

# HOW YOUR NEXT EXECUTIVE JOB FINDS YOU

FEATURING ANGELA SHAW



BY GINA RILEY





How does volunteer leadership open you up to one corporate leadership opportunity after another?

According to Angela Shaw, volunteer leadership is playing the long game to ensure career transition success. Shaw is an accomplished Human Resources professional who was recently sought out to become the Chief People Officer of Juiceland, a growing, independently owned juice concept company.

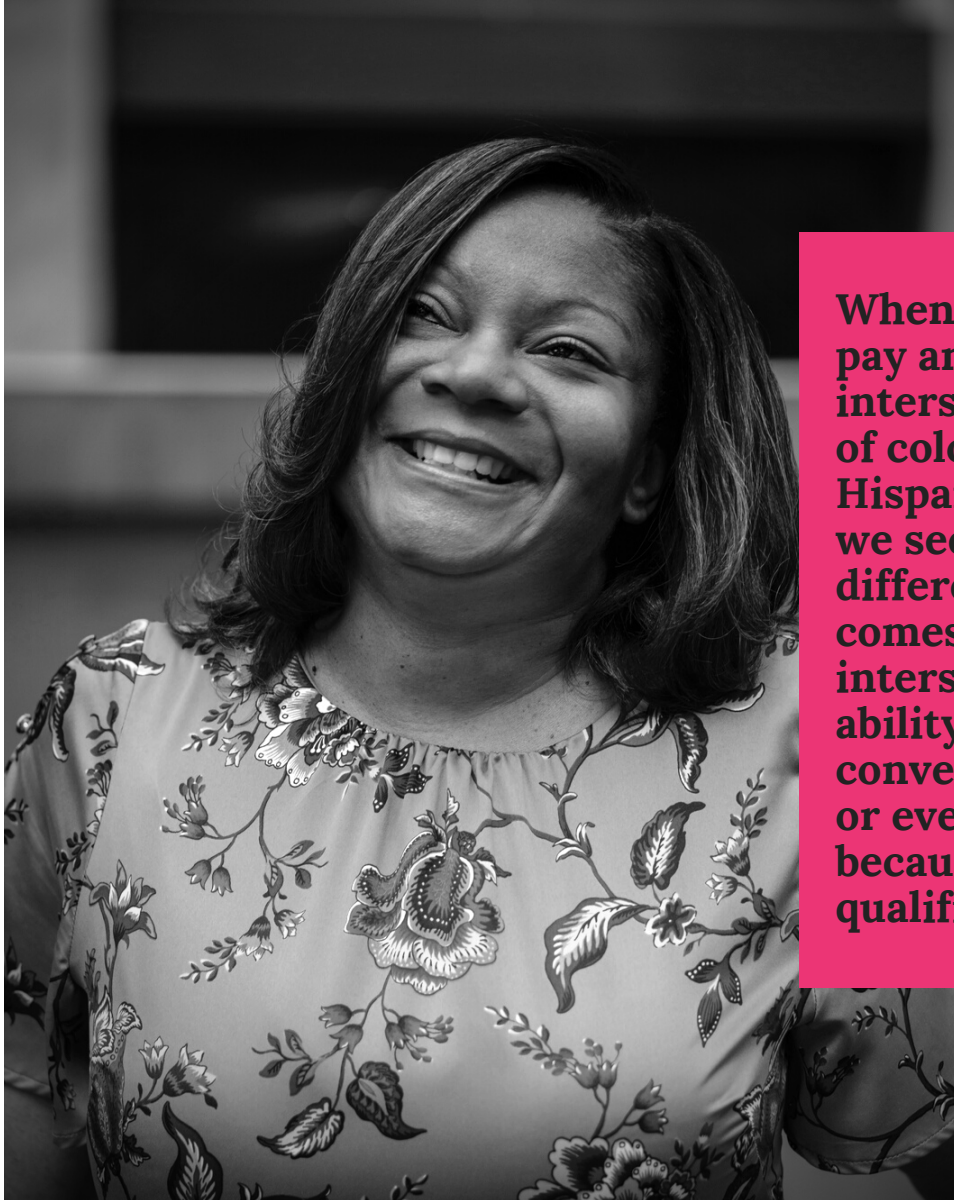
She is the past president of the Austin SHRM; past Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director for the Texas SHRM; adjunct professor at the University of Austin in Texas; and she sits on the boards of Peloton University and the YWCA of Austin. She is a dynamic public speaker who gave a TEDx talk in 2019, "Busting the Stereotype of the Angry Black Woman." A servant leader who is devoted to diversity and workforce readiness, Shaw sees volunteer leadership as the key to unlocking her last three successive career moves.

