

Influential Women Features Melissa Ninegar: Advancing People and Culture Leadership at Once Upon a Farm

CARLSBAD, CA, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- People and Culture Executive is Credited With Scaling Global Remote Workforce, Strengthening Retention and Engagement, and Building the Organizational Foundation Behind One of the Most Successful Recent IPOs in the Consumer Sector

Melissa Ninegar, a seasoned People and Culture executive with more than 15 years of experience building high-performing organizational systems for fast-growing consumer brands, is being recognized for her leadership at Once Upon a Farm, where she has played a central role in scaling the company's workforce, strengthening culture, and architecting the people strategy behind its successful public offering at a \$724M valuation in February 2026.



As leader of the People and Culture team, Ninegar has guided the organization through a period of rapid expansion, scaling a fully remote workforce from 60 to 200+ employees while maintaining a 90% retention rate and achieving 85% employee engagement—more than 20 points above industry benchmarks. Her approach integrates culture, performance, and business strategy, ensuring that organizational health remains directly tied to business outcomes.

At Once Upon a Farm, Ninegar has built the People function from the ground up, designing compensation architecture, performance management systems, leadership development programs, benefits strategy, and DEIB initiatives. She has also established employee resource groups, internship pathways, and scalable HR infrastructure, enabling the company to grow without compromising its core values or employee experience.

Her career spans a diverse range of high-growth consumer and entertainment brands, including JuneShine Brands, Modern Times Beer, Otter Products, LifeProof, House of Blues, and Live Nation Entertainment. This experience has equipped her with both startup agility and enterprise-level discipline, allowing her to adapt People strategies to organizations at every stage of growth while maintaining a consistent focus on culture and performance.

Ninegar's leadership philosophy centers on the belief that strong business results emerge from teams that feel purpose, belonging, and psychological safety. She emphasizes that People and Culture functions should not operate as standalone initiatives but as integrated business systems that shape how organizations make decisions, develop leaders, and sustain long-term growth.

Reflecting on her career journey, Ninegar attributes her success to the power of community and mentorship, often advising early-career professionals that "your network is your net worth." She emphasizes that professional relationships provide not only opportunity but also perspective, feedback, and resilience during periods of uncertainty. She also highlights the importance of reciprocal mentorship, where guidance given early in a career often returns later in unexpected ways.

She also credits her growth to establishing healthy boundaries between work and personal life, learning over time that sustainable leadership requires balance and identity beyond the workplace. Early in her career, she was deeply immersed in her work to the detriment of personal resilience, but later found that boundaries strengthened her clarity and effectiveness as a leader.

Ninegar is a strong advocate for values alignment in career development, encouraging professionals to understand their personal mission before choosing organizational roles. She believes that alignment between personal and organizational values enables more authentic leadership, better decision-making, and greater long-term impact.

A formative moment in her career came through mentorship from Oliver Lee Mincey, who encouraged her to focus on her strengths rather than simply on her interests. That guidance reshaped her trajectory, helping her identify environments where her capabilities could thrive and steering her away from roles that limited her growth.

She is also passionate about empowering women in the workplace, particularly around compensation transparency and negotiation. Ninegar encourages women to build financial literacy, leverage modern learning tools, and confidently articulate their value, emphasizing that equitable compensation is essential to long-term career success and opportunity.

Industry observers note that Ninegar's work represents a growing shift in how high-growth consumer companies approach People and Culture, treating it as a core driver of valuation,

operational stability, and long-term investor confidence. Following the successful IPO of Once Upon a Farm, her focus remains on scaling leadership capacity, strengthening global talent systems, and deepening the company's culture as it enters its next phase of public market growth. She continues to mentor emerging HR leaders and contribute to broader conversations on the future of work globally.

Learn More about Melissa Ninegar:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/melissa-ninegar>

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