



#Recfest2022

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Our top 10 TA Superstars

About the Event

RecFest 2022 offered a great line up of Talent Acquisition (TA) and Recruitment rockstars we're unlikely to forget any time soon. Held this year at the iconic music venue, Knebworth Park, we walked in the footsteps of some of the greats, Queen, Oasis, The Rolling Stones and... Adway!

What was clear from the fantastic speakers and events across all ten stages was that diversity and inclusion remains one of the critical talking points across the industry with discussions on the merits of building company-wide strategies that encompass candidates from all backgrounds and experiences. The conversation widened this year with talks from Salma Rashad on encouraging people back into the workforce and Gianina Harvey-Brewin, on growing early talent.



Hot topic number two was the ongoing discussion surrounding the future of work and how social media, AI, automation and data analytics continue to disrupt the TA space. Our very own Adrian McDonald delved into Social Media Recruiting and the business case for automated social media marketing.

If you attended RecFest this year and want an overview of our top ten to watch in the coming months or you missed the show and you're looking for the key takeaways from the best talks, discussions and conversations from around the festival - we've got you covered!



Clair Bush

Vice President of Marketing @Adway

Adway Top 10 TA speakers on our watch list:

(in no particular order!)

1. **AJ Thomas**
Chaos Pilot, People & Culture, X, the Moonshot Factory
2. **Adrian McDonald**
CEO, Adway
3. **Ashten Fizer**
Talent Brand Go To Market, Dropbox
4. **Yasar Ahmad**
Global VP - Talent, Hello Fresh
5. **Salma Rashad El Hamalawy**
Director of Global TA, Johnson & Johnson
6. **Heidi Wassini**
Global Head of TA and Employer Branding, Vivino
7. **Sonya Barlow**
Founder, Like Minded Females (LMF Network)
8. **Alex Her**
Manager, Employer Brand, GoDaddy
9. **Gianina Harvey-Brewin**
Associate Director, Employability & Apprenticeships,
University of Greenwich
10. **Torin Ellis**
Diversity Strategist & Consultant, The Torin Ellis Brand



AJ Thomas

Chaos Pilot, People & Culture, X, the Moonshot Factory



Bio: AJ is an experienced HR leader whose work across several enterprise technology and startup companies has shaped her unique approach to coaching and leadership. Her coaching style is founded on the principles of compassion, curiosity, and courage and she's passionate about bridging the gaps between talent, culture, and career. Her work focusses on curating access to education, learning and development for underrepresented talent, and shaping the future of work through empowerment.

She is the founder of [Infuse Program Foundation](#), a non-profit providing entrepreneurial experience to marginalised youth in San Jose. She and her 10-year-old daughter co-authored [Courage Takes Flight](#), a children's book raising money to support children's literacy globally.

