONFERENCE 20 Tech Enabled. People Centered. 26

Raleigh, NC | May 5-6
McKimmon Conference and Training Center

*BUILDING CULTURE IN
A DIGITAL WORLD*

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Meet the Keynotes

From Indeed to Tough Day, meet the names taking the stage.

Bruce Tulgan

Founder & CEO | RainmakerThinking, Inc.



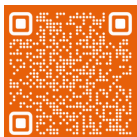
Katherine von Jan

Co-Founder & CEO | Tough Day



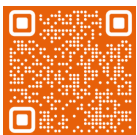
Dr. Laura Ullrich

Director of Economic Research | Indeed



Rod Gray

National Corporate Accounts Director |
Drylock Technologies





Agenda | Day 1

Registration, Networking, and Breakfast 8:00 am

Welcome & Introduction 9:00 am

Building Culture in a Digital World **Keynote** 9:15 am

Breakouts (Choose One) 11:00 am

- The Great Generational Shift
 - Connecting Purpose to People
 - How Are Companies Using AI – Panel
-

Lunch 12:00 pm

Breakouts (Choose One) 1:15 pm

- Legal Update
 - Future-Proofing the Workforce
 - Cutting Through HR Technology Overwhelm
-

The Practical Power of AI: Breaking Through Your Biggest Challenges **Keynote** 2:45 pm

Program
Day 1

Welcome & Introduction 9:00 am

Building Culture in a Digital World Keynote 9:15 am

Bruce Tulgan, Founder & CEO, RainmakerThinking, Inc.

Most managers simply don't practice the fundamentals of leadership on a regular, consistent basis, and the costs can be monumental. Bruce shares decades of research about what gets in the way for so many leaders and managers and how to tackle the most common challenges managers face. Get past the seven greatest myths about leadership and learn eight steps back to the fundamentals of high structure, high substance management communication.



Break 10:30 am

Breakouts (Choose One) 11:00 am

1. The Great Generational Shift — The Workforce Is Changing, Are You Ready?

Bruce Tulgan, Founder & CEO, RainmakerThinking, Inc.

Bruce shares decades of research about what makes generational difference in the workforce so uniquely challenging today: First, there is the numbers problem facing employers, which means that skilled workers will be in greater demand than supply for the foreseeable future. Second, there is a profound change in norms and values and expectations in the emerging workforce, and the new short-term transactional mindset. Third, we are all living through the most profound changes in work since the Industrial Revolution. Learn cutting-edge best practices for optimizing generational diversity in your organization and managing workers at every point on the generational spectrum.

2. Connecting Purpose to People — How Corporate Impact Fuels the Employee Journey

Carrie Reeder, Founder & CEO, Engage4Growth

Today's employees are bringing more stress to work than ever before—financial uncertainty, political division, loneliness, and fear of job instability. HR leaders are under pressure to strengthen engagement, retention, and culture in a time when traditional approaches aren't enough.

This session explores how purpose-driven impact strategies can transform the entire employee journey—from attracting future talent to creating legacy opportunities for leaders nearing retirement. Through data, storytelling, and practical examples, Carrie Reeder, founder of Engage4Growth, shows how aligning community engagement, volunteering, and corporate social impact with HR priorities builds resilience, belonging, and business value.

3. How Are Companies Using AI – Panel

Vance Moore, VP of Growth, Catapult Employers Association | Aubie Knight, CEO, IIANC | Skip Allen, Global Talent Director, Merz Aesthetics

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the way organizations operate, innovate, and compete. But beyond the buzzwords, how are companies actually using AI today—and what results are they seeing? Join us for an engaging panel discussion featuring leaders who are implementing AI across marketing, operations, customer experience, product development, and more. Our experts will share real-world examples, lessons learned, and practical insights you can apply in your own organization.

Lunch

12:00 pm

Breakouts (Choose One)

1:15 pm

1. Legal Update

Charlotte Smith, Labor and Employment Law Attorney,
Ogletree Deakins

Stay ahead of rapid legal change in this timely legal update designed specifically for HR leaders. This session will cover key federal and state employment law developments impacting today's workforce, with practical guidance on what HR professionals need to know now and how to prepare for what's next.

A dedicated focus will explore the growing legal and compliance implications of artificial intelligence in the workplace—including AI-driven recruiting tools, performance management, monitoring, and decision-making. Attendees will gain insight into emerging regulations, risk areas such as bias and data privacy, and best practices for responsibly adopting AI while protecting the organization and its people.

