

- [Announcer] You're listening to the 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.

- [Shari] Joining me today is John Baldino. John is the president and founder of Humareso, an organization poised to strategize with companies to develop plans to manage talent, recruit for skills gaps based on employee inventories, assess markets for growth, develop long-range success plans, and influence a culture of enthusiastic buy-in. John has a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in HR development, as well as 27 years of experience in HR. His areas of expertise include performance and change management, organizational development, leadership development, and the list goes on and on.

- [Shari] John, thank you so much for joining me today. We have a really interesting approach to our episode today. We're kind of bringing it back old school, back to that coffee shop, sitting on the couch, having a conversation about HR, answering Reddit questions of all things.

- [John] And I know this. And I'm not offended at all that you're taking it old school, and I'm guest you chose to do that with. It's cool really, it's totally fine. Well, you know, the OG, I guess, right? That's what I'm here for.

- [Shari] All right, so let's get started. These questions are juicy, to say the least, and I think they're very applicable to the things we experience in HR. Some of these are long, so bear with me as I read through them. I started a new job in August, I dress appropriately, but my boss has repeatedly told me I need to wear makeup. I wear mascara, but I told her my skin is very sensitive and I haven't found a foundation or powder that works. She said I should at least wear lipstick. Last week, we were having a casual conversation while driving between accounts. She interrupted me and said, I say "like" and, "you know" too often. She said that it's all she can focus on when I talk, and that I have to concentrate on not saying the phrases. I need to stop saying them all the time, not just at work. If I only try to not say them during work, my interactions with buyers won't seem genuine. All of this criticism is creating a lot of anxiety. I'm constantly worried about my appearance and what I'm saying. I live on the West Coast and my city is very casual. Has my boss overstepped? I feel like she's getting into a gray area by criticizing my appearance and speech.

- [John] You know, the answer could easily be, "Like, I quit." So, I mean, there's that initial response, but it's a challenging one in one portion. And it's, I think, pretty straightforward in another way. So let's do the straightforward part. And by the way, for the sake of everybody who may be watching, my eyes are all over the place, 'cause

I'm on different monitors reading these same things that Shari's reading. So just so you know, I'm not looking off at the stock market. Dress appropriately is such a difficult term to come to somebody with. "You're not dressing appropriately." What does that mean, right? What's appropriate? And if you have an appropriateness, typically what I would say to someone, meaning in an HR practitioner who's managing this kind of policy, is what does that actually mean? They have to spell it out. If you're going to be that narrow in what you intend, and I'll give you a great example. So when my kids were in middle school and high school, there was a dress code. Now, they didn't go to private school, they went to public high school, and public middle school, and there still was a dress code, right? And some of you remember terms like midriff or whatever, shirts, whatever it was. You couldn't show your belly. And so the school had to get so basic that they had pictures of "not okay, this is okay", "not okay, this is okay". And somewhere along the line, we felt like, well, when people graduated from high school, they would then know what "not okay, this is okay" would still mean. There's no manual that comes with you. It's not like anybody knows. So you still have to lay it out a little bit. What does appropriate mean? Well, you show too much skin. What does too much skin mean? Don't say things like that. I'm like, Well, I have long arms. I probably show... Do you know what I'm saying? Like, this is probably more skin than somebody else's arms. Like, what is that? Am I losing because... I have no hair. There's a lot of skin that's showing here. But you know what I mean? You're like, "What are you saying?" If it's like, I just feel like the clothes are too tight. I just feel like the clothes are too junior for somebody your age to wear. You gotta be really careful about what it is, because that's a personal preference. That's not really like a corporate perspective necessarily. And I think people have to be really careful in HR about this. The makeup thing. Give me a break. Give me a break. I don't wear any makeup. Why would I have a different standard? I'm making the assumption that there's a lot of she's used in this, right? So I'm gonna make an assumption that there's some sort of "identify as female" bit that's happening here. I never have a conversation with a guy about, "Could you just put on a little mascara?" I'm never doing that. How am I gonna be okay to turn to someone else who identifies in a different gender and say, "But for you, you, you need the mascara. Let's find you a nice shade of lipstick." Why would I say that?

