

- 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 back on the podcast today is Kate Grimaldi. She has been in HR forever, I feel like, and has been able to join us a couple different times on the podcast. And so I wanted to talk with you Kate about quiet hiring. You know, we have seen this workplace trends or key words, I feel like run rampant over the last two years. We started off with great resignation, and the great regret, and the great reshuffle, and the great rebalance, and then we got quiet quitting, and quiet firing, and now quiet hiring. So let's just start with a recap, right? So quiet quitting was seen as, I dunno employees being lazy. But we talked about it and that's not really what it's about. It's this idea that all this discretionary effort that our employees were giving us that they're taking a step back and looking at their lives, and trying to figure out what they wanna do, so now we are seeing this new catchphrase of quiet hiring. So let's just start there. What is quiet hiring?

- Yeah, Shari, thanks so much for having me back. You know, I'm chuckling as you're going through all of these things 'cause the thing that I hear in everything that you talked about in sort of your recap, is this concept of quiet where we're not talking about it. And that is probably the most interesting concept to me because one of the things that I've always valued as an HR practitioner, as you said I've been in HR forever, is, you know the biggest mistake employers can make is not talking, is sort of keeping quiet. And that's kind of what quiet hiring is. It's keeping quiet about what's actually happening and instead asking people to do jobs that they either are comfortable with, that are new for them, or taking on additional responsibilities that don't really seem to coincide with what they've been doing previously especially for people who are pretty happy in the work that they're doing. And it's interesting to note that everything related to quiet really is the opposite of what employees are asking for, which is the peak behind the curtain, the transparency, tell me what you want, tell me why you want it this way. Because employees wanna know that from their employers because they wanna be able to provide the same insight into their experience back. And they can't do that if everybody's putting up this sort of new curtain of quietness and shh, don't tell anybody about it, and just go do this over there and it's what we need. So yeah, it's an interesting time that we're in for sure.

- So just to kind of recap what you said so I understand it for our audience. Quiet hiring is taking somebody who's currently in a role and giving them extra responsibilities, hiring them above and beyond what they were hired for. I feel like this is just adding more work to an already taxed workforce.

- Yes. What I would say though is what you're gonna see from employers is their reasoning is going to be more about proactive for what's happening in the economy, recession looming, which is, hey I can't hire anybody else to do this job. I don't have the budget dollars but I can split up some of these responsibilities that gives people the opportunity to go above and beyond, and really kind of changing it to be more about employee development versus just sort of the workload. However, if you look at it from the other side as an employee, getting extra work with no extra rewards in any way can feel like taxing an already overtaxed workforce, as you said. I think the key though to all of it is really that conversation piece which is being open, being transparent both as an employer about what you need and the reason why, as an employee what you are going to get out of it. 'Cause at the end of the day as far as I know, nobody works for free. And the first thing that people think of is the WIIFM, right? The what's in it for me. As an employer your best bet is to start with that for an employee and you're gonna get the buy-in a lot better, especially if your end goal is to prevent something like a layoff, or prevent the ability to hire in the future if you're actually trying to make things better in the long run, be honest about that.

- I've worked in several different roles where I've had a really great opportunity to go above and beyond my role. I see that as a benefit for employees who might be in this situation. You know, is there other benefits that you think about as you've worked with your own individual teams and given stretch assignments, sometimes we call them skills development. How do you see that this new trend as a positive for employees?

- Yeah, I mean, I can actually think of one example of someone on my team. You know, this sort of "stretch assignment" actually changed the trajectory of her career. She came into a role doing something that was more related to training, and she shared a couple times really what her passions were around communication and some of the work she had done at a different company prior to that. So when there was an opportunity and communication was in need, we were able to tap her to do some of that. She was excited because it was something that she enjoyed to do and had done previously, and what it turned into was an actual career doing communication which she realized was something that she wouldn't have had had she not been given that stretch assignment or that opportunity to check it out. So I think that's one example. And the other example is I think a lot of people have skills that they don't even realize are their skills and how that translate into a job. You know, I would guess Shari you didn't get into your job saying, "I'm gonna be a podcast host. "I'm really good at it". It was probably something that sort of organically came about that wouldn't necessarily have come about in a traditional employee development conversation. So one of the key benefits to something like this and whatever, you know, new fun term we wanna call it is, are there things that you didn't know you were good at? Are there things that you

didn't even know were an interest of yours that maybe an assignment, a project, a stretch goal, whatever you wanna call it, an opportunity could actually enlighten you? I would also say on the other end there are people who are gonna say, "Nope, everything you're saying Kate is just more work. "It just means more work for someone". And I would be remiss if I didn't say, yeah for some employers you're right, they're gonna try and hide behind that as just to give more people work. And go back to that transparency piece, both for employers and employees of having that honest conversation about what that looks like 'cause there are gonna be times where, and I've said this to people, as a leader I really just need help with this right now. I can't promise that it's going to get you anything more it's just really what I need right now. But what I can promise you is I'll remember that, I'll remember that when it's time to talk about new opportunities or something else. That honesty has always gotten me a lot further.

- Transparency is gonna be key, because I think those organizations that are hearing about this trend and looking it as a way to recession proof, like you mentioned before, you could potentially end up in a scenario where you have your high performing employees who are now burnt out and now they're leaving, right? And that it's just so counterintuitive to everything we've been talking around mental health and work-life balance and flexibility, and all these things that modern employees want but there is this drive to do work that's more related to your passions. And so I really liked those couple examples you shared because you can tap somebody's passion and give them the opportunity to flex that, it's not only gonna be good for the employee but obviously it's gonna be good for the employer because you'll have a happy engaged employee. As employers are thinking about these tactics why not just look outside and hire gig workers for these extra jobs?

