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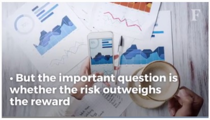
The 19 Best Places To Travel In 2019

Laura Begley Bloom Senior Contributor
Women@Forbes
Transformative Travel: I look at how travel can change lives.



• But the important question is whether the risk outweighs the reward

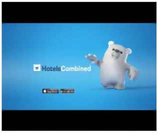
TWEET THIS

What's on your travel wish list for 2019?

Itz'ana, a new luxury resort in Placencia, Belize. PHOTO COURTESY OF ITZ'ANA

What's on your travel wish list for 2019? We tapped into some of the world's top travel experts to find out where they want to go next. From a colorful beach town in Belize that is slowly becoming discovered to an unexpected European country with a vibrant new arts scene, here are the most exciting places to travel in 2019.

Belmond Cap Juluca on Anguilla. PHOTO COURTESY OF BELMOND CAP JULUCA



HotelsCombined

Where: Anguilla, Caribbean

Chosen By: Tiffany Dowd is a global luxury hotel expert and luxury travel influencer known as "Luxe Tiffany" and founder of Luxe Social Media. Follow her on Instagram and Twitter.

Why: You'll be hard pressed to find beaches more spectacular in the Caribbean than on the beautiful British overseas territory of Anguilla. From long stretches of pristine white sand on Rendezvous Bay to the sparkling Maundays Bay, Anguilla is a honeymoon hot spot and also ideal for family holidays. The iconic Belmond Cap Juluca will soon reopen on December 15th after a complete renovation and will feature a brand new oceanfront infinity edge pool as well as a touch of Venetian glamour at the new Cip's by Cipriani restaurant. There will also be a new Cap Shack, where you'll sip rum punch and dine on beach BBQ tapas from a food truck while swaying to cool calypso tunes under the stars.

A bird's-eye view of Montage Los Cabos. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTAGE LOS CABOS

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Where: Los Cabos, Mexico

Chosen By: Michaela Guzy is a media executive, entrepreneur and on-air show host. She is the executive producer for two online television shows, *Michaela's Map* and *OhThePeopleYouMeet*. Based in New York City, she is also an adjunct professor at New York University School of Professional Studies, where she teaches a course called "Travel Storytelling: Creating Video Content."

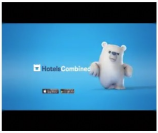
Why: You might think you know about Los Cabos, but did you know that one of the largest, protected national marine parks in the world is just 60 miles south? Cabo Pulmo National Park used to be heavily overfished before the park became officially protected in the 90s; it's also a UNESCO site because of its rich biodiversity, high marine productivity and beauty. Cabo Pulmo stretches five miles along the coast of Baja California Sur and houses the oldest living reef of on the west coast of North America. (Fishermen have been taught how to be dive masters to keep the ocean healthy and full of fish.) There, you can find sea turtles, sea lions, dolphins and humpback whales. Thanks to the success of the national marine park, travelers can now kayak, go stand-up paddleboarding or snorkel/scuba dive with sea lions and even (friendly) bull sharks. Back in Los Cabos, visit chef Enrique Silva's working organic farm and restaurant at Los Tamarindos, where you can pick your produce and make a meal with him. There are a number of hotels to check out, including a recently opened Montage Los Cabos and the forthcoming Four Seasons Costa Palmas, slated to open in 2019. My pick: the sustainable Hotel El Ganzo, which has an artist-in-residence program and a music recording studio. The hotel also supports the children's community art center across the street.

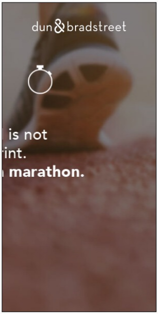
A tented room at Fairmont Mara Safari Club. PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRMONT MARA SAFARI CLUB

Where: Kenya

Chosen By: Natalie Beauregard is the travel guides editor at *AFAR*, where she covers emerging travel destinations and best hotels.

