

- You are 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.

- Joining me today is Kate Grimaldi, the senior director of Enterprise People Strategy at Paylocity. Kate is a seasoned HR professional with more than a decade of experience in various industries. She lends her skills to multiple projects including speaking at local and national conferences, working closely with the C-suite on HR and business alignment, updating the company of more than 6,000 employees with important announcements weekly, and cultivating an inclusive culture that supports the modern workforce. Kate, thanks for jumping on the podcast with me today.

- Thanks for having me, Shari. I always love being here.

- So we have a really exciting episode today. We got the opportunity to record some questions live on the SHRM floor from other HR practitioners just like those listening that we're gonna tackle today. So I will start by playing the first question.

- After being remote for three years, how do you tackle going back to the office after tripling your sales?

- That's a really interesting one. I think that a lot of companies right now are trying to really figure out what is the reasoning behind going back to the office and what is the impact? And so if someone came to me with that question, I'd probably say, I'd probably ask for both sort of the pro and the con. What is the pro to you going back to the office? Your results are great, but we're talking really about engagement and collaboration. Those are the two things we're hearing a lot about why people are increasing their visibility in the office and so I would ask this person are there pros to that? Could you get those things? And then what do you feel like the cons are? What are you missing out on? As with anything, if you don't agree with the decision, I always encourage people to start with a question. Ask for the why behind it. There's nothing wrong with asking why, especially if you're doing it in a way of genuine curiosity and then finding out if there's ever any opportunity for high performers to have maybe a different level of expectation. And maybe that's something that's a program that you could even recommend, that you could start of hey, can high performers have an extra day at home? I know that I've done that in past lives where people with high performance might get an extra day to work from home, and it changes based on the quarter or based on kind of the results or the role that's happening. So I would say start with asking for the why and then if you have a solution, definitely offer it up and understand that there's a lot of other impacts that go into it and that our business leaders aren't just sitting at home saying everyone should come back to the office for

fun. There's a reason behind it and it's okay to ask for why, but don't assume that it's to cause any specific pain for you personally.

- I think too that there's gonna be plenty of scenarios where the simplest answer could be we have this real estate that we're paying for and it feels fiscally irresponsible not to use it, and that's a legitimate reason to bring people back and just you have to be able to articulate that

- It is, and it's really hard too sometimes because people equate only results with sort of in or out of office which is if I'm getting the results at home. why do I have to go into the office? And I think, Shari, you make a great point which is your results may be great at home, but could you have better results or could you have a better experience? And I think we're seeing more and more business leaders and maybe they're not articulating it, to your point, in the best way possible, but they do care about the experience and they do want to know that people are not only doing a great job at their job, that they're getting results, but they're actually enjoying it 'cause they're more likely to stay, they're more likely to tell other people about their experience.

- Staying on the same theme about remote work, let's listen to our next question.

- For remote workers, how you're helping them stay connected with their team and their community?

- Wow, well, I think gone are the days of twice a week happy hours, zoom happy hours. Although some days I miss those. I think that was fun. No, I mean I think connection is a lot about vulnerability, it's a lot about transparency, and it's a lot about finding shared interests. One of the things that I usually recommend is finding ways that your teams can have conversations that aren't necessarily completely not work related because not everybody feels comfortable with that, but finding ways to find where those commonalities are. Did something happen in the office or happen in the environment that everybody maybe could talk about? And not necessarily a bad thing. Maybe something really cool happened or you saw your name up on a billboard somewhere, and as, a company you're talking about that. Or maybe it's just something as simple as hey, does anybody read? Is anybody reading a good book today? Finding those things that people can sort of share those experiences with each other promotes that genuine connection that's not really that trust falls and happy hour. Not that those things aren't great, they are, but understanding that we've been in environment for years now where people already, the forced fun. Maybe we needed that then. We don't necessarily need it now, so how are you finding that transparent connection? Shari, do you feel like there's other things that people can do, especially as someone who's sort of, you travel around and you meet lots of people

all the time?

- Finding commonality in your life and in your work can be really rewarding when building those relationships. I recently just talked to Traci Austin about seasons of life and how that affects your work journey. And I thought it was really interesting because there's probably so many seasons of life that you're going through that you could connect with somebody else at work in that moment that could be really powerful for you, and this isn't just specific to hey, you're having a kid. There's lots of different seasons of life and lots of different things that we experience, and so how do you kind of use that idea of communication and connection to share a little bit about yourself where you can maybe commiserate or get ideas from somebody else? The conversation was really good and it really made me think differently about connecting with others during different seasons of life.