- [Shari] It's such an old way of thinking about professionalism. You know, I know that I've been told in my career early on, "Hey, you should probably learn how to golf, because that's the only way you're gonna be able to advance to like, be in the room with the guys", you know? Women are very hard on other women, and that's a whole 'nother layer. Like, we're just making some assumptions.

- [John] And I am not gonna touch that one, but yes. No, but you know what? It's so funny. And it's like, I'd like to know who decided that you playing golf was gonna to mean something. And I'm gonna give you

an absolutely appropriate example. I have the privilege of having a client that is the PGA. And the PGA is a client of ours. Here's the secret, I don't play golf.

- [Shari] Right.

- [John] Never have. I played 18 holes one time, and it was the longest day of my life. And somehow I managed to ingratiate myself with a whole bunch of golfers.

- [Shari] Yeah.

- [John] So if I follow that logic... You know what I'm saying? What is playing golf? I actually am able to interact healthily, have really wonderful, robust conversations. And I don't mean robust as code for negative. I just mean really like ideate and collaborate with a bunch of people who have a passion for golf that I don't have. It hasn't held me up. So you have to really look at those beliefs that you have that you're sharing with other people. And I love to, by the way, let me make sure I mention this. This example is I live on the west coast. And I just wanna make sure people understand that sometimes in other parts of the country, we have a view that they're very liberal out on the west coast. These kinds of issues happen, equal opportunity across the entire country.

- [Shari] Yes. Yes. And it's not even, it's not necessarily always this, like, "Hey"... I mean, it seems like this conversation that this woman was having with this other woman... Assumptions, right? Is that they were... It was like a "level up" that was needed, right? We also deal with the, like, you come in and you're not dressed appropriately, right? Like you went back to you're showing too much skin, but there's all... Hygiene falls in these categories, and all that other kind of stuff. And it's like, you can have conversations if there's a business reason and it makes sense, and it's cognizant of bias and all those kinds of things. Telling somebody's certain hairstyles are not professional, like, we're done with that. But sometimes we have to have these conversations. This is not example of one of them.

- [John] And it also undermines. So I'm gonna pick on one tweak of this, just real quick and say, if there's something from a speech standpoint, the vernacular that you're using, is something I really want to address with you. So in this example, "like" and "you know" is what it says. You're saying "like" and "you know" too much. I'm gonna say, and I don't mean this to be old school, I will say there may be a bit of that that is actually really beneficial, to point out to someone, who may not realize that that has become more of a habit than actually a form of communication. And "um" can fall into this as well. And I think that there's times where it's actually quite appropriate to say to someone, "I have no idea if you ever noticed this, but you said 'like' 48 times in that half an hour presentation. And while I

don't think that anything that you gave in the presentation, from a content standpoint, was wrong, I wonder if those kinds of idiosyncrasies or or local idioms that you slip into distracted from someone being able to appreciate the efforts you put into the real content that you had put together." That's a healthy kind of conversation with someone. But if you've been distracting them with dress and makeup, and they're not hearing that in the context, you wasted. You wasted it.

- [Shari] Yeah. You missed your opportunity. Someone once called out to me when I was working on not saying "um" in my presentations, that I just replaced it with "right", like that affirmation. And so they showed me recording. I was like, "Man, I just swapped one word for another. Like, I didn't prove anything there."

- [John] Yes. Again, I'm an OG. I'm a person of a certain age. And so when I was in high school, especially freshman year I recall, we had public speaking as part of our English class.

- [Shari] Yeah. So did I.

- [John] And you got points off for saying some of these things too many times. They give you a little bit of grace, you know? I think it was three if I actually remember.

- [Shari] Yeah, I think so too, for me. Only three ums. That's it.

- [John] You have three ums and that's it. Right. And it was annoying because all your friends are sitting around and they're like holding up their thumbs, keeping track for you, and you're like, "Ah, I don't wanna say 'um', you know?" That kinda thing. But it becomes counterproductive. It just becomes counterproductive.

- [Shari] For sure. All right. Let's go to our next question.

