

- Hey, and welcome to "PCTY Talks". I'm your host, Shari Simpson. During our time together, we'll stay close to the news and info you need to succeed as an HR pro. And together, we'll explore topics around HR thought leadership, compliance, and real life HR situations we face every day.

- Joining me on the podcast today is Mary Faulkner, Principal at IA. And she just did or is doing here at HR Tech, an awesome session around making total rewards relevant for women. So, I'm so excited, Mary, to have you on the podcast today.

- Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

- So, I wanna dive right in and talk about this concept of total rewards for women. You know, I think about organizations right now where we're at with women and work, and I think we definitely need to reevaluate, you know a whole comprehensive approach for total rewards. But I'm curious, if you're not in a space where you can completely revamp your program right now, what are some of the big ticket items that are gonna have a real impact on ROI?

- I think the bigger things that we're seeing are how can you be creative about doing things that aren't gonna cost you a lot of money right now? So, as you know, healthcare is just going to continue to rise in cost right now. And so, that's gonna be a big focus for most organizations as a budget for total rewards going forward. But what you really need to be able to do is be creative. You have to offer that flexibility. You have to be able to offer people things that are relevant to their personal situation and not everybody's dealing with the same things. So, from an ROI perspective, the more choice that you can give people for whether it's leave, whether it's flexibility, whether and one big one that comes up a lot is things like bereavement leave, caregiver leave, all of these things, being creative with that. That three-day bereavement leave for only close family members that you list in your person health handbook, that's gone, stop doing that. It's an easy, inexpensive, high employee experience way to really give something back to your employees. So, when you're really thinking about it from your bigger thing, think beyond the big ticket items and think about packages where people can pick and choose things that are relevant to them.

- We've seen that more and more with this approach of not a one-size-fits-all approach. You know, really getting specific with things like benefits and experience, so one-size-fits-one. I love that we're moving in that direction because I think it brings back the personal piece we've been missing for our employee organizations for so long.

- Absolutely, and the funny thing is, you know, we really focused on total rewards for women because we were at the Women in HR Technology Summit. But when we really started thinking through, well, these are

the benefits that are beneficial for women, it's benefits that are beneficial for everyone, it has nothing to do with gender and it's if you can just find ways to make life easier for your employees, you're going to see a big return on investment in terms of retention, in terms of engagement, in terms of health, in terms of wellbeing, financial wellbeing, all of that is tied into it. Supporting people where they are and in their current situation is good for everybody, regardless of what of your gender.

- One of the big things that we continue to hear more about is childcare benefits. And I know that some employers are going down the roads of like, can we actually have childcare onsite? And the complexities that come with that. How have you seen companies addressing childcare specifically as a benefit opportunity?

- So, we're seeing everything from offering credit, credits for employees to discounts to partnering with local childcare outfits that are out there, to engaging with a drop in care. So, that's been a big one that's becoming more popular. You know, kid gets sick or somebody's got COVID and you have to have somebody watch them, they're able to find somewhere to drop them off to be watched at a last minute notice. So, that's been something that has been gaining in popularity. I'll be interested to see does onsite childcare really does grow, you know, there's so much uncertainty about people returning to a workplace full-time, maybe there's hybrid, maybe there's not. So, I'm not sure if we'll see onsite, but giving parents an opportunity to either use a partner that they've vetted prior to and given a discount or just giving them money to be able to do daycare on a regular basis would be helpful. So, many people do the math and decide there's no point in me working 'cause I'm only working to pay for childcare. So, anything, I mean, honestly companies if you wanna make a real difference, lobby to make childcare less expensive

- I couldn't agree more. When I was younger in my career, there was a time where I had two littles at home and we did the math and it was I would work 40 hours a week and bring \$50 into our home.

- Wow.

- Because of the childcare and it just it wasn't worth it. But then as a female, I had that whole dilemma of, "Okay, I know on my resume I'm gonna have a gap of four years because financially it didn't make any sense." I completely agree, let's figure that out. I mean, I don't want there to be less qualified people watching my children-

- Right

- obviously, but we have I mean we figured out other things. You know, maybe it comes from increasing, you know those flexible spending account limits where you can have more of a tax deduction. I think the

creativity is so important there.

- Mm-hmm, definitely. You know, Erin Spencer in our session yesterday, she brought up something really great. You know, when you look back at World War II and the women went to the workforce because the men were fighting and they needed to work and keep the economy going and keep the countries going, there was a system built to support women who were working. They figured out daycare, they figured out how do you support women in the workplace? And then when the men came back, all of that support went away. And so, we've done it before. Countries have done it before, entire governments have done it before in times of crisis. And I think you could almost argue, we're in a time of crisis now. We're at a real inflection point in terms of how do we support people who want to work regardless of their situation? And how do we make it easier for them to return to work? How do we make it easier for them to feel supported at work and not penalize the mothers like you who are worried about I'm gonna be out of the workforce for four years and now I'm behind. So, I think we have a lot of work to do there.

