

HR future leader of the year

Winner

Steve Othen, REC

“As a former HR director myself, and a CIPD chartered fellow, I like to think I have a good ability to spot talent from within an organisation,” says Kevin Green, chief executive of the REC. “I have no hesitation in recommending Steve for this award, as it will help shine a light on someone I feel is a HR leader of the future and has a successful career ahead of him.”

He is talking about rising star Steve Othen, head of HR for the REC. In 2009 Othen got his first taste of real HR when he managed a restructure of the entire organisation, after being selected from a range of internal applicants to work with the CEO on the REC’s business plan, and assist in redesigning its values. The restructure was a full-time job and involved process redesign, staff communications, redundancies, job design, selection process, structure design, building new teams, change management, presenting to senior managers and more. This period was a huge time in REC’s history and Othen had a massive impact in guiding the project to success.

Following the implementation of this structure, Othen decided he would like to pursue a career within HR. And since then he has not looked back.

Over the last 12 to 18 months Othen has worked hard to successfully make a step change on how the REC views its people issues. For example, he has implemented a company-wide pay structure and policy designed to address historical pay gaps across the business. Being such an emotive subject, he formed this project with the financial director and an external consultant to develop a way forward.



Once this task was completed Othen made a recommendation to the senior leadership team about how to rectify the situation, how much it would cost, and what impact this would have on the business. For the first time the REC now had benchmarked data on who was underpaid, who was paid in line with the market, who was overpaid... and all of this in comparison to peers across the business. Line managers were then clear on what they should offer new starters and what they could say to colleagues requesting a pay rise. This has resulted in a 75% improvement in an area of the business in which staff turnover has been a long-term issue.

Shortlisted

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**Rachel Kent,
Shakespeare Martineau**

Under Othen’s management the REC has completely redesigned its recruitment, induction and onboarding process. He was adamant that feedback is collected after each induction for improvement purposes. He has also played a huge role in enhancing the external brand of the organisation and the industry by leading on the Good Recruitment Campaign, in which he developed a free network for HR directors, heads of resourcing and directors of talent to discuss and share good recruitment practice.

“Steve takes his responsibility seriously and is an ambassador for our organisation and for the HR profession in general,” says Green. “His confidentiality and trust is second to none and I, and other staff, trust him with various information that others will never know. He deals with this responsibility with ease.”

The judges highlighted Othen’s interest in self-development – he attends evening classes in his own time and self-funds his studies to continue improving his skills. They were impressed by his ability to change perspectives towards people issues, not just within his department but across the whole organisation. These skills set him apart as a leader of the future, and we expect to see him go far.

Green is also certain that Othen has a bright future ahead of him. “I have no doubt that Steve will be snapped up by a larger organisation in the not too distant future,” he says. “At 32, Steve has a long and successful career in HR ahead of him.”

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