

Cortney Freshwater

(773) 575-0383 | cortney.freshwater@gmail.com

Summary of Expertise

Global People and Operations leader with over 15 years of experience building and scaling organizations for venture-backed SaaS, fintech, AI, and technology companies. Trusted advisor to CEOs, executive teams, and Boards, designing the organizational infrastructure, talent operating systems, performance frameworks, compensation philosophy, and workforce strategies that enable high-growth companies to scale through global expansion, executive transitions, and organizational transformation, resulting in M&A transactions.

Known as a builder and a doer, creating Recruiting, People Operations, performance management, onboarding, compensation, leadership development, and global employment programs from the ground up. Combining strategic leadership with operational rigor, building scalable systems that improve organizational effectiveness while creating exceptional employee and manager experiences.

Core Competencies

People, Talent, and Operations Strategy | Change and Crisis Management | Talent Acquisition & Recruiting | Revenue & GTM Operations | Financial Modeling and Reporting | Leadership Development | Total Rewards | Offsites | Performance Management | Organizational Design | Global Workforce Planning | AI-enabled workflows

Professional Experience

Messari (Acquired by Blockworks) - VP, Operations

Jan 2026 – July 2026

VP, People

Jan 2025 – Jan 2026

Director, People

Nov 2022 – Jan 2025

Built and scaled the People and Business Operations functions, while serving as a strategic advisor to the CEO and Board through organizational growth, executive transitions, organizational design, workforce planning, succession planning, and strategic transformation for a globally distributed high-growth SaaS and AI company, culminating in the company's successful acquisition.

- **Functional Ownership:** Led People, Talent, Revenue Operations, and Finance, partnering with executives to align organizational design, GTM operating models, workforce planning, forecasting, and financial strategy while building scalable operating infrastructure.
- **Corporate Development and M&A:** Partner with the CEO and Board on M&A and strategic transactions, managing banker relationships, leading data room organization and due diligence.
- **Recruiting & Talent Strategy:** Built the recruiting function from scratch, designing hiring playbooks, structured interview frameworks, AI-enabled recruiting intelligence, and repeatable hiring systems that improved candidate quality and scaled hiring across technical, research, and GTM organizations.
- **HR Programs & Compliance:** Built and scaled the company's People operating model, designing repeatable systems across talent acquisition, onboarding, employee relations, compliance, total rewards, and People Operations while supporting a globally distributed workforce and maintaining SOC 2 compliance.
- **Revenue Operations & GTM Systems:** Optimized the company's RevOps foundation, partnering with Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success to improve pipeline visibility, sales forecasting, CRM governance, GTM reporting, and operational processes. Owned the administration and optimization of Salesforce, HubSpot, Apollo, and related revenue systems while developing scalable workflows and executive dashboards.
- **Performance & Compensation:** Designed the company's performance management and compensation operating cadence, including annual reviews, quarterly development conversations, talent reviews, calibration sessions, compensation planning, manager enablement, and structured feedback frameworks. Partnered with executives on role architecture, career frameworks, competency models, and promotion criteria to improve role clarity and support organizational growth.
- **Employee Experience and Internal Communications:** Plan and facilitate company-wide offsites, functional offsites and all team bonding initiatives. Lead company-wide engagement surveys, leadership action

planning, executive communications, and manager enablement initiatives that strengthened organizational effectiveness, leadership capability, and employee engagement.

- **Executive and Manager Development:** Provide executive coaching and develop manager excellence by coaching executives and people leaders on organizational effectiveness, performance management, leadership capability, succession planning, talent calibration, and difficult employee relations matters during periods of organizational change.
- **Global Expansion:** Partnered with Legal and Finance to build international employment infrastructure, including benefits, payroll, and EOR vendor relationships (Velocity, Deel, Cintra) across multiple countries.
- **Systems & AI:** Implemented and integrated enterprise systems across People, Revenue, and Finance, including Rippling, ADP, Greenhouse, Deel, ChartHop, 15Five, Salesforce, HubSpot, Apollo, Ramp, and AI-enabled workflows that automated reporting, improved data integrity, reduced manual work, and increased operational visibility across the business.
- **Change and Crisis Management & Workforce Planning:** Directed three full-cycle restructures, aligning cost structure with business needs while ensuring WARN Act compliance and minimal disruption. Led the company through two CEO transitions and multiple executive changes, maintaining stability and continuity.

Better - Global Learning and Development

2020 – 2022

Led Global Learning and Development during one of the fastest periods of organizational growth in fintech, helping scale the organization from approximately 2,500 employees to over 10,000 before supporting enterprise-wide restructuring initiatives that resulted in a SPAC IPO.

- Led a global team responsible for leadership development, onboarding, employee experience, culture initiatives, and organizational change management.
- Designed and operationalized high-volume onboarding supporting 250–500 new hires every other week while reducing operational costs by more than \$500,000 per quarter.
- Built manager development programs that trained more than 1,800 people leaders on inclusive leadership, coaching, performance management, and organizational effectiveness.
- Directed enterprise-wide change management supporting the transition from fully remote to hybrid operations across multiple business functions.
- Partnered closely with HRBPs, Talent Management, Total Rewards, and executive leadership to deliver enterprise People initiatives during rapid organizational change.

LVMH - Benefit Cosmetics - Global Enablement

2016 – 2020

Led global learning and sales enablement supporting more than 15,000 field- employees across global markets.

- Managed a global team and \$1.6M operating budget while designing scalable learning infrastructure supporting worldwide growth.
- Designed scalable programs including certifications, onboarding, and role-based academies.
- Collaborated with cross-functional leaders to ensure product adoption and increased revenue outcomes.
- Designed curriculum and managed instructional design, building repeatable processes that improve quality, consistency, and scalability of program delivery
- Identify and expand new revenue opportunities through innovative education offerings
- Directed global conferences and executive development events spanning North America, Europe and Asia.
- Reduced enablement costs by 30% through technology modernization and scalable learning delivery.

Early Career

Starlight Children's Foundation - Sr Manager, Global Impact & Philanthropy	2014 – 2016
Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles - Sr Manager, Annual Giving	2011 – 2014
LVS Health Innovations - Director, Training Operations & Partnerships	2009 – 2010
National AIDS Marathon Training Program - Manager, Training & Travel	2008 – 2009
Iowa Army National Guard - Automated Logistics & Training Specialist	2001 – 2007

Education & Certifications

Bachelor of Arts, Marketing & Management - Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago
Instructional Design Certificate - Association of Talent Development, 2020
Coaching Certificate - Association of Talent Development, 2020