- There's this throwback right now to we talk about like flexible working hours, right? And I think it kind of goes back to the idea of nine to five, we work nine to five and can we introduce flexibility? And I think, I mean, honestly I think that's a little, it's an outdated concept, you know, we know that work can be done in so many different ways asynchronously, you know how are we thinking in corporate America about flexibility now when it comes to wrapping that into a reward? You know, being able to talk to a recruit and say, "We have flexibility, quote-unquote, and this is what it means."

- Yeah, the joke is among recruiters, they say, "Oh, we have flexibility means you have the flexibility to work 18 hours a day." So, I love that you're saying we need to define that 'cause absolutely, it needs to be defined what flexibility really means. I think where I would challenge companies is don't think about it just about who's in the office and can do that remote work because they work on a computer. You have, I think it's 80% of the workforce is in a job that they can't be at a desk. So, how can you introduce flexibility for them? There's some great tools out there where you can allow your staff to shift, share their own, shift with their coworkers. So, you just have it out there and the system can define and make sure that they're working the right amount of hours, but they have control over it, they can do job sharing. I think those are the things that even for all workers, you can set it up so if they have a little bit more flexibility to manage their own time and manage their own schedules and get the work done, let them do it, and then it becomes a performance management piece. And I think there's gonna be a lot of work with managers going forward. They need to relearn how to manage people to the work that needs to get done as opposed to the guidelines and principles.

- Yeah.

- Obviously there's laws. Okay, please follow FLSA rules, but you too long I think companies have relied on well, these are the hours to manage performance. Now, we actually have to look and see each person, how are you doing? What's working for you? Is the work that's getting done what we expect you to do? Then great, do it that way.

- I like that you brought up just thinking differently about how we manage work or how we list those expectations along performance. And the reason I like that is I think that when we talk about women, sometimes we only think about women with children and that's how we define women. That's not the only type of women that exists out there. We also only think about women view family first. Not all women are functioned that way. You know, I'm definitely in that category where work for me is 1A and family is 2A, and that's okay and that's my drive and my passion, but I have children, right? That was my choice. I think it's every woman's choice to decide what they wanna do with children or not children. How have you seen total rewards look at women holistically and make sure that we're providing the right type of benefits for every type of woman that's out there?

- I don't think we've seen it yet, is the sad truth. So, I'm married, but I don't have kids. We chose not to have kids. I have a dog, he's wonderful, he's a brat. But when I look at when it's like we're a women friendly company, it's things like we give you a breastfeeding room and we give you, which is great, I love that. Please give women and mothers all the support that they can have. But that doesn't speak to me, that I have no need for that. So, what else could you do? You could give me caregiver leave, you could make it easier for me to care for aging parents or if I have a nephew that needs help or if I need to go help a family member because somebody got into an accident, whatever it might be. So, when I look at that, I think it goes back to yes, call out those things that are women specific, but it's really about just human benefits. I mean, I'm sure dads would really like to have flexibility to go and see their kids play too. I'm sure dads would like to be able to go and do the PT, the parent teacher conferences and not feel like it always falls on the mom because you always seem to have it focused on the mom being able to go and do that. And when you think about same sex couples, you know, they're parents too. You know, two men have to have the same division of labor and have the same division of a focus for their kids, and yet these policies get focused on women only. Well, if you're a gay man, you're sitting there like, "Well, I have a kid too, and I would really like to be able to do those things." So, I think it would be best if companies started it as person first and then what are the needs of my people? Because if you don't identify as a woman and you still have some of that biology, you're gonna have some of the same coverage needs as a person who doesn't identify as a woman. So, I almost say

separate it out, just take it out, strip that out, and just talk about what are the needs of my people?

- It's such a good point because it shifts how we think about diversity. I think sometimes we focus on diversity in buckets, right? In check marks and I love where we are moving towards when it comes to DEI initiatives. I think we have a lot to learn still, but I appreciate that we've really been pushing it the last couple years in a way that I feel like it's becoming more ingrained in our conversations and the way we think. And it's not as much as a checkbox as it used to be, but we still have a lot of work 'cause you brought up some really great points about especially a gay married couple that has children. You know, if you're not thinking that way, you're not thinking the right way about what benefits or what support that they may need that you're limiting them by their lack of being a female. Right, it's like that's a whole nother problem that we have to encounter, you know? As you think about women and I wanna change the subject just a little bit and how they're paid, how do you see that affecting, you know, how we think about total rewards?

