

- You're listening to HRMSA, your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice, thought-provoking interviews and stories that just hit different so that work doesn't have to feel, well, like work. Now, your host, Shari Simpson.

- Joining me today is Ryan Bonvillian, Chief Revenue Officer at Blue Marble. As a CRO, Ryan is responsible for leading all aspects of the organization's revenue strategy including new client acquisition, client upselling and channel partnerships. Prior to becoming CRO, Ryan was the Regional Vice President for Paylocity's Enterprise Division and Director of Sales for Paylocity. Before joining Blue Marble and Paylocity, Ryan was an Enterprise Account Executive and held various leadership positions at various organizations. He also is a Board Officer for Conscious Alliance, a Boulder, Colorado 501c3. Also joining me is Priya Licht, a Senior Human Resource Executive with a deep background in international people strategy for both global non-profit and for-profit organizations. Prior to developing Global People Strategist and starting Automate Consulting, Priya was the Chief Human Resource Officer and Senior Advisor at the Clinton Health Access Initiative where she built the HR department from the ground up for an international employee base of 700 plus employees across 25 countries. Priya and Ryan, thank you so much for jumping on the podcast with me today.

- Thank you, Shari.

- So excited to have you both here. We have such an amazing topic around the global workforce today and everything that we've experienced in the last couple of years has told us as HR professionals this is definitely something that we need to be on the forefront of understanding and helping lead in our organization. So you both bring a really interesting background in this area. So we have a couple of prepared questions today as we spend our time together. So I'll start with you, Priya. As you think about work in the global context, how do we need to start thinking about the needs of our employees differently?

- Well, first of all, thank you once again, Shari, for having me on this podcast. This is certainly a topic that is very top of mind for companies, for employers. The world really has changed in the last three years and working from home is not going away. The global context is much more prevalent now than it ever has been. Employers, because they are seeing that employees want to work from home, boundaries really have vanished in terms of where employers can find the right skill sets for their business needs. We are seeing in the U.S., but also worldwide, obviously because of logistical lockdown concerns, it was much higher back in 2020. Working from home is now actually stabilizing somewhere around 30% or so, which is really far above pre-pandemic levels, which means that where we are hiring from really has expanded across borders. Businesses are trying and adopting

hybrid approaches, such as the 3-2 work week. And also they are budgeting for things like off-sites and retreats where no matter where in the world you have your staff, you can bring people together for a little bit more of the old-fashioned bonding experience. But obviously, if you are thinking about employing in a global context and you're looking at Blue Marble or Paylocity to help you out with that, chances are you are looking at an international market for your business and quite possibly a global labor pool for your staffing needs. This means you need knowledge and advice on how to be a compliant and competitive employer in different countries. The laws, the rules are different, which means the people you want to hire have different expectations from what you might be used to in your home country. So all of the measures that you need to take, you know, and in our world, things can get tactical very quickly, right? I mean, we are talking about this at a high level, but at a very tactical level, just how you are looking to recruit what are the laws you need to follow? What are the benefits you need to provide? What are the documentation you need to have in place to make sure you are bringing people on in the correct way so that, you know, you don't run afoul of local authorities? These are all measures that an employer needs to keep in mind when you're looking to hire in a global context.

- Ryan, with all of those complexities that Priya mentioned, how are companies in multiple countries thinking about juggling multiple payroll methods really for such a diverse group of global employees now?

- Yeah, thank you, Shari. And thanks again for having us here today. Appreciate the opportunity in the forum. What you just mentioned is a real challenge because country to country, the needs can be so different. And as I think about it, the optimal approach becomes one where you've got that country experience and expertise, but you're doing it in a way that's efficient as well. And as it relates to HR and payroll software specifically, we've really been seeing over the last several years a trend towards consolidation on the global side, which has been present for quite a while now in the domestic software market, especially for payroll and HR. CIOs and CHROs and leaders are coming together and saying, how can we find that all in one solution that can really meet those the comprehensive needs of the business? But really finding one or fewer vendor relationships in a way that doesn't compromise that experience and expertise is, I think, the goal. And I think what naturally happens with employers that go global with a global remote workforce is that they might start off in a country or two, and they find in-country providers to work with. And when they start to see that that's an effective strategy, they layer in more countries and more software and more partners. And before they know it, they've got a really, you know, difficult platform and experience because they're managing so many different systems, so many different relationships. So consolidation really is key.

- I can just imagine as an HR professional thinking about navigating all those systems and it's already giving me a headache. So I understand where the thought process there is. How do we find a solution that meets all our needs? With these complexities, Priya, how can companies maintain that sense of team culture and cohesion when employees are working remotely from different locations all around the world? You have things like different time zones and different cultural expectations that you might have to deal with.