2. Future-Proofing the Workforce: Guiding Leaders Through Macro Talent Shifts, Knowledge Risk, and AI-Enabled Continuity

Nicole Higginbotham, Executive Coach, Catapult Employers
Association

For HR leaders who must help executives understand “what’s happening,” “what it means,” and “what to do now” across workforce risk, knowledge continuity, and AI-enabled talent strategies.

HR leaders are increasingly called upon to help executives make sense of rapid workforce shifts: demographic departures, shifting career preferences, capability gaps, hybrid work expectations, and the profound influence of AI. In this session, we'll equip HR leaders to educate organizational leadership on the macro dynamics reshaping talent today—and to introduce modern, practical strategies for future-proofing culture, capability, and business continuity at all levels. You'll explore how to de-risk institutional knowledge loss, strengthen ready-now/ready-next capability, design multi-path growth that aligns with evolving workforce expectations, and leverage AI as an enabler of capability, not a disruptor of culture.

3. Cutting Through HR Technology Overwhelm

Tammy Castro, CEO & Co-Founder, iAMHCM and Author of *Shiny Objects*

In a marketplace flooded with HR platforms, AI tools, and constant innovation, leaders often feel pressure to move quickly. But what happens when speed outpaces clarity?

This interactive roundtable invites HR and payroll leaders to candidly discuss the realities of technology overwhelm. Together, we'll explore how to distinguish true strategic need from industry noise, how to avoid culture-fracturing implementations, and how to keep people at the center of every tech decision.

Rather than prescribing a single framework, this session creates space for shared learning, practical reflection, and real-world insight from peers navigating the same challenges.

The Practical Power of AI: Breaking Through Your Biggest Challenges

Keynote

2:45 pm

Katherine von Jan, Co-Founder & CEO, Tough Day

AI is reshaping how work gets done—and those who learn to harness it will lead the next wave of innovation. Katherine von Jan, Co-Founder and CEO, Tough Day, will explore the latest advancements in AI and how they can help you overcome your five most persistent challenges. From streamlining operations to unlocking smarter insights, you'll gain a fresh perspective on what's possible and how to move forward with confidence in an AI-powered future.





Agenda | Day 2

Registration, Networking, and Breakfast	8:30 am
Welcome & Introduction	9:00 am
Winning the War for Talent: Two Fronts, One Fight Panel Discussion Keynote	9:30 am
Breakouts (Choose One) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using AI for Employee Culture• If Not You, Who?• Health Benefits Reinvented	11:15 am
Lunch	12:15 pm
Breakouts (Choose One) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• HR Nightmares• If Not You, Who?• The Power of Accountability in Leadership & Teams	1:15 pm
The Power of the Pen: Building Culture and Connecting in the Workplace in a Digital World Keynote	2:45 pm

Program

Day 2

Winning the War for Talent: Two Fronts, One Fight Panel Discussion

Keynote

9:30 am

Dr. Laura Ullrich, Director of Economic Research, Indeed
Dr. Cheryl Richards, President & CEO, Catapult Employers Association
Gary Salamido, President & CEO, NC Chamber
Brian Denisar, CEO, Bobbit Construction, Inc.

Dr. Laura Ullrich, Director of Economic Research at Indeed, will present a data-driven analysis of national and regional labor market conditions shaping hiring outcomes. The presentation examines how AI is influencing work today and the implications for jobs, skills, and productivity in the years ahead. The presentation concludes with an economic outlook that connects labor market trends to the broader economic environment.

Dr. Cheryl Richards, Ph.D., will then lead a distinguished panel of CEO's discussion on how companies are responding to the talent conundrum.



Break

10:45 am

Breakouts (Choose One)

11:15 am

1. Using AI for Employee Culture

Katherine von Jan, Co-Founder & CEO, Tough Day

Employee culture is evolving, and AI is changing how organizations understand and shape it. This session introduces Tuffy, an innovative AI tool designed to support stronger, healthier workplace cultures. Discover how AI can identify cultural friction points, elevate employee voices, and help leaders take timely, informed action. You'll leave with a new perspective on how technology can enhance—not replace—the human side of work.

