

- 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 Jessica Dunyon. She is the director of go to market strategy at Infor. And she is doing some awesome work here at HR Tech around engagement. So Jessica, thanks for jumping on.

- Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here, Shari.

- So let's start with this topic of engagement. So often it sits only in HR. Is that where it should sit, or should we think more broadly about who owns engagement?

- Well, traditionally, we've thought that that's where it goes, because I think nobody else wanted to deal with it. So we'll just shove it off into HR. They're the ones that are gonna do the surveys and collect the data. And managers and leaders that are sprinkled throughout the organization, we'll get our training from HR. That's good enough for engagement.

- Have you seen that ideology change as a result of the pandemic?

- That ideology is changing more as we move out of this Industrial Revolution, this Industrial Revolution 4.0, and move into what I really am calling, where people are, I don't wanna call it the woke generation, but we're much more in touch with mental health and overall well-being. So the pandemic absolutely had an effect on that, where we saw so many people be impacted in a lot of different ways. Whether it was now they're working from home, they're dealing with childcare, maybe they can't even go to work because they're sick. So that engagement, everybody's put their arms around each other as we've gone through this pandemic together. And really, it's about survival. I don't know that any of us are really thriving right now. We're all just surviving. And I think that that is part of what has made engagement bubble up to the top, as I wanna know how you're feeling today as opposed to what you are getting done.

- One of the things you talked about in your session is this idea around an engagement dividend. Can you talk a little bit more about what that is?

- Absolutely. The engagement dividend is what the business outcomes are as a result of your engagement programs at your company. So whether that's operations, through an annual survey, through a poll survey, whether that's people getting paid on time, whether that's people feeling like they've got support at work, and the tools that they need for the job. Are we as employers meeting employees where they want to be met at that point of need? That engagement dividend is

just a measure. It's an overall measure, and it could be a bunch of different things. Are you saving money on training? Are you getting a faster time-to-value with your new hires by using the same software across your enterprise? Are you getting better data, and sharing that data in real time to help engage your employees? And we all wanna do work that's meaningful. We wanna do work that matters. It doesn't matter if we're an accountant, if we're the CFO, if we're hosting a podcast, if we're processing . I sat in a a session yesterday where the CHRO of Tyson Foods talked about their attrition and their retention rates. And just so incredible, where people find value and where they wanna work. And just bringing that all home into what what's the score? Am I winning? Am I overall winning as a business. It's not just about the percentages of who feels good at work today. It's how much money are we making? Are we profitable? Do people understand what our business mission is? Do they understand that across business units, whether they're in Seattle or Florida.

- We collect so much data when it comes to engagement. Just like you said, there's a bunch of different places. And a lot of times we lean into that annual engagement survey as being the one tool we use. Is that enough? Should we be gathering data differently?

- Engagement is something that happens every single day. When we do it on an annual basis, it turns into: How did I feel in the last couple of weeks? Our brains are really not capable of thinking back much further than two to six weeks. And if you're me, and after this week, it's two to six days. But if we only do that once a year and we're only checking in with our employees once a year, there can be so much that skews that data. Perhaps it's their birthday. Perhaps it's their anniversary. Maybe they just got back from a vacation. Maybe they just finished a really successful project. Maybe a project just tanked. Maybe they had a death in the family. All of those things outside of work can affect that engagement survey. And so if you're only collecting that data once, and you're not aggregating it and looking at the highs and lows and throwing those out, you don't really have a true look at what's going on inside of your organization.

- It's such a good point, to think about those moments that employees have. I would also add in, moments where employers might get something wrong in their environment. Maybe you had a really bad execution of something, and then you do an engagement survey right after that. You better believe that your data's gonna be skewed based on that lack of change management in that moment. So I really appreciate you giving some of those examples. 'Cause we gotta be more cognizant of when we're asking these questions, I think, and not to skew the information. It's about repetition and consistency.

- Absolutely. It's kind of like weight loss. The scale can fluctuate, but five pounds in either direction. It's about that 90 days a year, that consistency. Where are we getting traction? Where are we losing

traction?

- What do you think is the biggest factor impacting employee engagement? And that's such a big question, because I know it could be very specific to an industry or to an individual. But is there things that HR professionals should really be focusing on, is those big impact items?

- I think the biggest factor impacting engagement today is leadership or a lack of. And especially where we've moved to these hybrid work types. And we've even made the gap between what I'll call an hourly employee and a salaried employee even larger than it was before. And engagement is so critical when we think about that hourly frontline employee. Most of us who are salaried, we're already engaged. We're already bought in. We've got education. It's a career for us. In a lot of cases, hourly employees are seeking that career still. Or hourly employees are still seeking that career path, and they're looking to move in to a path or a pathway, I think, is what Josh Burson called it yesterday. People fall into jobs, and it's just kind of what they do for the rest of their life. And so the key to engagement is leadership. And we're all leaders inside of our organization. Whether I've got a fancy title of director, I don't actually have any direct reports. And what that does for me is it gives me the opportunity to do my best work every single day, without necessarily having to manage people. So leadership, in and of itself, those skills, they're kind of considered soft skills. Those are critical across the organization. And the reason why that's not just an HR role is because how often do most people interact with HR leaders in their organization? Especially if you think about an hourly workforce. Their direct relationship is with their manager. And if that manager is not a good leader, and it might not even be their fault; they're not getting training. They're not getting support from their manager, from their leadership. So if they're not getting that support and those insights, leadership is a critical piece of engagement. And I think that's what's really lacking. And I think some of it is lacking because of the fact that we're surviving and not thriving. Really hard to hone leadership skills when we're struggling with work and home.