- [John] All right.

- [Shari] Career in human resources. Hello all. I'm currently working on my bachelor degree in human resources. I have about three semesters left until I graduate and earn the degree. What I'm wondering though is I see a lot of jobs in the field requiring experience, and I'm not entirely sure what jobs, internships I can do in the meantime that will give me experience. I wouldn't really want to come outta college and get a job paying \$20 an hour. So anyone with an HR degree, what would be your advice? Or if you could tell me how things played out for you. What's the highest I can go with a bachelor's degree, even though sooner or later, I plan to go do my master's work in HR? Any reply would be greatly appreciated. I would love to just tackle this one from my own experience to start off. I was a stay-at-home mom for a while, worked part-time. And I used that time to get my education.

So I went back to school, got my master's in HR, and decided one master's wasn't enough and got two. So I have an MBA as well, 'cause I don't know what I was thinking. But then I was like, "Okay, now it's time to work." And I ran into this exact problem, as they were like, "Yeah, you're super educated, you have a lot of really great ideas, but like, where'd you cut your teeth?" Which there's some truth to that, but I think this linear thing of like: You worked in HR and therefore that qualifies you to work in HR or any job for that matter. Let's talk about skills, right? What are the skills that transfer?

- [John] First of all, companies that are going to limit their candidate pool at an entry level role by only talking to people who have HR experience is foolish. And so I would say like if you are talking to an HR practitioner who's working within an organization who's looking for an entry level HR role, call it an assistant or coordinator, whatever they may have, and they're mandating one to two years of experience; they're not wise in what's happening in the candidate pool at the moment. And so if you're only looking at jobs that are asking for that, you gotta keep looking. There are other jobs that understand it's really entry level. The other thing I wanna say is, please don't poo-poo \$20 an hour. Please don't do that.

- [Shari] I agree.

- [John] That's not to say that this is the job that you are going to retire off of, but 20 bucks an hour ain't so bad. Listen, when I got my first job out of college, it was \$15,000 a year. And I know I'm an old man, and inflation and this and that. I understand. Yes, I do get that. But I wanna tell you, 15,000 wasn't a lot back then either. And my dad called me after I got this job and he was like, "Hey, congratulations on the job. You're never going to survive." I was like, "Hey, thanks so much. Appreciate that."

- [Shari] Let me take you through the budgeting spreadsheets, son.

- [John] Right, right, right. And so 20 bucks an hour for a time gets you the experience that you are worried that you don't have. Bite the bullet. You can live on 20 bucks an hour. I appreciate that it's gonna be a thrifty existence to a degree. I appreciate that, but it isn't the worst thing ever.

- [Shari] Yeah. And we all know that, that next job, that's when you're gonna start to increase your income. It used to be you were in a job for like years and years and years, and that's what we were looking for on resumes. That's just not the case now. You're in a job two, three years. Unless I see a promotion, we're like, "Hey, what's going on?" You develop some new skills or you new projects.

- [John] Promotion or a challenge. Some sort of skill development. It's not all linear, which is nice. Because not every organization can

be so linear. You're gonna go from a level one, two, three; supervisor, manager, director. Everybody can't travel that same road. There's not enough roles. But what I would say is, this person with three semesters left... I mean, I just love college students. It's my favorite ticket. And I've gotten called in to guest chat to college students all the time. And I love asking, you know, like, "Well, why are you doing this? Why are you doing the HR thing?" "I just love people. I just wanna work with people." And I'm always like, "That's really nice. You'll hate people in about two weeks into the job, because you get to experience the full breadth of humanity and the anger and the sadness, as well as the joy." Like all of that is part of this experience. And so it can be exasperating, and exhausting, emotionally draining. A lot of that can happen. And I'm a crier, which I'll raise my hand. Out in the open about me being a crier. Way out in the open. So people would come into my office and want... "Hey John, I need to talk to you for a few minutes." "Sure." "I just got back from a doctor's appointment and X." And they start crying. I'm crying right with them. I'm just like, I'm broken with them. So there's a lot of investment that happens there. It's more than just the rate per hour. It's more than just nobody's letting me in. Except that's not unique to HR. It's actually across the board in a lot of different industries, where they're asking for experience in entry level roles. But I would say though, in specific to this individual, it's the person . I would say, you have three semesters left of college. There are absolutely internship opportunities in your geographic area. Absolutely. And it doesn't matter if it's five hours a week. It's not about making the money, it's about putting things on your resume. And secondly, you likely have already had jobs where you've had human interaction, and have had to figure out how to build teams, how to collaborate with the team, how to work within an organization. Highlight that on your resume.

