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You're listening to AMI, 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 here joining me today is Jennifer McClure. Jennifer is a full time professional speaker, business advisor and CEO of both Unbridled Talent LLC and disrupt H.R. LLC.

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She helps leaders embrace the future of work and leverage their influence to create positive, lasting change in and through their organizations. She has spoken in more than 350 industry related conferences, both in the U.S. and abroad, including Europe, Australia and Asia. Prior to her career as a speaker, she served in various roles as a human resource executive, executive recruiter and executive coach.

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Jennifer, thank you so much for jumping on with me today. Yeah, it's great to be back with you. You've done this before, so I guess I get to be a repeat guest. Yes, I love that. We learned so much from you last time when we had you on PCD talks. And we're so glad you're able to join us now on the eight hour mixtape.

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So really excited about that. I thought we could start with maybe learning a little bit more about you and your background and how you got into the industry to begin with. Sure. Well, it's a story I've told a few times, so maybe some who might be listening have heard it. But I think it's worthwhile because it does kind of go to how I think about H.R. and what I'm doing today.

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So I got into H.R. back in the old days when it was called Personnel. When I was in college, it was a junior. I visited with my advisor and he said it was time to choose a major. And I still don't know why to this day. I had never met someone who worked in personnel. I'd only had one job in a country grocery store that I was hired by.

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This store manager never knew anyone in personnel, but I. I kind of thought to myself, Well, I guess I can't be the CEO right out of the blocks. So where can I have the most influence and impact in the organization and have access to the most people? And I said personnel.

So my university didn't have a degree program in that.

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So just ended up getting a business management degree, but joined the American Society of Personnel Managers, which was what Sherm was called back in the day. So we have come a little bit further than that and started out trying to find a job right out of college in H.R., which as many people will tell you, it's very hard to get hired to an entry level role in H.R. because they want you to have previous experience.

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But somehow I ended up talking my way into an H.R. manager job and the rest is history. I still believe almost well, let's just say multiple decades later, I believe that H.R. is the place in the organization where you can have the most influence and impact. Yeah, the CEO, who's got a lot of responsibility. But the things that we do in human resources impact every employee, and you have the opportunity to really have an influence over their lives and the company and its trajectory.

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So I think it was a pretty wise decision. I'm still I'm still down with that. It's so refreshing to hear somebody who intentionally chose to go into H.R.. I feel like there's so many stories, even my own, where either I was pushed into it or you kind of fell into it or was a backup plan. And it's just really exciting to see somebody who is passionate from the very beginning.

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So I appreciate you sharing that with us. Sure. As you think through your experiences and as we've seen what's happened over the last couple of years for H.R., what do you see as some of the key challenges that we're going to face? As you know, businesses, the landscape of business continues to change as the future of work continues to evolve for us.

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Sure. I think I spoke at a group conference yesterday to a group of public H.R. professionals, and I said for years, I mean, I started again when it was called personnel. It was very administrative. And then for years we kind of got on the bandwagon of we want to be seen as business partners. And then we moved on to strategic business partners, and then we started advocating for seats at tables.

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And there were a lot of things that H.R. and the profession has done over the years to try to get recognition and respect for the work that we do. I think we were headed in that direction pre 2020. There was a lot more, I think, being seen from H.R. in terms of the value they provided and many organizations had that strategic partnership role defined reporting to the CEO, very important person who definitely had a seat at the table and a voice.

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You don't just have a seat. You need voice. But I think post 2020, where wherever we stand in terms of pandemic phase right now, we really saw that organized nations had to reckon with the fact that people are truly their most important asset. And that's not just a phrase on a plaque in the wall in the hallway. And many H.R. leaders who had not been brought into the decision making table before were brought in because we couldn't make any decisions or move forward or serve our customers needs without considering the people aspect.

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So I think since that time, H.R. has had a real opportunity. Many have taken a full advantage of that opportunity to add value to be the people who need to be in the room when decisions are happening and thinking about the future. And so how does that kind of portray the future of work for H.R.? We're in the best position we've ever been to really have an impact.

