

# JLL Delivers a Frontline Experience Powered by Precision

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# Managing the Buildings Where Business Gets Done

JLL (Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated) is a leading global commercial real estate services and investment management company headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Founded in 1783, the company operates in more than 80 countries and employs over 112,000 people.

Roughly 55% of JLL's workforce consists of frontline workers in specialized, licensed, and scarce-talent roles, including boiler technicians, HVAC technicians, building trades specialists, and operating engineers. These employees work inside the facilities of some of the world's most recognized companies, managing more than 5.7 billion square feet of real estate on behalf of JLL's clients worldwide.

JLL ranks No. 175 on the Fortune 500 and has been recognized among *Fortune's* World's Most Admired Companies for 10 consecutive years. In addition, Ethisphere has honored JLL as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for 18 years, reflecting a reputation built on trust, integrity, and enduring leadership.

“Our workforce spans from the boiler room to the boardroom—and every person in between deserves the same level of care, access, and opportunity.”

Amanda Pleasant, Senior Director, TA Tech Enablement & Operations, JLL

## Serving an Essential, Scarce, Hard-to-Reach Workforce

Most of JLL's frontline employees—approximately 55% of the workforce—consist of building trades and facilities management professionals. Building trades workers physically operate, maintain, and repair the critical systems that keep commercial buildings functioning. Facilities management professionals work at client sites, managing and coordinating the relationships, services, and operations needed to keep buildings running smoothly.

### Summary

#### Challenge

- Attracting and retaining specialized and scarce skilled trades workers in a constrained labor market.
- Delivering consistent HR services and career opportunities to a heterogeneous workforce spread across hundreds of client sites.
- Reaching thousands of frontline workers who are embedded in client environments and often lack access to JLL emails or HR systems due to client firewalls.

#### Solution

- Built a persona-based workforce segmentation model to design tailored attraction and retention strategies for each frontline segment.
- Launched Open to Opportunities, an internal mobility program enabling frontline workers to explore and self-nominate for new roles.
- Deployed Ask JLL, an AI-powered digital front door providing always-on HR access regardless of worker location.

#### Results

- Cut screening time by 70% with Paradox's mobile-first candidate experience and HireScore.
- Drove more than 6,700 employee opt-ins into Open to Opportunities in 2026, with 430+ moving into new roles—88% of them from the client-embedded frontline population.
- Improved pay accuracy and capacity visibility through Workday Time Tracking, reducing annualized overtime costs.

Together, these employees serve as the primary point of contact between JLL and its clients on the ground, playing a critical role in driving their success. Serving this workforce well requires solving two challenges uniquely shaped by JLL's operating model:

- **Attracting and retaining scarce skilled trades talent.**  
JLL is not immune to the skilled trades talent shortages affecting businesses and industries worldwide. The company relies heavily on specialized skilled trades professionals, including boiler technicians, operating

engineers, HVAC technicians, and numerous others. Many of these roles require advanced technical expertise, specialized training, and licenses from regulatory bodies, while the available talent pool continues to shrink even as demand grows.

“The more specialized the role, the harder it gets. There’s a shortage of talent, too many roles open, and every company is going after the same people,” said Amanda Pleasant, Senior Director, TA Tech Enablement & Operations at JLL.

- **Managing a workforce too varied to treat as one.** JLL’s frontline population spans roles with vastly different skill requirements, talent risks, attrition drivers, and development needs. Employees are distributed across thousands of client locations and work in a wide range of environments, creating the need for a more precise, targeted approach.

What attracts and engages a licensed boiler technician is fundamentally different from what resonates with a property coordinator or mobile maintenance engineer, for example. To support this workforce effectively, JLL needed to better understand its distinct frontline employee segments and design talent strategies tailored to their specific needs.

Given the scale and complexity of JLL’s operations, these challenges compound one another, making it harder to attract, retain, develop, and communicate with frontline employees working in demanding, client-embedded environments. JLL addresses these challenges through differentiated strategies across every stage of the talent lifecycle.

## Reengineering the Frontline Experience with Precision

What makes JLL’s frontline strategies distinct is the company’s ability to design talent strategies with precision for a large, diverse, global workforce. JLL reengineered its end-to-end frontline experience around a persona-based segmentation model, an AI-powered hiring ecosystem with humans always in the loop, frictionless mobile-first operations, and proactive career stewardship.

## Understanding Who You’re Designing For: A Persona-Based Architecture

As a first step toward improving the design and delivery of frontline experiences and enabling more effective communication, JLL needed to establish a common language and framework for how teams worldwide understand and support their people. Around 2024, under the leadership of Rachel Laws, Global Head of Talent, JLL’s talent team undertook a rigorous effort to map the entire workforce into a set of personas that would guide how HR products and processes are designed and activated.