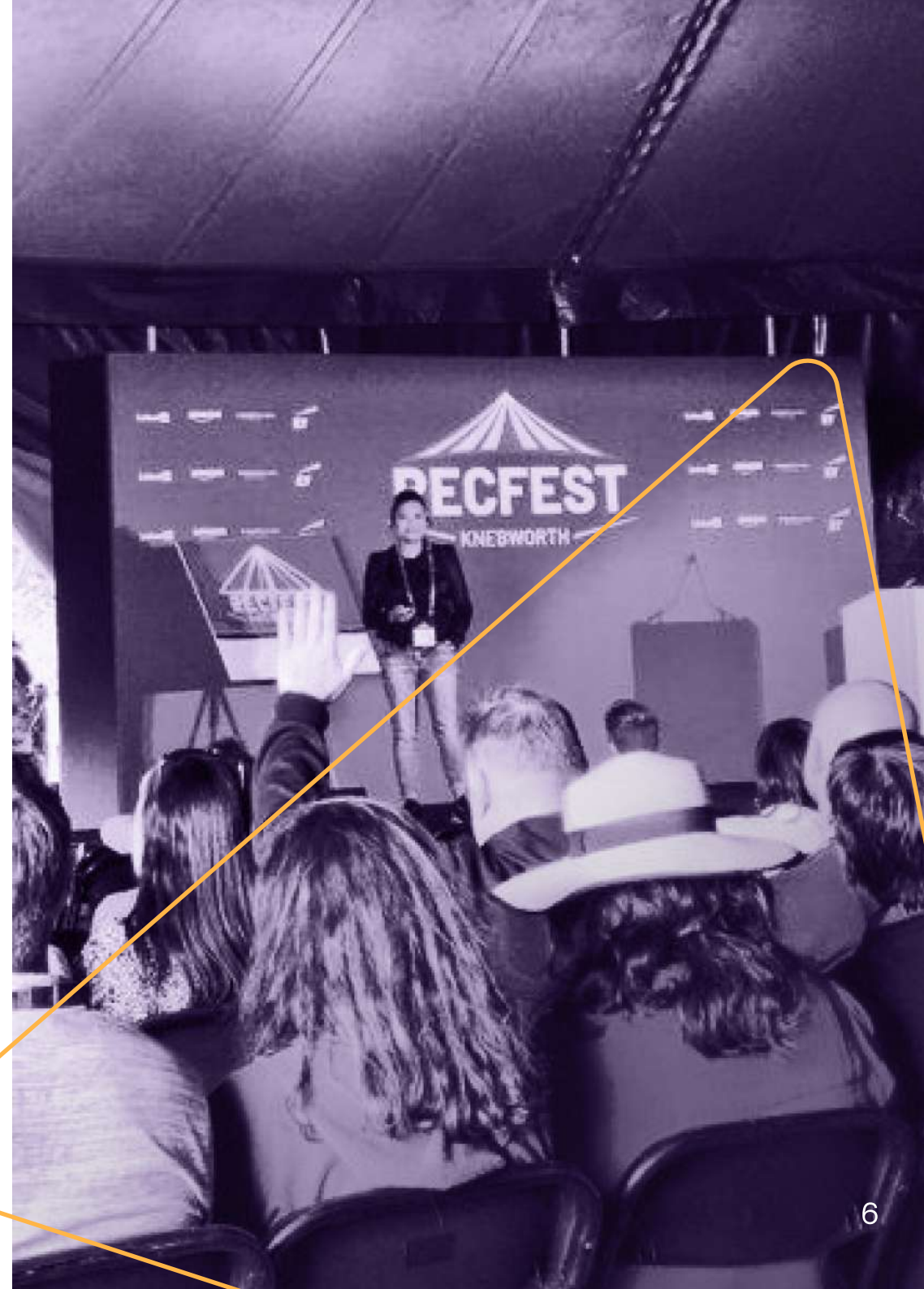
What AJ brought to the RecFest table:

Talent's Ultimate Playlist - Counting Down the Hits of the #FutureOfWork

AJ's talk on the Resourcing Leader's Stage centered on the ongoing discussion surrounding the future of work.

Let's face it, the last few years have been bumpy ones for TA and TA professionals but when hiring was turned upside down it forced us to come up with creative solutions and innovate how we worked. While none of us want to return to that period of uncertainty, we need to recognise its impact, build on the momentum provided and deepen our connections. This TA rockstar was in good company and featured cameos from Bowie, Queen, Bon Jovi and more!

Image © AJ Thomas





Adrian McDonald

CEO, Adway

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Bio: Adway's very own CEO and thought leader, Adrian McDonald, is passionate about all things AI, automation and being data driven! Adrian brings a wealth of experience developing new business models with emerging tech products and an interesting consultative angle to his approach to TA. Having spent four years coaching the founders and CEOs of some of the most exciting tech scale-ups in the Nordics, Adrian now focuses on the one and only, Adway.

Through AI and data-driven technology he helps large enterprises streamline and maximise talent pools, take their employer branding to the next level in less time and at lower costs than ever before.



The 101 on Adrian's talk:

Social recruitment, really?

Did you know that the average person spends 2 hours and 27 minutes a day on social media?