- Yeah, I mean I don't know that there's one set reason for that. I do think that that could be, it could be a solution depending on the type of industry you're in. I think it depends on what your overall philosophy is. If you're a company who cares really strongly about your culture and you wanna create a sense of value and belonging, which is what the modern employee wants, they wanna feel valued and they wanna belong then hiring a gig worker could be the opposite of that. It could make them feel like they weren't given an opportunity to demonstrate a skill that they could have. You could also look at it from the other side and say, hiring a gig worker could actually teach your current employees something new. And it might actually make them feel like, hey this is a cool opportunity to learn from this person I wouldn't have got. And that gig worker's response is actually more I would say employee focused or driven because there's no competition. They know that they're there for a short period of time. They might be excited to share their passion and share their experience, because they aren't looking to climb the ladder at that company. They really are there for a gig. And so that transparency, that honesty, that

connection, actually could drive your culture of value and belonging. And then there's an argument for both cases. It's different, it's different for the industry, it's different for the type of maybe economic standpoint that your current company is at, and the type of employees that you have. You might be in a situation where gig workers are abundant in an area and you actually need quite a bit of onsite gig workers and it makes sense. You might be in a situation where your company is remote and having gig workers to jump on, and do work during off-peak times and off hours when maybe your US based employees aren't working, but you could get gig workers from around the world. That could be super helpful. You know, part of it is a really strong commitment to partnering with other groups in your company, finance, executive leadership, operations, to really determine what is your needs analysis and how do you use those people and determine what's best for you.

- Another good point if you're thinking about gig work compared to hiring an employee is there's all those kind of ancillary costs that you don't necessarily have to occur. You know, you don't have to think about benefits or some of the PTO, sick time, all that kind of stuff. So there is another benefit there if you are looking at your cost for the year and you know you have a work, but maybe hiring another FTE or even less part-time employees is not gonna be something that's beneficial for you. As HR professionals in totality continue to deal with motivating employees, I think that's where we're at. I think we're all trying to just figure out how do we be transparent? How do we answer all the questions that Gen Z and Gen Alpha are looking at us for and continue to motivate, because the way we've done it in the past it's just not gonna work that way anymore. We have to change as HR professionals. So as you've seen that change happening what are some new ways that we can think about motivating employees differently than we have before?

- Yeah, I think one thing too that I would say is a difference and you kind of touched on this around the gig piece is, traditionally as HR people we sit down and we document jobs. We document full jobs that require all the responsibilities and all the skills. I think where we could actually really benefit is documenting skills first and less about full jobs. What are the skills that we actually need? Or what is the type of work that we need? You know, recently I was working with someone on a project and they were discussing some of the things they need and I asked them, "Do you actually need a full person for this?" And their response was, "Well, no I just need this specific thing "and we don't have that available "and I can pay X amount of dollars". Which was maybe 0.2% of what a full-time person would be. It made so much more sense to go outside get that very small couple hours of gig work done rather than going through the process. And it was because we documented the skill needed not necessarily the actual person or the full job. That doesn't mean that the full job goes away, but I think a more modern way of looking at it is like, what's the skill are you

needing and is there someone at your company who's already doing that? You know, I think about when we started doing some things over the past couple years with wellness. The first thing we did is go to our employee base and we had so many people raise their hand and say, "Hey I'm actually a health coach on the side, "or I'm super interested in nutrition, "or I actually teach yoga at my local gym "I would love to do that". And we were like, "Yeah, we're not gonna be able to pay someone "we're not sure that's okay". They wanted to do that because they wanted to share their passion. So I think finding a way to really align, like you talked about earlier with passions and documenting what those skills are needed. They're still gonna be full jobs, absolutely. But starting with skills, I think will open up the creativity side of your brain to figure out how we solve some of those problems in different ways and asking people who already work for you what they think. I find that some of my best ideas and my best solutions come from asking the people that I work with, their thoughts and what they think, and what they've seen done in other places, or what their dream big is.

- I'm anxious to see how skills inventories are gonna take a more prominent role in our future. You know, as a dream big, right? Imagine if you have a job opening and you know it's got these 10 skills and you put it in your database and it spits out, hey, these 12 people in your org already are highly qualified in these 10 skills. I just think it's a cool place for HR to move into think differently about interacting with more modern employees, so I really like that example.

- Yeah, and it doesn't have to be super tech focused, right? Like I think when people hear about those things they're like, "Oh, I don't have that technology. "I can't afford that technology". I mean, if we're talking back to basics, you can document that stuff through Excel, and I mean, I know that sounds very like not fun by any means, I mean, who loves living in Excel document? Not me. But not everything costs, being modern isn't a huge cost. You don't have to find the new unicorn startup. You could, absolutely, but you don't have to. You can document those skills in other ways that still spit out those 10 or 12 people in a way that still works for you. And I think it's one of those, and maybe I shouldn't say I think. I believe that if you put some of that work in at the front end, you'd be surprised about how much time it would save you on the back end. It would push you to the forefront of being more modern and really driving that could be a part of your employee value proposition. I mean, that's a whole another conversation for how you attract people like that. But that could be a part of a broader reason why people might wanna come work for you.

- You know, being transparent and leveraging your employees in a new way I think is really the thrust of what quiet hiring should be about. So thanks for taking a few minutes Kate.

- Absolutely. Thanks for having me. Hope to talk again.

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