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As I said, I wanted to get into the role to have influence and impact. H.R. is positioned for that, even in organizations where it wasn't before. The opportunity also is a challenge. And because it's complex, it's more complex than it ever has been before. The workforce has a completely different attitude post 2020 to how they want to work, how they want to be treated, what they think is important, what they're looking for both out of life and work.

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And so that makes our job much more complex, both to understand the needs and the wants and desires of their employees and their their prospective employees, but also how to deliver on that while still making sure that we are making profits and that we are taking the business to where it needs to be. So with great challenge comes great opportunity, or vice versa.

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With great opportunity come great challenge. But I think I see and listen to and hear from many H.R. leaders who are excited about that challenge and opportunity and ready to go. How do you see technology impacting that future? You know, I so I just got back from a conference in California, and obviously there's a lot of talk about AI right now and automation.

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And and those are things that we definitely know we need in our industry. And in a lot of ways it's going to help us. But I'm curious from from such a veteran outlook, how do you see technology changing, you know, the future of H.R.? Well, again, technology has been changing the future of h.r. For the last couple of decades at least.

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I know when i started, everything was manual. I had a typewriter in my office and a bunch of wite-out that I used liberally. So everything was a three part carbon copy form back in the day, and we filed things manually in folders. So we've come a long way, I think. And technology has been an impetus for change all along.

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But again, over the last few years, technology like everything else, is just exploding and more rapid and and both again, the opportunities and the challenges are there. I just really want to challenge our leaders, and I know many people are running full steam ahead with how can we use AI, how can we use the new tools that are available to us?

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I really challenge our leaders in the talks that I give and the coaching that I do. Really pay attention to your consumer experience, how you navigate the world as a human, not in the workplace, but how you use your mobile device, how you use your, you know, your screens to select content that you want to consume, how you interact with vendors out in the world, how you decide.

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Last night I decided I need a new cup. I went on Amazon and ordered a cup within like 10 seconds and it's already here. You know, it still amazes me. I want groceries. I've been out of town all week. Somebody already delivered them to my door. I didn't have to go. We need to think about all of those things and then also bring that into the workplace.

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Our employees want to be able to navigate the workplace similarly to how they do their life. And in the past it's been much easier to navigate life than it has been to go into the workplace because we're still using triplicate forms and requiring, you know, physical signatures. So I just want our leaders to kind of be thinking ahead.

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I once said that technology is not the responsibility of I.T or the CIO. Technology in your organization is a productivity and a communication tool. Whatever tools they are, they're productivity and communication tools that involves people. So that means you should be right in there in those discussions and you should be looking for opportunities to either implement new technologies and certainly leading the charge when tech analogies are introduced into the organization, like right now, let's think back to our experiences and what we've learned over the last 15 years with social media.

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In the beginning, H.R. was like, No social media, everything's blocked. That would be dangerous. You know, security issues. Employees will say bad things. We lost that war and we will lose the war with a high if we are saying that we can't use that. I'm on a business advisory board to the Department of Defense. You know, the 4 million plus people that are both in the military and civilian employees and the DOD is running full steam ahead with how A.I. and technologies can be used.

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So any employer out there that's telling me that it's a security issue, if the DOD can say we need to figure this out and not hide, because our competitors certainly aren't hiding from the technology, they're using it. So we need to use it too. And that's just going to be my challenge for our leaders. It's out there. You should be looking ahead to see what's new and next.

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Right now is not new, not next. It's here. How can we figure out how to use it in our organizations? It's interesting. I listen to a lot of podcasts, certainly about AI, but one I listened to recently was with Adam Grant, and he had a college professor who I don't remember what he taught, but and also an expert in Adam Grant, who is also a college professor at Wharton and a bestselling author, was saying he was very skeptical.

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He hates A.I., he doesn't like the content that spits out. It removes critical thinking. So he shared his thoughts. And then the other college professors said, I require my students to use A.I. in the classroom. And so they had a really good debate about why we should be embracing it and helping people to figure out how to use it to to expand their creativity rather than accepting what it spits back to us initially.

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But certainly it can be used in chat bots in a lot of ways and organizations other than just like what chapter is doing today. So I want to paraphrase something that you just said, because I think it is such an interesting takeaway is that H.R. should be in this space either implementing or influencing technology in your organizations, because that has a direct impact to productivity and communication of your talent.