- It's, I mean, pay is paramount. I think everything starts with pay. It's one of those things that pay doesn't matter unless it's not enough. So, they're just like, "Oh, they shouldn't care about their salary that much." Like well, they need to live, you need to pay people enough money so that they can live. You know, we were just having this conversation last night around when women graduate from like an MBA program, they're getting the same offers as men most of the time. But there's still some evidence that women accept the first offer and men negotiate. So, results in like a 7% increase for men, and then that just compounds over time because then you see well, what are you making now? And so, it just keeps getting exaggerated through the years. And I don't like going down the path that women don't know how to negotiate, lots of people don't know how to negotiate, let's just be honest with that. But there is a little bit of a cultural piece of I'm just happy to be here. Don't be happy to be there, demand your money. Know what you're worth, demand to be what you're worth. Don't settle for what those things are. On the flip side though, companies have a responsibility to really be looking at internal equity at all times. So, when I ran a TA group, it was an in-house and whenever we would make an offer we always presented internal equity and did our range and showed the evidence to the hiring manager to say, "Listen, market is saying you need to pay them 10,000 more than all of your incumbents, and we'll support that as long as you submit a request to increase the salaries for all your incumbents because we're not gonna let you do that to somebody who's been here for 15 years." So, I think you need to be able to take a stand and say, "We are going to commit to pay equity." And that's more than that macro level, "Oh look, we passed an audit." That's looking at each team, looking at each person's experience value to the company, their engagement with the company, what it is that they're bringing to the table, what their

potential is, and making sure you pay them what they're worth.

- That example is something that I think listeners can definitely walk away with because it puts the conversation back on data a little bit and takes the emotion out of it. And you can just, you can look across the board and say, "Look, here's what the data is showing us and it's not well, I think they're, ABC subjective," you know, you really can just lean into, how you can make those changes with data. You know, for the men listening that are in the total reward space and it's their responsibility, how do they keep themselves abreast, informed so that the rewards they're looking at are relevant for their women population.

- Ask them, have conversations. Don't assume... It's so funny to when you think about you put five men in a room and they're gonna decide what's right for women. Same thing, like you put five White people in the room that are gonna decide what's right for their Black employees. You know, it's you really need to get all those perspectives and you really need to just say what's relevant to you. Some of them are going to be like big time women issues. You know, we look at the reversal of Roe v. Wade and what some companies have chosen to do to offer travel costs for people who can't get the the treatment that they need in the state where they're living, or Patagonia saying, "We'll pay your bail," or Uber saying, "We'll cover your legal fees if you get charged because you gave somebody a ride." So, that's one spectrum. And then you have folks or companies that are like, "We're just not gonna take a stand 'cause we see both sides of the issues like take a stand," you know, but if you are in charge of total rewards ask people what is important to them? And it shifts, you know, I'm not saying that every year you're gonna do a big survey and the fad of the year is like, "Okay, well let's throw our entire budget into that." Be thoughtful, keep on top of the trends, come to listen to podcasts like this, come to conferences and understand sort of what is the next big thing and what are you hearing. Keep abreast too of just social issues. That's gonna tell you a lot about what people care about. So, there's a lot that you can do beyond just reading, "Well, here's our budget and this is what it is last year, so let's increase it by 2%."

- I was speaking at a conference in Arizona a few weeks ago around employee experience and one of the questions that came from the audience was what do I think men want when it comes to creating a great employee experience? And I chuckled at the question because the way I answered it is, "I can't speak for men, ask them, survey them, because my answer is gonna be based on what I think what my husband would say or what my adult children would say, but I'm not the person you should be asking that question to." And so, I think that's such a great point is ask and listen and really listen, like really understand and not just have it be a line item like you said in your total rewards or we're gonna throw our money towards that thing. It's going back to a one-size-fits-one approach and really thinking through

what types of benefits you wanna offer. You did mention the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and I'm curious, have you seen a change in benefits come from that, from benefit providers? Not necessarily what employers are doing.

- Not yet, I think we'll see it. I think they're figuring out, you know, they have to operate in all states too and they have to figure out what does that mean? What are we going to offer? Do we offer it? Do we still offer coverage in states where it's legal? Do we challenge in states that it's not? I think I wouldn't be surprised if more EAP type and carriers start to help manage some of those more creative benefits, like I was talking about the travel expenses and that sort of thing. I think they might offer management services sooner rather than later. And listen, if you're a company that's considering doing that and you're not sure how to manage that with your employees to maintain any kind of confidentiality, reach out to your carrier and see if they have any ideas. I'm sure they've been thinking about it for a while, they tested the wind and knew it was coming. So, there's an opportunity there. I'm really curious to see, I think deep down there's a hope that this isn't permanent so we don't wanna make massive changes, but we just don't know.

- There's so much we don't know for sure. As you think about the future of total rewards, what are you most excited about?

- Oh my gosh. I think one of it is I'm most excited that we have so much information now and we we know more about what people are using, what people want than we've ever had before. So, this is the opportunity now to really mine that data in a responsible way to decide where are people really seeking information, seeking help, and being able to proactively offer solutions to employees who are struggling. 'Cause a lot of employees, they're muddled by benefits, they're confused, they don't think about them until they need them. And so, being able to proactively go and help guide them through that process is something that I'm really excited to see happen.

- And Mary, you gave our audience a lot to think about when it comes to total rewards, and supporting women, and all people like you said. So, thanks for taking a few minutes to jump on the podcast with me.

- Well, thank you so much, I enjoyed it.

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