The team guided the exercise with a set of defining principles: personas must be business line and function agnostic; each must represent at least 1% of the workforce; each employee is assigned to only one persona; groups are consolidated when no significant differences exist; and subpersonas are created only when meaningful distinctions warrant them.

By consolidating insights from JLL’s People Survey data, exit surveys, onboarding feedback, and direct collaboration with HR business partners, the team identified distinct personas. Each persona is defined by shared demographics, preferences, motivations, and pain points. JLL uses this segmentation framework to tailor employee experiences and support more user-centered decision-making across the organization.

JLL’s Global Executive Board reviewed and approved the framework, which now serves as a key design principle guiding talent decisions across the company. “We no longer launch a talent product and ask who it’s for afterward. Every decision—whether it’s around goal-setting, performance cycles, career growth programs, or onboarding redesigns—begins with the persona: what do they need, and how do we design specifically for them?” said Karina Cuello, Global Head of Talent–Careers and Global Mobility and Immigration at JLL.

## Hiring with Ingenuity: A Referral-First, Mobile-Forward, AI-Powered Approach

JLL’s TA strategy reflects a multipronged, mobile-forward approach built around four differentiating elements:

- **Refer2JLL**, the company’s employee referral program, was designed from the ground up for mobile access. Employees access the program via a QR code, submit referrals in

seconds, and receive real-time updates on referral status and bonus eligibility directly within the app. For frontline workers who are rarely at a desk, this represents a meaningful advantage because it eliminates the need to access a desktop system. It also creates a continuous pipeline of referrals, particularly in regions with the highest concentrations of frontline workers, including India and the United States.

- **HireBuddy** is JLL's conversational AI hiring assistant powered by Paradox, a Workday company. Rather than requiring candidates to navigate complex application portals, HireBuddy meets them where they are—on their phones—through a simple, text-based chat experience. The tool automatically schedules interviews, sends reminders, and removes the back-and-forth friction that can cause frontline candidates to drop out of the hiring process. The tool is currently live in the United States and will be expanded globally due to its success.
- **A strategic partnership ecosystem** spans veteran networks, trade schools, and professional associations, enabling JLL to build proactive, community-rooted talent pipelines rather than relying solely on reactive job board postings. JLL has also piloted veteran-focused upskilling initiatives, sponsoring certification programs in HVAC, electrical, and plumbing to help transition military talent into technical frontline roles.
- **HiredScore for Recruiting** eases the burden of high-volume hiring. With 1.5 million applications annually, JLL's recruiters faced significant volume challenges, as manual resume review increased time-to-fill and limited recruiter capacity.

"With HiredScore for Recruiting, we have transformed our hiring processes—dramatically increasing recruiter productivity while also improving candidate experience," said Ajay Pimpalshende, Director of Product Management at JLL.<sup>1</sup>

## A Seamlessly Connected Onboarding Journey: TA to Day One

As part of its frontline experience transformation, JLL integrated onboarding and talent acquisition, which historically operated as separate processes. The company now delivers an integrated TA-to-Day One journey entirely within

Workday, providing new frontline hires with a fully mobile-accessible experience that includes digital I-9 verification, benefits enrollment, and policy acknowledgment.

JLL also implemented a new onboarding experience featuring automated welcome messages, task reminders, and FAQs. These communications help deskless workers stay connected and supported throughout their critical first 90 days.

Check-ins at Day 1, Month 1, and Month 3 are designed to surface issues before they contribute to early attrition. "If you build a strong connection point upfront, it is easier to stay connected once they're embedded in a client site. That foundation is everything," said Cuello.

In India specifically, JLL has deployed an AI onboarding agent that supports frontline managers with new-hire introductions and buddy program coordination—extending personalized onboarding support at scale across one of the company's largest markets.

## Unlocking Internal Mobility: Open to Opportunities

JLL recognized that facilitating career growth is a powerful way to demonstrate its commitment to frontline employees. In 2023, JLL launched Open to Opportunities (OTO), an internal talent marketplace that gives frontline employees a self-directed way to signal their interest in new roles and explore growth opportunities without requiring manager approval. Once employees opt in, JLL's recruiters can proactively surface them as candidates for internal openings. "Before OTO, great talent stayed invisible—not because of a lack of capability, but because internal mobility depended entirely on whether a manager chose to champion it," Pleasant explained.