- [Shari] Yeah, especially with the gig economy right now. Even if you don't find an internship, you could jump on a Fiver, you could jump on any of those websites and find things that align to the HR skillset, and just jump in and do those projects, right? Other times you can do that stuff in off hours, and set your own parameter.

- [John] Absolutely. And 100%. And don't just look for the gigs. I had someone tell me who was young in their career, "I really just wanna do the HR work where I"... This is a quote. "Where I can sit and just have people ask me questions and I provide my opinion."

- [Shari] Wow!

- [John] And I was like, "First of all, that's my job." "But second of all, I'm so sorry that someone has sold you human resources as being just that one piece. You have to get into systems, right? You're gonna have to log into a payroll system, into an HR management. You're going to have to, and enter things in there. I don't really love doing that.

"Oh, boo boo, this is not gonna work out for you." Gotta cut your teeth somewhere.

- [Shari] Yeah. All right, next one. Oh man, this is a tough one. I mean, it is and it isn't.

- [John] I love them, by the way. I hope everybody's like, "These are"... I feel like it's like, "Dear Abby". And you and I are just like, "Here's what to do. Dump 'em!"

- [Shari] Yeah. Human resource team and confidentiality concerns. I'm on a team of four. One of the HR generalists is responsible for processing all employee change forms. I recently got a raise, and the change form came across her desk and she was pissed. In the past, on a team, all of our records were kept private from one another. Change processes and anything relating to an employee on the HR team was dealt with by the HR director. My two other teammates have full access to all my files and vice versa, medical included. Is this how things are normally done?

- [John] It is a tough question for a few reasons. One: And you and I, we can talk about this part for a while. Who was in charge of your HR management system? How all of a sudden are the credentials different or the access points different for users, if, according to this, everything was typically just handled by the HR director for anything from quote... How did that change? What happened? That should be very easy to set up in an HR system to limit access. The other side of it: If your HR people cannot trust one another, whoo! I would be very concerned about what their interactions are like with other members of the larger team across the organization. I can't trust you to know that you're gonna have their best interest in heart when it comes to the difference between confidentiality and privacy. I can't guarantee confidentiality all the time, but I can limit who knows, and so provide a sense of privacy. If that can't happen amongst the HR team, who are supposed to be the leaders in that consideration: Whoo! We are in trouble. Your organization is in trouble.

- [Shari] Yeah, and HR systems, I think that's something you gotta get right. You have to consider the access for the HR people. And in all reality, somebody on your team probably, who shouldn't have access, has access based on their role, because they're at that level where they're entering data. And so how do you think about that, right? The conversations you need to have with that person. The types of culture fit, and I'm using air quotes for those that can't see, right? Culture fit that you're gonna look for in that person. Do they have high confidentiality? Are they trustworthy, right? Can they take the information and do what they need to do with it? But in our org, the only people that can see that data is a very small team, and that's their whole role. So I have an org of 250 HR people, and I can't see all their data. You know, that would be ridiculous.