I invite you to read Shaw's inspiring story about overcoming the challenges and bias she has faced as a Black woman, how she tenaciously continues to map out her career path with goal setting, and how she builds authentic relationships through community volunteer leadership.

**I am grateful to our mutual connection, Ricklyn Woods, for introducing us. You were a guest on her podcast, "So You Want To Work In HR?" I listened to it three times! Your strategic and intentional way of building your brand through volunteer leadership is powerful and will inspire many people. I was struck by you saying you are no different or better than anyone else.**

When I think about the privileges people have, I don't think only in terms of skin color, if someone went to college, or if they grew up with a silver spoon. While I grew up lower class, I came from a two-parent household. I grew up in an actual house with a backyard. I ate meat every day. I consider that privilege, too.

**My experiences define me. Bad or good, I didn't let anything stop me. I saw barriers as challenges. I believe everybody can use their tenacity to work toward their goals.**



**When we look at equal pay and look at the intersection with people of color, whether Hispanic, Black, or Asian, we see we are all at different levels when it comes to equal pay. These intersections impact our ability to have these conversations, negotiate, or even to apply for a job because we don't feel qualified.**

While I acknowledge this privilege, I would say my experiences define me. Bad or good, I didn't let anything stop me. I saw barriers as challenges. I believe everybody can use their tenacity to work toward their goals. Anyone can be successful.

**Since your career path is untraditional ... would you tell me how you got into HR?**

My love of HR started as a line employee and the love I had for myself. I encountered situations that did not feel right or weren't fair. I wanted to give equal experiences to everybody else, and I loved the powerful way I

could help others and make a positive impact. My career has grown by setting and meeting goals. Now, I can say I am at a level or position of real power. I don't think it's vain to say I have a position or power, especially if I use it in good ways. I use my power to positively give back to people in my community. I want to start this movement of good HR and its intersection with DE&I.

**As you progressed through your career, what were your primary career goals?**

To increase my title, which increases my power, and to affect generational

wealth within my family. I feel like money is an area people don't like to talk about because it's taboo or it is negative. I didn't come from money. Since my parents were not able to pass it down to me, my biggest goal is taking care of them in their golden years. They had challenging lives and careers, and now is time for them to have some fun. I also want to increase my own wealth and show my nieces and nephews you don't have to let your race, gender, or any factor you represent stop you. Don't give other people the power to stop you.

**Do you think women have a harder**







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**time talking about money than men do?**

Yes, and I would also say it's intersectional. There are many factors that lessen the likelihood you'll talk about money. We all know the dominant race is the white race, right? We all know it's true and it's OK to say it. Almost any other race is going to struggle with some of the freedoms of conversations.

When we look at equal pay and look at the intersection with people of color, whether Hispanic, Black, or Asian, we see we are all at different levels when it comes to equal pay. These intersections impact our ability to have these conversations, negotiate, or even

to apply for a job because we don't feel qualified.

Being able to go after generational wealth helps you, your family, and your community. This is about me impacting my family and other Black people in my community.

**Do you think it is a lack of exposure to this information? Is it about money or seizing opportunities in general?**

It is about access.

Early in my career, I thought I should be making more money, so I put together a proposal for my boss. She asked me to present it to her boss. When I handed him a copy of the proposal, he literally took the packet of information and threw it across the table and said, "Who told you that you can ask for more money?"

This shaped the rest of my career because I knew I didn't need anyone's permission to ask for more money. I'm always going to ask and tell other people they can ask, too. The work I produce tells me I can ask for more money and what my worth is.

It might seem weird to ask a person what they make, but I ask and if they tell me, great! That's how we get information. I had a discussion with an executive recruiter about my compensation goals. I told her I wanted to make \$250,000. The response was, "HR people don't make that." What I really think they meant was Black women in HR don't make that.

These moments have defined me. They left me thinking I don't need permission, and I won't let other people decide for me based on information that is not true.



