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SEO

Vice President, People & Culture

SEO

New York, NY | Hybrid

Anticipated Salary: $225,000 – $250,000

Background

The Organization

Founded in 1963 during the Civil Rights Movement, SEO closes educational and career opportunity gaps for 7,000 ambitious young people annually through our programs. SEO Scholars is a free, eight-year, academic program that transforms public high school students in New York City, San Francisco, North Carolina, and Miami into college graduates, ready to succeed in their careers. SEO Career recruits and prepares high-achieving undergraduates for summer internships in corporate America, including Wall Street, commercial real estate, and technology. SEO Tech Developer is a virtual intensive, free immersion program to propel first-year and sophomore computer science and software engineering college students to the next level. SEO Alternative Investments is an industry-wide program that provides education, exposure, training, and mentorship to help high-achieving professionals be competitive in the industry. SEO Law helps aspiring law students thrive in law school and excel in their legal careers through training, career development, and internships. SEO Leadership Institute provides ongoing development for SEO alumni, customized for each stage of their career, with three distinct features: making connections, professional and personal development, and civic engagement.

SEO's strength begins with its mission, its people, and its commitment to participant outcomes. The organization is entering a period of leadership transition and maturation in which greater enterprise clarity and operating discipline are increasingly important, while preserving the flexibility and humanity staff value.

To learn more about SEO, click here.

The Position

SEO is seeking a transformational Vice President, People & Culture to help shape the next chapter of our organization and employee experience. This is a unique opportunity for an accomplished people leader to build on a strong foundation and elevate how SEO attracts, develops, supports, and engages exceptional talent in service of our mission.

Over the past several years, SEO has made meaningful investments in talent acquisition, total rewards, workplace flexibility, and talent processes. The next chapter is about bringing those efforts together into a cohesive, high-impact people strategy that strengthens culture, deepens employee trust, and enables organizational excellence across the enterprise. Working alongside a new CEO focused on growth, clarity, and organizational effectiveness, the Vice President will help translate vision into the people systems, management practices, leadership capabilities, and cultural norms required to support SEO's next stage of expansion. This leader's charge is to ensure that as SEO grows, it does so with the consistency, accountability, and employee experience necessary to sustain long-term impact.

Reporting to the Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel, the Vice President will serve as both a strategic thought partner and an operational leader. The VP leads four functional areas, Talent Acquisition, Total Rewards, Talent Management, and People Operations, with the four functional leaders reporting directly to the VP. The P&C team totals 8.5 FTE, including the VP, with one People Operations & Executive Assistant position split equally between P&C and the Executive Office.They will advise executive leadership on talent and organizational matters, partner closely with managers to strengthen leadership effectiveness, and champion a people-centered culture where employees can do their best work. At the same time, they will oversee the systems, processes, and practices that ensure the People & Culture function operates with consistency, credibility, and excellence.

The ideal candidate is an influential relationship-builder who combines curiosity and adaptability with sound judgment with executional rigor. They are a trusted advisor, a skilled change leader, and an empathetic listener who seeks first to understand. They bring a clear and confident point of view, know how to translate ideas into action, and can thoughtfully prioritize, communicate, and sustain meaningful organizational change. Most importantly, they are energized by the opportunity to help build an exceptional employee experience and culture that enables SEO's people and mission to thrive.

Background (cont.)

Reports to	Work Model	Travel
Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel	New York City Hybrid, 3 days/week in office	Periodic site visits ~1–2 in year one

Role Overview

Organizational Leadership & People Strategy

- Lead SEO's People & Culture functional areas, including Talent Acquisition, Total Rewards, Talent Management, and People Ops.
- Develop and communicate a practical, sequenced P&C roadmap that distinguishes urgent priorities from important longer-term work and protects the organization from initiative overload.
- Clarify P&C's partnership with each SEO team, along with decision ownership, service expectations, and escalation paths so employees and leaders know where to go and what to expect.
- Establish priorities and measures of success, communicate trade-offs and rationale, and sustain focus long enough for changes to take hold.

Change Management & Organizational Effectiveness

- Make disciplined change management a core organizational capability, particularly for technology, process, policy, and new ways of working.
- Use structured, continuous-improvement and project management approaches to understand the work, define the problem, simplify processes, engage users early, pilot where appropriate, and measure adoption.
- Build stakeholder engagement, communication, training, feedback loops, and reinforcement into implementation from the start rather than treating adoption as an afterthought.
- Listen before prescribing, build on what is already working, and avoid repeated redesign before prior changes are fully embedded and evaluated.

Talent Development & Performance Management

- Translate SEO's job roles and competencies into visible career pathways, development plans, succession practices, and stronger internal mobility.
- Strengthen performance management and accountability so expectations, feedback, development, and consequences are clearer and more consistent.
- Build sustained manager and leadership development rather than relying on one-time programs or leaving development solely to individual departments.
- Partner with leaders to strengthen succession planning, develop internal talent, and expand equitable access to development opportunities across the organization.

Role Overview (cont.)