- [John] Well, and if you're getting to the place where medical data is able to be seen, that's a big problem. You know, I know some people might think that's a HIPAA violation. Actually, it's not always that. It depends on the kind of organization it is, for really the problems of HIPAA to be applicable. But certainly there's something private and confidential about some of that information that's purposely limited as to who needs to know. I am a fan of assessments, right? So I wanna piggyback on something you just said, in terms of figuring out what their appetite for confidentiality, or their lean towards confidentiality would be. If you're giving someone as an assessment that is basically asking them, "Do you keep things secret?" If they want this job, who is going to say no? I'm a blabber mouth and tell everybody everything. You aren't getting a real good feel for the person, right? You might have a shrewd person who knows what they need to answer in order to qualify for this job. That's not what your intention is. That's where I think if you're going to apply, and I love what you're bringing up, right? If you're going to apply some sort of, "How do I litmus test to see where this person may fall in some of these qualities that are necessary, so that the skills that they possess can be displayed appropriately", then use things that are bias free. Work towards behavioral science assessments. Use those instead. Because it's harder for an individual to figure out where is this leading, because it's not so A to B. "Are you an honest person?" "Yes." What is the other answer? No. "Please hire me. I'm a liar."

- [Shari] Yeah, sometimes. Sometimes I'm shady, sometimes I'm good.

- [John] But if you ask... If you have an assessment that's really done well, again, from a behavioral science perspective, you can figure that out. And it really then gives you the insight as to: Oh, this person's trustworthiness can be questionable at times. That may not be so good for them to have access to a lot of private information.

- [Shari] Yeah. For sure. All right, here's the next one. Man, this one hurt when I read it. Is human resources becoming the worst job?

- [John] Yes. Next question.

- [Shari] Saturday night, you think I'd have so many other things on my mind, but I can't stop thinking about quitting my job with no backup plan. I feel like a lot of people are here right now. This is partially so difficult because I feel like I'm whining, which I should just be grateful I have a decent paying job. So please don't comment or make me feel worse, I already agree with you. I love that. Taking ownership. Okay, back to the point. This field requires you to be doing everything at once. In reality, you control finances, future success, hiring, firing, legal compliance, employee relations, and so many other things. I have no idea how this can be sustainable as a

department. I have worked at three different companies where this is the case. I have done jobs where I was the only one in the department, and where I've been in a team of seven. I end up feeling constantly burnt out, and they go on and on. And it's a very long post, but I'll stop it there. Man, is human resources becoming the worst job?

- [John] Later, she... This person, of course. I don't know why I said she. But this person says, "Should I run away from this field?" I love that, that question. It's a really honest one. My first response is, you're right. That's my first response. You're right. There's a lot of those components that are listed that are the responsibilities that fall to human resources. And those who are listening and watching, some are an HR department of one. So literally all of those things are direct responsibilities for one individual. If you're in a larger organization, and there's a director of HR or VP of HR, there may be tiers of other practitioners who report to you that handle one or two of some of these responsibilities. So ultimately you're responsible, but you have people to work with you through them. In your department of one, which by the way, is a very high percentage. A very high percentage of HR practitioners in our country, yes, they are handling all of these things. So what I would say to this individual is: First, if that's daunting to you or scary, that's okay. It doesn't mean that you should do it. But I would say don't let the fear affect your decision as to whether this is the profession I want to continue to move in or towards. Embrace the fear. Because the fear helps keep you honest and it helps keep you hungry. You have to keep researching, you've gotta keep learning. There's no rest for the weary, right? You have to keep going. But if you realize that and then say, "I don't have an appetite for that", that's very different. Then this may not be the route for you to go.

- [Shari] I would add too, you know, so I've done the HR department of one thing. I don't know if you've done that in your career. But one of the things that I came to the conclusion of, and I was lucky 'cause I went like big org and then HR department of one, so I had a background, so that was good. Not everybody has that luxury, right? Sometimes you get promoted into an HR role and you have to wear all the hats. One of the things that I learned early on is that having a conversation with the business leader as to what is most important for them, right? What is most important for the success of the business. It gives you an opportunity to help prioritize your work, and know what is gonna have the biggest impact to the org and to what you're doing. And the things that you can just honestly say like, "Hey, yeah, I can do that thing. But I'll be honest, it's not going to be 100% perfect. It's gonna be 85% because you find this area more important." I started having those conversations. I think sometimes we miss that opportunity as an HR department of one based on fear. We just think we have to do everything. And then everything is kind of 80%, not 100%. Nothing's 100% then.

- [John] Well, on that, right? The fact that the larger percentage of how work happens for an HR practitioner during the day is responsive.