**When have you felt the most stuck in your career and how did you overcome it?**

The first time I felt stuck was ten years ago. I couldn't get into management for a variety of reasons. I had my certification in HR but hadn't quite finished my degree. There was no lightning bolt with the world opening up to me. Although I felt prepared, I couldn't figure out why opportunities weren't coming to me. Five years later, I finally gained traction and moved into management; however, I continued to struggle to get to the next level and couldn't figure out what I wasn't doing right.

So, ten years ago I decided to change my viewpoint. It was about me. I needed to take control. Using my ambition and changing my mindset were key. I worked on really preparing myself for the next level. I wanted to be the most prepared person in the room. Once I moved into management, I recognized it wasn't about me being prepared anymore, but rather I needed to figure out how to create more opportunities for myself.

What I found was the key to career movement is less about who you know and more about who knows you. A lot of people need to be speaking your name in rooms that you're not in. How do you create those relationships for people to do that?

Once I started taking action and building real relationships, I started to see a real change. I started to create situations where opportunities naturally opened up. I wasn't asking for jobs; instead, I got to know people. I found ways to help people first before I started to get any dividends from it. I was just making deposits in the bank.

I also spent a lot of time in the first five years of the last ten focusing on my professional development, so I could learn and speak about all the parts of HR. I worked to be the most knowledgeable person in the room, and then I once I felt ready, I figured out ways to show I was ready.

**Did you have role models, mentors, or sponsors who helped you along the way?**

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Not necessarily a specific person but there were many who mattered. Every manager I've had who gave me a salary raise, a title, or promotion, I give each of them value and kudos. They did a great thing. They empowered an amazing person – me. Thanks to one such boss and his sponsorship of me, I got my HR certification before I got my degree because it was a quick win to give me credibility.

There were times my organizations weren't able to provide a professional-development budget, and I put it in my own personal budget to develop myself because I wanted to be the most qualified HR person.

**Let's help others crack the code of discovering and getting in the line of sight of opportunities. What were some keys to your successful career transitions?**

It goes back to putting deposits in the bank. I've worked hard the past six years at developing relationships and wasn't looking for immediate withdrawals. I was playing the long game by entering relationships and asking how I could help other people.

The real key to my success is through building multiple bodies of work and volunteer leadership.

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I first started with my HR community's professional association, and I have used this as a platform to grow outside of work. I built my brand as a servant leader and somebody who gives back to the community. Then, I branched out into other board positions outside of the HR community.

This work is visible to people. They can see the great things you do for others. I became a public speaker. I now teach. People are seeing and feeling value from this.

**I heard you say on Ricklyn Woods' podcast people may be reluctant to take on a board seat if it is not a paid position.**

I've never had a paid board position yet. I've always seen the value of these

roles beyond money. There is personal value being a servant leader and helping others. I aligned with boards where I believed in their mission, and I get so much more than I can even say out of that experience.

When you serve on boards that align with your values, you end up surrounding yourself with people who get to know what you stand for. They end up wanting to help you when situations come up. These are the people who speak your name in rooms you are not in. This is the value you can't quantify. I just can't tell people how valuable that is.

**Has this helped you improve your odds of getting in the line of sight when opportunities come up?**

Yes! You are serving with people who are like you. They are ambitious. They are connected and have a network they can introduce you to. It pays dividends when you least expect it.

If you start volunteering at the point you are looking for a job and that is the only time you spend volunteering – and quit when you have a job – you won't get long-term benefits because you have not built long-term relationships. You may have to give a lot before you get anything from it. You need to continue giving, even after you feel like you received what you were looking for – you still do it.

I've had the most movement and title progressions, and made more money in the last three years because of these activities than I've had in my entire career. It comes from ten years of work I put into developing myself, building relationships, and volunteer leadership. It is not instantaneous. But it eventually comes – and it comes back to you big!

**How did you get found for your**

**current job? What caused the outgoing HR person to think of you?**

The initial connection was made through volunteering in my local HR community three or four years ago. We met at an event, had a great spark, and we stayed in touch over the years.

She called me one day and shared she was leaving her job for a new opportunity and thought I'd be a great fit. I didn't know it was coming. I didn't ask for it. In fact, I wasn't looking for a job.

She thought of me because I'd built a reputation, and she could speak to the reasons why she would recommend me. It was never because I gave her a résumé or my elevator speech.

