

- You're listening to HR Mixtape, your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice, thought provoking interviews, and stories that just hit different, so that work doesn't have to feel, well, like work. Now your host, Shari Simpson.

- Joining me today is John Bernatovicz. John is a husband, father, brother, coach, competitive amateur golfer, entrepreneur, keynote speaker, author and HR expert who's eager to embolden leaders to do better and have fun. Over the last 20 years, John has been an owner of six business ventures and is currently the president of Willory, a staffing and consulting firm dedicated to HR and payroll. John's passion is transforming purpose-driven organizations to meet their full potential and ensure they find, develop, and empower the best talent. John's book, "HR Like a Boss," is set to be published by SHRM Books and available at the upcoming SHRM 2023 conference in Las Vegas this June. John, thank you so much for jumping on the podcast with me today.

- Super excited to be here, Shari. Thank you so much. Enjoy all the work you're doing and can't wait to talk about amazingly awesome HR and all things HR like a boss.

- Ah, "HR Like a Boss." So that is a title of an upcoming book that you have that will be out before SHRM Annual Conference hits us. And I'm honestly so jelly. I feel like all HR people are writing books in their heads, and it's really cool to be able to spend some time with somebody who's getting it over the finish line when it comes to that. So, I'd love to start with what inspired you to write the book, "HR Like a Boss."

- Couple things stand out. Give a shout out to my friend Steve Brown, Ben Eubanks, Tim Sackett, and Chris Dunn. Saw them write books throughout the last 10 years or so, and have met them, have socialized with them, have done business with them and realize they're regular people just like me. They're really super smart, and I'm not saying I'm really super smart, probably way smarter than I am, but I saw them do it and I picked their brain and got some inspiration from them, but then life and work and business got in the way and I put it off, put it off, which is pretty common to do. And then, unfortunately, the real inspiration came to be the passing of my parents in a 13-month span. I lost my mom in March of 2019. I lost my dad in March of 2020. And for those of you that live in the States know what was going on here in March of 2020, the COVID pandemic. I sat there and reflected on what I wanted to achieve in my personal and professional life, and the number one thing that professionally for me was writing a book. And I started to write this book. My marketing director, Bridgette Klein, gave me a slight nudge to potentially shift the topic to a presentation I had done at my college, Kent State University. I went there in the '90s and did a presentation, called "HR Like a Boss" to their business school. And then I did a similar presentation to the

Northern Ohio HR Conference in 2019. and had all the content there. I shouldn't say all the content, but I had the framework for what doing "HR Like a Boss" was all about. And I was frankly kind of stuck on the first book idea I had. It wasn't really getting past page one and needed a little bit of support. And Bridgette was smart enough to say, "Hey, by the way, you have the guide, the outline already pretty much situated. And I think it would really align well with our business at Willory." We serve the HR and payroll community with our staffing and consulting services. So, combination of some friends, inspiration of my parents, this bucket list item, and a very kind nudge by a wonderful business partner in my firm, Bridgette Klein, our marketing director.

- How exciting and what a great story about building your network in the HR space and how we can elevate each other to the goals that we want. I absolutely love that. As we dig into the content of your book a little bit, I'd love for you to share in what ways does your book empower HR professionals to approach and solve problems in their day-to-day work.

- Yeah, really at the center of the table stakes of doing HR like a boss, which I describe as being amazingly awesome. And I'll challenge all of those that are listening right now, have you ever had anyone express to you that you do amazingly awesome HR? I feel like the bar, the standard for what we're trying to achieve, for our own personal experience needs to be at that level. There are so many things at stake, and the two main priorities of doing HR like a boss is owning everything that's within your span of control and loving what you do. If you do not, first and foremost, have an ownership mindset of being able to take control over the things that you can and influence the areas that are really important to you that maybe you don't have direct control over but become critical to your people, to your organization, to the success of your business, you really need to take that high degree of ownership in what you do. You cannot pass the buck. You cannot point the finger. You have to take ownership. The best HR professionals that I'm with every single day, week, month, year, they have a true ownership mindset and they're getting things done no matter what. And then on top of that, you have to have a tremendous passion for human resources and frankly for people, because we in HR get to deal with a lot of crazy you-know-what out there with people doing wild stuff, making bad decisions, maybe using certain parts of their body but not their brain and doing things that are either at work or online or through social platforms. And HR gets to deal with all that fun stuff. And I have talked to hundreds of HR professionals that have gotten burned out, that over time they don't like people. And that sounds to me like a really bad place to be. And you have to, in essence, again, in that situation, own what you can, take responsibility what you can, but you have to truly want people to succeed. You want them to be successful. You want them to really love what they do at work. And you spend so much time working every single

day, every single week, every single year, some people say 70,000-80,000 hours in a year, and you might as well do something that you love to do. And if you don't love people, I'm not gonna discourage you to get out of HR, but I'm gonna encourage you to find something within your function that can really get you into a positive place.

