- 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 today on the podcast is Lance Sapera. He is the VP of Talent Acquisition at Talend. He had a session here at HR Tech, and we're so excited to talk to you, Lance, today.

- I'm excited to be here and talking with you, Shari

- So, you have a really unique background and perspective on data-driven recruiting. Let's start there. Can you talk a little bit about more what that concept is?

- Sure, and the easy answer is that data drives your recruiting, but for us, it's more of a support mechanism. So, what do I mean by that? The special sauce for us at Talend is our recruiters and our coordinators and their ability to be strategic and consultative with the hiring managers and also do the same for candidates. And we all know recruiting or hiring, depending on what seat you sit in, it's emotional, it's personal, and it's nice to have data that we can rely on to help us reduce friction, move faster, drive better results. And so, that's what the data-driven recruiting means is an augment to, I'd say, better empower our recruiters and our hiring managers to find great new Talendians for us.

- How have you seen data impact how talent acquisition and HR approaches recruiting? And I guess what I mean by that is that I think sometimes we in the HR profession will rely on our gut in an instance, you know, not necessarily culture fit, but you know, "Oh, I know the job, I know the manager, I know the work that they're gonna do, I'm gonna trust my gut." How do we shift to think more about using the data differently?

- Boy, that's such a good question, and it has me thinking about some changes immediately I wanna make. I think the way we can do that is to start measuring things. We started small and then shared those metrics with the business and see if that's resonating with them. So, I'll give you an example. We have been measuring candidate experience for seven quarters now. Every candidate who interviews with us and goes beyond to the hiring manager interview and beyond gets a survey, and we only survey the people who don't get hired. 'Cause our expectation is if you joined Talend, you had a pretty good experience. And so, why are we measuring that? Because one, well the four questions we ask help drive how we behave as a team. The first is did the recruiter provide effective clear communication? Did you know what was gonna happen in the process? That tells us if the recruiter is driving with them. The second one is were you able to present your authentic self to Talend? Did we get to know Shari so we could make an informed decision about you? We also ask if you would refer someone to Talend?

And then the fourth thing we ask is did you get enough feedback? You and I were talking just before we started about this candidate-driven market, and when candidates have so many options the fact that they're willing to invest time with Talend to tell us about themselves while we're doing due diligence and they're doing theirs, we owe the something and the candidate now expects that and we can see trailing scores from our hiring managers in terms of the feedback, the bland, "You did great Shari, but we went another way." You're a professional, how does that help you prepare for the next interview? The other piece is we really count on nurture hires to help us. And so, building that trust and that relationship, which includes giving you constructive feedback potentially has you saying, "You know what? I like what I heard at that company, I'm open to the next call." And because we've been measuring that and doing that, 11% of our hires the last year have come from people who we first met when they applied for a different role. And when you're a small, growing company I see you're shaking your head, you get how important that is. That's 11% of our hires that we didn't have to go start with a brand new InMail.

— I'm always amazed at recruiters who don't go back to the candidate and give them feedback. There's this fear that somehow if I give them a peak behind the current as to what could have gotten them hired that they'll fake it next time, and I genuinely just do not believe that's the case. I think if you're in the spot where you're looking for a job, it's our due diligence to to tell you and say, "Hey, you know what? When we were looking for this role evaluated against the job description, here's where another candidate had more skills or had more whatever. So, here's some advice if you want a role like this to go get this skill set or whatever." It's an advantage to all of us, those who are candidates and those in the industry. How have you seen talent acquisition take some of those same skills that they use externally for recruiting for internal hiring and internal momentum?

— Same mindset, using data to help us be more effective in that space. So, for us, we actually have a program Talend First. It's part of our culture that for every role that we open, we're gonna look internally first. And a couple of things help us drive that. First is measuring it, we set a goal as a company that we wanted 25% of our open positions to be filled with internal Talendians. And we're measuring that and we're sharing it with the business and with the company. A couple of parts of our process also support this. When a new role's being opened, we've taken to adding an extra step right now where the HR business partner is working with the hiring manager on just because it's a backfill role do you need that same skill set or experience level? Now's the chance for you to rethink your org because you're hiring someone for the next three to five years or more, hopefully. So, there's thought around what this role is gonna do, and that gives us a chance to say who here could do that? The other thing we do is we post it internally and those two pieces give us a chance to be thoughtful ourselves about who here could do the role? And the second

piece is it's a chance for someone in Talend to raise their hand. In measuring this, we've also received some good feedback and data ourselves around the opportunity we have to use data and information to be more proactive. If we had better information in our HRIS system and a new business analyst role was popping and we could look and see, "Huh, we had no idea so and so had done this before they joined us." That kind of thing could help us be more proactive with our own people. But it's a great question that you're asking and it's a key part of how we're growing our company, but also retaining our people.

— How do we make sure that our data stays clean? And what I mean by that is when I think about talent acquisition right now especially, we have these huge nets cast because the candidate now has so much more control as to what organizations they choose to become a part of, want to work for whatever company aligns to their values. And so, we're kind of getting inundated with all of this data, how do we make sure that the output of that data as we're making decisions on who to pursue is clean and useful, I guess, for us to make the best decisions?

