

Building Resilience: Workforces of the Future with Dr. Shari Simpson and Alfredo Borodowski, Purpose Factor Facilitator at The Purpose Company

Announcer:

You're listening to the HR Mixtape. 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.

Shari Simpson:

Joining me today is Alfredo Borodowski, Purpose Factor Facilitator at The Purpose Company. Alfredo helps leaders connect purpose to performance by building cultures rooted in meaning, resilience, and engagement. Alfredo, thank you so much for jumping on the podcast with me today.

Alfredo Borodowski:

Thank you, Shari. It's great to be here. Ready to go.

Shari Simpson:

Awesome. So I want to start with one of the biggest mistakes that leaders make when they start to think about future-proofing their workforce. Because often I see that they potentially go down this road where they accidentally burn out their people. So from your perspective and background, how do we start to see some of those mistakes as leaders?

Alfredo Borodowski:

First of all, there is no more predicting. Leadership, what we call the usual leadership, the usual way of leadership, good leaders were good predictors. The one who knew how to time the market and changes before competition.

If I can be just one step ahead, I'm going to be a great leader. Well, change now is the game, not the name of the game. Then you try to predict change, you are going to fail. Yeah. And we have to move to a different paradigm, a different shift. From guessing or predicting they are uncertain, the good leader today is the one who prevents disorientation. What people want is orientation more than prediction, okay? Then that's what the leader had to give now to a person, orientation. And orientation is a little bit more flexible. You give the tools for a person to face change more than controlling change. And the tool that I see today as the most effective is what we call in positive psychology, character strengths. Every person has character strengths. There are 24 of them. Everybody has them. But 70% of people in America do not know them. That's amazing. Amazing. Then there is a blindness of strengths, and that's step one. When I go to a company, to a team, the first thing I do, no matter what the problem or the challenge is, we do a strength workshop. For everybody to look at the strengths. That's going to minimize disorientation, substantially.

Shari Simpson:

How do you, when you do your strengths assessment, are you using like Clifton StrengthsFinder or do you have a particular proprietary model that you like to use?

Alfredo Borodowski:

Then it's interesting because every time I mention strengths, I get the answer with Anit, with Clifton. It's a great question. The usual Gallup, Clifton, strengths finder is about talent, which is skills, what you do well, which is something very important to know what the talents are. But the crisis today in companies and teams is not about talent. It's not about how we do and how well we do. It's more about who we are. That's what the crisis is. OK, talent, we have to spare. We are very talented. The problem is that there is no loyalty, motivation. There is depression, uncertainty. That's not about talent. That's about strength. And then I use an instrument called the VIA, Values in Action, which is the main instrument today of positive psychology. 16 million people a year take it. It's the number one instrument in the world by people who take it every year. Translated into 40 languages. Wow. The VIA value is in action. And

because it's taken by so many people, it becomes so reliable and consistent. And that's what they use. But for people who are listening, by the way, I tell you, they're going to say, I want to know my strengths. If they text me, the word positive to 3-3-7-7-7. I will send you the 24 character strengths of positive psychology and a couple of questions about how to get your top five.

Shari Simpson:

That's awesome. It's not the same as taking the beer, but it's kind of the first step you can take. Then it's very easy. It's a text away. Positive to 3-3-7-7-7. But that's, you know, that's what I do. Use the VIA instrument or sometimes, you know, what, you know, what they send you through a text. And that's step one.

Alfredo Borodowski:

So part of that, though, I think is actually, like you said, understanding your strengths and almost, I'm gonna use this term that I've heard you say, the human upgrade, like upgrading yourself to have a better perspective of not just your talent markers, right, but what your strengths are. How do you see that actually coming to life when you're having this conversation with people about their strengths? What's that next step, right? You have the assessment, great, now I have that information. What do I do with that? I mean, as an HR person, I can't tell you how many assessments I've taken over the years. And some of them have stuck, but some of them have just been like, hey, another piece of paper.

Alfredo Borodowski:

No. Well, let me give you a case study, a case, OK? Exemplify it. That I want a company in South America. I work a lot. I am from Argentina. Then I worked a lot with Chile and Argentina, and I went to a company in Chile. And they were doing great, a team, a sales team. Then I gave them the beer, and it showed that 90% of them had honesty between among the first two top character strengths. A super honest team. They were not getting along. Then I asked them, try to role-play your usual Monday morning meeting, where things really went sour, you know, the leader told me. And then they began role-playing. And what did they notice? They were rude to each other. They were too direct,

no filters. They were the most honest team, OK? They were true to who they were. And the points they were making, they were great points. But because they were all too honest and were competing to be more of who they were, then it came without filter, rude. Then what did I work with? How to be honest, but not overuse honesty. And how to control your strength. And then from that point on, and then we have, let's have a meeting where you say the same things without overstepping into your honesty. Then once you know your strengths, a lot of doors are open. Okay, on how you communicate, in motivation, because it talks about who you are, not only how you do things.