Why: Kenya Airways just started offering direct flights from New York's JFK to Nairobi, which is going to open the idea of a safari to so many people, since it used to take multiple connections to get to Kenya. This spring, Delta will also start flying direct from Atlanta to Nairobi. In





Kenya, I love the Fairmont, which has three properties across the country. Nairobi's Fairmont The Norfolk is focused not just on being a hotel, but being a cultural center by showcasing the city's vibrant culture with exhibitions by Kenyan artists and local fashion designers. At the Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club Resort, the property is running conservancy efforts to protect the animals as well as the culture of the people who live there. The Fairmont Mara Safari Club provides the quintessential safari experience: Nowhere else in Africa can you get so close to the animals.

Overlooking glacial Black Lake in Montenegro. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: Montenegro

Chosen By: Joanna Kuflik is director of services at Marchay, a membership-based community that plans luxury travel experiences for a select elite worldwide.

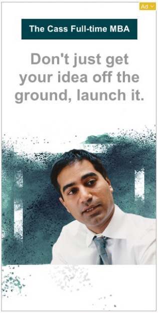
Why: With breathtaking scenery, undiscovered beaches, UNESCO World Heritage towns, a burgeoning wine culture and incredible Southern European cuisine, this country should be on everyone's radar for 2019. While it used to be considered a stopover that travelers combined with its popular neighboring country, Croatia, this Adriatic paradise has experienced a development boom this past year, making it a perfect country to explore on its own. The legendary Aman Sveti Stefan, a fortified island that dates to the 15th century, is the go-to spot for rest and relaxation with its pink-sand beach and killer spa. In nearby Tivat, the glitzy Regent Porto Montenegro is a prime place for shopping, socializing, beach clubs and boating; a St. Tropez scene, though at a more reasonable price. Meanwhile, the recently opened Chedi Lustica Bay, part of the new Lustica Bay Marina Village, is one of seven hotels to be built in this area, complete with an 18-hole golf course, along with the One & Only Portonovi, due to be finished by the end of next year. With luxury accommodations now able to match its stunning surroundings, Montenegro is a place to put on your horizon in the new year.

An aerial view of Itz'ana in Placencia, Belize. PHOTO COURTESY OF ITZ'ANA

Where: Placencia, Belize

Chosen By: Jeri Clausing is the contributing editor for luxury at *Travel Weekly*.

Why: When you think of Belize, you think of the cays or the inland eco



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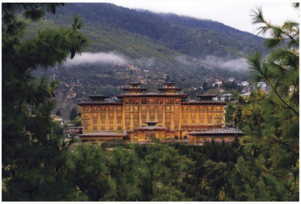
resorts. But further sound on the mainland is Placencia, a cute waterfront fishing village with bright houses and buildings that is slowly being discovered. It's also home to Itz'ana, the first luxury resort in the area. The owner collects Mayan artifacts, and this is his second independent hotel in Belize (the first was Ka'ana in San Ignacio).
At Itz'ana, the lobby is designed to feel like you're in a guest house, not a hotel. In addition to the stunning rooms in the main property, there are also villas with private plunge pools.



The Taj Tashi in Bhutan. COURTESY OF TAJ HOTELS

Where: Bhutan

Chosen by: Juliana A. Saad is a Brazilian writer and editor who specializes in travel, lifestyle and luxury. Her company, MMJX Comunicação, produces develops special editorial content and projects for numerous publications and companies.

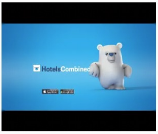
Why: Bhutan is ideal for everything, with a peace and calm that you don't experience anywhere else. It transports you to another culture with different values than what we are used to. You can also challenge yourself to trek to places like the Tiger Nest, a cliffside Buddhist temple. There are great hotels, like the Taj Tashi in Thimphu, which is modeled after a Bhutanese temple and has wonderful amenities, like a signature spa that uses oils from the Himalayas. Amanjiwo in Paro is spectacularly beautiful with a trail between the different lodges in Bhutan.