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I love that. I think that is if you take away anything from this podcast episode, takeaway that because there have been so many times in my entire career where you're reacting to things that are rolling out, you don't have a good sense of it. It creates bad employee experience. It potentially lowers productivity in collaboration. So you have a seat in that I.T table.

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I absolutely love that. I want to switch topics a little bit. You know, we're sitting in a space now where our talent market is a lot different than it used to be. Expectations from candidates are a lot different. You know, I've talked about on the podcast before that, you know, we get questions now around our carbon footprint and our social responsibility, and that's just one factor when it comes to attracting and retaining talent.

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What are some of the things that you've been seeing or some advice you have to h.r. Professionals to be competitive in that labor market space right now. They really need to have their eyes open similar to kind of technology. What does the workforce want? What are people responding to in terms of both your employees? What are they asking for?

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What are their expectations? Why are people leaving your organization? Why are they joining your organization? Why are they not joining your organization? And again, I really challenge our leaders to remove your thoughts about generations. I think, again, post-pandemic world, all generations are wanting more sense of well-being, a better work life balance, whether that's integration or balance, however you want to talk about it, they are no longer thinking about their employment in terms of and we haven't been for a while.

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Even the older generations, 20, 30 years at the same company, they're really focused on career growth and learning opportunities and new skills development, which your organization should also be focused on because you're going to have to constantly develop skills of people who are in your organization and because the jobs will change. So I think it's a real challenge for our leaders to say, I need to be listening, reading, learning from my peers, what are the things that people are wanting?

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What are the solutions they're looking for from their employer? I was surprised earlier this year on my own podcast to interview, I believe, Alex Alonzo, Dr. Alex Alonzo from SHRM about what what employees actually are looking for from their companies and organizations. And it was a lot around. They want their organization to help them manage their financial responsibility.

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They want their organization to help them think about their career growth. And I'm like, Wow, In my past we would have stayed away from that because work, you know, there's work and then there's your life outside of work and we don't want the two to cross. I think that line blurred for people in all generations. Now they are looking to their employer to provide them resources, tools, education and things that are purely in their personal life.

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And they're also looking for that in the workplace. So the best advice I can give anyone is to have your eyes and ears open, you know, have some blogs that you regularly read, have some resources. And like I get regular emails from Deloitte, from Gallup, from McKinsey. I'm trying to stay informed with what some of the leading organizations are out there doing.

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And if I were working as a nature leader, I would be using that to figure out what my organization needs to do as well. Is there any organizations that you see because you mentioned social media earlier that are doing that really well from a attracting and retaining talent perspective? Well, I can't think of like a specific organization, but I can say there are companies doing it well and you don't need to look any further than, again, podcast interviews.

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Find some podcasts that are focused on our leadership, etc. There's many, this one being one large. Schmitz Redefining Work, rudiments, Punk Rock. You can listen to my podcast, Impact Makers, with Jennifer McClure on those podcasts. They're interviewing heroes, people, officers that are talking about how they are leading in the future of work. Another one is David Green's People Analytics podcast.

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I don't know exactly what it's called, but every week they're talking with another global business leader in h.R. Or related to the people function about what they're doing. And many of these companies are way far out there ahead of some others. And so it's always good. I know when i started as a speaker of 13, 14 years ago and i was talking again a lot about using social media at the time and nature and recruiting.

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And I would share examples from Google or who was the darling at the time, Zappos, you know, Facebook, and I'd be sharing these examples and inevitably someone would raise their hand and they'd say, We're not Google. And I believe, like I know you're not Google, but the good news is that Google is already spending a lot of money to figure this out.

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And through this example, you need to take away what you can that you can take back to your organization. Will you be able to spend millions of dollars on something? Maybe not necessarily, but you can learn or infer from what they learned when they did that and implement and implement that in your own organization. So there's numerous examples.

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Find people on LinkedIn that you can follow who are sharing good content, you know, follow. You don't have to connect with you can follow a Chief people officer at Microsoft. You can follow these leaders who are sharing great information about what their companies

are doing online. Another one I was just looking at LinkedIn before we got on this podcast.

