

- 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. This episode was recorded live at SHRM 2022 in New Orleans. And joining me during this session is Vivian Blade, resilience and inclusive leadership expert, number one best selling author, and top 100 HR influencer in 2021. Vivian, thanks so much for joining me on the podcast today.

- It is so good to be with you. Thank you for having me.

- I'd love it if you could share a little bit about your background and passion for elevating HR professionals.

- Well, my background, I've worked for GE and worked for Humana in my previous career. So I've had a marvelous corporate career where I had the opportunity to work with a lot of HR people and in various roles that I had, but also to be influenced by HR in my progression in my career, in my day to day work in my career. And especially as I've been working independently, working with organizations to help them to build better leaders and better workplaces, I had an opportunity to work with a lot of HR people and just helping them invest in the talent and their organizations to make them better, to make their organizations better.

- I love that story. You know, I think for a lot of HR development and HR professionals, we have centered it around having a seat at the table, right. We've talked a lot about having a seat at the table. We have a seat at the table now in most tables, in most organizations, but we could really use guidance on how to influence that table better. What skills do you think HR practitioners are missing and or need to strengthen to accomplish this?

- Thank you for asking that question, Shari. It's really important in my session here at the SHRM Conference, I talked about some research from McLean & Company that really is new. And they talked about the fact that while HR does have a seat at the table now, involved in more strategic discussions and a lot of that has been driven by COVID and the need to have HR helped figure out the human capital pieces of all of the challenges that came with that. But unfortunately, the perceptions of HRs effectiveness with that seat at the table is not perceived as high among non-HR professionals as it is, of course, with HR professionals. So the other challenge I think we have is the fact that we have had more of a seat at the table with the pandemic. How do we maintain that? How do we continue to help people see that our roles are as important in the everyday day to day, as it has been in the pandemic. It's different, that how we support our businesses and our employees, our human capital are all critical roles in business success each and every day. So ways that we can do that are around a

framework that I learned about when I was doing research for the book, "Influence", and the Association for Talent Development asked me to be one of the authors in a soft skill series that they were producing, and it came out in 2021. But the things I learned about what really helps people who are most successful in their HR roles, in their leadership roles, in their professional roles are around five key principles. And those key principles are your social capital, your courage, your authenticity, leaning in with passion and engaging a diverse and inclusive workplace community. And we can tap into any of those that you'd like, but those key principles and the practices behaviors around those are really key. And what we as HR professionals, leaders, whatever your role can tap into that to be successful, to maintain that seat at the table, to grow your credibility, to grow your confidence, to grow your impact and your role each and every day.

- I like that you brought up the social capital piece 'cause I think in HR, we focus so much on relationship building, but we don't necessarily leverage that and think about that in a strategic way. Could you elaborate a little bit more on social capital?

- Yeah, that is a great point. You're right, we are supporting business partners every day. And one of the examples and stories that I shared during my session was from a conversation I was having with an executive who was sharing with me, well, he had seen prior to some leadership development work I was gonna be doing with them on my bio that I was named one of Enagedly's Top 100 Global HR Influencers. So with that, he had some HR questions for me. And one of those was, who does HR really work for? You know, do they work for the business? You know, do they really support us? Do they really support employees if they have the best interests, can they? Because they're stuck in the middle. And he said that oftentimes when we are trying to work on things and get things done, there's always some of this pushback that comes from HR or something, and it takes us so long to move the ball forward. And in fact, the analogy that I use, my grandson is learning to talk. He's almost two years old. And one of the things he likes to say of course is, no, no, no. I was talking to my son last night on the phone, and we were talking about this conversation and my grandson said, no, no, no. So it was funny. But people think of HR as the no, no, no people. So rather than that, as we are building relationships and thinking about our relationships, as we think about social capital, one of the key practices that I encourage people around is to make sure that you are selflessly adding value. So what can I do and what ways can I contribute to the organization positively? So that even in ways, sometimes I might not think that I can add value. So we are always, we always have the opportunity to do things without the expectation of anything in return. Of course we don't have to go doing all this stuff outside of our box. You know, I'm not asking you to add on, or pile on more work. But what can we do? And to use our skills, our expertise, our area, our domain expertise to give value. And then

I was talking to someone too here during the conference who mentioned, well, I'm doing all these things I feel like, and people don't even recognize it. So part of our reputation building is also sharing the things that we're doing with people so that they make the connections, they connect the dots. We don't have to go around with platitudes about ourselves, but it's making sure that they understand what we're doing and why and how we're contributing and really being engaged at the table.

