

- 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 again today is Kate Grimaldi. She is our senior director of enterprise talent strategy. So Kate, thanks for jumping on with me again.

- Thanks for having me on again, Shari. It's nice to be back.

- So we have a pretty unique topic today, and I thought I'd start by sharing the audio of a TikTok. It's LinkedIn's TikTok, so they are on TikTok and their handle is @LinkedIn. So, let's start with hearing this audio.

- Hey, so they want us to talk about quiet quitting. Quiet quitting, what's quiet quitting? So, quiet quitting is when you go to work, but you don't put any extra effort in, you don't go above and beyond, and you don't take on additional assignments. Isn't that just like doing your job? No, it is totally different. It's like you're just doing the bare minimum and you don't even care about getting promoted, so you don't do extra work during the nights or weekends. Okay, well, I've been quiet quitting for like six months and it must've been really quiet, 'cause nobody seems to have noticed. Wait, am I quiet quitting?

- I absolutely love this audio because I feel like this could be any conversation we're having with any one of our managers we've encountered over the years.

- Yeah, what I thought is most interesting, though, about that is, I liked the part when he said, "Isn't that just doing your job?" Like, I think about all the people that I talk to on a regular basis who, if I were to talk about something like that, I think they'd have a similar response of, "Wait, no, that's not doing your job. Doing your job is X, Y, Z." So, yeah, I was definitely chuckling when you were playing that.

- There was a great article that CNN just posted called "Quiet Quitting Rejects Hustle Culture: Bosses May Want to Take Note." And I love this line that they have in here and it kind of talks about where this idea is coming from and how it's being articulated. And it's really about, people are tired, tired of leaning in, tired of feeling guilty about taking vacation, tired of the nine-to-five that's more like the nine-to-seven or eight, tired of panic attacks in the middle of the night, tired of maybe the Sunday scaries if some of you get that who are listening. And I think it's such an interesting concept because it's become this buzzword on TikTok and on social media. And the reality is, the people who are quote, unquote, and I'm saying that on purpose, quiet quitting, are meeting expectations. So, how do you have those conversations with leaders if they're coming to you with

this concept around quiet quitting?

- And in some respects, those people are exceeding expectations. Because their version of quiet quitting is still probably more than what somebody else is doing. So, I think it's a really interesting concept. You know, we think about being tethered, right, prior to the pandemic, and that same CNN article that you mentioned references this, this concept of you were tethered to the office, you were tethered to your desk, to your car, to your mode of transportation. And then when you went home, you untethered. And for some people, that was super helpful because then they sort of untethered themselves. Now, there were other people who stayed tethered. But when the pandemic hit, it was this new wave of, there's no direction around how to untether yourself. You are in it at all times. I mean, most people worked in a similar space that they live in. So they don't necessarily have a room in a corner somewhere that has a locked door. It is part of their living room or their kitchen or it's a side area in a family room or an office that also, in my case, houses games and other documents and the printer that you need for school. So, you don't just get to walk away and shut the door. You go back in multiple times. You know, I think when you're talking to leaders, it's really defining what the difference between meeting expectations and above and beyond is and what is okay. And the reality is, when you hire someone to do a job and you give them the job description and they meet all of those expectations, they're doing the job that you hired them for. Somewhere along the way, Shari, we decided that doing the job you were hired to do wasn't good enough. And I don't know, I, when I'm talking to leaders, I'm reminding them of some of the concepts that they probably heard about early on in their career, which is asking people questions, checking in on people, and telling people, "Hey, it's okay for you not to check that email." I have a new person on my team and a couple weeks ago, we were talking about something on a Friday around 2:00. And I told her I was gonna take a look at it and I'd get back to her. And she said, "Okay, great, I'll make sure to check in a couple times this weekend to see what you said and then I'll make sure to do it." And I laughed and I said, "Why would you do that? Don't do that." And she said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You do not need to check anything over the weekend. The weekend is for rest." And she said, "Yeah, but, you know, if you need it by," and I said, "I'm never gonna ask you for something on Friday at three o'clock that I need on Monday at 8:00 a.m." I said, "That is just silly." And I said, "You can expect that I won't ask you for that. It would have to be something truly burning," and I said, and she said, "Oh, I just, I've always expected that if we talk about something Friday, that I should be checking over the weekend so I can have it ready on Monday." And I said, "Well, welcome, because this is a new era, dawn of the new place." But I thought that was interesting that that was her immediate reaction to me. It was like, "Oh, I'll check it over the weekend." And I was dumbfounded. I was like, "Why would you do that? Don't do that."