2. If Not You, Who? The Breakthrough Strategy HR Needs to End Employee Disengagement

Jill Christensen, Best-Selling Author & Award-Winning Keynote Speaker

Organizations that lead in employee engagement outperform competitors by 147% in earnings and grow nearly twice as fast. In addition, engaged employees are 87% less likely to walk out the door. And yet, despite this undeniable evidence, only 31% of U.S. employees are engaged at work. So, the question is: Now that leadership has outsourced employee engagement to HR, how do you create a culture so extraordinary that people can't imagine leaving? In her best-selling book, *If Not You, Who? Cracking the Code of Employee Disengagement*, Jill uncovers the missing piece of the puzzle and reveals how HR can transform culture from the inside out. The payoff? Higher productivity. Stronger retention. Greater profitability. And renewed respect for the HR function. That's not just valuable... it's priceless.

3. Health Benefits Reinvented

Martha Barker, GBA, CFC, Benefit Services Manager, Catapult Employers Association | Patrick Long, Founder, HeroHealth | Steve Garris, Global Operations Executive, NC Chamber

Small and mid-sized employers face some of the toughest challenges in the health benefits market: rising premiums, limited plan choice, volatile renewals, and increasing employee expectations. But a new wave of innovative funding models is changing the landscape—and giving small employers more control, flexibility, and predictability than ever before.

In this interactive panel, healthcare and benefits experts unpack the evolving ecosystem of small-group health solutions, including group captives, Independent Coverage HRAs (ICHRAs), new NC Association Health Plan options, and other emerging approaches that blend cost-containment, customization, and competitive value. Attendees will walk away with a clearer understanding of which models work best for which types of organizations—and how to implement them successfully.

Lunch

12:15 pm

1. Managing the Unmanageable: HR Nightmares and How to Overcome Them

Linda Hunter, PHR, HR Advisor, Catapult Employers Association

Every HR professional has a story—the employee relations blow-ups, the performance issues that spiral, the policy violations no one saw coming, and the “I-can’t-believe-this-is-happening” moments that land on your desk at 4:55 p.m. This breakout session dives into the real-world HR nightmares that keep leaders up at night and equips you with practical, legally sound, and confidence-boosting strategies to tackle them head-on.

Through scenario-based discussion, expert insights, and take-home tools, we’ll explore how to de-escalate tough situations, navigate competing priorities, communicate with clarity and authority, and turn chaos into constructive outcomes. You’ll learn how to protect your organization and support your people—while keeping your sanity intact.

2. If Not You, Who? The Breakthrough Strategy HR Needs to End Employee Disengagement

Jill Christensen, Best-Selling Author & Award-Winning Keynote Speaker

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3. The Power of Accountability in Leadership & Teams

Bradley Kirkman, Author and Professor, NC State University

Accountability is more than a workplace expectation—it's a catalyst for trust, performance, and organizational success. Yet many teams struggle with what accountability truly looks like in practice and how to build it into their culture, especially in a hybrid and tech-enabled world.

Join us for an insightful session exploring why accountability matters, how to foster it, and what leaders can do to create environments where commitments are honored and results are achieved.

The Power of the Pen: Building Culture and Connecting in the Workplace in a Digital World

Keynote

2:45 pm

Rod Gray, National Corporate Accounts Director, Drylock Technologies

In a fast-paced, digital-driven era where communication often gets lost in the chaos of emails, texts, social media posts and instant messages and notifications, how can HR professionals stand out and build authentic relationships? Join Rod Gray for an engaging 60-minute presentation, "The Power of the Pen: Building Culture and Connecting in the Workplace in a Digital World," where Rod explores the transformative impact of handwritten communication in the workplace.

This session is designed specifically for HR professionals who are eager to foster stronger connections within their organizations. Rod will delve into the compelling reasons why handwritten notes hold a unique power in an age dominated by digital interaction showing how they not only enhance personal connections but also contribute to a positive workplace culture.

Through a dynamic mix of insightful statistics, real-life HR stories, and practical strategies, you'll learn:

- The psychological benefits of handwritten communication and how it can elevate your employee engagement efforts.
- Creative ways to integrate handwritten notes into your everyday HR practices, from candidate follow-ups to internal relationship building.
- How modern tools, including AI, can assist you in crafting heartfelt messages without compromising their personal touch.
- Actionable steps to make writing handwritten notes a regular habit, empowering you to cultivate a culture of appreciation and support.

Expect to leave inspired and equipped with tangible strategies to implement in your organization, along with a challenge to commit to writing at least two handwritten notes each week.

Discover the art of meaningful communication and learn how a simple ink pen can make a profound difference in your workplace culture. Join us and unlock the power of the pen!