- You're absolutely right about HR needing to love people. And so many people, I think, get into HR 'cause they have this passion for people. But then they come to realize that people are messy and you have to love the totality of humanity, right? And you've got to be willing to do that. I'm curious, does your book help or talk about strategies for HR professionals to get from that really tactical view of their job to a more strategic view?

- Yeah, we built out a five-step HR Like a Boss business plan for human resource professionals. And that's one of the things I'm really proud of in the book. We took real intentional time, got feedback from lots of human resource professionals who are actually quoted in the book. So the book, it's your guide to amazingly awesome HR. That's the tagline for it. And I describe it as an inspirational tale of human resource professionals that are delivering amazingly awesome HR, and they're doing it in everyday life. They're not superhuman, they're just doing their best work, and it's really cool to see them taking on the tactics, the strategies, the intentionality around their delivery of human resources to make a difference for their employees, in their business, and in the community. In that, I got some really good ideas from them. I had some ideas in my head, and that's one of the really cool things about writing a book that you mentioned before, Shari's. You end up having some good ideas, you write down, you read them back like, "Oh, that's not too bad," and then you write a few things down, you read it back, and you said, "Oh my gosh, how quickly can I burn that content because that was god-awful and terrible." Inside the book the five main pillars of amazingly awesome HR and in that business plan the first is having a purposeful commitment for yourself and your business. That's your true north. Preferably it's four words or less. It gives meaning to what you do every single day and you can align people inside of your organization that have that same purpose. It's different than a mission, it's purposeful intention, and how we're doing good inside of our organization trying to make it simple. Next is being people-centric. And being people-centric, you have to put your employees first, because if you don't do that, someone else will. And as a result of that, you might lose some highly talented people. People inside of your organization really pay attention to what you're doing as an employer, and they act with their feet. They stay at your organization, they give you full energy if you treat them well. They do the exact opposite, they leave, they put nasty grams on Glassdoor if you mistreat them in a way that's really not the way that you should treat a human being, as the Golden Rule would tell us. The next is around process continuity and the ability to have processes inside of your business, just not in HR, that is important. For your most

important processes from beginning to end, from how you market, how you sell, how you operate, how you deliver accounting services, there needs to be continuity for you to be able to do that so you can scale your organization and you can grow and develop your talent inside of it. They understand how you operate as a business. The next is to make sure every employee is producing on a consistent level. If you notice there's a PC, purposeful commitment, people-centric, I'm gonna confuse myself if I keep saying that, we're on to produce consistently. People have to produce at their work. That's one of the main things for me as a business owner, as an author, as a speaker, we need to deliver results. And we all are fans of some sports team, of some actor or actress, some sort of platform that's not work. And if someone has a bad game, we really, we talk about how bad it is. You go onto Twitter and you see how poor of a performance that person maybe had. Well, we don't have that at work. No one's talking about us on Twitter about our workday. I think that I don't want people talking about me on Twitter about my workday, but I wanna make sure I know what is a successful day for me, for my team members, for my leadership team, from everyone, from my role as a CEO down to anyone, all the way down to an intern. They should know what a successful day is and that we can produce on a consistent level. And that production leads into the success of our organization. And then last but not least, everyone inside of your business should understand the profitable components of your company. Sometimes I talk to HR professionals and they don't want anything to do with finance or P&Ls or balance sheets or anything like that. But I have found the most successful HR professionals truly understand the purpose of a business is to make money unless you're a nonprofit, but you still need to make money if you're a nonprofit, just, you need to show it a little differently on your books. You have to understand that. And that's a key component of business is making money. Otherwise it's a hobby and the business won't last that long. Especially if you have something really great, we want it to be around and be long standing and profitability drives that. So purpose, people, process, productivity and profit are the five main strategies that I really want the HR profession to really hone in and get those right and be really consistent with them, and everything else will take care of itself.