— Another good question and I'm smiling because it's actually twofold. One quick piece is that's what our company helps other companies do is use your data effectively. But in terms of recruiting, for us, we're adopting that mindset that you hear in the sales organization which is, if it's not in Salesforce, it didn't happen. And so, we're trying to drive that behavior with our recruiters. Most recruiters just wanna talk to people, assess, build relationships, and get people hired. But because we're trying to use data to help them be more effective and empowered, they need to put information into our ATS. I talked about the nurturing hire earlier. If they're not properly tagging a super sharp candidate particularly the ones who maybe didn't get to the offer stage, how are we gonna know the next time a roll opens to go back to that person? You know, the recruiter shifts to supporting a different business unit. We have so many recs open, they don't know that role is open again that they've been waiting to call Shari about. So, the keeping it clean is a big part of what we're doing and we've made some investment from a people perspective in our data and analytics team to run some audits to help us. We get some alerts, for instance, I talked about the candidate experience being so important. There's a cue the recruiters can set up in the ATS to let you know you haven't touched this candidate in seven days. That's kind of our back to the promise we made to keep them informed in knowing where they are even if it is I don't know. Tell them that, people hate the vacuum, you know, the information vacuum.

— How have you seen talent acquisition take the data that they're collecting and bring it back to the business to effect change? I mean, I think that's ultimately one of the most exciting things about being in the HR space is we have this 360 view of so many things that maybe necessarily our business leaders don't have, and we can bring that to

the table and effect change. How do you see TA doing that with data?

- It's, first of all, TA has to do it. And for us it started small, a weekly update for the senior leadership team on where we stand progress towards hiring goal for a quarter. And that has expanded to we certainly continue to do that weekly update, but it's also now transparent and available in Tableau for any hiring manager, any leader in the organization to click in and see where their roles are, the candidate pipeline, offer status, all that information we're making readily available to them so they can push us and they can also just be informed. So, sharing the data, doing it as real time and as transparent as we can is another big step. A third step we took is each quarter, like a lot of teams, we do a really deep dive and we also have TA leaders assigned to each business unit. And so, following up on sharing that report is the TA leader trying to get with that business leader and their direct reports to have a conversation about what the data's telling us. So, a great case study for us in this is engineering hiring's important to everyone. And we'll often get the comment that there's not enough pipeline. Which sometimes can be true, but now we can go look at the data and say, "Well, that's not true. We're actually looking for this really tough role, we've got a four to one interview ratio and these people are moving through and we can find some nice data points." And a big one for us was time in stage. And what we found in a particular business unit was that they were taking 23 days to get candidates. I see you shaking your head. 23 days to get candidates through the third and fourth stage. And during that entire time, talented people or interviewing somewhere else. And so, showing them a data point where it was a light going they're like, "They told us that's too long." And so, we eliminated an interview, we took minus one on a panel. In many cases, we took the hiring manager plus one interview out, all kinds of things that helped us maintain the focus on hiring someone great, but also getting a faster, better result 'cause the candidate doesn't have as many steps.

- Your point about shortening the span, but not sacrificing the evaluation for the right candidate, so important because we end up in those conversations where it's taking too long, it's taking too long, move faster, and then you end up with a bad hire. And leaning into the data to actually pull out those pieces that are most relevant is super important, so I appreciate you sharing that. You know, as I think about where we're at right now, right? The great resignation, the great return, the great reshuffle, the great regret, whatever great you wanna call it and then you add on these new buzz phrases like quiet quitting and quiet firing. There's so much out there, right, that we're kind of talking about as these buzzwords, but I think that data can play a really interesting role on that. How have you seen the data that TA is collecting being used to impact how companies might be addressing some of these buzzwords?

- It's another important topic because for each of these big pieces,

again, it comes back to that personal, emotional, there's an investment there. For us, we're working hard for all of those big topics to bring a business logic to it and then some data to support it. So, as an example, we've been talking about the candidate-driven market, and we've all seen particularly in some special skills the salaries rising that interviewees are looking for. And so, it always warms my heart in a way when a hiring manager says, "Hold on, I'm not paying this new unproven person more than my top performer." And with data, we can take some of the emotion out of that, which is, "We understand what you're saying but here's actually what the market has done." And you can show them with hard facts the way the salary range has moved for a particular role. Think machine learning, and that starts to take some of the edge off. Then the other piece is we can involve the HR business partner to say, "Look, we're seeing this move, we can't do it right now, but whether it's at annual focal or at some point, we will look to get our top performers to market because if we don't, guess what? Somebody's gonna be reaching out to them if they haven't already on LinkedIn." And so, it's twofold there. But again, the data takes the whole piece, which we appreciate is that you don't wanna pay somebody unproven more than your best person. And so, that's an example of how we're using data to help us with some of these really big topics that can be overwhelming.

— And you brought up the relationship between TA and HR, that has to be a very, very close relationship because the data that you're collecting absolutely should impact how HR business partners are addressing things, how they're having conversations with their compensation teams on the structures and the grades, and the things that you all are seeing. You have a very unique perspective that we definitely need to leverage if you don't have that. So, Lance, this has been a very interesting conversation. I think the more that HR can understand and leverage data, the more successful we're gonna be at supporting our employees, and our candidates, and our businesses moving forward, so thanks for taking a few minutes with me today.

— Thank you.

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