



HR TECH **AWARDS**

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TALENT MANAGEMENT

BEST INNOVATIVE OR
EMERGING TECH SOLUTION


2022

GUILD 

Case Study: 2022 HR Tech Awards

Each year, technology companies across HR, talent, and learning apply for the HR Tech Awards to demonstrate the value they bring to their clients and to the broader industry. These case studies represent a sampling of the capabilities from the award winners in our program.

[Learn more about the HR Tech Awards.](#)

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| Company Name: | Guild Education |
| Website URL: | https://www.guildeducation.com/ |
| Insert Logo (JPG/PNG): |  |
| Key Customers: | Walmart, Walt Disney Company, Chipotle, Target, Discover, WM, Hilton |

About the Company

Guild Education is a social impact company that empowers American workers to unlock life-changing opportunities for personal and professional advancement through education, skill-building, and coaching. As a certified B-Corp founded to bridge the gap between education and employment for working adults in the U.S. in need of upskilling for the future of work, Guild's industry-leading technology platform allows the nation's largest employers — including Walmart, Chipotle, Discover, Hilton, Macy's, Target, and The Walt Disney Company — to offer strategic education and skilling to their employees. Guild connects workers to a learning marketplace of the nation's best learning partners for working adults with tuition paid by the company. Guild's payments and technology platform, curated learning marketplace, and advanced education and career services come together to help working adult learners advance in their education and career, debt-free.

Guild has seen significant market momentum and an increase in employers investing in education and skilling for their employees, given the unprecedented labor market trends. In the past year, Guild has launched partnerships with employers such as Kohl's, Macy's, Target, Hilton, and Herschend Enterprises, to further expand access to programs for their workforce that lead to a reduction in turnover, a more skilled workforce, and powerful gains in diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Problem(s) Your Technology Solves

In the last year, record numbers of employees (4.5 million in November 2021 alone), disappointed by the lack of purpose and human investment, and in search of greater opportunity, voluntarily left their jobs, creating talent shortages never seen before. However, organizations that have invested in education and skilling for their workforce have remained competitive in this war for talent, recognizing it as a powerful tool to attract new talent and retain employees. But simply offering education benefits won't satisfy workers in the long run. Instead, designing clear, well-defined career pathways helps employees map out the skills and training they need to move up to their desired roles and functions or beyond to new career opportunities. Such opportunities for continuous skill development can increase workers' sense of purpose, and provide pathways to economic mobility for employees.

Guild was founded to bridge the gap between work and education for working adult learners who for too long, were let down by a system that drove them to poor outcomes. An industry leader, Guild helps organizations build strategic education and upskilling programs for their workforces that lead to reduced turnover, more skilled workers, and powerful gains in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Employers who partner with Guild to invest in education and upskilling programs see an average of 2.8 times return on investment and a 34 percent higher retention rate for learners. In addition, engaged workers experienced career mobility through increased wages and promotions, with some employers having employees experience 2.4 times higher wage increases in their first year than those not engaged in the program and a 2 times higher likelihood to receive a promotion than their peers not in a learning program.

Moreover, Guild has pioneered an innovative model of tuition assistance that helps adult learners achieve these outcomes without incurring any short or long-term debt. Through its payments technology, employers pay tuition to learning providers directly on behalf of employees so employees don't have to pay out of pocket. As a result, Guild has helped learners avoid over \$500 million in student loan debt to date, and the overwhelming majority of learners Guild supports using tuition assistance – 97 percent – have no debt from tuition, textbooks, or fees.

Guild achieves strong outcomes for populations historically left behind by the higher education system: 52 percent of learners identify as a non-white ethnicity versus 40 percent in the U.S. workforce. In addition, by taking debt out of the equation, Guild creates more equitable opportunities for career advancement for all: Black participants in Walmart's program were 88 percent more likely, and Hispanic or Latino participants were 71 percent more likely to receive promotions than nonparticipants.



Client Case Study

Analysis driven by [Lumina Foundation study](https://www.luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/lumina-study-shows-the-benefits-of-walmart-employee-education-program/) (<https://www.luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/lumina-study-shows-the-benefits-of-walmart-employee-education-program/>) on Walmart's Live Better U (September 2021)

The Challenge: The retail industry faces an enormous challenge of competing in the war for talent, and the need to differentiate themselves from their competitors, with attraction and retention strategies besides the commodity of higher pay.

The Solution: As the industry faces challenges to attract & retain talent, Walmart has leveraged the power of their education program with Guild, Live Better U (LBU), to position the company as an employer of choice and underscore their commitment to career development.

The Results: As of April 2021, 336 Walmart associates have earned a bachelor's degree, 50 associates have earned an associates degree, 50 associates have earned a total of 1,805 certificates and nearly 2,400 associates have completed high school studies programs.

LBU also helped advance Walmart's efforts towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. 17% enrolled in bachelor's programs identify as Black. To underscore true mobility, LBU saw Black participants were 88% more likely and Hispanic/Latino participants were 71% more likely to receive a promotion. LBU also increased positive retention metrics, as participants leave the company at a rate of 4x lower than non-participants.