**What experiences informed where you are today that people might not expect to hear?**

Because I present myself as very confident, people are surprised to know what a struggle I feel like it's been for me. They see the title and quick movement, but they don't know I've been in the industry for over twenty years. There were days when I was sad, and I couldn't get a callback after reaching out to people. I spent two years reaching out to people trying to make individual connections and never got a response. That's what people don't see.

I realized I had to do something different. That is when I turned to volunteer leadership and being out in the community.

**How do you suggest people be strategic and intentional with the ways they stand out? How do they make a mark with, as you say, "undisputable results"?**





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Everyone has a finite amount of time, so I suggest you figure out what your passions are, define how much time you can spend, and where you'll have the greatest impact.

I initially started with my HR association community because I felt I would have the biggest impact. Then, I branched out into other board positions that weren't related to HR. It was a progression.

Then, after serving as president of the HR association in my community and serving on boards outside of HR, I became a public speaker, which allowed me to share my passion for HR and DE&I. I've gone from submitting proposals to being asked to do paid speaking engagements. It has always been about setting goals and working towards them.

**What doors have you opened for yourself by creating opportunities and asking for a seat at the table?**

I was head of HR in an organization where HR did not have a seat at the table. I literally wasn't a part of strategic conversations. The first thing I did was change the view of our department by figuring out why we weren't connecting with the rest of the organization. We weren't visible and present, people didn't know who we were, and they didn't understand the value we could bring.

I started inserting HR and volunteering anywhere HR could help. We made promises and delivered on time with great customer service. People in the organization started to feel supported, and HR was seen and heard. We started hearing that our team was amazing and helpful.

I started getting invited to the table and became involved with the strategic conversations around the organization with other leaders. You need a seat at the table and allies to be successful.

**Many people wait to be recognized and plucked from obscurity for their next best job. You talk about leveling the playing field and controlling one's destiny. How have you effectively done this for yourself?**

When we talk about leveling the playing field, that is specific to diversity factors and being underrepresented. DE&I and discussing bias are hard for people whether it is conscious or not. People are not going to level the playing field for you, which is why you need to be putting in work to create those opportunities for yourself.

Find ways to be visible, seen, and heard.

**Many people are afraid to "toot their own horns" and put their successes and thought leadership out. How does a person get over their fear of what others will think? Don't we need social proof of our successes?**

You need to know it is OK. Just do it. Every time I make a post on LinkedIn, I think about it a couple of times before I post it. Most of the time I just put it out there anyway. Look at other people's examples or talk with people about your ideas and what you'd like to put out there. More often than not, people will encourage you to put yourself out there. Find a support system while you are doing it.

**You have a passion for HR, especially DE&I.**

### What are some of the biggest barriers people of color face when it comes to uncovering unadvertised jobs?

People of color are missing opportunities because they either don't know the right people, they're not in the right circles, or don't have the confidence or know how to level that playing field for themselves. I think preparation meets opportunity. I've been lucky enough to create these opportunities for myself, get into some rooms, and to know some people. But having opportunities is key.

### What advice would you give to allies? What are ways companies can develop practices to ensure a diverse leadership-level candidate gets an opportunity when so many jobs are obtained from relationships?

Allies can help create opportunities for people who are excluded. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about this. Think about how you can create opportunities. Speak people's names in rooms they are not in. Ask yourself whose name you are speaking. When you can push someone up, support them.

It starts with diversifying your circle. If all the people in your circle look like you, then that's typically who you are going to speak up for. If you look at your leadership page and there is no diversity, then you have work to do. Start speaking these names and help create opportunities.

We need to get beyond making corporate statements and marketing on your website that we value diversity. There is real action and work to be done. Now that people are back to in-person events, I am noticing what people are posting does not represent diversity. In this day and age, who is still posting pictures that don't have diversity in them? It happens a lot. Every ally should want to represent what they say they believe in.

### What would you leave people with? Anything I didn't ask you that would help others?

First, set goals and create opportunities for yourself. Set one goal and start to work towards it. Recognize you have some power and activate it. How will you activate your power to create opportunities? Whether it's volunteering, professional development, just attending an event – do that.

### Thank you. That's the perfect way to end the conversation!

In conclusion, I encourage people to consider volunteer leadership to open unexpected doors and unlock unforeseen opportunities. Use Angela Shaw's example as a way to navigate and land incremental leadership roles through the power of planning, goal setting, and using one's voice to ensure people are speaking your name when you are not in the room.

## CONTRIBUTING WRITER'S PROFILE



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