

Influential Women Profiles Marilou Lagman Gilfillan, SPHR: Advancing Human-Centered Leadership

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Global HR Leader Leverages Two Decades of Experience, Strategic Insight, and a Passion for Developing People to Shape the Future of Work

Los Angeles, California — Marilou Lagman Gilfillan, SPHR, is an accomplished People & Culture Executive with two decades of experience shaping talent strategy, organizational development, and workforce transformation across global organizations in technology, gaming, entertainment, financial services, and luxury retail. Currently serving as Senior Director of People & Culture at Kobalt Music Publishing, she leads people strategy for complex and creative teams while operating at the intersection of business performance, organizational design, and culture.



Known for her data-driven and human-centered approach, Marilou combines workforce analytics, strategic leadership, and AI-enabled insights to help organizations strengthen leadership effectiveness, improve scalability, and navigate meaningful transformation. Her career reflects a commitment to building workplaces where people are empowered to succeed while organizations achieve sustainable growth.

Originally from the Metro Manila area in the Philippines, Marilou's professional journey began after migrating to the United States, where she embraced the challenge of building a new life and career in an unfamiliar environment. Her first experience at Disneyland Resort sparked her curiosity about the "people side" of business and ultimately led her toward human resources. Without a formal HR background at the time, she took a bold step into the field and quickly

discovered her passion for helping organizations and individuals reach their full potential.

Over the course of her career, Marilou has held leadership roles with respected organizations including U.S. Bank and Activision Blizzard, where she guided large-scale workforce initiatives, advised executives through complex organizational challenges, and helped companies navigate periods of rapid growth, regulatory complexity, and significant change. Her ability to connect business objectives with employee experience has allowed her to create strategies that strengthen culture, improve engagement, and support long-term success.

Beyond her corporate leadership, Marilou remains deeply committed to mentorship and giving back. She actively supports emerging professionals and contributes to initiatives that connect industry and education, including serving on an advisory board for a strategic AI program. Through mentorship, knowledge sharing, and advocacy, she continues to create opportunities for others to develop their skills and advance their careers.

Marilou attributes her success to an unwavering combination of tenacity and courage. Throughout her career, she has approached opportunities with a willingness to embrace challenges, often adopting the mindset of saying “yes” first and then using her resourcefulness, strategic thinking, and determination to figure out how to succeed.

This approach was shaped by her personal journey as an immigrant navigating cultural and linguistic adaptation. Marilou intentionally worked to master American business communication to ensure her strategic perspective could be clearly understood and create a meaningful impact. That experience strengthened her adaptability, resilience, and ability to lead effectively across diverse teams and environments.

Throughout her career, Marilou has consistently championed innovation and introduced solutions designed to improve the employee experience. She has been recognized for implementing forward-thinking initiatives, including developing one of the first online career sites during an era when paper applications were still the norm, transforming complicated vacation and sick leave structures into simplified paid time off systems, and introducing strategic benefits such as 401K profit-sharing programs. She played a very instrumental role in the recruitment of a CEO, in collaboration with the board of directors.

For Marilou, success is not only defined by personal achievement but also by the opportunities created for others. She believes many of her accomplishments were made possible because others opened doors, provided mentorship, and offered support throughout her journey. As a result, paying that support forward has become a central theme of her leadership philosophy.

The best career advice Marilou has received is simple: say “yes” first and then activate the resourcefulness needed to figure things out. She believes this mindset encourages professionals to embrace opportunities that may initially feel intimidating and trust their ability to learn, adapt, and grow through experience.

For Marilou, stepping outside of one's comfort zone is often where the greatest professional development occurs. She believes individuals do not need to have every answer before accepting a challenge; instead, they must be willing to learn, seek guidance, and approach unfamiliar situations with curiosity and confidence.

Marilou encourages young women entering the industry not to avoid discomfort. She believes that uncertainty and moments of self-doubt are not signs of inadequacy but rather indicators of growth and learning.

She encourages women to view what is often called "imposter syndrome" as a natural part of expanding their abilities. Rather than allowing uncertainty to hold them back, she advises women to embrace new experiences, remain open to learning, and trust that growth comes from stretching beyond familiar boundaries.

In addition, Marilou emphasizes the importance of resilience, adaptability, and continuous improvement. She believes successful careers are built through curiosity, courage, and the willingness to evolve.

As the workplace continues to transform, Marilou identifies artificial intelligence as one of the most significant opportunities and challenges facing People and Culture leaders today. While organizations are eager to embrace AI technologies, she believes the focus must extend beyond adopting new tools and toward creating meaningful business transformation.

She encourages leaders to consider what becoming "AI first" truly means for their business models, employees, and long-term strategies. Rather than simply implementing technology because it is trending, organizations must understand how AI will impact their operations, workforce, and future goals.

Marilou believes successful AI adoption requires thoughtful governance, strategic planning, and strong collaboration between technology and People teams. She emphasizes that HR leaders must have a seat at the table when organizations make decisions about AI implementation because technology strategies must align with people strategies.

Her message to leaders is clear: prioritize the human element. Organizations must continue investing in their employees, supporting workforce development, and ensuring that technological advancement enhances—not replaces—the human experience.

Integrity remains the cornerstone of Marilou's personal and professional philosophy. She believes authenticity, honesty, and staying true to one's values are essential for building trust and creating meaningful relationships.

Equally important to her is humility. Marilou approaches challenges with a willingness to listen,

learn, and collaborate with others. She believes humility enables leaders to build stronger partnerships, navigate complex organizational challenges, and continue growing throughout their careers.

Together, integrity and humility guide Marilou's leadership approach and shape the way she supports individuals, teams, and organizations. Whether developing executives, mentoring emerging professionals, or guiding cultural transformation, she remains dedicated to creating environments where people and businesses can thrive together.

Through her combination of strategic expertise, innovative thinking, and commitment to empowering others, Marilou Lagman Gilfillan continues to redefine what effective People & Culture leadership looks like in a rapidly evolving world.

Learn More about Marilou Lagman Gilfillan:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/marilou-gilfillan>
and her LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mariloulagmangilfillan/>

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