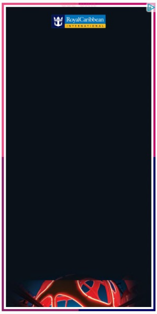
A view of a volcanic lake on San Miguel Island in the Azores. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: The Azores

Chosen By: Michele Wise is a travel advisor with KK Travels Worldwide. Michele travels constantly, seeking out new, unique destinations for her clients, which include families, couples, multi-gen groups and girlfriends, as well as wellness and incentive travelers.Follow her travels on Instagram @michele.wise

Why: Portugal is on everyone's radar right now, however, new to the scene is the Azores, a set of beautiful islands that are situated in the middle of the Atlantic. With new, seasonal nonstop flights on Delta Air Lines from New York's JFK, the Azores are now very easy to reach. The Azores are known for outdoor adventure along with historical and cultural charm. These islands have something for everyone: vineyards, volcanic crater lakes, world-class whale watching, hot springs, UNESCO protected landscapes, natural swimming pools, thermal springs, diving, surfing, waterfalls — this destination is one big playground that's rich in natural beauty. Rest your head at the lovely Furnas Boutique Hotel, which has a thermal swimming pool that is nice to come home to after a day of sightseeing. You can visit its sister property, Azor Hotel in Ponta Delgada and relax at the rooftop pool, which has amazing views of the city and the port. Looking for something off the beaten path? Santa Barbara Eco Hotel sits on cliff overlooking the Atlantic and is popular with surfers, while White Exclusive Suites & Villas is an intimate spot on the south side of the island with breathtaking ocean views from





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Glamping at Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge. PHOTO COURTESY OF BELMOND

Where: Botswana

Chosen By: Fernanda Costa Gama Logemann is the founder of the Brazil-based travel platform, Spice up the Road, which is focused on sharing the most exclusive travel experiences around the world and the best tips for food, hotels and attractions. Spice up the Road is also a column in the lifestyle magazine *Revista Donna*.

Why: I am always looking for unforgettable adventures and authentic experiences, so glamping (upscale camping) is a trend that I am really excited about. It's the perfect way to disconnect from your routine and connect with wildlife and nature, but still have the opportunity to enjoy the kind of comfort and luxury that makes a difference in a stay. Want a great way to experience the glamorous and unique world of glamping? The Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge has just reopened and is located in the heart of Chobe National Park in Botswana, offering beautiful lodges and amazing wildlife viewing in the savannah.

A Mexico City panorama after dark. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: Mexico City

Chosen By: Based in Mexico City, María Pellicer has been working in the travel industry for the past decade. Formerly the editor in chief of *Travesias* magazine, she now oversees all the editorial projects in the company.

Why: Mexico City is going very strong, and I'm not saying that because I'm a local. Just check out the number of hotels that are opening here. Now, joining Ritz-Carlton and Park Hyatt, Kimpton and Sofitel have both announced they will open in Mexico's capital. This clearly speaks to a rising interest among tourists to explore our city — and I'm pretty sure our gastronomic scene has a lot to do with that, too.

Silversea's Silver Cloud will be traveling to Iceland in 2019. PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVERSEA

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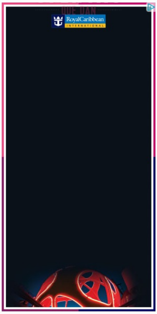

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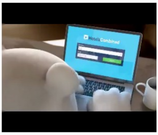

Where: Iceland

Chosen By: An avid traveler, Tania L Swasbrook grew up in the travel industry. She specializes in ultra luxury travel with a particular passion for wellness, romance and adventure.

Why: From waterfalls and glaciers to whale-watching and puffins, Iceland is a place like none other. In 2019, the way to see it is with Silversea, which is venturing to Iceland with Silver Cloud, the finest and most elegant expedition ship float. She will be circumnavigating the land of fire and ice in August of 2019, and only 250 lucky guests will be able to experience the beauty of this mystical country so close up.

A view of Paseo del Prado in Havana, Cuba. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: Havana, Cuba

Chosen By: Jill K. Robinson writes about travel, adventure, food and drink for *AFAR*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure, Robb Report* and more. Her magazine and newspaper articles have won Lowell Thomas, Society of American Travel Writers, and American Society of Journalists and Authors awards.

