

How a UK Healthcare Company Built a U.S. Workforce

Without the Costly Assumptions

The Challenge

When a UK-based healthcare company opened its U.S. operations, leadership arrived with something most expanding companies underestimate: invisible assumptions. The staffing model, compensation philosophy, employee expectations, and cultural norms that had worked in the UK were treated as a reasonable starting point for the U.S., because why wouldn't they be? Same company, same values, same industry.

The problem is that the U.S. employment landscape is fundamentally different. Healthcare burden falls almost entirely on the employer rather than the state. Direct wages carry different weight when benefits packaging looks nothing like what UK employees receive. What counts as a competitive offer in London doesn't translate to Chicago or Dallas. And the unspoken cultural contracts between employer and employee – around feedback, hierarchy, directness, and work-life boundaries – differ in ways that are easy to miss until they've already caused friction.

The company's U.S. leadership recognized early that they needed a guide – someone who understood the terrain they were actually entering, not the one they assumed they knew.



Our Approach

HR.coach conducted a comprehensive HR Assessment to establish what building a U.S. workforce would require from the ground up, not from a UK template. The engagement spanned the full people infrastructure:

- **Compensation & benefits structure:** rebuilding the total rewards model to reflect U.S. market rates, healthcare costs, and competitive benchmarks for the specific roles and geographies involved
- **Staffing model & org design:** pressure-testing the UK-derived headcount and role assumptions against U.S. talent availability, labor costs, and operational realities
- **Policy & compliance:** developing the U.S.-compliant policy framework that addressed the legal and regulatory environment the company was now operating in
- **Cultural onboarding & training:** equipping both U.S. hires and UK-based leaders with the context they needed to work together effectively across cultural difference



What We Found & Built On

The gap between assumption and reality was significant, and would have been expensive to discover through trial and error. A staffing model built on UK compensation expectations was materially underfunded for the U.S. market once healthcare costs were included. Role definitions that made sense in a UK context needed rethinking for a U.S. workforce with different expectations around scope, autonomy, and career progression.

Equally important were the softer dynamics. UK and U.S. employees often interpret the same management behaviors very differently. What reads as appropriate directness in one culture can feel abrasive in another, and what feels like collaborative consensus-building to a UK leader can feel like indecision to a U.S. team.

HR.coach's cultural onboarding work created shared language and mutual context, reducing the friction that derails so many cross-Atlantic expansions before they find their footing.

The Results

The company successfully built and launched its U.S. operation with a workforce, a compensation structure, and a policy framework designed for the environment they were actually entering:

- A right-sized total rewards model: competitive in the U.S. market, financially sustainable, and clearly communicated to incoming talent.



- A compliant, U.S.-specific policy infrastructure: built from scratch rather than retrofitted from UK documentation.
- A culturally prepared leadership team: UK and U.S. employees equipped to work together with fewer of the misalignments that typically emerge when companies expand across cultural lines.
- A stable foundation for growth: the organization could scale from a base that was built correctly the first time.

Key Take Away

International expansion fails most often not because of strategy, but because of assumptions – the quiet belief that what worked at home will work somewhere new with minor adjustments. It rarely does. HR.coach's assessment methodology surfaces those assumptions early, when they're still inexpensive to correct, and replaces them with a people infrastructure built for where you're going.

About HR.Coach

HR.Coach is an HR advisory firm for founders and business owners who need practical people solutions – without the overhead of a full HR department.

Led by Leigh, HR.Coach specializes in behavioral assessment, talent strategy, and employee listening – helping organizations hire the right people, understand what their workforce needs, and build cultures that retain the talent they want. Every engagement starts with the same belief: the answers are usually already inside your organization. You just need the right structure to surface them.