- You know, I think about this when we've talked about discretionary effort, right. We want our employees to have this, you know, super highly engaged discretionary effort view of doing their job. And it's interesting because what's really come out of people who especially have high discretionary effort is, they're freaking burnt out now. You know, and they're not even performing sometimes at meets expectations because they've just taken on so much mentally. I'm curious your take on, you know, if you're a leader, right, who has high discretionary effort and is working all these hours and checking email on the weekends, as myself included falls into this category, how are we coaching, you know, the leaders who are doing that and they're thinking, "Well, I'm a leader of the organization. I still need to perform at this certain level?"

- Yeah, it's a great question. You know, in those circumstances, I usually ask them to look at their leader and ask them what behavior their leader is modeling for them. Because most behaviors, as with anything else, and if you look at any sort of psychology behind it, behaviors are learned. They're, you know, there are innate things and then there are learned behaviors. At work, work is learned behaviors. You're a product of your environment. So if your leader is answering emails and giving you tasks over the weekend, you're going to feel the same way. So as a leader, are you taking a look and saying, "What behaviors am I modeling and then what behaviors am I providing an explanation for?" So when new people start on my team, what I'll say is, "Hey, these are the things that I'm going to model for you. Here are some other pieces to know about me and my personal schedule. When my daughter has gymnastics, that might mean I have to pop out an hour before the end of the day, so you might see things come back later on in the evening. That's for me. I'm not going to ask you for something and I'm going to do a really, I'm gonna focus on asking you for something with the date attached to the filing date. Tomorrow, can you please X, Y, Z, so it doesn't look like it's being asked." A lotta times you have to help leaders figure that out. And the difference between modeling good behavior and explaining, because you also don't wanna ruin the flexibility of work, especially this great flexibility that we have encouraged and encountered throughout the pandemic. We don't want it to become, you know, "Oh, you can't work in the evening, 'cause that's flexible for you, 'cause it could cause a problem for someone else." No, but you can give someone a tip that says, "Hey, you can set all those emails to send the following morning. So you can do them and feel like they're done, but don't hit anybody else." There's tools out there to allow you to do that. There are ways that you can change small parts of your behavior by asking questions that attach certain dates, tomorrow, the next week. "Hey, next week, on Monday, can we talk about this?" Then, they're conscious, right, they're conscious decisions, but the difference between modeling the behavior and then explaining the reason why behind what you're doing helps to continue to keep that flexibility while adjusting to this sort of trying to be, I should say, less tethered to everything that's

happening.

- I really like the examples around flexibility in how you shared your personal example, because I think part of this is, as leaders, articulating the flexibility that we've given ourselves and how we're still meeting expectations. We're not going necessarily above and beyond, just the way our schedule flows and how we've decided to organize it, that works best for us. That flexibility works best for us. So, I really like that. You know, there is another article I read in "The Wall Street Journal," and there was a reference there to another TikTok and he talked about, you know, the most interesting part about all of this is, nothing has really changed. We've just wrapped a new word around it, you know. People still work as hard. They still get as much as accomplished. They just don't stress and internally rip themselves to shreds about these different kinds of very stressful or anxiety-related items.

- Do you think that a part of that, though, or I should maybe instead of asking, I should tell you. What I think a part of that is, we have become more open to giving names to things. So things that have always been, we're just really on these buzzwords lately. We love a good buzzword. But I would agree with that. It's not new, but we are being more transparent about what we're talking about, which is, I think, just an effect of culture changing general about being transparent, transparent about pay, transparent about job responsibilities, transparent about schedule. We're now being transparent about, "I wanna do the job you hired me to do. I don't wanna do three other people's jobs too. I just wanna do this job because this is the job that you hired me for and this is what you pay me to do. I don't have a desire to do someone else's job. That doesn't mean I don't want to advance." I think that's the key piece with the quietly quitting that people, I think, are maybe losing. It's like quitting feels like you're doing the bare minimum and so you're barely getting by. But really, you're not doing the bare minimum. You're doing the job that you were excited to take on. You're not doing three other people's jobs. And, you know, so I think part of it is giving a name to it. I also think part of it is, so right, history repeats itself, and one of the things that I think when we look at history, when we look at things that have happened, there's this fear, right? In 2008, anybody who struggled, either was laid off or struggled to get a job if they were coming outta college, you know, it was a scary time. That if you did get a job, you were in this constant fear that if you weren't the top performer, you were going to be laid off. You know, when the pandemic hit, we went through that same fear all over again. People were like, "Everyone's gonna lay everyone off. You have to be the top performer." I think we're kinda going back into that piece that we saw probably in 2012, 2013, after people started to feel safe again, like, "Okay, now, can I just do the job, like the one job that I was hired for?" Instead of having, you know, what we call corporate side hustles. And it's the same, but it's also different. And the people

who've already been through this once before, I'm not gonna call out anyone's ages on this podcast, but I would venture a guess that our people who have been through the recession previously have similar thoughts about that and sort of, it's that fear that I think is instilled that never actually goes away. That's like a, it's that, it's a little bit of trauma and I don't wanna be super clinical about it, but like there's a trauma piece that sits in the back of your mind. "I'm not number one all the time. Am I gonna be the last? And if I'm last, am I first to go?" And there's that, you know, you end up in that, I know there's a psych term for it, you know, worst-case scenario, but-

- Set up to fail, set up to fail.