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Noah Water and his company is going to escape me, but he's in Canada and every day he's posting some sort of leadership insight, something about the people space and it's a H, a RDR follow Noah. You see what he's he's learning who he's learning from. And it's no different than when I started blogging back in 2008. I started reading a couple of blogs before that and back in the day, the good old days of blogging, which we've that's long gone.

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It was really important for bloggers to link to other sources to build their network, to connect with other bloggers. And I found consistently against some of my people that I learned from still today that I am one of my best friends. And I started reading Chris DUNS the Capitalist Capitalists back in the day. He posted five days a week.

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Practitioner Insights. You know, he did work at a small company in Alabama, but he liked to learn rudiments Anonymous blog one day called Team Building for Sucker. So I followed Laurie's blog. I probably followed a lot of links to other people that were mentioned by the people that I admired and respected. And I think that's a way that our leaders can say, Well, if I want to learn what leading companies are doing, let me find one leader.

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Go follow Noah. Today, he linked to three other leaders that he's learned from on LinkedIn. Follow them if they have a blog or if they have a social media account. There's so much good free sharing of information out there. Schmitz Another one that I mentioned has a lot of open source resources. There's lots of ways for people to learn and stay current and be looking into the future about how they can best lead their organizations from a people perspective.

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It's so exciting to be in this space now where all those resources are so easily accessible. So, you know, I remember starting out my career and, you know, it was just, you know, as a baby da, it's like, you know, I was like, what book do I need to read? Who do I need to talk to? And now, like you said, you don't even have to connect with people on LinkedIn.

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You can just follow them and kind of gain that knowledge. So we are definitely in a great era for learning and growth in our profession. So I appreciate those examples. You know, I'm curious if you think about engagement right now. And then the question I had written was about boosting engagement levels, but I'm going to change it a little bit because I think our definition of engagement has fundamentally changed over the last couple of years, especially as we're talking about things like, you know, quiet quitting and those types of things, which really is, you know, deciding my discretionary for doesn't all have to be given to my organization anymore.

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I need to have work life integration. So whatever the word is you want to use for it, How are you seeing companies redefine what engagement means as they think about cultures and how we talk about employee experience now? Well, I have not changed how I feel about employee engagement because I believe I'm right. I long said employee engagement is not about whether your employees are happy or sad.

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You have good days at work, you have bad days at work. There will be challenging times. Employee engagement is about. It's a function of whether or not someone feels connected to the purpose and what the company is doing and that they feel like that the work that they do actually matters. So if I don't show up tomorrow and I'm supposed to be here, it's going to impact both people on my team and my organization.

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And eventually our customers are the people that we provide services to. So to do that, we need to have a clear understanding as our organization and as leadership. What is the purpose of our company? You know, I use the example of during the pandemic, you know, right when the pandemic first started, Indeed.com, obviously was pretty heavily impacted because job postings certainly went away overnight because a lot of jobs went away overnight.

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And I knew people that indeed, during that time and I was talking with several of them at different times and they were actually working harder than ever before. And it all was because their purpose, their tagline is we help people get jobs. And so they were able to rally individually and as teams and as an organization around, okay, our core business models been completely disrupted, but what can we do?

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What resources can we provide? How can we help people get jobs? Because that's what we do and that's more actually more important than ever today. So that was getting people engaged during a really difficult time because they were able to connect to the purpose and the mission of their company and the value that they provided. But each individual was able to do that as well.

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I'm helping people. So I think it's important to Laszlo Bock, who's the former SVP of People Operations at Google, says the single biggest thing that you can do at work is to connect your employees to meaning and purpose in their work. So we'll have good, bad day, good days and bad days. But if I feel like I need to push through this because what we're doing matters, then I'll be able to do that.

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You know, engagement, I think also is a function of there's a lot of studies out there that say the single biggest factor in employee engagement is whether or not an individual feels like their manager actually acknowledges them and sees them and recognizes the work that they do. But that goes back to I feel that my work matters because my leadership actually tells me it matters as well.

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So we as leaders need to be encouraging people to connect to that purpose and meaning and then seeing their efforts and recognizing their efforts. So, you know, I'm sure there's other factors that go on employee engagement, but I'm still going to land on. The biggest factor in employee engagement is whether or not someone feels like the work that they do matters.

