




Eliassen Group: Changing the game to retain top talent

Quick facts

 **Name:** Eliassen Group

 **Industry:** Strategic consulting, talent solutions

 **Employees:** 2,550

 **Headquarters:** Reading, Massachusetts

Eliassen Group delivers strategic consulting and talent solutions that fuel innovation and business results. The group partners with clients to combine business objectives with its expertise, empowering them to execute business strategy and scale their business effectively and efficiently. With more than 30 years of success and offices from coast-to-coast, Eliassen Group offers local community presence and deep networks, as well as national reach. Hear from Vice President of HR, Heather Jordan, as she shares the company's journey, partnering with ADP's Strategic Advisory Services.

Tending to our own talent needs

In recent years, the Eliassen Group's expansion strategy has been a combination of organic growth and mergers and acquisitions (M&A). You might say we adhere to an "active" M&A operating philosophy. Despite the turmoil M&A can sometimes bring, we've maintained a solid track record of combining a strong culture with attracting talent and minimizing turnover.

Over the past few years, the company experienced substantial growth through multiple mergers. The resulting scenario made it clear the cultural impact of that deal could potentially be disruptive.

Given the nature of our business, we are keenly aware of how expensive turnover can be. Plus, turnover is becoming especially acute with today's younger demographic, as many employees don't blink at switching jobs if they are unhappy at their current employer. It's critical for an organization to understand what is important to their workforce.

Eliassen Group leadership believed that to maintain its M&A track record of success, it was time to re-energize our talent management strategy. That decision also was driven by workforce data and feedback indicating that employees weren't quite sure how they would grow professionally as the company continued to expand. Taking it all into consideration, we began working with the ADP Strategic Advisory Services team, who collaborated with us to build talent strategies that fit our latest challenge.

Learn more about Eliassen Group at
eliassen.com



Critical questions to answer

Some of the key questions we asked and answered when developing a talent roadmap were:

- Where does our business want to be in three to five years?
- What are the critical roles/ job family that will execute our strategy?
- What are the critical skills, number of associates that we'll need and that we will have?
- What is the talent gap, if any?
- Finally, what are we going to do about it today?

Other critical questions might be:

- Where are we overstaffed or understaffed?
- What is our average position tenure?
- What is our average time between promotion?
- Also, and this is very important, do we have access to this data and how are we sharing that information outside of HR with business units?

We chose to pursue four key actions to change our talent acquisition strategy and retention approach.

1. Adopted a big picture approach.
2. Began to enhance our brand internally and externally.
3. Committed to a sharper focus on the overall culture and employee experience.
4. Launched a people strategy designed to keep turnover to a minimum.

ADP's Vitality Report: Excellent resource

When we were thinking big picture, ADP's Strategic Advisor, Dr. Susan Hanold, offered a look at the company's Workplace Vitality Report, a data-driven system that delivers indicators and real-time data for both month-over-month and year-over-year changes. The [ADP Workforce Vitality Report](#) metrics proved highly useful. We could easily click on different ways of looking at the metrics: by wages, changes in wages for job holders, for job switchers, turnover weight, changes in hours worked for job holders and total employment growth. ADP derives the data from a real sample of approximately 250,000 companies and 18 million employees each month.

Additionally, we got a big picture view from [ADP's Eye on Washington resource](#), which ensures that we can closely follow all state legislative and regulatory measures affecting employment. We were especially interested in minimum wage trends and how they are impacting compensation.

Developing people first

Moving even deeper into our specific scenario, when we talk about developing a people strategy, the first thing that emerges is the link between people strategy and business strategy. It's very important to know the two are aligned to obtain leadership buy-in and create a cohesive plan. Before we could understand what programs receive the most focus, we had to understand the type of talent that we wished to attract and retain, and then what is most important to those key groups.

Some things we asked and answered with ADP's input are:

- Who do we want to retain and attract?
- What is our growth strategy?
- What market areas are we going to expand into, if any?
- What is our compensation strategy?
- And where are we, as a company, willing to invest?

Most often, these questions can be identified by speaking directly with the leadership team to truly understand where the company is headed.

Metrics matter, a lot, so in 2020 we also will be tracking effectiveness. Based on projections, we expect a minimum a 20% decrease in the undesired turnover. The next step, as the year progresses, is to go back to leadership and deliver our successful progress metrics.

Heather Jordan

Vice President, Human Resources



Using data to inform strategic initiatives

In 2018, the reasons employees gave for leaving our organization centered around career growth and training/development. Again, with ADP's help, we took the data and focused on our 2019 initiatives, developing programs and processes in those top two specific areas.

To boost those initiatives in 2019 required investing in new systems and technologies, so we planned roll-outs of talent management and career path programs for 2020. Metrics matter, a lot, so in 2020 we also will be tracking their effectiveness. Based on projections, we expect a minimum 20% decrease in the undesired turnover. The next step, as the year progresses, is to go back to leadership and deliver the successful progress metrics.

Culture, engagement and critical challenges

On the engagement and culture front, again working with our ADP Strategic Advisor, we've added new programs resulting in 80 staff members actively engaged in our culture and diversity initiatives. The results were encouraging. Employee Net promoter Score (ENPS) feedback across our five regions delivered two "world class" ratings, one "excellent" rating, two "good" ratings, and most importantly, none were rated "poor."

Along the way to those results, ADP cited a trend today of more touch points and increased employee check-ins within the role of manager as coach during the day-to-day flow of work. ADP also showed how the tools to gather that critical data must be engaging, easy-to-use and at the employees' and managers' fingertips. So rather than the traditional annual performance review, we focused on implementing more frequent, continuous feedback loops. Plus, rather than webinars and classroom training alone, which are effective, we're developing new outreach models, including mentorships and shadowing programs. And we now encourage our employees to no longer focus on a one-dimensional career ladder approach (where an employee can only go in a single direction, up); we talk about considering "career mosaics" that have lateral and vertical movement as well, fueled by new knowledge and skills sets.

We strongly believe that HR and people strategies must adjust to meet both workforce and marketplace needs. With that, we are starting to encourage employees to take on their own career ownership planning and responsibility. HR and line leaders historically are expected to dictate and/or delegate career decisions. But individuals know themselves best, so shifting responsibility for career ownership to them makes the most sense for both employee and employer.

When you get to a certain size organization it can be a challenge to find resources to develop a talent strategy. Susan Hanold from the Strategic Advisory Services team helped by connecting me with experts at ADP and that helped with my direction on things like compensation structures and career pathing. She has a wealth of knowledge in talent strategy.

Heather Jordan

Vice President, Human Resources

With ADP helping, we are well on our way

As I said at the outset, in 2019 we took on substantial growth in hyper-speed mode. Both the C-suite team and HR quickly realized we had to tackle any potential disruption — especially as it related to turnover — with a strong, effective talent management plan.

Unexpected, unwanted turnover can be costly; it's a fact. To avoid that disruption, Eliassen Group needed to unearth what really matters to our workforce, as well as any new talent checking out our brand. That required an energy-boost for our own talent management strategy, and, with ADP's collaboration, we are off to a great start for the balance of the year and beyond.

For more from Eliassen Group, check out the [Changing the Game to Retain Top Talent](#) article.