- I think the season of life conversation is so interesting because to your point, it's so much bigger than probably the average person thinks it is. I know that I connected with someone that I hadn't necessarily thought I would connect with over something as simple as a conversation around our parents getting older and things that they were saying, and we were both discussing how it sort of hit us one day. Oh, they're older than we expected them to be and the help that they need, it's very new. And so it was a way that I could connect with someone that I wouldn't have otherwise maybe had anything in common with. So I really agree with that. I do think just that concept of finding things outside of your everyday professional life really helps people not only find that connection, but that collaboration then professionally feels a lot easier. And someone who maybe you would've struggled possibly with in the past, you're not gonna struggle with them when you jump on a call with them or you walk into a meeting room with them, and you already have that connection. You're like oh, you know what? I know what's going on in their life and I can relate to that, so I'm not gonna jump on them if maybe they don't agree with something or maybe their response wasn't as friendly as I would've liked.

- Well, and it's a great example of some mindfulness practices for yourself there. As you go into meetings, know where your headspace is, so I love that. This next one is a little bit more sticky, so let's listen to this question submitted.

- I'm a HR director currently in an executive leadership position. I am experiencing discrimination and aggression interactions from my GM and would like further guidance and feedback on how to handle this interaction and engagement with this individual.

- Wow, that's a tough one. Well, first and foremost, I would say gosh, whoever asked that question, I really hope that they have another ally

at the office. That would be my first recommendation is find someone that you can trust. Find out if you can share your experience in a way that's not necessarily gossiping but truly is hey, I'm trying to figure out what to do. That ally could, I would recommend I should say, that that ally is someone at your level or someone above, if you have a general counsel. Someone who you feel could keep your confidence in having that conversation. Publicly-traded companies have board of directors. I would say that can be super sticky if you don't have relationships with people on the board of directors. There are companies too that also have hotlines that you can call and sort of make anonymous call-ins. As HR practitioners, those are push and pull. We love those hotlines but also they make us really nervous. What I always tell people is at the end of the day, I never want you to feel like you don't have any option where to turn. That's always an option if you just need to get it out anonymously, but I would say start with an ally. See if you have someone that you can talk to about it first and see if maybe there's, they might be able to have some information, where to point you to that you hadn't thought of.

- Yeah, I absolutely agree. I also think once you've kind of exhausted all of your paths to take, I'm being very careful on my words because I think this is a sticky one, I think there does need to be a conversation with yourself at the end of the day, like is this place still the place for you? And does it align with your values and how you think about leadership? I've definitely been in that position before where the leadership above me just was taking an approach that I didn't agree with and ultimately I had to make the decision to leave, and that's really hard if you are really loving your job or you really love an organization. That's a hard decision to make.

- I could not agree more. I also recommend finding people outside of your company that maybe do, either they work in a similar industry or at a similar level, and you can talk to them about experiences that they've had. Whether it's a mentor or even a friend. I know that I try really hard to surround myself with people who have similar work experiences so when I'm struggling, there's a multitude of people that I can go to which is great 'cause it provides you a lot of objective points of view. And Shari, to your point, at the end of the day, unfortunately sometimes it's making a really tough decision that in the end actually ends up being better for you.

- This next question I absolutely love 'cause I think we've all been in this situation as we've been talking to potential candidates, so let's listen to this question.

- How do you be transparent when talking about a new job without scaring someone away understanding the difficulties of the job?

- So I love this question. This is something that's super important to me. We can take it all back way back, way back to the whole realistic

job preview. People love to use that. For me though, I think it's incredibly important to be very honest about the good, the bad, and the ugly meaning what are the challenges? What are the impacts the person's gonna see career-wise in a good way? Hey, this is an opportunity but here's what I see, it could be a challenge, but here's why I see you're gonna come out on the other side and here's some struggles. And the other thing is if you're hiring that person to help you tackle some of those challenges, being very clear with them. Hey, the reason I'm really excited about you and your background is I actually think you're going to be able to help us overcome some of these challenges. And so the goal is to get you excited and the goal is to get you ready, but it's also to be honest with you. If you're not someone that's up for a challenge if you're not someone that wants to deal with sticky situations, I'm being honest because I wanna make sure this job is for you. For me, I check in with my new hires. Even I have a couple new hires that I've had now almost a year and I still check in with them, and I say is there anything that I could have told you differently in the interview? And one of them actually said to me, "No, everything you said was absolutely accurate. I just didn't believe you." And that actually made me feel good because I said there was nothing else I could have done. So I think being upfront with the person, you're not trying to scare them. You're saying hey, look, your background actually might help us with these things.