- [Shari] Yeah.

- [John] You have great plans, and I'm sure they're wonderful. You walk in knowing that, proactively, these are the things I want to accomplish today, and then the phone rings; or you get that email and it's like, "Hey, we're gonna need to let go of so-and-so today," and you're like, "Wait, what?" Or, "Hey, I'd like to talk to HR, there's a claim of discrimination." I mean, that's not only today, that might be the next few days, because the investigation that you're conducting, like... And if you can't handle the fact that your schedule in some ways is not your own, there's always a balance; but in some ways your schedule is not your own, and that's a frustrating point to you in this career, I don't know that that's going to go away. So having sort of that rubber meets the road perspective, that truly matters, because high work stress can happen in the human resources department. It certainly can happen in finance, it certainly can happen in operations. I'm not saying that it is exclusive to HR, but it is a high stress. And you have people that you have to talk to through that stress. It's tough.

- [Shari] Yeah, when I started that role as that HR department of one, the first week I was there, my supervisor came in and she's like, "All right." She's like, "You've been here a couple days. We've been waiting to do this 'til you got here. I need you to term these three people." And I was like, "Okay, not super great to start my career off here." The three people were the CFO, then Director of Operations, and the Head of Maintenance. And I was like, "No, I'm totally serious." I was like, "They're gonna call me the grim reaper." I was like, "This is ridiculous." But again, I had no idea. That didn't come up in the interview. Like, "Hey, are you holding off any fires?"

- [John] I'm so shocked that didn't come up in the interview. Wow!

- [Shari] So you don't know what you're gonna walk into on any day. And yeah, you gotta block time, and we've talked about that before. You do have to manage your schedule a little bit. But you're right, you have no idea on any given day what you're gonna walk into. Maybe like you said, you get that call where somebody sits down and gives you really terrible medical news. Well, you're an emotional person, right? That's gonna affect your decision-making the rest of the day. So maybe you had a really great brainstorming session that you just know, "Hey, I'm not in the mind frame now to be able to do this."

- [John] And listen, some of you need to hear this, and I mean this lovingly, honest and true. Somebody comes in and shares, just like you're talking about, that difficult medical news, and you're doing the side eye to your Outlook calendar.

- [Shari] Ugh. Bad thing.

- [John] You're like, "Oh gosh, I'm so sorry." But you're still you're like, "Okay, I couldn't do this for four more minutes." They know what's going on in your brain. Just let it go. This person needs you to just love on them. They just need you.

- Yeah. That's good advice.

- [John] Yeah, like it's just tomorrow's gonna come no matter what, so we'll figure it.

- [Shari] All right, next up. HR question about work incident needing immediate advice.

- [John] Immediate. Well, apparently. Really, I don't know how old this is.

- [Shari] There was an incident at my workplace where the center director of job brought alcohol on a big holiday to celebrate with employees as a gesture. We work in a somewhat medical place, It's a center.

- [John] Somewhat. Somewhat medical.

- [Shari] Medical light. When the employees were clocked off, some of them decided to take a shot with the center director before leaving. Well, this got taken up to corporate, and my center director which most of the employees adore was fired. I heard he took most of the rap for the employees. Our employee handbook does state no alcohol on the premise, but the regional director and HR are still launching an investigation on what happened on that day. And I heard the employees that were there and admitted to drinking have the possibility of being terminated, even though it was the center director who made it seem okay to do what they were doing. It was literally half our staff who were there on that day who took a shot. Is there any way they can avoid termination or figure out a way around this? Someone please help. Any advice is greatly appreciated.

- [John] This is heartbreaking for different reasons. But so much for the celebration. Sounds like it went over really well.

- [Shari] Right? This manager is like, "Alright, I'm gonna build some camaraderie, and show like I'm a human being," and then gets fired.