Culture & Employee Experience

- Help SEO navigate organizational transition with clear communication, appropriate transparency, and thoughtful attention to employee experience.
- Clarify which people practices should be enterprise-wide and where local flexibility matters; strengthen inclusion across sites and address regional realities in compensation, benefits, and policies.
- Bring empathy and practical judgment to a modern, multigenerational workforce while balancing care for employees with organizational needs and accountability.

People Operations & Systems

- Ensure high-quality employee relations, total rewards, benefits, compliance, onboarding, policies, and core P&C services.
- Own and manage HR systems and vendors. Assess HR technology, employee data, and cross-functional workflows with IT and Operations; establish reliable sources of truth, clear ownership, and practical workflows.
- Lead, develop, and unify the P&C team, creating clear accountability while enabling sound judgment close to the work.
- Build stronger cross-functional partnership and a team model that empowers team members to lead their respective functions.

What Success Looks Like

- Employees and leaders experience P&C as accessible, responsive, credible, and appropriately confidential.
- P&C priorities are explicit, sequenced, and understood; leaders can see what is being done now, what comes next, and why.
- Major people, process, and technology changes have clear owners, stakeholder input, adoption plans, measures of success, and time to embed.
- Managers have practical tools and sustained development support, with clearer performance expectations and accountability.
- Career paths, development opportunities, succession practices, and internal mobility are more visible across departments and locations.
- Employee data and HR systems are dependable enough to support decisions, reporting, and a consistent employee lifecycle.
- The P&C team operates as a cohesive, high-accountability team with stronger cross-functional partnership and less dependence on the VP as a bottleneck.

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate for the Vice President, People & Culture position possesses the following competencies:

Builds Effective Team

Unifies and develops the P&C team while strengthening partnership across functions and sites.

Instills Trust

Creates an accessible, credible, and confidential place for employees and leaders to turn.

Courage

Brings a point of view, challenges senior leaders constructively, and makes difficult calls.

Communicates Effectively

Explains priorities, change, decisions, and the "why" to employees, managers, executives, and other stakeholders.

Ensures Accountability

Strengthens performance and follow-through while preserving humanity and sound judgment.

Manages Ambiguity

Navigates transition and competing needs while sequencing change and creating clarity.

Additional Qualifications

- Progressive senior People / HR leadership in a complex, mission-led organization; nonprofit experience is strongly relevant.
- Broad command of talent, performance management, compensation, benefits, employee relations, compliance, HR operations, and HR technology/data.
- Demonstrated organizational-change leadership, including adoption of new systems, processes, or ways of working; structured continuous improvement, or similarly disciplined methods are highly valued.
- Experience partnering with distinct business or program leaders and, ideally, a multi-site or decentralized organization where enterprise consistency must coexist with local needs.
- Track record developing managers and senior leaders, building succession and talent practices, and leading a strong People team.
- Ability to translate strategy into a realistic roadmap, prioritize competing demands, and lead implementation through adoption and measurable impact.
- Strong professional judgment, discretion, communication skills, and ability to create systems and practices that are effective for multiple, diverse stakeholder groups.
- Comfort with ambiguity, organizational transition, and the needs and expectations of a modern, multigenerational workforce.

SEO

Who We Are

Work Environment

This New York City-based role follows SEO's hybrid work model, with three in-office days each week at NYC headquarters in downtown Manhattan; the specific three days may be selected based on team and business needs. During the first year, the VP should expect periodic travel to understand SEO's sites (San Francisco, North Carolina, Miami) and local operating realities, approximately one to two site visits annually.

Our Commitment to Inclusion and Equal Opportunity

At SEO, we are committed to cultivating a team that embodies the backgrounds and experiences of the constituencies we serve and the communities we live in, and a workplace that reflects the impact we seek to make in the world.

Candidates from all communities, including people of color, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, veterans, and people with disabilities, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Equal Employment Opportunity is not just the law, it is our commitment.

Sponsors for Educational Opportunity is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer – M/F/D/V and considers all qualified applicants without regard to any legally protected status.

Applicants who need an accommodation while applying for a role with SEO due to a disability may contact us.

Compensation and Benefits

Salary

$225,000–$250,000 base salary, subject to final organizational approval. Final compensation will be determined based on the successful candidate's skills, qualifications, and experience and the requirements of the role.

Benefits

- Low-cost health, vision, and dental options, with employer contributions to health reimbursement accounts.
- Generous holiday schedule and paid time off policies, including fully paid time off for new parents.
- Disability coverage and employer contributions to retirement accounts.
- Employee wellness resources.

SEO regularly reviews its benefits based on employee needs.

Timeline and Next Steps

If you are interested in this position, please click here to submit a resume and cover letter. All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply even if you do not meet every qualification outlined above. DRG and SEO will consider the full range of experience, skills, and perspectives each candidate would bring to the role.

Recruitment Fraud Notice: *DRG is the exclusive partner for this search. Legitimate communications will come directly from DRG using @drgconsulting.com email addresses or their LinkedIn profiles. If you are unsure whether a communication is authentic, please contact the consultant(s) listed in this posting.*

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Submit an application