- That is such a great question. And I think we are extremely lucky to be alive in the era that we're in, which is that technology has really made so much of this possible. We are already using many of these tools, whether it's Zoom or Microsoft Teams or Google Meet. Whatever else the COVID lockdowns taught us, it certainly drove home the fact that technology has now allowed us to communicate so much more seamlessly across borders than ever before. And the rise of remote work as a norm or preference really has been a partner phenomenon to the rise of the technology. You know, as they say, necessity is the mother of all invention, of course. As for time zones while it will always be imperfect, successful teams have been known to take turns on whether to start early or late in order to accommodate those on the other side of the world. Personally I'm here on the East Coast of the U.S. and if I need to speak to partners in the Asia-Pac region, I find it easier to schedule an evening meeting to accommodate their mornings, mostly because I'm terrible at waking up super early. But you work with your strengths and also a sense of fairness. But also within teams you want to make sure that whatever communication technology you are using, that it's not only for work purposes. You know, so a lot of kind of chatter near the water cooler or just hallway side conversations that are now missing you can use technology to mimic the kind of cultural connections that you would have gotten in person. So whether it is you have casual Zoom get togethers, maybe on a Friday or trivia nights or happy hours. You can even encourage biweekly chats between members of teams who don't normally work together so they can learn about what the other does for work. This also opens up opportunities for collaboration or at the very least turn on light bulbs during client meetings when you're trying to think of who could be tapped on for expertise on some question that the client may have.

- I love that idea. You know, I don't know if Slack still has this. Back in the day, they had this app called Donut, and it would just randomly match you with somebody in your Slack channel to have a conversation with. And I just I loved the concept because I think you're right. You have to think about that social component. Ryan, as you've seen technology change, how how is technology or is there some trends in technology that are really addressing this idea of remote work and flexibility in the global context?

- Yeah, sure. Shari, I think there's a couple of things that we've

been seeing. You know, I first from an employee's perspective, there's really a desire in this new remote working world to be connected, not just to the mission of the organization and the things that are happening that can inform future direction for the organization. Employees are desiring more communication and more transparency. And we're seeing that in most of the cultures that we do business in. But employees also have a desire to stay connected with each other, to be able to communicate with each other, share stories, collaborate virtually and feel like they're part of that broader team. On the employer side, as companies are expanding globally as part of their business strategy, leaders really have to weigh the benefits of that global expansion and the remote work against the challenges. It's intimidating. I mean, it's intimidating enough if you're a U.S. based company and you're expanding into a new state, especially one that might have significantly different H.R. and payroll laws than the one that you're operating in. But that challenge is really multiplied when you're expanding into new countries. I know California is a favorite state for H.R. practitioners because to pick on because of the regulatory environment there. But it really pales in comparison to some of the countries that we our clients do business in, like France or in Brazil. And and it's a lot to maintain. It's a lot to keep up with. I heard a statistic the other day that was staggering that said there's roughly 30,000 labor law changes every year globally. So so that's a lot. And in good, comprehensive software does go a long way to help stay in compliance. And there are tools out there. There's a tool that we provide to our clients called Global People Strategist GPS, which helps companies keep up to date with all the current payroll and H.R. laws for each of the countries and ensures that those 30,000 labor law changes are up to date and made. And our clients always have that most up to date relevant information for their business. But I would say that it's it's not enough in my 20 years in this industry, technology and software on its own isn't usually enough and that people need contacts and people need discussion and people need support to work through things, especially those sensitive areas like compliance. And that's why we've taken an approach with our go to market strategy and offering to complement that technology with in-country partners who provide that additional personal layer of support when needed.

- Yeah, there's a lot of complexities when you think about digesting technology. But then what's actually happening with the people? You don't want to lose that just with a technology solution. So I really like that approach. And some of the trends that you're seeing, you know, Priya, when you think of working with, you know, global employers, I keep coming back to the skills and competencies that those employees are going to need to really develop and flourish in a global setting. Things like maybe intercultural communication or language proficiency, proficiency. Well what are the skills that you're seeing that are kind of rising to the top is the most important for H.R. professionals to think for themselves personally, but also

for upskilling their employees?

- Yeah, that was truly a great segue from Ryan, you know, because, of course, whether it is the payroll software or GPS or the expertise the subject matter expertise of the in-country partners there are beyond technology, a lot of intangible skills that employers now, you know, need to look for to really bulk up their team with the kind of skills that translate across cultures and across borders. So you mentioned intercultural communications it is really important to be able to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. And so this requires an understanding of different cultural norms, values, communication styles, whether or not when you are in a meeting or you're trying to accomplish a particular project goal should you be direct and blunt, or should you kind of encourage the people on the team, you know, to come to a conclusion themselves or be more subtle in terms of recommending a particular solution. Language proficiency is another skill set that is very critical in a global setting where employees, of course, might need to communicate with clients. And it is very important to let somebody know, you know, whose business you're going after, that you understand the cultural context that they are coming from, but within teams as well. You know, it is a great tool to foster team bonding, communication. And of course, while it's not necessary to be fluent in multiple languages, often having a basic understanding of other languages can really be helpful in building relationships and conducting business. We are also seeing that it is very important to build cross-functional collaboration. And it goes back to the point I was making before, where a lot of this might have been happening naturally in the hallways and corridors, it is a little bit harder in a remote environment. So you want to make sure that you are bringing on employees who are able to work effectively with people from different departments, countries, cultures. And of course, this requires strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to build trust, listen actively, communicate clearly. And then cultural awareness which might sound obvious and more of a thread that is going through all of this stuff that we're talking about. It is also essential for employees who work across borders. Of course, you want to make sure you are very understanding of different cultural norms, values and beliefs, but also that you have an appreciation for diversity, not just cultural diversity, but skill set diversity, educational diversity. And employees who are culturally aware really are better equipped to work with people from different cultures because they can be your linchpin in avoiding misunderstandings and conflicts and adaptability, whether it is the very basic skill of taking turns, doing calls in the morning versus calls in the evening, all the way through to understanding what a particular language requirement is or hurdles might be, cultural requirements or hurdles. Really having team members who are flexible, creative and have a willingness to learn. This can only enhance your business across multiple countries.

