

- 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 Nicole Sloane. She is the employee experience leader at Kimberly-Clark and had a session here at HR Tech around digital transformation and connecting and engaging all of your workforce. So Nicole, thanks for spending a few minutes with me.

- Thanks for having me, Shari.

- As we think about this topic what do you think will be the key skills or talents to look for in mentoring remote workers? What's kind of new or different about that type of person?

- Yeah, and I'll just preface this by everything I say is kind of my opinion, right? It's not necessarily my company's opinion, but I mean, I know there's a lot of talk around empathy, emotional intelligence, those types of things. And maybe that's not new. Maybe people have always had to have some degree of that. But I feel like it's even more important, especially when you're virtual. So you're trying to read someone through a Zoom call or something like that, right? And we just see this intersection of your personal life and your professional life. And so it's really kind of just leaning into that and accepting where someone is. So I have a mentor myself. I have a human mentor and we just talk about personal life a little bit mixed in with career. So I mean, I think the ability to kind of navigate that, as well as just having those virtual communication skills. And some people may need to work on that a little bit. We know how to navigate in a meeting type of scenario, but one-on-one getting a little more personal maybe as you mentor someone, just being able to do that.

- One of the things we've been talking a lot about on HR team is now that we're fully remote we have found that it's become much harder to collaborate in the same way that we used to. You used to be able to stand up and go, "Hey Jill, can you help me with this?" Or you might be talking to somebody in the office and they'd say, "Hey, Matt on the L and D team, "he actually really has this really cool skill set "that might help you with that project." And so we're trying to figure out how we manufacture that now, now that we don't have that same type of water cooler chats. Is there technology or ways we can think differently about collaboration so that we can get back to a more collaborative environment where we're tapping the full breadth of skills in our organization?

- Yeah, I mean, I don't know that I have anything new or different to say about that, but I think fully leveraging the technology you have. So we use a chat type of functionality, right? And we use that all the time in our daily work, but we're starting to connect some things into

that. So maybe some of the other channels we had are able to connect in. So we have Yammer channels that were existing previously that it's like sometimes people paid attention, sometimes they didn't. Now it's hooking in where we do our chats and things like that. So you're able to kind of more easily pick up on things that are happening or collaborating on different topics. We also kind of run with some gig type of functionalities where we do try to find people that are wanting to work on a project or that kind of thing. You know, I think it's going to get better as we move forward. It's only going to get better. We're gonna be more connected, and we just really have to be strategic about thinking how we use our technology to help enable that. But I mean, a thing I wanted to add on, it's not necessarily collaboration, but we're really talking about, I'm really talking about with other people about an employee experience platform. So it's more than just how do I get through my day to day and connect with people, but how do I connect with things I need in the flow of my work and how do I do that cross-functionally? And that's not always easy to do, right? Because HR cares about HR stuff and IT cares about IT stuff, and finance cares about finance stuff. So, as we start connecting those things in and thinking like an employee, what do I really need? How can I find easily what I need, get things done, get back to work and make that really easy? So I think leveraging technology and coming together cross-functionally for that as well is helpful. So that's not necessarily a collaboration type of topic, but it is like how you get through your workday, how you find the right things to do what you need to do and do it effectively.

- When you made that change with pulling in, like you said, some of those Yammer chats, was there a big change management process that was involved in getting your employees kind of on board with communicating differently, or was it a more natural change?

- No, it just kind of happened organically. So some things I think you see changes being made these days, if they're not huge magnitude, they kind of just kind of softly happen, like soft launch almost. You just kind of put them out there, let people find them, and they gravitate toward it and you see if it sticks, right? So I like that approach with smaller incremental changes to things and just you can kind of read on the back end are people picking up on it.

- As we continue to become more remote, more integrated with technology in how we communicate, I think it opens us up for an opportunity to think more globally for our businesses, even if you are a small business. How do you see that changing employee experience and how we think about employee development if we need to think about this from an international scale?

- Well, I think one thing, and I've heard it several times here at HR Tech, that we're, and we talked about it on the closing keynote panel with the women in HR Tech. So it's starting to happen at all levels

now. So there's a shift you're seeing from just really hyper focused on high potential talent to all of our talent, right? So yes, you might be doing something different for top talent, but you also need to be thinking all the way through every employee. Every employee matters, right? And from a filling open roles and that kind of thing, getting people in the right roles, that's important for every employee, right? So we need to be thinking that way. I mean, it's a balance of high tech and high touch. Some of it you might be putting some e-learning out there, you might be putting a virtual mentor or some things, people wanna work on skills or you might be doing kind of an opt-in learning series where you say, "Hey, here's a topic. "Are you interested in this type of topic?" Put it out there. You've got a live webinar, people can opt in. So you're seeing a lot of different things. I think on an international or global scale, you really have to think about the language piece of it. And I focus on that a lot in my role. What languages do we need? And it's not just, well, what can we provide? You start with what is the need, right? And then you figure out how to provide it. But I think that's a huge consideration as we offer development opportunities and that kind of thing. Sometimes language is a barrier and it's just a fact, right? But we need to find ways to do that and do that well.