The program is further supported by internal career profile optimization, job alerts, and integration with HiredScore to match frontline workers to open roles based on transferable skills. JLL also hosts Career Week events that are virtual, mobile-accessible, and increasingly codesigned with client partners, giving frontline workers dedicated time and space to explore opportunities within JLL. "Through tailored interventions to unlock internal mobility, we have moved from reactive backfilling to proactive stewardship of our frontline workers," said Pleasant.

<sup>1</sup> "JLL harnesses AI to onboard quality talent at scale," Workday, 2026.

## Simplifying the Day-to-Day Frontline Experience

Moving from talent management to day-to-day operations, JLL made targeted investments to simplify how frontline workers and their managers experience work each day. JLL implemented Workday Time Tracking for its hourly workforce, improving visibility into workforce capacity, time-tracking ease, and payroll accuracy, while incorporating shift differentials, overtime rules, and labor policies directly into the system.

JLL also rolled out DailyPay, giving frontline employees access to earned wages before their scheduled payday and providing a financial safety net for workers facing unexpected expenses between pay cycles. To simplify benefits navigation, JLL plans to transition to Willis Towers Watson's (WTW's) all-in-one platform, which includes an AI-powered chatbot that helps frontline workers make informed health plan choices based on their individual circumstances.

For frontline managers, JLL deployed CAI, an AI coaching tool designed to build confidence in handling difficult conversations. CAI enables frontline managers to role-play challenging scenarios before having those conversations in real life. "Role-playing a difficult conversation with a real person is uncomfortable. With an AI tool, managers can practice in a safe space—and walk into that conversation with confidence instead of anxiety," said Melissa Thompson, Head of HR Services for the Americas at JLL.

## The AI-Powered Digital Front Door

Finally, to address one of its most persistent challenges—reaching a workforce often inaccessible through conventional channels—JLL implemented a conversational AI gateway across Workday, Microsoft Teams, and SharePoint, with plans to make it available through JLL's Workplace Operating System (WPOS). Ask JLL provides frontline workers with a single, always-on gateway for HR-related questions or actions. Employees can ask HR, finance, and IT questions in natural language, receive immediate answers, or be routed to the appropriate team through a seamless case-management handoff.

Looking ahead, JLL plans to expand Ask JLL into a full task-execution engine, enabling frontline workers to submit performance questions, update payroll deductions, or confirm benefits—all through a simple chat interface, from any device, at any time.

## The Measurable Impact of JLL's Frontline Strategy

JLL's concerted efforts to reengineer its end-to-end frontline employee experience are delivering tangible, measurable results. At the top of the talent funnel, Paradox and HiredScore for Recruiting have transformed JLL's frontline hiring. Nearly 100% of JLL's 1.5 million annual applicants now receive a response, strengthening the candidate experience and JLL's employer brand. JLL has also achieved a 70% reduction in candidate screening time, a fivefold increase in recruiter capacity, and an estimated \$12 million in savings.

OTO has generated approximately 6,700 global opt-ins, with over 430 employees successfully moving into new roles. Of those, 88% came from the client-dedicated frontline population. Operationally, the migration to Workday Time Tracking has improved payroll accuracy and capacity visibility while reducing administrative burden for both employees and managers.

These outcomes, together with JLL's continued market leadership, demonstrate the measurable, human, enduring impact of investing in the frontline workforce with precision and purpose.

## Lessons Learned

- **One size does not fit the frontline.** Designing talent programs without first understanding employees and their distinct needs underserves everyone.
- **Mobile-first is nonnegotiable.** Any strategy, benefit, or experience that is not accessible from a smartphone in the field detracts from, rather than adds to, the frontline experience.
- **Career growth signals care.** Frontline employees who feel supported and cared for as they grow their careers are more likely to stay.
- **Operational excellence is a retention strategy.** Everyday aspects of the job, such as time tracking, payroll accuracy, and earned wage access, have an outsized impact on the frontline experience.
- **Build connection early.** Frequent touchpoints and check-ins during the first 90 days build a solid foundation and surface issues early to prevent attrition.

## About the Author



### Nehal Nangia

Nehal is senior director of research at The Josh Bersin Company, where she leads empirical research on all talent management topics, with a deep focus on frontline workforce strategies. She brings nearly 20 years of experience in human capital research, advisory services, and consulting in talent management, L&D, leadership, performance management, employment value proposition, and inclusion. She previously led the global advisory practice at Deloitte, where she provided consultative advice to global HR and talent leaders on advancing key talent priorities. Nehal has also led deployments of Gartner's benchmarking and diagnostic products for the EMEA, APAC, and ANZ regions. She has a master's degree in psychology, an advanced specialization in AI, and the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) certification. Nehal lives in India.

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