Shari Simpson:

Yeah, I love that. You know, I'm a really curious person and I've always considered that a strength, but I like that you shared the comment around controlling your strengths because I have found in my own life that that curiosity, that questioning, for some people it can feel like I'm challenging them, like I'm being too invasive. Like, I shouldn't know that information. And it wasn't until somebody in my life pulled me aside and was like, hey, this is a great strength for you, but your execution of it is actually hurting you and hurting your message and what you're trying to do. So I love that approach. How do you help people kind of wrap their head around the idea around resilience then? With all of this, you know, we know change is constant. We know that, hey, we got to lean into our strengths. But with change constant and us trying to kind of do all the strength works at the same time, I could see people feeling unresilient or not realizing how important that resiliency factor is as well.

Alfredo Borodowski:

It's very interesting when you look at the 24 character strengths of positive psychology. And by the way, my top five, which are your core, are creativity, love of learning, curiosity, perseverance, and courage. And each person, you know your top five, you need to begin applying them. Because the next question is, OK, what do I do with them? Interestingly, resilience is not one of the 24. And then I talk once with a world expert. And I asked the question, isn't resilience so basic? It's so basic that it's in all the 24. It's not by itself. It's in each one of the 24. You have to be creative and resilient. You have to be

curious and resilient. Then resiliency comes when you know your strengths, by the way. It's almost natural to it. Now, resilience, what is resilience? Because there is a lot of misunderstanding. It's not coming back. That's fixing. Coming back is fixing. Resilience is the art of coming back higher than your fall. If you come back to the same state you were, you wasted everything. Resilient people are the ones who say, OK, what did I learn from it? You do not go through a learning period, all your suffering is a waste. And what happened is that the way the human brain works is that when you go through a difficult situation, you want to be as far away from it when you overcome it. Let's move to the next one. That's a mistake. You need a short period in between for the evaluation, reflection, and lessons. Otherwise, you haven't gone from down to up higher than where you were when you were down, and that's a waste.

Shari Simpson:

Yeah. There's definitely a component to there that I've experienced myself, and I'm sure those listening have gone through this as well. When you're going through that kind of evaluation period, there's also potentially some opportunity for grief, you know, that maybe the way it was, you have some nostalgia over, even though you know like where you need to go is, you have to make those changes. Yes. It's a lot of emotional work. How do we translate that emotional work that, I mean, people like to call this like squishy work, that's times of things. I think it's table stakes work. That being said, I think sometimes when we're having our conversations with our C-suite teams, our CFOs about, you know, budgeting and talent and that kind of stuff, and we try to weave in all this other work that we're doing, this really important people work, it gets missed or it gets lost in translation. It becomes a spreadsheet. How do we start to paint that picture more broadly that these things like engagement and working on strengths and, and having the time to kind of sit and, and think about resiliency actually is business impact. It's not agnostic of it.

Alfredo Borodowski:

No, I just finished a book called The Human Upgrade, the new leadership for the AI era, and I am fortunate that it's going to be published by John Maxwell's

publishing company. The application of positive psychology to the challenges of AI, such as depression, uncertainty, anxiety, and a lot of it has to do with the idea that the human is going to become the luxury of the future. As technology kind of get more and more into the terrain of the human, you are going to have less and less as a human. And then paradoxically, the human, the human touch is going to become more valuable because it's going to be more scarce. Then if all companies have recorded messages and one is going to still have a human talking, it's going to be more expensive to have that but it's going to attract many more customers. Then customers are going to look for not only efficiency, but where there is humanity in the company. Okay, then what I predict that is happening today is that the human is going to have the high value of the company, not the accessory. The human is going to become what distinguishes the company that you want to go to from another who you don't want to go to. Then the way you are treated is going to become the highest commodity in a time when technology becomes the most prevalent aspect, okay? And companies who understand that and preserve the human inside and outside are going to be the most prosperous today. You know, I was reading about Starbucks, where the new CEO wants to close down all the drive-thru. And he said, yes, we are selling more, but have distorted the image of what this company is about, which is about the third place, the place between work and home, which is what built the brand. And when we build drive-thru, we kill the human value. Another one that I've been reading, I want to give you as an example, you know Cracker Barrel? Yeah. They took out, you know, on a, on a, on a stupid marketing with, I imagine they pay millions of dollars. People know that they took uncle, it's called uncle Kershaw from the picture, you know, the old man and they lost 70, \$700 million in one day. Didn't change the menu, didn't change the locations. They changed an image of a human person, of a person, and everything fell apart and they had to apologize and bring him back. What did they do? In a time where people are craving the human, they took the human image out of the logo, OK? And they regretted it because they took the human component. Who thought about that? I mean, who sat down behind a boardroom and a marketing firm that charged millions to take humanity out of the equation? When the fear that we have, the number one fear, is losing humanity.

