Bernadette Brown MSc, PG Dip, PGCE, BA (Hons)

Global change, leadership and talent strategist

Executive coach

Former Global Director of Talent

Working globally, remotely and in person

For start-ups, SMEs and business units in transition

Fractional HR Director

Senior strategic thinking for a defined period, without the cost or commitment of a permanent, full-time director

- I have led HR in global, blue-chip organisations. Now I bring that experience to other ambitious businesses at a point of change.
- A business psychologist's eye for what really drives your people, so you lead with evidence, not instinct.

> **The end goal:** the CEO or MD becomes the genuine owner of people strategy, rather than deferring to HR.

GET IN TOUCH

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What a Fractional HR Director Is, and Is Not

A Fractional Executive is an experienced senior leader in a genuine leadership role, working part-time: a set number of days each week or month. Fractional CFOs, CTOs and Marketing Directors are increasingly common, and a Fractional HR Director follows the same model.

How it compares with the alternatives:

Fractional HR Director	Embedded in the business. Makes decisions and owns outcomes.
Permanent HR Director	Full-time and ongoing. In a smaller business, the reality can turn out to be an HR Operations Manager at director-level cost.
Consultant	Advises from the outside, with no operational accountability.
Interim HR Director	Works full-time to bridge a gap until a permanent hire is found.

A Fractional HRD brings senior, strategic leadership at the moments that matter most: periods of growth, transition or significant change.

> Best suited to start-ups, SMEs and business units at a point of change: organisations that need senior strategic thinking for a defined period, without the cost or commitment of a permanent, full-time director.

A Strategic, Time-Limited Role

In practice, the role works at a strategic level: leading change, not running day-to-day HR operations.

1. Set direction

Agree strategy and priorities, aligned with the CEO or MD's vision and based on real data

2. Design the transformation

The Target Operating Model, structure, processes and approach

3. Lead change at every level

From the CEO or MD and senior team to managers, staff and HR, galvanising people across the organisation

Time-limited by design. The aim is to build a people system that runs well without full-time director-level involvement, with day-to-day operations in the hands of the right permanent HR roles. Once the core work is complete, an ongoing advisory arrangement can provide continuity and senior counsel when it matters.

> **The aim: a CEO or MD who owns people strategy with confidence, and a leadership team equipped to deliver it.**
>
> Drawing on specialist expertise that the business would not otherwise have.

What I Bring That Most HR Directors Do Not

Underpinning everything I do is deep expertise in business psychology: uncovering the real drivers of individual, team and organisational behaviour, and turning that insight into structure, hiring decisions and leadership development that deliver lasting change.

CEO advisory and coaching
A candid thought partner on people, structure and leadership

Talent acquisition
Structured, end-to-end, behaviourally based hiring

Talent management
Identifying and developing high-potential people

Leadership assessment
Hogan-based, uncovering patterns and blind spots

Culture, change and transformation
Changing how people behave, not just the structure they sit in

Organisational design
Structures, job design and competency frameworks

Senior Team Engineering

"The more senior a leader becomes, the more they must rely on others, including their peers and other teams, to deliver results."

Yet many successful leaders struggle at the top, because today's organisations run on teamwork, not top-down control. Hogan-based workshops and retreats uncover the hidden norms and dynamics that shape how teams think and behave. I have personally assessed and coached hundreds of leaders, including C-suite teams.

Case Study

North American family business, c.50 permanent staff plus a large seasonal and contract workforce. A 9-month assignment as Fractional HR Director, 6 to 10 days a month.

THE BRIEF

An ambitious, visionary CEO wanting to professionalise the business while protecting what made it distinctive: a friendly, open culture and a real commitment to work-life balance. Decision making was cautious and slow, and reporting lines were blurred, largely because roles and accountabilities were unclear.

THE RESULT

Business restructured
around a new Target Operating Model

25 roles
redesigned or created to fit it

12 roles, 14 people
hired and onboarded, or well advanced

Before being offered the Fractional HR Director role, I was engaged as a consultant to run an organisational diagnostic: a survey open to every employee, alongside interviews, calls and workshops. The aim was to identify what was working well, what needed fixing and what was outdated or no longer relevant.

We measured nine dimensions. Four priority themes emerged:

Direction from the Top
How clearly the top team leads, communicates direction, and stays connected to what matters.

Less Playing It Safe
How well the business supports learning through trial, error and smart risk-taking.

Working Across Teams
How smoothly teams work together to solve problems, share information and keep things moving.

Cost Awareness and Quality
How people balance high standards with cost-conscious thinking in everyday decisions.

These are not just engagement scores. They are predictors of performance. The work gave the leadership real evidence, not just instinct, on where to focus and set the direction for the Fractional HRD:

Clarity
Getting the organisation and job design right, starting with responsibility and reporting lines

▶

Accountability
Moving from task and supervision to personal ownership of outcomes

▶

Performance Management
A true Performance Management Culture, built on clear roles and ownership

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Case Study

How the Work Was Done

THE SHIFT

Underpinning everything was a single cultural shift: moving the business from task and supervision toward personal accountability and outcomes.

Clarity
Accountability
Performance Management

THE APPROACH

Business psychology, used not as an add-on but as a diagnostic tool, uncovering the real drivers of individual, team and organisational behaviour.

Leadership Advisory & Top Team Development · A thought partner to the CEO

Worked closely with the CEO as a trusted thought partner and candid advisor, helping the CEO define and drive their vision, and worked one-to-one with the top team on their behavioural patterns, aspirations and leadership style.

Target Operating Model & Job Design · Every role defined by outcomes, not tasks

Worked with people across the business to design a new Target Operating Model and led intensive job design around the four priority themes. Each role was defined by Purpose, Accountabilities and Success Measures, not a list of tasks, introducing clear lines of authority and personal accountability.

Talent Acquisition · Retained-search quality, built in-house

Built the talent acquisition strategy and standardised, in-house systems to deliver it, assessing candidates objectively across behavioural, psychological, technical and experiential dimensions. Candidates were assessed by people, not screened out by keyword-matching software (an ATS), with AI as a collaborative partner. The result is a world-class, human-led, repeatable framework for future hires, with no search fees.

Leading with Awareness · A practical, human approach to leadership, behaviour and lasting change

An intensive five-day, in-person programme for 12 high-potential leaders, combining Hogan-based assessment with practical behaviour change and leadership self-awareness.

HR Operations · Capability that stays

Reviewed contracts, policies and HR records, identified legal exposure and advised on putting it right. Hired and onboarded an HR Manager/Senior HR Business Partner and a junior HR Business Partner to run ongoing HR operations. A business of this size had no need for a permanent HRD: I remained available to advise as needed.

About Berna

Business Psychologist
Fractional HR Director

I bring more than 20 years of strategic HR leadership, honed in global, blue-chip organisations, to start-ups, SMEs and business units at a point of change: organisations that need the same calibre of thinking, for as long as it adds most value.

QUALIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATIONS

- MSc Cognitive Psychology, University of Strathclyde
- PG Diploma, Organisational and Behavioural Psychology, University of Strathclyde
- British Psychological Society: Occupational Ability and Personality
- Hogan Assessments: HPI, HDS and MVPI
- Harvard Law School: Program on Negotiation for Senior Executives
- Also accredited in MBTI, FIRO-B, 16PF, Belbin, Korn Ferry Lominger and NLP Master Practitioner

Where to start: an initial organisational diagnostic, giving you an evidence-based view of what is working, what needs to change and where a Fractional HRD would add most value. From there, we agree priorities, days per month and what success looks like.

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