- I appreciate so much that you have profit in there, because I think that is such an important component for the HR professional. Like you said, those that have wrapped their heads around P&L statements and profits and loss and EBITDA and all the financial terms, right? They just have a more strategic view of how they can contribute back to the organization, how they can help meet the goals of the business by really being strategic about their talent management and benefit strategies and all those kinds of things. So love that that's a key component of your book. As you think of all the other HR books out there, what sets yours apart? How do you feel like this is different than other books, maybe on the same topic?

- There's no other book with the title, "HR Like a Boss," I know that. So the title stands out, people seem to like that. There's a level of confidence when you hear that term that, I don't know if you've seen all the memes and the stuff that go along with "like a boss," but there's a level of confidence that comes with that. And I want people in human resources to feel like that when they walk into a room or they're staged in front of an audience or they're meeting with their CEO. I want them to feel a level of confidence, not arrogance, not cockiness, but confidence and belief in what it is that you're doing, that you're standing for your employees, you're putting the most important things in that business first, which is your people. And you cannot lose sight of that. Having that level of confidence, I believe, will come from reading my book. Again, that's a shameless plug. And if you want to do HR like a boss, if you want it to be described as doing something amazingly awesome. Don't take my word for it as the author. I have over 40 people that I've quoted inside the book. Some of them are friends of mine, some are people I was highly recommended to talk with that they filter in their ideas and suggestions on how they're doing HR like a boss inside of the book. It's just not my own story. It's many, many others complementing my words as well as giving their insights on how you can do HR like a boss. I think that makes us very unique. The title. The fact that we've got other people just like you that wrote part of the book, frankly, with their quotes. And then we put some framework around it, some strategies. I've been told many, many times when you write a book for HR, you've got to give them somewhat of a step-by-step. Give them something to hold onto. Give them some sort of guide point or takeaway. And we really think that's in the book. And the last thing I'll do on a shameless plug is we just don't stop with the book. I have a podcast called "HR Like a Boss." We do about 20 or so episodes each season. We'll be on season four here shortly. I built out an entire training course called the HR Like a Boss training course. Inside of it, there'll be an opportunity for people to learn the five main aspects of doing HR Like a Boss, which are thinking differently, being different, being better, taking action, and making an impact. And then at the same time, we have merchandise. I'm wearing a shirt right now on the podcast, HR Like a Boss. It's all about a franchise and a brand. To me, I'm trying to create a movement to do this thing called HR way better than you've ever done before. And I think all those things combined make it a little bit different.

- How exciting. And definitely, the swag is great. I know those that are listening can't see it, but you'll definitely have to go check out the website and all the things you mentioned. Such a great brand idea and a message. When you think about somebody who is on their career path for human resources, and you've mentioned a ton already, so if you just want to highlight one or two, what do you think are the building blocks for somebody to have a long-term successful career in HR?

- I'm not giving this shameless plug to SHRM because they are the publisher of my book, but I think one of the very first things that you should do as you build your career, and if you're doing it, engage more in it, or if you haven't done it, please get involved, is in your local and national SHRM community. In what we do every single day, I had a guest on my podcast say, "I can't talk to my colleagues at times about the things that are going on inside of my office, because they may know the details, they may know some of the semantics, they may know the people." Although I don't go and tell all the gory details with names and social security numbers and everything else, I can talk to one of my HR peers that isn't inside of my company, that can give me an interesting perspective, one, that maybe I wouldn't be seeing. And my first piece of advice would be to build out your network and start in your SHRM chapter, your local chapter, and getting involved, potentially even becoming a member of national SHRM. There are so many resources there, so many great thought leaders. I'm sure, Shari, you have and will and continue to be one of their great speakers at local and regional chapters. They seek out talent like you that really have great intention and great thoughts to inspire the HR profession. So join your SHRM chapter, network in it. If you have the time, volunteer inside of that organization, because you can learn so many things by how that business is structured, your SHRM chapter, you get to know some of the intimacies of the other members of the board, and usually they're high caliber people that are wanting to get better at human resources. That's my first suggestion. The second one, and SHRM helps that, helps this second item, is you really have to know your stuff. You have to be an expert in what it is that you do. And I'm very fortunate to be surrounded by a great leader inside of my organization who really prides herself the director of people operations at our firm, prides herself on knowing her stuff. She knows her technical HR responsibilities. And I think it doesn't mean you need to know everything inside of human resources, but if you're a talent acquisition pro, you need to know talent acquisition. If you're in HRIS and developing HCM platforms or supporting that, you need to know the HR technology space. And there's a bunch of resources available from SHRM chapters, from vendors like Paylocity, from all kinds of other resources that are out there to help you hone your craft because you need to know your stuff to become that subject matter expert, to walk into that room with confidence, to want people to be in that room with you as opposed to oftentimes, "Uh-oh, here comes HR. Who's getting fired? Who got in trouble? Oh no, Shari's here in the room. I want her to be here because she adds so much value, she knows her stuff, she drives results for our business." Those would be the two main things I would suggest. Know your stuff and really make sure you build out your network early on to help you surround yourself with awesome people.