That's more time than we normally spend eating! Over half the world's population has mobile access to social media and an increasing number use social to find their next roles... TA professionals need to have a good grasp of why and how Social Media Recruitment is the most effective TA strategy to drive business growth. Adrian covered these stats as well as the components needed to deliver a seamless CX experience and the business case for adopting automation for your social recruitment marketing



Ashten Fizer

Talent Brand Go To Market, Dropbox

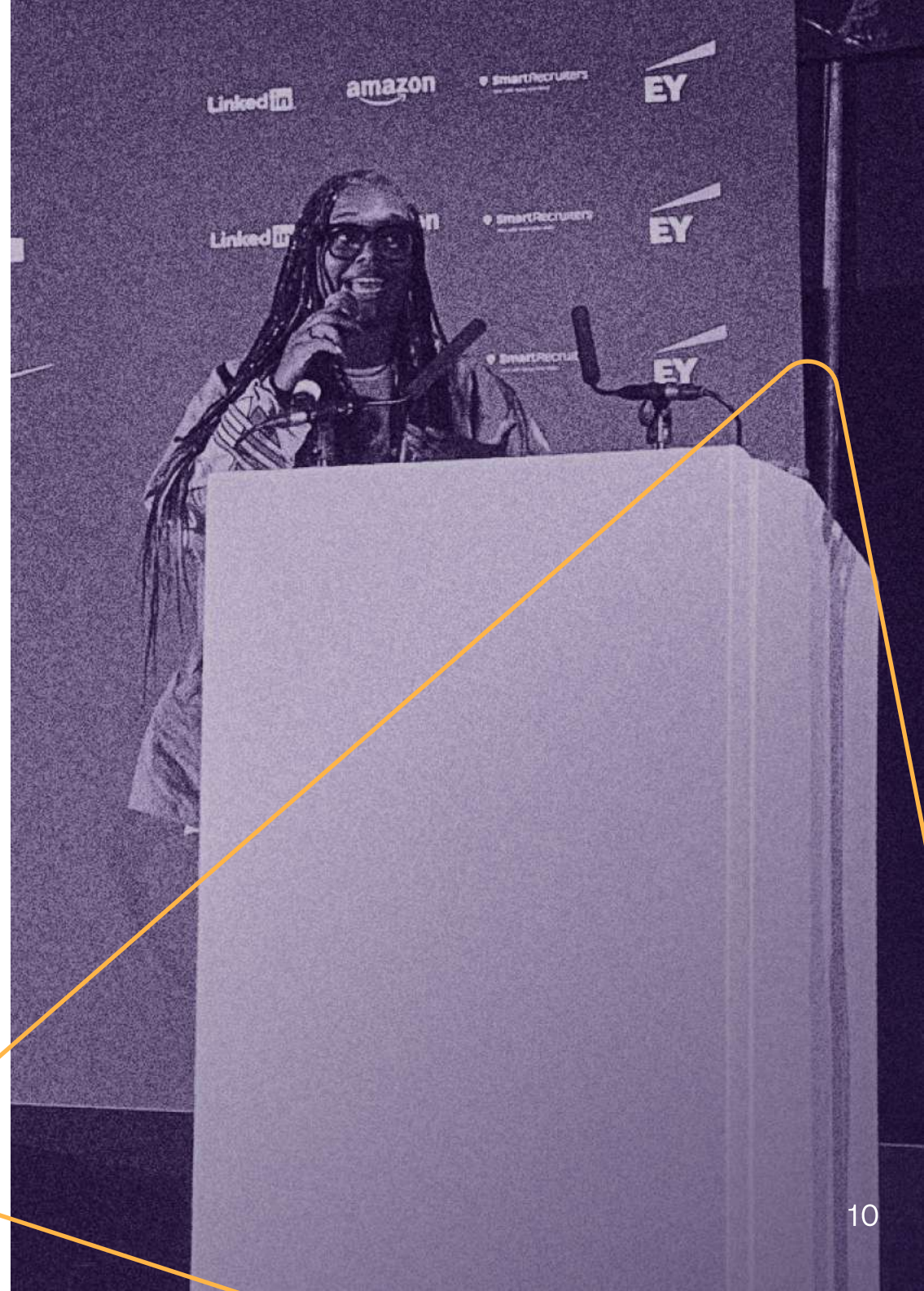
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Bio: Technically and creatively gifted, Ashten is an employer brand, diversity and inclusion fire-starter and has shined her light holistically on some of the world's biggest global brands. Currently responsible for ensuring Dropbox shows up in the right place, at the right time to the right talent, Ashten is driving activation of the employee value proposition across all geographies and channels.