- The other thing to consider too is if you're not willing to be honest in that time and space, you potentially are gonna have to deal with the consequences of that person not, and I'm using air quotes, working out because they weren't able to make an educated decision whether the organization was a right fit for them. And so then you start to see discrepancies and it could be hey, you know what? The leadership style that a skip level has just doesn't work for this person or the work they're doing didn't come to fruition like they thought. So I think it's definitely on us as hiring managers to be as transparent as we can and again, obviously you have to phrase things in a certain way. So no, you don't wanna come across as dooms day, but you do wanna be clear. This is gonna be hard and this is why I think you're gonna help us succeed, so I really love those examples. So as we get into our next question, I feel like I could go on and on for days for this answer 'cause I absolutely love this question, so let's hear it.

- How do I increase engagement on our HRIS system?

- Well, Shari, I think that's both an awesome question and probably a little bit of a give-me for those of us who've maybe worked for HRIS providers either currently or in the past. Here's what I say with any system if you're trying to increase engagement is you have to teach people how to use it. That is the first thing and you have to make it easy. Find your champions, find your people who love that stuff. Find your people who are a whiz with those kinds of systems and feel really

comfortable in it and do a traditional just train the trainer. Train them how to use it and let them go out into the world and encourage it. The other thing is you can always offer incentive. An incentive can be really simple, right? It could be hey, if you get in there x amount of times, if there's some sort of reward system that you all use even if it's just something as simple as I'll write your handwritten thank you note. It could be something, another thing is hey, I'll let you duck out an hour early or won't make you come to this meeting or whatever the case may be. Find a way to get people to use that. What I used to do in my early days when I was training people on HRIS systems, I actually created a scavenger hunt. And so I actually gave them an activity where they had to go in and find all these different things that were really difficult and they had to truly scavenge for the information, and it forced them to get in and use the system and that way the system became something that they were used to and that they went to first.

- I love that, and I think this question is difficult and easy at the same time 'cause if you think about any app that you use all the time, you have a reason for it, right? A lot of times it's connection. Other times just it's such an easy resource for something that you do or repetitive task that you can go to for that. Think about those same things and translate them to your HRIS system and build in that kind of need and exclusivity to be able to go in and do the things that you need to do. So many times I think we try to overcomplicate it. Teach them one thing and I love kind of finding those tech champions because they're gonna speak way louder on these issues than we ever could in HR.

- Yeah, I love the need concept too. It's crowdsource your needs. Find out from people what do they need to go into the HRIS system for and start there. Give those directions first because people are more likely to use it if they're actually gonna get something out of it, right? It's the whip them. Everyone wants to know what's in it for me? What do I need it for? And those people are gonna be really thankful the day they do need their pay stub to buy a new car or buy a house and they know how to get it, and they're not dialing every person they could ever imagine because they've never used the system before.

- We have all been there, Kate.

- Yes, I know.

- So as we end our conversation today, I wanted to end with this one last question and I think it just kind of wraps up everything we've been talking about and what the HR community is thinking about. So here we go.

- What is the number one challenge HR professionals face today?

- Only one challenge, Shari? Can I only give one?

- Right, only one for today.

- Okay, I think if I had to sum up the number one challenge for HR professionals, I would say it's balance. Balance between priorities, what's most important. Those priorities change every day. Balance between what the business leaders are asking for, what solutions that an HR practitioner might be offering to get to those solutions. Balance with your time. We talk about this, Jerry and I talked about this for years and trying to find time balance, integration, what that looks like. But I think it's gonna always be the number one challenge. I don't think we're ever gonna get past that. HR practitioners are the people who are really, they're helping business leaders, they're taking care of the employees, and they're taking care of their own lives and that will always be a challenge. But I think figuring out specifically within your profession, within your business, what are your biggest priorities and how do you manage sort of the need to be flexible and change those priorities? And how do you manage the balance when a business leader comes to you with thing after thing after thing looking for you to help figure out how to balance which one matters most?

- And I think that's a really good example to think about as you're setting boundaries even in your workday and I know that seems like a really tactical example, but I think so many times we don't block our calendars to actually have think time, and project time, and work time and we just kind of are so reactive that we can never kind of move into the role that we wanna be in because we haven't set up those good boundaries. So I think that's definitely something you should consider if you're thinking about this concept of balance. Well, Kate, thanks as always for jumping on with the podcast, on the podcast with me today. This has been a great discussion and I look forward to many more HR practitioner-submitted questions for us to tackle.

- Thanks for having me, Sherry.

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