Why: One of the things that got my attention recently was the announcement of the first SO/ property in the Americas. The SO/ Havana Paseo del Prado is expected to open in early 2020, at the intersection of Paseo de Marti and the Malecón in the heart of Havana. The property will feature the creative signature of Spanish designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, who has been inspired by the world of Cuban dance for the glamorous, yet playful hotel. I have to admit that my initial reaction was selfish, because I traveled in Cuba for my honeymoon in 2001, so I'm already planning to celebrate the opening and my wedding anniversary in Havana.

The pool at Hotel Casa San Agustin in Cartagena. PHOTO COURTESY OF HOTEL CASA SAN AGUSTIN

Where: Cartagena, Colombia

Chosen By: Haisley Smith is the vice-president of marketing and business development for Brownell, the agency of choice for intrepid travelers since 1887. Smith looks for properties with personality, cruises with creativity and experiences that excite the senses on behalf of the luxury agency powerhouse.

Why: Cartagena is a riot of color, cuisine and culture. Where to stay? Casa San Agustin is situated in the center of the action inside the city walls. It's a romantic getaway with unique features, like a pool running beneath a centuries old aqueduct.

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The pool at the InterContinental Ljubljana. PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERCONTINENTAL LJUBLJANA

Where: Ljubljana, Slovenia

Chosen By: Tiffany Dowd is a global luxury hotel expert and luxury travel influencer known as “Luxe Tiffany” and founder of Luxe Social Media. Follow her on Instagram and Twitter.

Why: Discover one of Europe's most charming places in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It’s a young and lively city that should be hot on everyone’s radar. For a unique perfective and beautiful views, sail the Ljubljanica River on a traditional wooden boat to experience the city. The new InterContinental Ljubljana is the perfect place to stay for a luxurious and modern chic experience. The hotel has a great location near the train station, Old Town and Park Tivoli. You’ll find some of the most spectacular views from its rooftop B-Bar and B by Alfredo Russo restaurant.

A hacienda at Chable in Merida, Mexico. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHABLE.

Where: Mérida, Mexico

Chosen By: Michaela Guzy is a media executive, entrepreneur and on-air show host. She is the executive producer for two online television shows, *Michaela’s Map* and *OhThePeopleYouMeet*. Based in New York City, she is also an adjunct professor at New York University School of Professional Studies, where she teaches a course called "Travel Storytelling: Creating Video Content."

Why: Sunrise yoga on the banks of a sacred Mayan cenote? Sí, por favor! This is just one of the magical wonders you’ll discover at Chable Resort, in a 250-year-old converted hacienda just outside Merida, Mexico. But Chable is more than just a wellness retreat with a world-class spa. It incorporates indigenous Mayan traditions and healing into treatments, like a temezcal under the careful eye of the Résident Abuela Ak’bal, a spiritual leader. After a mind, body, soul connection, take a dip in the thermal pools. For golf lovers, a Pitch & Putt will open in January 2019, and the well-curated gift shop features only Mexican designers. No visit to Mexico is complete without tasting the local cuisine and tequila. An estimated 40% of produce and herbs used at Chable are grown on its own farm, utilizing traditional Mayan techniques. At Ixi’im Restaurant, executive chef Luis Ronzon works hand in hand with star chef Jorge Vallejo, known for his award-winning restaurant, Quintonil, in Mexico City. Ixi’im also has the world’s largest tequila collection (in terms of bottle design), with 3,500 on display. And you must not miss the handmade tortillas at the Palapa Maya, where Doña Eneida — the village’s grandmother and Chable’s Yucatan chef — cooks her family's recipes for guests.

Baha Mar in the Bahamas. PHOTO COURTESY OF BAHA MAR

Where: Baha Mar, Bahamas

Chosen By: Haisley Smith is the vice-president of marketing and business development for Brownell, the agency of choice for intrepid travelers since 1887. Smith looks for properties with personality, cruises with creativity and experiences that excite the senses on behalf of the luxury agency powerhouse.

Why: Visitors are flush with choice in the Bahamas, and at the new Baha Mar, there is a little something for travelers of all tastes and preferences. Pick your hotel based on your passion: the luxurious Rosewood Baha Mar, the cutting-edge SLS Baha Mar or the family-friendly Grand Hyatt Baha Mar. The resort complex opened earlier this year with well-publicized hiccups, but the Bahamian government recently allowed for 2,000 additional work visas to help the resorts round out their staffs. It's smooth sailing and cocktail sipping from here on out.