What's the drop on Ashten at #Recfest22?

Ashten's perspective centres on the fact that the future is on our heels, and we must be present for it. Content creation and the audiences that we create for are digesting content in new ways and crave to feel seen. In her session Ashten dived into the newest content styles that wider audiences are seeking and how to use creative applications and social media algorithms to show up and stand out in our new virtual world.

Image © Alex Her





Yasar Ahmad

Global VP - Talent, Hello Fresh

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Bio: Yasar is an experienced HR leader who has over a decade of experience in TA and Talent Management. He's passionate about embracing digital innovation and automation to transform every aspect of organisations HR and people functions, from TA to global mobility, from diversity and inclusion to early career support for graduates and interns.

In almost a year as Global VP of Talent at HelloFresh he has supported company growth, catalysed industry change, introduced new functions around talent marketing, employer branding and talent intelligence (among others) and launched TA 4.0.



How to Build a Hiring Culture to Drive Great Hiring Results

Hiring isn't just the job of TA – it's a company-wide imperative and everyone needs to be on the same page when it comes to hiring. Yasar was in conversation with Annabel Nichols, Global TA Director at Avanade and Kevin Blair, VP of TA at Celonis to discuss how embedding a culture of hiring best practice at every level of your organisation can lead to incredible hiring results. Those attending were able to hear what the world's leading meal kit is doing differently in 2022 and how the development of new TA functions around Talent Marketing, Employer Branding, Sourcing, Co-Ordination, Operations, Talent Intelligence, Exec, Early Careers have led to business growth.