- [Shari] Yeah. On a big holiday to celebrate, right? To recognize people. Congratulations, you're all fired. Like what is happening here? I would say, gosh, the policies that are written can't define the people. They're supposed to guide the people. And so if you say no

alcohol on the premises and you're a medical light organization. 'Cause I know these medical light organizations. What do you do when a vendor or supplier comes in, during the holidays and says, "You all are the best. We love working with you. We love supporting you. Here's a case of wine to divide up amongst some of the staff. We're just so grateful." Do you like tackle that person and have them arrested and brought out, because they now have brought alcohol on the premises? Do you cancel your vendor contract with that person or that agency, because they've done so? I'm going to bet you do not. So what is the intention behind no alcohol on the premises? Because a closed bottle, by the way, and again, I really will myself; there are things that are probably stored in the facility that actually could also serve as an agent of being out of your mind a little bit. Whether that be some sort of medication, even down to rubbing alcohol. For those who are of a certain age and remember Kitty Dukakis drinking rubbing alcohol when she was in her lowest spot, which was the wife of a political presidential candidate. And she shared that that's how desperate she got. Because you can become intoxicated to a degree off of that. Are you removing those things? No. Come back to what the point is. What's the guideline of the policy? Stop trying to be so literal with everything. And you're really gonna look at half of your staff and say, "You've all violated the letter of the law and therefore you're gone"? I hope you're enforcing all policies to that degree as well.

- [Shari] The one that hurt as I was reading it, is when it talked about it, it seemed like the staff were actually really cognizant and were like, "Let me clock out." Like let me not actually be working. And I was like, "Oh, that was smart." If you kind of knew the policy in the back of your head and you're like, okay, like that doesn't... Technically the alcohol's on the premise, so I didn't bring it, like whatever. But it goes back to what you said of like, let's stop being the policy police. Let's have real conversations about what the intent was. And I don't know, personally, I probably wouldn't have fired that director. I would've had a serious conversation with them and been like, "Hey, you kind of set a bad example because we have this policy in place. Maybe next time invite them across the street." Like build the same kind of thing.

- [John] Yes! That's what I was thinking.

- [Shari] Yeah!

- [John] Totally agree. And that's the kinda wisdom conversation you have with the director, right? Your thoughts were really kind, you had great intentions. How do you think you could have handled both in the right direction? Both consideration for various policy and the idea of wanting to celebrate with your team. You probably should have had them all go across the street to so-and-so's for happy hour, and buy them all a drink. Probably. That's probably better. 'Cause the other thing is, I already know, I can hear the finance and the HR people who are

uptight already wanting to scream at me. And I'm sure I'll be getting the "@s" on social media. But you know, the idea of like, John, if those people left that job that day, even though they clocked out and they got into an accident, and there was alcohol found on their breath, and terrible things happened, the company can be held liable. I understand that. I'm not disagreeing. I do understand that. I'm not advocating for those things. but what I am saying is, can we discuss the context rather than being so immediately punitive, that no one could ever look to the left or to the right? You're at the point where you're really thinking about firing half of your staff from this particular center. What in the world is going on? You just have to ask yourself that. How did we get here? Because it's not reason... I just think we have to take a minute. We have to take a minute. And I would bring that center director back and I'd say, "Let's all talk through this. How could we have done it differently?" Ask them! Let them tell you this. "You know what, John? Now we're looking back on it. We probably should have done this, that." "Fantastic. Did you all learn something from this?" "Absolutely." "Amazing. Let's try to apply it the next time an opportunity like this comes up with"-

- [Shari] That's where HR should sit in general. That's where we should sit, not in this like, "I caught you". All right. I think we got time for one more. Reaching the end of a job interview, the human resources officer asked a young engineer, fresh out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "What starting salary are you looking for?" The engineer replies, "In the region of 125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package," which for an engineer, isn't that crazy, if you know anything about the tech space. So the interviewer inquires, "Well, would you say to a package of five weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund of 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years, say, a red Corvette?" The engineer sits up straight and says, "Wow, are you kidding?" The interviewer replies, "Yeah, but you started it."