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And I've long said I need to find somebody and talk to them. I feel really sorry for the chief people officer at the meat processing plant or the chicken rendering plant. It's got to be really hard to give people excited about coming to work in that environment. But at the same time, if their purpose is to feed people nutritional, healthy food or, you know, to find a way to get people connected that like John Deere.

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John, do I think a John Deere or a green tractors or lawnmowers, their

purpose statement is around creating opportunities for people to sustain themselves through food or something like that. So they've made it a higher purpose, I guess is what I'm saying. And a green tractor. I love that. You know, as we wrap up our conversation in and I've always really enjoyed talking with you because I think you are somebody in our air space who's very authentic about the pros and cons and authentic about your own journey and the things that you're seeing that are working and also very passionate about your stance on a lot of things.

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So is as you think about giving advice to an h.r. Person who wants to maybe be more involved in the industry, maybe start speaking or blogging or getting involved, what are some advice or piece or tips and how they can start to expand their influence outside of their organizations and into our larger h.r. Industry has never been easier to expand your influence, to build your network, to become a thought leader in the industry.

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And it's as simple as sharing what you know. You know, again, back in the day, it was through blogging. Blogs still work, but you can blog on linkedin, you can have a newsletter on linkedin, you can post daily on linkedin and get a lot of people to see and recognize and value your content. I would say probably half of those speaking engagements that I've already booked this year have been through people who have seen my content on LinkedIn.

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I have a weekly newsletter on LinkedIn. I know at least a couple of them would come to me because someone read that newsletter or one of the newsletters that I wrote was the topic that they were looking for a speaker on. There are people like Tracy Sonnenberg, who's the Chief People officer, Tracy Post Daily, I think on LinkedIn, always good content reflective of the work that she's doing, human resources in general.

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She speaks at conferences and events. Julie Tourney is another one too. You are any way she's started since when? I met her through LinkedIn, she was just sharing good content about being an h.R. Practitioner in barbados and now she's expanded into having her own business where she helps h.r. Leaders with burnout and self care and has a really thriving coaching, speaking workshop practice.

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So find some people that you can model for on Tracy and Julie. Be great again later. Schmitz Another one. Lori Rudiments Another one I share. Subscribe to my newsletter. Follow connect with me on LinkedIn and then learn that it's not as difficult as you think. I know I get in my own way sometimes, like, Will I have to write just the epic tome of why I haven't written a book yet?

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Because like, it needs to be a New York Times bestseller. Now, the last 13 years people have just been asking for me for a book about what I've been thinking about. You know, it's never going to be a New York Times bestseller. But if a thousand people were able to buy it and it made a difference in their lives, I should do that.

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So I'm working on that one. So you don't know, it could be a New York Times bestseller? I don't know. I'd be all right. I would love to be an H, our best book seller. But just start writing, you know, learn from the examples of some of the people that I mentioned there and just share your experience, share what you're learning.

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It's amazing opportunity If you go to something like the upcoming Sherman Annual conference, there are a lot of people that I follow. You know, they'll write their daily takeaways. You know, I attended Jennifer McClure's mega session on personal branding, and here's what I learned and here's what I'm going to do. That's it's not easy, per se, to put your thoughts on paper and to sound coherent, but it's not hard.

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You can share what you've learned back in the day, I would encourage job seekers to share their job search, experience, their networking experience, get their visibility up, you know, through just sharing what they're learning. I became a speaker simply because I was sharing what I learned. I shared my networking experience. I shared my transition experience from corporate into taking on and going in a different direction.

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I shared what I was learning about social media. I helped executives learn how to build their LinkedIn profiles. Back when LinkedIn was new, those people then started saying, Hey, come to my organization or my company and teach my employees how to set up a LinkedIn profile.

Tell them about how they can be networking as an introvert. So by sharing what I knew, I started to get asked to share that with others.

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LinkedIn is a great place to start if you want to. If you have a website, blog, share, share your LinkedIn content on your blog. Probably going to get more visibility these days on LinkedIn. So start there. Absolutely. Love it and enjoy our time together as always. Jennifer, thank you so much for a few minutes of your day. All right.

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Thanks for having me back. I hope you enjoy today's episode. You can find me at the eight hour mix Paycom Come back often and please subscribe rate and review. So.