- Yes.

- You know what, I think we should coin a new term. I don't think I've seen this as a buzzword yet. I think quietly quitting is quietly performing. That's the reality, right? You're performing as expected. Like you said, you just don't wanna do this extra stuff. I wanna ask you a question about something I just read recently that kinda falls underneath this same concept, and it's this term, another buzzword, right, called quiet firing. And the concept around it is that you have an employee who's meeting expectations, they're effective in their role, but they're not being offered promotions, they're not being offered raises, and when management is asked about it, they kind of avoid the question. Have you seen this bubbling up yet?

- I think it's getting there. What's interesting, though, as you were talking about that, that came to mind was, and I myself am guilty of this, when you talk about people getting promoted, one of the things you tell people is, "You gotta go above and beyond. That's how you get promoted, you go above and beyond." And as you were talking, I was thinking, when did that, when did going above and beyond, like when did that become the new normal? Right, like so now, you can't just do a good job in your role and do everything you're asked. You have to do more than everybody else, right? So if your job is 40 hours a week, you gotta do 50-plus hours of work and then you can get promoted. You know, I haven't seen it bubbling up a ton. I have a little bit. I think where you're gonna see interesting pieces around that, though, is connected to DEI. Which is, we're trying really hard, I think, as organizations to make sure that we are giving people ample equal opportunity across organization. And in general, research shows that people who tend to be quieter are less likely to get those opportunities. If you have underrepresented minorities, they're already quiet, either by nature or because of the environment that they're in, and they're performing, but they're not necessarily standing on a stage telling everyone they're performing. They're less likely to get the promotions. And when you look through all of that, your DEI lens tells you that you're going to be even further from

where you're trying to go. So, I think that's where you're gonna see it bubble more. I've seen it bubble a little bit. I mean, just recently talking to leaders, you know, when you're going through even just, if you do review cycles, whether you do 'em quarterly or annually, having conversations, and a lotta leaders are still saying, "Yeah, that person's really great. They do everything I ask. But this person does all these extra things." And I remember asking someone recently, I said, "But do all those extra things, is it useful?" They're like, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, those extra things, is there a revenue component? Are they driving something? Like what are those extra things?" "Well no, they just do all these extra things." And I said, "So, they're doing, maybe they're doing 'em for them." "No, they're doing them for us and we should reward them." And I said, "But you didn't ask them to do any of those things." "Well yeah." I said, "But if you didn't have those things, would the job still be okay?" "Yeah, it would be." I said, "Okay, then all you're doing is burning that person out and not giving them the accolades for actually doing the job that you asked them to do." Like, and it's so, right, it's a weird mind trick on your head. 'Cause somewhere along the way, someone decided that you can't just do the job you were hired to do. You have to do your job times, you know, two, and then you get opportunities.

- Well, it goes back to that idea around hustle culture, right? I gotta hustle to get to the next level, and I think there's definitely a shift that we're gonna have to see when we train our managers on how to think about performance, expectation, promotion criteria, competencies, all the things that are, you know, our words in the HR space that we live by and help to drive performance. But it's interesting, you know, we've had so much shift and so much growth over the last couple years around how we think about performance and results-oriented work. That I think there's still a lotta work to be done and it's gonna be interesting as, you know, we go through this next year with return to office and more and more people being in the office, and you know, balancing that space now we're in where we have, you know, fully remote organizations still, but we still have those bread and butter organizations, manufacturing and retail and, you know, restaurant and all of that. That they've always been on-site. And so, now there's this difference between, you know, the knowledge workers and those that are on-site. And so, there's a gap there that we're gonna have to think about as we think about flexibility and transparency and advancement and making sure that we're providing those robust opportunities. So, thanks for giving me your two cents on this topic. I think it's really interesting to see how this is gonna come to life in the next few weeks here. But if you're hearing this in your organization, maybe start talking about quietly performing and the benefits that has. The more people performing in your organization, the better, right?

- Absolutely, I would take five solid performers over one exceeding

performer and four inconsistencies. That's for sure.

- Absolutely, well, Kate, thanks again for taking a few minutes.

- Always, thanks for having me, Shari.

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