- As you think about implementing different types of technology, and you talked about a virtual mentor and some other things, how do you measure or how do you look at the impact of those digital adoption and engagement opportunities with those tools?

- Yeah, so it's interesting, like there's a lot of conversation around, we all know we have too much tech, right? There are so many opportunities, so many different applications. And that tends to create different datasets, right? So one of the things I'm really trying to work on is connecting those multiple datasets so that we can get some kind of insight out of that. Data's nice, but just looking at independent data doesn't really tell a story. So we're really trying to move that direction where we can connect in different datasets from different places. Some of it is kind of the more traditional survey type of approach where certainly we have engagement surveys, right? But I think you're starting to see some questions change in the survey because companies are starting to focus more on what is the experience? Are you getting what you need out of your career here? That net promoter score type of question, would you recommend the company and that kind of thing is generally there, but I think there are more frequent surveys happening. They're happening along points in the journey on someone's career. And then you're taking that and kind of coupling it with other things that we're measuring data and just kind of even watching behavior of employees and what are they doing? Where are our opportunities? Do we have some trouble spots that we can see just in the data?

- How have you used surveys to make sure that you're getting the

reality in the answers? So, I think sometimes we fall into this trap of, hey, we're gonna go do a survey that we want our employees to be honest, and I'm using air quotes here, be honest with, but ultimately our intent is to score at a certain level so we can get some badge, right, and we can put it on our website and say, "Hey, we're scoring this" and we really miss the opportunity get that raw data, the reality of what our employees are experiencing, especially now that we're in this remote environment where we can't necessarily see each other in the same way. How are we ensuring that we're getting the information we need to influence our culture as we go forward in kind of this new way of work?

- I think a big piece of it is what you do with the survey outcomes, right? So if you haven't built trust with employees, they're not gonna trust you to give you the information next time, right? So you have to build the trust and show that you're taking an action, right? You maybe can't address every piece coming through, but I think you have to show that you're doing something with it and that you are, that their voice was heard, it's making an impact. We're going to incorporate that in some things we're doing. Here's what we're doing. So that's, I think, part of it. Anonymity is always super important, right? If you wanna speak up, you probably don't want them to know I'm the person that said that. So that's part of it. And I think just providing multiple opportunities for people to provide that feedback in different environments. So I think when you're surveying someone right in the flow of something just happened, something just got completed, how did you feel about that? Capturing it right then and there, you're more likely to get rather than, oh, 30 days later, 60 days later, oh, I kind of remember what happened there, but getting that feedback immediately is I think another good thing.

- As organizations have worked through that data that they're getting from their feedback in surveys have you seen a change in the way change management toolkits have been built now to think about that remote workforce differently? Is there different layers that we're seeing or flexing to certain pieces of those change management models?

- Yeah, I think it's no longer this flat approach of, Hey, we pushed an email out, we're done. Check the box. So, while we're still using email, right? Everyone has email, you can't expect that to be something that someone read it, first, and then absorbed it and retained it. So it's a multichannel approach. You're trying to reach them in the ways that you can. And so our communications team has a platform so we're pushing things out that way. And it has multiple channels. It can be email, it can be the online, it can be through an app. We're using email, the traditional email. But we're also finding other places to put an announcement or push a message through a channel that maybe wasn't the traditional channel. So it depends on the level of change and impact, right? Sometimes you really just have to call people together and human-to-human, let's talk about this to

make sure you understand the change, 'cause it's high impact or maybe you're pushing it out through those multiple digital channels. So I think there's multiple ways to get it out there. You create content that people can just, when they search, they find it and get the answer, Oh, this, okay, this is how this works. The fact of the matter is you can communicate at a point in time and it won't stick, right? You don't wanna have to go dig up that piece of information again later. Oh my gosh, where was that? So you need to place it in the spaces where people will find it when they need it and just make that kind of appear in the flow.

- That is the worst experience when you know you saw something. Where did I see it? Was it in this platform? Was it on a wiki? Was it on my internet? Was it in the email? I couldn't agree more. That's definitely something we and HR struggle with is making sure that we have the things in the right place, but they're also not redundant. As you think about the future of employee experience and how organizations have evolved the last couple years and with Gen Z and Gen Alpha coming up what are you most excited about to see in this space?

- The thing I'm most excited about is getting beyond HR and getting cross-functional about this. So one of the things that I'm working on is partnering with our marketing team and pulling some of those concepts from customer experience over to employee experience. And I think as companies start looking internally, where are the other resources, who may have already figured something out or have a completely different perspective we can bring in? Those are the kinds of things I think that are really cool. We have a really good partnership between HR and IT. It's a natural fit, right? So as you start doing those cross-functional approaches and aligning strategically in a cross-functional way, I think it's only going to get better, right, because you just get just a momentum going that's more than just the kind of the one lane. We're not gonna stay in our lane anymore, I guess, is what I'm saying. We're gonna start partnering together and have even better outcomes.

- I couldn't agree more. I'm excited about the collaboration that we're seeing and in a way it's almost been forced. We've had to lean on each other to kinda get through the pandemic and make sure that we're serving our employees in such a good way. So I really appreciate your insight and thanks for spending a few minutes with me here at HR Tech.

- Sure, thank you.

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