Salma Rashad El Hamalawy

Director of Global TA, Johnson & Johnson



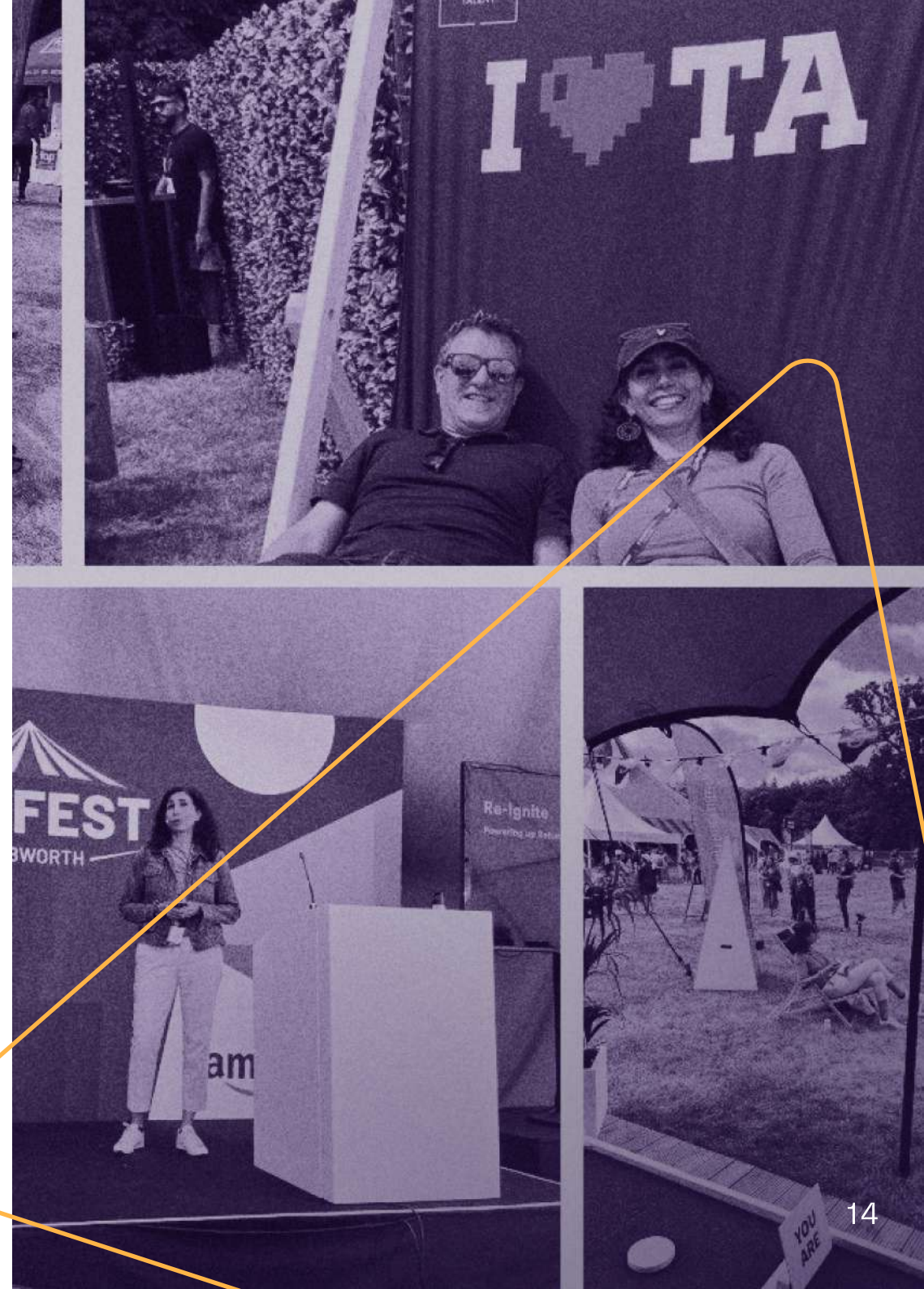
Bio: Salma is an engaging and passionate speaker and was named as one of Recruiter Magazine's 11 most influential in-house TA leaders in 2021. She began her career as an HR Manager and has worked in several different industries including retail, IT and banking before moving into resourcing and TA. As Director of Global Talent Acquisition for Johnson & Johnson (J&J) she leads a team of Executive Search professionals and steers the TA strategies that will help J&J identify, attract and retain the future C-suite leaders.

Salma's agenda for RecFest:

Re-ignite: powering up Returners careers to the world of STEM

Speaking on the Inclusive Hiring Stage, Salma treated us to a deep dive into the Johnson & Johnson returnership program, Re-ignite, and how the company helps people who have been outside the workforce for some time return to STEM roles through learning and development support and inclusive hiring strategies. She discussed how the program offers experienced professionals who have taken a career gap of two years or more can be successfully supported back into a STEM career path as well as the business benefits that can be gained from encouraging those with non-traditional career journeys back into the workforce.

Image © Salma Rashad El Hamalawy





Heidi Wassini

Global Head of TA and Employer Branding,
Vivino

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Bio: Heidi has an extensive background in Communications, Marketing, Product and Employer Branding as well as a wealth of HR and TA experience which she brings with her into the TA space and her role at Vivino.

She's passionate about creating talent acquisition strategies with a strong Diversity, Equality & Inclusion focus and developing authentic Employer Branding that enhances candidate experience and drives business objectives. She believes strongly in continuously challenging herself on her own biases and boundaries, expanding her knowledge, making the effort to understand other's differences, and encouraging others in TA to do the same.



Her areas of interest:

Purpose Driven Recruitment - 3 Ways to Increase DEI in Your Talent Strategy

The “War for Talent” can be considered a misnomer. Instead of a war for talent what we are experiencing in TA is in fact a “War for Skills.” In her engaging presentation Heidi explored why we are experiencing this grab for skills and what that means for businesses, for candidates and for TA professionals.