The program also helped achieve internal performance ratings for the company. Within 6 months of enrolling, participants increased their performance ratings by more than 10%, from 87% to 97%.

Lastly, Walmart has saved \$5.6M in tuition costs (payments avoided because students have already mastered the curriculum and earned credit).

Key Differentiators

Guild's platform and career marketplace were designed with a learner-centered philosophy and a systems-thinking approach to empower all employees, drive meaningful business outcomes, and streamline administration.

Before Guild existed, traditional tuition reimbursement catered to white collar workers and didn't address the barriers to access that most frontline workers faced when deciding to continue their educational journey. Moreover, in traditional tuition reimbursement, workers were asked to pay upfront



for education and then sent a reimbursement from their employer after they completed their course or semester. Unfortunately, this put higher education beyond the reach of most working learners who lacked the savings to front the money and pursue their educational aspirations. It also forced the working learners who did use the program into costly debt.

Guild specifically launched its platform to address this issue and make debt-free education pathways available to employees – especially frontline workers. Since 2016, Guild has expanded its platform to become the comprehensive technology and payments system to support the education and career advancement of the American workforce. Additionally, Guild’s data supports helping workers better document, validate, and share their skills and competencies – both on the job and in the classroom – to advance their education and career.

The Company Behind the Technology

Guild is on a mission to unlock opportunity for America's workforce through education, skilling, and career pathways, starting within the organization and for its own employees.

Guild is committed to building a diverse and equitable workforce. Guild equips its six Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) (AAPI Guilders, Black Guild Network, Disability Action Community, Gender & Sexuality Diversity, Unidos@Guild, and Women@Guild) with three elected leaders each, an Executive Sponsor, and a budget to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to drive change. These groups partner with one another under Guild's central DEI Team's guidance and connect with cross-functional teams as relevant. They are hubs for community building, leadership development, and business innovation as Guild aims to consistently improve its workplace culture and the execution of its mission to support learners in accessing education and career mobility.

Over 52 percent of Guilders belong to an ERG. Guild also runs a twice-annual pay equity analysis to ensure equitable pay and promotions across seen and unseen demographically diverse categories. Guild also implemented anti-bias practices to review job descriptions for bias and exclusionary language. Over this year, 14.8 percent of hires – Director-level and above – identified as Black, and 24.1 percent identified as Hispanic.

In 2021, 747 Guild employees – Guilders – participated in at least one development offering. Options included: “Guild for Guilders”, which is Guild’s own education and upskilling program, Manager Essentials, Daring Self Leadership, BetterUp, and/or Team Development.



Guild believes strongly in lifelong learning and sees education as a meaningful way to grow employees' careers at Guild. Through Guild for Guilders, Guild offers employees multiple paths to meet their educational and professional goals, including through associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees and certificates and stand-alone programs.

Guild for Guilders gives employees access to the platform and programs Guild offers to employers' students to better support employees' ability to grow within and beyond Guild.

All People Managers are encouraged to participate in Guild's Manager Essentials program – two programs designed to define fundamental people management practices at Guild. The quarterly program focuses on core behaviors, critical skills, resources, and tools for what it means to be a People Manager at Guild.

Daring Self Leadership is a three-session virtual program over five weeks, based on the work of Dr. Brené Brown's Dare to Lead (<https://daretolead.brenebrown.com/>). Guild's values are integral to the organization's success – as individuals and as an organization. Daring Self Leadership offers employees an opportunity to explore these values in themselves and others. In these virtual sessions, Guild employees discuss the core concepts of leading with courage, vulnerability, empathy, and trust, developing clear communication, strengthening resilience while moving away from fear, and enhancing the values participants hold central to their lives. Employees can lead others more effectively and authentically by first leading as individuals in ways that elicit vulnerability and empathy.



About Lighthouse Research & Advisory

[Lighthouse Research & Advisory](#) is a modern, independent analyst firm dedicated to setting the standard for excellence in talent, learning, and HR with practical research and a hands-on approach. By providing compelling research and actionable insights, our team enables HR, learning, and talent leaders to deliver more value to the business. Our research examines competitive practices, cutting-edge technologies, and innovative strategies.

Ben Eubanks is the Principal Analyst at Lighthouse, providing insights for today's talent leaders and vendor partners. He works with practitioners from areas across the HCM spectrum, delivering high-quality research, insights, and advisory services to enable better business performance. His book, [Artificial Intelligence for HR](#), was published in 2018.

Prior to joining Lighthouse, Ben worked as a researcher, writer, and speaker for nearly more than 10 years, focusing on learning, talent acquisition, and talent management. During his tenure as a researcher, he has published more than 1,000 reports, case studies, and articles in addition to providing advisory services to executives from some of the largest and most respected organizations in the world.

He also has hands-on experience working as an HR executive, leading both strategic and tactical talent practices and giving his research a distinctly practical perspective. Ben has interviewed business leaders from notable organizations such as Southwest Airlines, IBM, H&R Block, McDonald's, AARP, and AlliedUniversal in his role as the host of [We're Only Human](#), a podcast focused on the intersection of people, technology, and the workplace. In addition, he founded and operates [upstartHR.com](#), a community serving HR leaders that has reached more than one million readers since its inception.