- I mean, that's such a good point. I think about even the work we're doing here, recording a podcast, we're managing not only kind of our day jobs back in the office and checking email, and making sure that our guests are prepared to jump on the podcast. And that's just a very small view of of my world. But you're absolutely right. We are kind of inundated with all these things we have to pay attention to. And then we're like, "Hey, why aren't you engaged? Why aren't you focused? Why aren't you excited about what we're doing here at work?" And maybe you have a manager who only talks to you about execution, never checks in with you about how things are going. How do we help our managers connect the dots between those check-in moments and real empathy? And how that has a direct impact on engagement. And even one step more,

the bottom line.

- Technology is certainly an enabler for that. But nothing replaces a conversation, whether that's face to face, over the phone, or even a chat or an instant message. Recognition goes a long way, whether that's from your manager or from a colleague. I think there's data from O.C. Tanner that says that people that are recognized at work within the last seven days are 300% more likely to feel engaged in their work. And we'll have to check that stat. I might be making that up. But there is some data certainly there. And it doesn't have to come from your manager. That all comes from everybody's a leader recognizing everybody around you. And so technology can certainly be a driver for that. And it keeps everybody kind of aligned on the same page. I think a lot of times, people aren't engaged because they simply don't know what they don't know. It can feel really obvious to some of us for X, Y or Z reason. Why didn't you know that? Well, because I didn't know. I wasn't here that day. My wife had a baby. I missed the memo. I don't know how many times we've had a I-missed-the-memo moment. But once you're educated, you're educated. I think I forgot the second part of your question there. The technology would be the driver. What was the second part of your question? I forgot.

- Just really about how managers can connect the dots. That focusing on engagement and having empathy will affect their success from a business perspective.

- I think that it's critical for managers to remember that they're people first, and that their people are also people. None of us are superhuman. And that's one thing that I think the pandemic has done for a lot of us, is reminded us all that we're human. That we only have a certain number of hours in the day. Giving ourselves a lot of grace and permission to be who we are. And so when managers approach people like people, the outcomes can really be incredible when employees feel like their manager cares about them and is vested in them, regardless of the type of work they're doing. We put a hierarchy on nurses in healthcare 'cause they're out there saving lives, and nurses are certainly experiencing a lot of burnout. We're seeing the Great Resignation, where people are moving and changing jobs. So it's more important and more critical than ever for managers and leaders in an organization, regardless of role, to reach across the aisle and make those inroads with employees. Because the outcomes themselves, you're gonna have lower attrition. You're gonna have lower overall costs for training. You get the right people in the right place at the right time when they need to be there. And that's all about meeting employees where they're at. And really what it comes down to is feeling heard, and that you have an opportunity to make an impact in that organization. Even if it's not daily, on a weekly, monthly, annual basis, so that you feel like the work that you are doing matters.

- I wanna talk a little bit about what you said about feeling heard. As we, HR practitioners, read through engagement surveys, we have to digest that information and pull out the nuggets of value. And sometimes it's very interesting. For example, a lot of times on an engagement survey, you'll see a couple things come to the top: I'm not paid enough. I don't have enough benefits. Those are pretty typical across the board all the time. No matter how the company's doing, how you're feeling, those things will come up. So how do you go into a survey and really glean from it, these are the things I need to work on. Yeah, compensation right now is very low, or it's something we need to tackle. Or this is kind of noise and not address it. Do you have any advice on that?

- It's all about asking questions that get to the real issues. Are people truly not being paid enough? I mean, there's data, that you can benchmark data so we can compare salaries and whatnot. But it kind of goes back to some of those Gallup questions even: Do I have a best friend at work? Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day? Do I feel like I make a difference at work? Those things make a huge difference when it comes to the engagement piece. It's not just about, the comments I think are important, and grabbing the word cloud and seeing what bubbles up to the top. And some of that can be addressed through better messaging from the company. And if there's a true problem there that can be addressed through data, then that's something that they can certainly solve at the point. But as far as getting excellent engagement, it starts with having a really well-defined mission and values, and communicating that to your people over and over again through multiple media channels. I like to listen to podcasts, but I don't really like to watch live television, because I want that async. Some people prefer the live. So it's all about, again, discovering where your people are and meeting them. And what an overwhelming task. Think about how many different personality types there are and how many different kinds of people there are. It's hard for companies to be everything for everyone. And I think in some cases, it's fine for companies to say, "Oh, it didn't work out." I mean, attrition, it's there for a reason. But when we've got the right people, we want to make sure that we keep them around. So it's about having those conversations.

- Jessica, I appreciate your perspective. And I think you've helped to remind us that there isn't a peanut butter approach to engagement. It's very unique to the mission and values of your organization, but it's also very unique to the individual. And so it's our job as managers and leaders and HR professionals to really have a good understanding of our people, and get back to, as a catchphrase, putting the human back in HR, and getting down to the nitty-gritty of that. So thanks for taking a few minutes of your day to talk to me.

- It's been a pleasure to be here. Thank you so much.

- This podcast is brought to you by Paylocity, a leading HCM provider that frees you from the tasks of today so you can focus more on the promise of tomorrow. If you'd like to submit a topic or appear as a guest on a future episode, email us at pctytalks@paylocity.com.