Image © Heidi Wassini



Sonya Barlow

Founder, Like Minded Females (LMF Network)



Bio: Sonya Barlow is an award-winning entrepreneur, influencer and leading expert on diversity, inclusion, entrepreneurship, confidence & personal branding. She is also the founder of **Like Minded Females** (LMF Network) a social careers platform and professional network designed to build the confidence and careers of women by focussing on providing masterclasses, business & entrepreneurship workshops and the UK's largest mentorship programme.

She has also been named as one of the most influential women in UK tech. All her work is focussed on enabling professionals to take charge of their learning and development and in 2022 she won a **Advertising Week x Pintrest Future is Female** award.

Sonya's summary for RecFest:

Women want confidence & careers - the guaranteed method to hire and retain female talent

The Like Minded Females Network found that the number one reason women choose not to enter a workforce, or fail to thrive, is lack of confidence. Sonya shared insights from the LMF Network on what women want from their workplace. Supporting mentorship schemes that TA professionals can implement to hire and attract more diverse talent, she wanted her listeners to know how to leverage knowledge on gender inclusion as well as data tracking and reporting to support your organisational needs.





Alex Her

Manager, Employer Brand, GoDaddy

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Bio: Employer Branding is all about storytelling and Alex captures and shares amazing stories to support GoDaddy's talent attraction and retention strategies. Based in Austin, Texas, he enjoys everything to do with content marketing, recruitment marketing, employer branding (EB) and digital strategy as well as helping talented job seekers find new roles. Alex is a founding member of the Employer Brandwagon, a community of employer branding leaders with the goal of raising the understanding of EB and sharing expertise, insights, and perspectives.



Alex's contribution for RecFest:

Employer Brand isn't a Solo Act

Alex broke down the principles behind successful employer branding as well as the work and collaboration needed to build an engaging, positive employer brand. Explaining how you can grow your brand through social media, how to manage campaigns and marketing projects and how networking and collaboration can strengthen your employer brand strategy.

Image © Alex Her



Gianina Harvey-Brewin

Associate Director, Employability & Apprenticeships, University of Greenwich



Bio: Associate Director for Employability & Apprenticeships at the University of Greenwich, Gianina is driven to help students gain a competitive edge in the graduate labour market. With experience in both the academic and professional sectors, Gianina is an inspirational speaker, effective leader and talented influencer who is passionate about creating meaningful engagement with employer partners on behalf of her students and graduates.