Enjoying a ride on a traditional gondola boat in Warsaw's Royal Baths Park. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: Poland

Chosen By: Natalie Beauregard is the travel guides editor at *AFAR*, where she covers emerging travel destinations and best hotels.

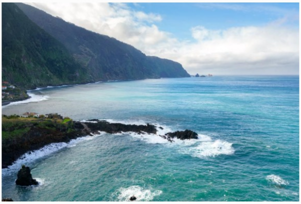
Why: I'm excited about Poland, where there's a lot of a youthful energy right now. In Warsaw, there's so much going on with culture and the arts, including the new Raffles Europejski, set in a landmark, 160-year-old building. Another city that's doing a lot with the arts scene is Katowice. Also worth checking out is Szczecin, an emerging city in the northwest of the country that is home to a new philharmonic building. Of course, any visit here should also include a stop at some of the more sobering historic locations, like Auschwitz. It's a destination you'll really want to explore.

The pool at Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, in Krabi, Thailand. PHOTO COURTESY OF RITZ-CARLTON

Where: Krabi, Thailand

Chosen by: Juliana A. Saad is a Brazilian writer and editor who specializes in travel, lifestyle and luxury. Her company, MMJX Comunicação, produces news and develops special editorial content and projects for numerous publications and companies.

Why: Krabi is a special place in the south of Thailand that is still under the radar, uncrowded and peaceful. The place to stay is Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, set right on a white-sand beach. The bungalows are like little houses with lap pools, bathtubs in the form of a lotus flower and the biggest beds you'll ever see. The hotel hosts barbecues on the beach and will take you on boat trips around the islands, which jut out of the sea. It looks like Halong Bay in Vietnam, but is blissfully serene. Once you're in Krabi, you'll never want to leave.

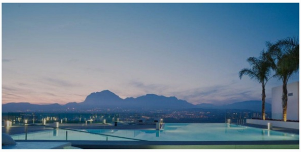


Beautiful black rock beach in Madeira. PHOTO: GETTY

Where: Madeira

Chosen By: Based in Mexico City, María Pellicer has been working in the travel industry for the past decade. Formerly the editor in chief of *Travesias* magazine, she now oversees all the editorial projects in the company.

Why: Portugal has been on travelers' radars for quite some time now, but I'm super excited about the country getting a bit more popular. Madeira is a great nature destination and is still fairly unexplored. Because of its remote location, there's a feeling of something exotic and isolated — but then again, it's Portugal, so food and culture are still there. For those who love nature, this is something to keep an eye on.



SHA Wellness Clinic in Alicante, Spain. PHOTO COURTESY OF SHA WELLNESS CLINIC

Where: Alicante, Spain

Chosen By: An avid traveler, Tania L Swasbrook grew up in the travel industry. She specializes in ultra luxury travel with a particular passion for wellness, romance and adventure.

Why: Alicante in the Valencia region of southeastern Spain is a beautiful and picturesque destination set on the hills of the Mediterranean Sea between the bay of Altea and the natural park of Sierra Helada. There are stunning views, plus the weather is amazing year round. There, you'll find SHA Wellness Clinic, which is in a class of its own, perfectly combining the chicness, beauty and service of a luxury Mediterranean resort with an expert team of medical professionals. The combination of Western and Eastern medicine provides a true 360-degree approach to wellness. SHA Wellness also recently launched "SHA Residences," 11 luxurious suites that allow you to truly immerse yourself in a healthier lifestyle while in the company of your loved ones.

I'm a travel and lifestyle authority and a content strategist who works with brands to create powerful storytelling, build audiences and drive profitability. In this column, "Transformative Travel," I look at how travel can change women's lives. I profile the doers and the d... MORE
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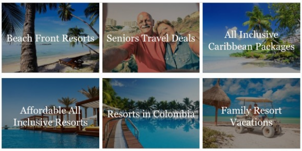

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How To Avoid The Surprising Implications Of Mergers And Acquisitions

SAP BRANDVOICE

By Ali Ghumman, Senior Director, Industry Value Advisory, SAP

When Northrop first acquired Grumman, it was a disaster. The integration strategy with respect to people, processes, and systems was ill-defined and that created significant friction in the company. Even after 17 years of acquisition, folks would still complain about how Northrop did them wrong.