- Ryan, as you think about that skill development piece I think about this from the perspective of language that you talked about. Obviously, a lot of people are using technology to learn new languages, but there's also the technology itself that you need to stay on top of. Ryan, how have you seen or are you seeing any trends in that space when it comes to accessing the right tools in the right countries and making sure that people are skilled in those tools?

- Sure. So the challenge here is really twofold. First, as I see it, the challenge that global employers have is the same that domestic employers have in the sense that in this really competitive landscape, you need to develop your employees and you need to provide those tools. You need to do it in a way that helps your company achieve their strategic goals, but also keeps the employee engaged because employees want to be developed. They want to be challenged. They want to learn new skills. And how do you do this in a remote workforce? Secondly, how do you provide tools for a distributed workforce that meets those needs in a way that your company can manage, especially when you're an employer with several employees spread across the globe? Because that could mean more systems. And the answer isn't really more systems. It's having the right systems. I think adoption of HR tools specifically, as we're talking about skill development, classically, those fall into an HR suite really happens with a good onboarding experience. And if you can have a good onboarding experience with tools that provide access to things like a community portal where employees can exchange ideas, you're going to drive that utilization of that technology. Employees are going to want to go there. They're going to want to use it. And that's when you can take advantage of that post content for employee development and also keep your global employees together and create that true global company culture, despite those local cultural differences that Priya mentioned and those time zone challenges that you're confronted with.

- Really interesting to think about just all those different pieces when it comes to tech. I'm a tech nerd by heart. So I love the idea of new tools and technology that are out there. But again, kind of going back to your one suite at the very beginning, it's definitely something to keep in mind. You know, Priya, as we wrap up our discussion, I'm curious what your perspective is on providing culturally sensitive and accessible mental health support and resources for employees. And I think about that a lot now as we've, you know, kind of come out of the pandemic, but we're now in an environment where remote work is very heavy or hybrid work. And sometimes there's limited access to mental health services. So how should we be thinking about providing that from an HR perspective for those around the world?

- That's a great question, Shari. And I think one of the first things to acknowledge in terms of our changing landscape in terms of just how we even talk about mental health, the fact that we are talking about

it, the fact that it is acknowledged as something that needs to be addressed, you know, not just in one's personal life, but also in one's work environment is truly a sign of progress. And I would say that for global employers to provide culturally sensitive and accessible mental health support and resources for employees who are located in so many different locations around the world, including in countries where maybe this is not something that is easy to talk about, much less access. There are several ways that organizations, you know, can provide this kind of support to their employees. One would be offering teletherapy services that allow employees to access mental health support remotely, regardless of their location. Another way would be to partner with local mental health providers to provide in-person support and resources, providing mental health resources and support in multiple languages to ensure that employees can access support in their preferred language. And in terms of the best practices you want to make sure that you are offering employee education and training on mental health and resilience, including stress management, mindfulness, coping strategies. And then to tie in to other points that we made earlier in the session, you want to also establish some peer support networks that allow employees to connect with colleagues who may be experiencing similar challenges. Also, offering flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options, which is a lot of what we're talking about right now, flexible schedules, really items and strategies and best practices that allow employees to balance their work and personal lives.

- I think what's really fascinating about flexible schedules in the global context is you can really flex with that. You know, you might have somebody who's actually really good at working 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. And in the global context, you might not have had access to that type of employee before. And now you do if you're thinking about your expanded remote footprint. So really exciting the the amount of talent that's out there that we can tap into. So, Ryan, I will I will leave you with the last question. If you know those that are listening want to learn more about the work that you and Priya are doing, what is the best way to get in touch with you both?

- Well, absolutely. And we would love to hear from you if if you have questions, if you'd like to explore some of these topics even further. Or if you've got a technology or service need for your organization, please do make contact with us. We're both very accessible via LinkedIn. So finding us there, dropping us a note, absolutely an opportunity, sending us emails. But but probably the most efficient way for your company to get in touch is right through our website at Paylocity.com. And and let them know that you listen to this this podcast and you had some questions about how to better manage your global workforce. And and one of us will absolutely be be in touch.

- Wonderful. Well, Ryan and Priya, thanks for taking a few minutes of your day to chat with me about our global workforce.

- Thank you, Shari.

- Thank you, Shari.

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