- [John] First of all, HR shouldn't hurt themselves too much by trying to be the comedians, like relax a second. Just relax a second here. The other thing, and again, I'm not looking at any cheat sheets, everyone; 'cause I know not everybody can see. They're listening to us. I'm not looking at any cheat sheets. I'm pretty sure if this job was taking place in Massachusetts, as an example, I know the person went to school there, but let's just say it was happening there. They actually can't even ask what salary are you looking for? So one of the things I just wanna make sure is, this is still happening: Make sure you're hiring managers know what they're allowed to ask them what they're not. There are plenty of places across this country that do not allow any longer for you to ask how much money are you looking to make. So stop asking that question. The the idea of sort of being snarky in your response is so fascinating to me. Typically, this is the AV club. Here's where HR is the AV club. I got you, really quick.

- [Shari] So I was like, "Does everybody know what the AV club is?" as they're listening? Audio visual. It stands for audio visual. It usually existed sometime in your high school.

- [John] Correct. Remember this? And so, I'm again, a person of a certain age that the couple of people that were in the AV club had the keys. They had keys to a lot of places in the school, because they had to go get all the carts with the VCRs and TVs on them-

- [Shari] Oh, come on. They had the projectors overhead, right?

- [John] Film strips. We had film strips. I'm not kidding you, we had film strips, that would have the tone to let you know once-

- [Shari] No!

- [John] Yes, yes. I told you I'm a person of a certain age. I'm in a Smithsonian somewhere. I'm telling you. So, but what do I mean by that? Those keys gave those individuals in the AV club this enormous sense of power and cockiness, though they lived truthfully on the outskirts of the social strata within high school. And I know that's painting with a broad brush. That was my experience of everybody that I knew that was in the AV club. They were just on the fringe. And part of the reason they were on the fringe was just because they were not fun to be with, because they got off on their power. That really meant something. They kept their keys on the outside of their belt loop, so they jingled as they walk, like seriously? The janitor has that too. Like what is it that you're trying to tell me? Sometimes HR falls into this, where we're like, "This is our opportunity to really mess with some people." That's a terrible impression of the organization you're encouraging them to interview for and with. Why on earth would you be snarky? Engineers are not a dime in a dozen. What if this really turned this person off, and when you called for the second interview, they were like, "Yeah. No, thank you."

- [Shari] I mean, the other thing too, like with how social everything is, right? This person goes on Glassdoor and blasts you up one side and down the other. I mean, we're reading this question off of Reddit. It's out there. I mean, and kudos to them, they didn't actually call out the organization. But that's definitely a factor. You might be in a position where you interview for a job and you're not the right fit. You end up not being the fit. They go somewhere else. But your interview experience was so great that you tell everybody like, "Hey, I didn't get a job at this company, but it's not because of whatever, like you should apply. Like they're a great organization to work with. They're gonna be honest with you in your interview process if you don't meet the mark or if there's things you gotta work on..." You're missing that opportunity if you reply like this.

- [John] For sure. And I totally agree with you. I'm seeing more and

more, I would say over the last five, six years of people being very, very bold to go online, and not only say the negative, but to say the positive. To say, I did not take a job with a ABC company because other reasons, I'd relocate or this. But if anybody's interviewing at ABC company, good for you. They were a fantastic company. A lot of great people I spoke, good luck to you. And you read that and think, they didn't have to do that. I think it's so awesome that they felt encouraged to do that. But I don't wanna let HR off the hook, because I really believe strongly, and again that, you and I have talked plenty of times; but yeah, I tease about it, but in 30-plus years of being in human resources, I'm still so encouraged by all that we get to be involved with, how we get to present the organizations. We're a part of how we get to present our profession. And that is often found in the basic relational building blocks. That's where it's often found. So to take some of the approaches we do in our responsiveness, we really have to do better sometimes. These things that we we read through today on Reddit, which by the way is so fun-

- [Shari] You'll have to come back again. We'll have to do this again.

- [John] Yeah, we need to see. This is so fun. I love this stuff. This was great.

- [Shari] Well, John, it was great having you on the podcast today, and I definitely will invite you back. We're gonna keep this format, one of our regular formats going forward, because there's just so many questions out there. I feel like we didn't even get into some like dirty HR questions, which they're out there. So yeah, John. Thanks for taking a few minutes of your day.

- [John] Thank you so much.

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