One oft repeated complaint by employees was about how Northrop took their Turkeys away. Back in the day, Grumman employees would receive fresh Turkeys for Christmas. It was quite an event as employees and retirees would line up to get their birds and years ago they even received live ones. In one of the first meetings after acquisition in April employees asked, “Will we still get our Turkey?” and the answer they were given was a big fat NO.

Had Northrop been aware of the cultural implications of this small gesture they might have decided to continue the giveaway for a temporary period if not long-term. Their response perpetuated the kind of behavior that cost millions due to their apathy while saving thousands on Turkey.

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This is just one example of how a small symbol can impact a merger of two titans. Now, I don’t intend to say that the merger between these two entities was troubled simply because of this one detail. However, it’s a good example of how employees and their concerns are acutely responsible for the success or failure of mergers and acquisitions.

What’s up with M&A?

Every year all over the globe, trillions of dollars are spent to merge organizations big and small. Worldwide there were more than 50,000 deals worth more than $3.5 trillion in 2017 and millions of employees were affected by them. With so much value at stake M&A can be a great way to improve returns. However, it is also true that more than 50% of M&A does not generate the expected ROI. Another study gives more color by providing a grim view suggesting 80% of M&A fails at the implementation stage due to ineffective change management, lack of HR representation, dearth of HR skill set, and inadequate roadmaps. These studies show that if done incorrectly M&A can also result in significant loss of value.

Types of M&A

Typically, there are three types of mergers and acquisitions:

1. **Converge Horizontal Processes**: These drive value by converging certain processes like finance, HR, procurement, etc. across the merged companies

2. **Full Value Chain Integration:** This approach requires the most integration. In addition to the synergies delivered in scenario 1, it is envisioned that there are substantial synergies in fully integrating the value chains. This may be the case when the acquired company supplies or consumes a product produced by the acquiring organization.

3. **Portfolio of Assets—Low or No Synergy:** In this scenario, the buyer doesn't expect to deliver synergies from the integration of business processes. A typical buyer in this category would be a Private Equity firm which expects to deliver value from areas like financial engineering or accelerated growth.

The People Impact

The first two types of M&A typically require a lot of care while carving out the new entity. It's almost like a marriage between two people who already have kids from before. Both families have their own deeply rooted rules, traditions, and a way of life. It is very difficult as it is for one family to find a happy medium between its own members, let alone adding a new and completely different set of individuals into the fold. Anyone who minimizes the enormity of this task (in marriage or in M&A) is bound to fail at its helm. Logically, the people specific due diligence required to succeed in M&A is intense and can broadly be divided into three stages:

1. **Pre-merger:** To validate if the merger is even a good idea

2. **During merger:** To ensure that employee related concerns are well embedded in the integration plan

3. **Post-merger:** To drive people related initiatives until a new culture starts to develop for the merged organization

Putting Employee Concerns at Ease

A new normal like M&A results in anxiety for the employee population, as job cuts and role changes are the norm and bright talent looks for a way out as soon as they get hint of such activity. It is imperative in this situation, to set the right example from day one or the implicit cost of M&A will rise to unmanageable levels. In this situation the following three steps can help restrict loses, engage employees, and improve empathy:

1. **Cultural assessment surveys** can highlight differences between the two merging entities and help design a cultural roadmap for the future

2. **Honoring icons** like Turkey giveaways will protect emotionally valuable norms and build trust with the new entity

3. **Day One planning** shall get information out to employees about the merger and what it means to them. This should include onboarding plans, compensation and benefit rationalization information, and preliminary origination design among other things. Transparency is key!

In any merger of big organizations, people are usually a critical piece of the puzzle that is often overlooked. Simply identifying that as a key element as early as identification of M&A targets, helps build better practices into the process. More of the same can improve M&A success and ROI gains.

This is an excerpt from a whitepaper called "Mergers and Acquisitions: An HR perspective across pre-post merger planning and implementation." Read the full whitepaper here.

This story also appears on Medium: Innovation Spotlight.

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