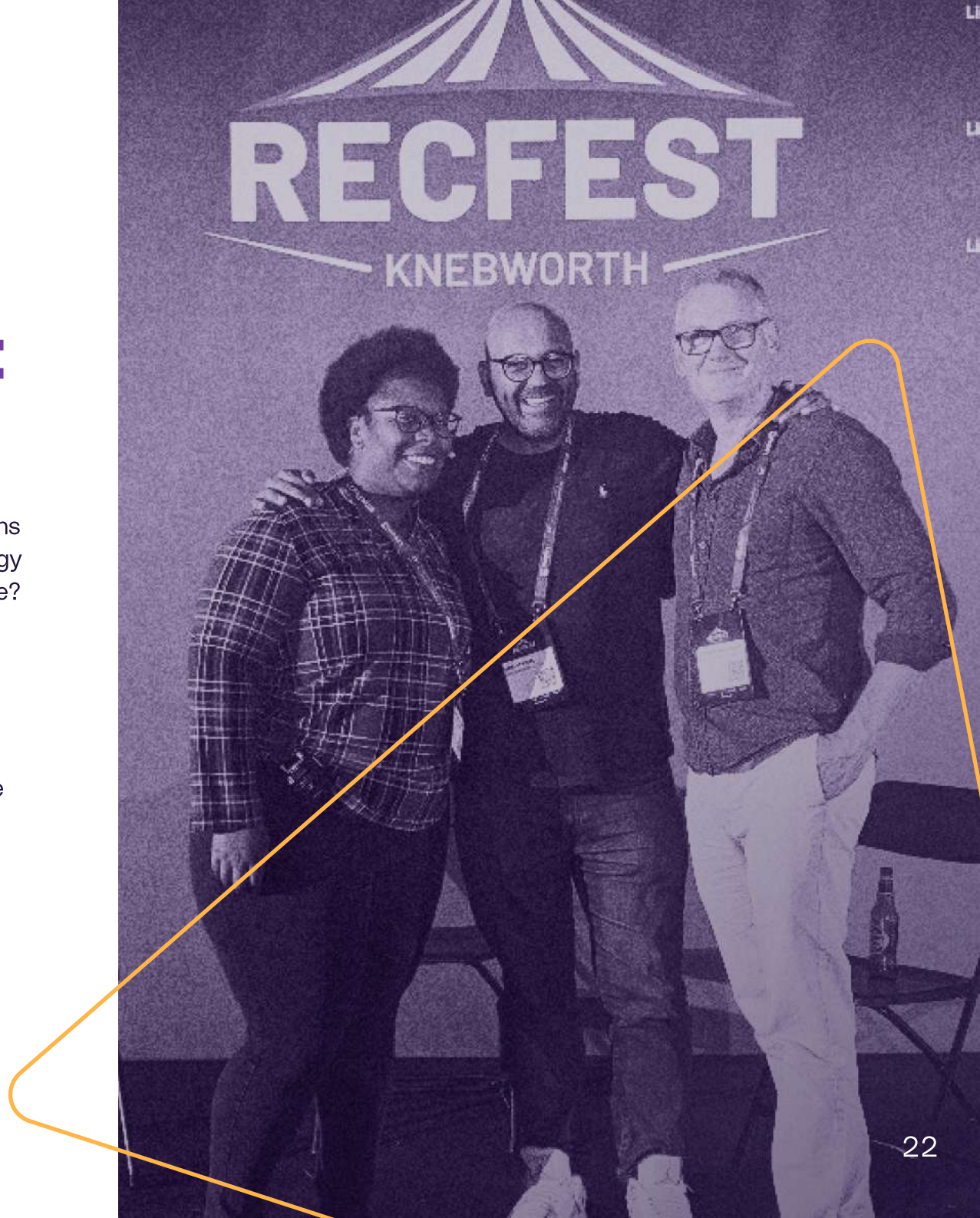
What Gianina wants you to know:

Win the war for early talent

The current talent market is extremely tough and organisations that fail to put early talent at the heart of their people strategy will struggle. So what approaches to early talent can you take?

Ultimately organisations have three options. To buy in talent, retain it, or grow it. Gianina, in conversation with Stephen Isherwood, CEO of ISE and Bob Athwal, Culture & Belonging Lead at Skyscanner, explored what a comprehensive early talent strategy should look like, how early talent can generate ROI and how you can secure board buy-in and investment to help win the war for early talent.

Image © Gianina Harvey-Brewin





Torin Ellis

Diversity Strategist & Consultant, The Torin Ellis Brand

Bio: Torin Ellis is a consultant and coach focussed on helping some of the most forward-thinking companies develop inclusion, representation and belonging strategies through the lens of recruitment. A dynamic speaker who draws on his personal experience as a BIPOC, he uses his position in the recruitment space to develop creative solutions that deliver great ROI. Torin operates from a place of love and transparency whilst challenging the status quo surrounding discussions on corporate diversity and inclusion processes.

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Torin's talking points:

Minus The Illusion – starting with the abstract

Drawing on personal Equal Opportunity Employment Commission statements, press releases, employee engagement and vanity metrics, his unique insights change your relationship to power and the way you approach diversity and inclusion as part of your talent acquisition strategy. By using real employees, he made us aware of how organisations and people defend themselves against change that threatens their social structures and explores the responsibility we all share to take part, and where necessary, force change.

Image © George Oehlert



Way simpler. Way smarter. Way more talent.

Adway connects you with the best talent in the market. By combining social media job advertising, automation, advanced machine learning software and data-driven human expertise, we support you in finding, engaging and converting relevant talent – all the while ensuring your employer brand presence increases to become talent's employer of choice.

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