- I love that you shared the idea about volunteering. I did that for many years actually at the SHRM Annual Conference as a volunteer. And it was such a great way to network with other HR professionals who

have the same mindset, who wanna give back. And you get a peek behind the curtain in a lot of different ways in the content and how they think about the work that they're doing. So I appreciate that. As we wrap up our conversation, I wanna leave you with this question that you can enlighten our audience with. So as I think about the field of HR, it's evolved so much in the recent years with just the reaction we've had to have with the pandemic and the change that a lot of businesses now put on HR in a really good way. For so long, we kind of talked about having a seat at the table. And now that we're at the table, now that we're driving strategy in a lot of ways, what do you see as some of the biggest trends shaping the future of HR?

- First and foremost, we always have to put our people first. Always. We are the ones that are watching over our people inside of human resources, and it may not be as much of a priority for your CFO or your head of sales to be mindful of your people. And I think that you cannot lose sight of how important it is to make sure that someone is advocating for your employees every single day, every single minute inside of your business. And what that means to me is turning, flipping this switch around that says two out of three employees are not engaged at work. That's really bad. That's really one of the drivers for me, data points that inspired me to write "HR Like a Boss," to do the presentations, to help the HR profession understand their responsibility in that lack of engagement with your employees and what are you going to do differently about it. In addition to that, those employees need to understand what their role is inside of the organization and how they fit in, and how can you train them and support them. Because all of us are dealing with emotional, social, and financial things in our lives, at home, at work, and the human resource profession is really importantly tied to ensuring that our people are in their best possible head space so they can do their best work. I saw a data point that came out by Gallup that said, the worldwide economy is losing \$7 trillion in productivity because of a lack of engagement. That's staggering when you think of it. And HR has a great responsibility to make that better. Secondarily, we cannot lose sight of what our business needs. We work for a company. They pay us to work there. Sometimes, a lot of money. And with that lot of money becomes, again, responsibility to drive results for our business. And to me, the best way to do that is to get a bunch of aligned people that are skilled at what they do, that meet their core values and understand what their job is every day. And if you do that, your business becomes a little bit easier to run. I know I made that sound really simple, but there's some foundational things I wrote in the book to help you drive business results for your organization. If we do those two things, if we have highly engaged people doing meaningful work that love what they do, they know what a good, successful day is at work, and then we can clearly help them identify the opportunities they can have and make on the business to drive the results the business needs, profitability, sales results, customer acquisition, whatever it might be, then my hope is we'll have a bunch

of people that like what they're doing and some money laying around that, "Oh, by the way, we as a business can do something good in our community. We can end poverty in our local community. We can impact a local college. We can drive results for entrepreneurship. We can do whatever we can in that business." And to me, that last point, that social entrepreneurialism, that social business component, having that corporate responsibility to not only treat your employees well, but also to do something really, really meaningful in the world, that to me is a trend that I hope continues to grow and develop, and one that I think is super important. I write about it in my book, and I speak about it at presentations, and I believe in it 100% that it makes such a difference when you and your organization have a purpose and you have your people and all your organization heading in that same direction.

- What a great way to end our discussion, John, on the idea of being so successful that you could impact your community around you. Absolutely love that. John, thanks for taking a few minutes of your day to chat with me.

- This was awesome, Shari, keep it up. Thank you very much.

- I hope you enjoyed today's episode. You can find show notes and links at thehrmixtape.com. Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.