Shari Simpson:

Yeah, and it aligns with what we're seeing out of the World Health Organization. I mean, it's been several years now, but they are investigating, you know, and really watching what's happening in this space of loneliness and how people are talking about their lives and their lack of connection. And it is part of the component when you talk about return to office or, you know, those types of ideas and what that looks like. So it's interesting to see how fast the technology is evolving, but what we crave as humanity and connection. And that's not going away. AI is not going to replace the humanity that we bring to it. I have so many more questions. I want to be cognizant of our time. So I guess I'll ask you this next. You know, with AI moving as fast as it is and the kind of mandate from a lot of organizations to figure out how to use it, you know, what is your kind of practical advice for how do we approach using these tools in a way that can augment the work that we're doing but not replace the humanity that you've talked about?

Alfredo Borodowski:

Then, you know, there is a revolution taking place on the field of positive psychology in the workplace, and new concepts are emerging. They're big today and accepted in labs, experiments, conferences, and academic journals, but they have not yet filtered into the field. I'm going to bring you just one, what is called today psychological capital. We know about human capital, about social capital. There is no capital. It was discovered five years ago only. And we discovered that there are four components. You know, this was basically in the University of Nebraska, one of the best teams for this. They discovered four components, which are the psychological capital which are crucial for the future of a company today and these are the components self-confidence hope optimism and resilience okay of all the many characters that we know out there companies who are able to develop these four specifically. We know tested now, okay, there are hundreds of them, but these four, okay, I don't have time to show you all the mechanisms clearly, but you have to believe me that if you invest on these four, the results are magnificent. Self-confidence, resilience, optimism, and hope defined within the theory. For example, hope is a capacity of believing of action plus multiple paths. Then what is a hopeful company? A company that is ready to act and it has plan A,

B, C, and D. Then we have very defined ways of hope is. Then when I go to companies, one of the things I do, I offer a psychological care plan. And we work in these four dimensions. And I tell you... They are a great way to prepare a company to bring technology without suffering at the human level. Then we have today the tools we didn't have five years ago. They have not yet filtered into the field in practical ways. And you have to be careful which consultants you bring because the pace of change and knowledge and tools we have today is tremendous.

Shari Simpson:

Yeah, for sure. As we wrap up our conversation, what's one action, one piece of advice you have for listeners to take away to start to build more resilient teams, more resilient cultures? More teams that are focused on everything we talked about and less about, you know, some of that, you know, hey, we got it done, but we got it done in a crappy way. Kind of going back to your example of the team, right? Hey, we're honest, but we're kind of breaking everything because of our honesty.

Alfredo Borodowski:

Yes. Then I'm going to tell, you know, people ask me, what is this all about? And I have, you know, and I have a phrase, we need to move from a culture of fixing to a culture of nourishing. We need to understand that fixing is bringing something to the same situation it was before it broke. And it's very tempting because leaders are brought to companies to fix things because they're broken. And they find the reason to be and their value in fixing. But nourishing is not about bringing things to the way they were, but to develop them to the higher level, which is a little bit more complicated and difficult. We need to move from this modality we have of trying to fix the way we review people, you know, we manage people. It's about fixing them. To use strengths to nourish them. That's going to distinguish good companies from bad companies now. And, you know, as I said, it's not the same thing to fix a pipe at your home than to do home improvement, okay? And we need to move from this that they taught us as we were children, what is wrong with you, fix it. OK, always showing what you are weak at. Well, we know today from science that you get better results and more growth by actually allowing

people to fulfill their potential and fixing them for what they're not good at. That's what I would say.

Shari Simpson:

Such a great takeaway. I love that. This has been such a great conversation. Excited to read your book, and I will make sure to include that in the show notes, as well as that text number that you gave us so that our listeners can reach out to you and build that relationship. So Alfredo, thank you so much for sitting down with me today.

Alfredo Borodowski:

Thank you, Shari. These were great questions that made me think before answering, which is not always I do.

Shari Simpson:

All right. Well, thanks again.

Alfredo Borodowski:

Thank you. I hope you enjoyed today's episode. You can find show notes and links at thehrmixtape.com. Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.