- I really appreciate that. And if you're listening, here's some extra noise, we are on the SHRM floor. So they're making some announcements right now. So hopefully that won't distract too much from our conversation. You know, thinking about that no, no, no that you just said, I think about that that HR, so many times, we sabotage ourselves, right. What are some other ways we're doing that, and specifically I'm thinking about influence, right, we do things that sabotage our ability to influence, what are some other things things you've seen HR professionals do.

- Yeah. A lot of the focus oftentimes is on being an influencer. And that is when I need somebody to make a decision, when I need to influence somebody, I'm going to figure out which tactic works for me. And we focus there rather than focusing on being influential, the long term gain. And that's why social capital is the very first principle and why it's so important because we are investing and building those relationships. But some of the mistakes people make include thinking that influence is manipulation. If I can just see how I can say this or do this, or spin it, the spin doctor to make it seem like a nice, shiny object, and they go my way. I know we also have people who love coffee and I use this analogy around coffee drinkers. So the second mistake people make is that they think influence is instant, therefore the long term game. So if you're a coffee drinker, think about the fact that, which do you prefer? Do you like those low roasted coffee beans when that coffee is fresh and you can walk into that Starbucks and you smell it, or is instant coffee your preference? Well, maybe so, but, and I'm not saying either way whether one is better, you make the call, but that's one of the mistakes that people make. The other mistake is that people think that they can see and view influence as a transaction. You know, once I get the handshake or the person says, yes, my job is done, and I can walk away from that, I've influenced. And so my mantra is that influence is more about how you live than what you do. It's not just about the tactic that you use but it's how you engage and work with people every day in the beginning with those investments with people, being authentic and leaning in, understanding and tapping into the why for others so that you really, you know how you can support, how you can be that business partner, how you can support employees in the best way possible. So those are some things to really watch out for.

- I love that, it's just really practical, like centering in on that

long term influence. And I will say, I do not like instant coffee, so I will put that up there. I like that slow roast and.

- Yeah.

- And you know, that build up for the relationship. For those in HR that have gone through this transition to a more strategic partnership, how can we remind ourselves of our worth? And what I mean by that is sometimes I see HR professionals volunteering to do tasks that lessen their impact, like party planning. I'll just give that as an example, like we have so much more to give than that. How do we remind ourselves of that?

- Yeah That's a great question, Shari. And I think that as we think about the L in the framework, really leaning in with passion where, and my practice, one of my practices that I recommend there is to tap into why, I mentioned that a minute ago. What is our why? What's important for us in this work? Sometimes we forget that and the day to day just rush of everything that we have to do and getting it all done. But if we can stay connected to that, we can elevate our work. We can elevate what's most important. Sometimes just like in any job, there is the, and other duties as they come up each and every day, right? And so I don't wanna minimize the importance or the need for us to do some of those things sometimes, but we can't stay there. Again, if you understand what is important to your business partners, what is important to employees and focus your work around that. I heard somebody talk about here, just sometimes we get a wrapped around all the policies and people see us as the policy police. Someone also said in my session, we need to get out of our offices or our cubicles and walk around and engage with people so that we can understand and connect to that why. I think if we can do that, then we elevate our work. And even times when we do have to do some of those party planning things, they see that we're adding value with social capital, right. But we're also communicating our value and demonstrating what else we can come to the table with.

- Yeah, really good advice there. As we wrap up our conversation, I'm curious, what do you say to young professionals who are trying to develop this influence skill?

- You know, I had a couple of professionals come up to me after my session to ask me that very question, they're young in their career, they are working with people who are more senior to them. And so how do I have influence among people in that position? And what I encourage them is that, I think everything that we've talked about, everything that I have shared and that the research showed me and the scale framework, if you apply those, it will help you. Social capital are really selflessly adding value. Sometimes with the C, courage, you have to really lean into the challenges sometimes versus walking away from them, have the courage to face them with authenticity. We can be

adaptable rather than artificial. So self-awareness is important and understanding who we are, the leaning in with passion to really connect to the whys is important for demonstrating to someone who may be senior to you that you're connected to the business and what's important and that you have the maturity to recognize that. And then leaning in with passion is followed by engaging a diverse and inclusive workplace community, and my recommendation there is to really leverage community influence there. How can we involve and inspire community influence, which means, it doesn't just always have to be me, but there is other expertise, there are other individuals, there are even utilizing some of these people who are senior to you as partners can help you to have greater influence.

- Such great advice. And man, I wish somebody had told me that early in my career. So I really appreciate that. Thanks so much for taking a few minutes of your day to chat with us.

- Absolutely. Absolutely, it's been absolutely fun to be here with you to have this conversation and I just encourage HR professionals. You do have influence and you can be influential. Focus there, remember that influence is more about how you live than just focusing on what you do or the tactics to influence people every day. This podcast is brought to you by Paylocity. A leading HCM provider that frees you from the task 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.