00:00.000 --> 00:08.120
You're listening to the HR Mixtape, your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice,
00:08.120 --> 00:12.040
thought-provoking interviews, and stories that just hit different so that work doesn't
00:12.040 --> 00:14.800
have to feel, well, like work.
00:14.800 --> 00:18.800
Now, your host, Sherri Simpson.
00:18.800 --> 00:22.160
Joining me today is Jim Link, the CHRO at Shurm.
00:22.160 --> 00:27.160
Jim's career includes roles of increasing responsibility across a variety of industries
00:27.320 --> 00:32.200
and companies, including General Electric, the Pillsbury Company, Porsche Cars, and
00:32.200 --> 00:33.200
Randstand.
00:33.200 --> 00:37.520
Jim has served as a volunteer leader in several organizations, including the Shurm Foundation
00:37.520 --> 00:43.840
Board, the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank Human Capital Advisory Board, and the Human Resources
00:43.840 --> 00:44.840
Leadership Forum.
00:44.840 --> 00:51.480
Jim, thanks for jumping on the podcast with me.
00:51.480 --> 00:52.480
Hey, thank you.
00:52.480 --> 00:53.480
It's great to be here again.
00:53.480 --> 00:54.480
My pleasure.
00:54.480 --> 00:55.480
So excited.
00:55.480 --> 00:56.960
You are doing a session here at Shurm around.
00:56.960 --> 00:58.760
You're talking about empathy as a business driver.
00:58.760 --> 01:00.780
This is such an important topic.
01:00.780 --> 01:01.780
It absolutely is.
01:01.780 --> 01:05.560
And in the society in which we're living in today, it's becoming more and more obvious
01:05.560 --> 01:09.020

that this is a topic that all businesses and organizations need to think about in order
01:09.020 --> 01:12.200
to ensure success for themselves and their employees.
01:12.200 --> 01:15.400
So I want to start with this question.
01:15.400 --> 01:20.380
In my career, I have totally run into scenarios where maybe you're dealing with a salesperson
01:20.380 --> 01:24.120
and not to call it salespeople, but maybe you're dealing with a salesperson who's meeting
01:24.120 --> 01:26.280
their KPIs and they're just killing it.
01:26.600 --> 01:28.160
Week over week, year over year.
01:28.160 --> 01:31.400
But they are terrible when it comes to people skills.
01:31.400 --> 01:34.660
And we can never get to that conversation about empathy.
01:34.660 --> 01:35.660
How do we get to that?
01:35.660 --> 01:40.040
How do we help change the narrative that KPIs aren't the only thing that should be driving
01:40.040 --> 01:41.680
our business?
01:41.680 --> 01:44.880
It's happening rather organically these days.
01:44.880 --> 01:49.160
Matter of fact, there's a lot of research going on right now in both academic environments,
01:49.160 --> 01:54.560
but also in business environments, where that people are really understanding how you move
01:54.640 --> 01:59.040
from shareholder value to stakeholder value.
01:59.040 --> 02:04.440
And that movement clearly involves things like understanding the role you want to play
02:04.440 --> 02:11.560
in the community, the role you want your employees to play around empathy and caring and well-being
02:11.560 --> 02:14.480
and the management of other people.
02:14.480 --> 02:20.380
And honestly, what's brought all this forward has been the polycrisis that we've been dealing
02:20.380 --> 02:23.240
with in the world in the last three or four years.

02:23.400 --> 02:28.440
None of it has brought it to attention more so than the well-being and creating a culture

02:28.440 --> 02:30.680
of care in your respective organizations.

02:30.680 --> 02:32.960
So lots of things going on.

02:32.960 --> 02:35.360
Great time to be paying attention to this.

02:35.360 --> 02:39.720
And we support that idea that there's more at stake here than just a bottom line business result.

02:40.720 --> 02:47.920
How have you seen organizations start to thrive differently when they start to introduce empathy?

02:47.920 --> 02:49.220
In a couple of ways.

02:49.220 --> 02:53.120
And it's usually related to the cultures that they wish to create.

02:54.000 --> 02:57.120
When you have an empathetic culture, you naturally get a few things as a result.

02:57.120 --> 03:03.000
You get cultures of learning, cultures of belonging, and cultures of innovation.

03:03.000 --> 03:07.800
And all three of those are vitally important for success, not just now, but certainly in

03:07.800 --> 03:09.280
the future.

03:09.280 --> 03:14.400
And there are other outcomes you get from that as well, which is a more satisfied, engaged,

03:14.400 --> 03:16.200
happy workforce.

03:16.200 --> 03:22.080
Your ability to attract, retain, and engage employees continues to get better.

03:23.040 --> 03:24.040
And guess what?

03:24.040 --> 03:28.400
Research also shows that your business results, your customer satisfaction results, anything

03:28.400 --> 03:33.400
that you wish to choose from a business performance perspective to measure, gets better when you

03:33.400 --> 03:37.760
have high engagement and you've created those cultures in which we've described.

03:37.760 --> 03:43.280

What kind of obstacles do you see HR professionals running into when they start to introduce
03:43.280 --> 03:47.200
or start to talk about empathy as a business driver?
03:47.200 --> 03:51.760
I could see some HR professionals going into that C-suite and saying, we're going to talk
03:52.440 --> 03:54.840
about empathy today and maybe getting some blank stares.
03:54.840 --> 03:59.080
Yeah, they will get some blank stares, but they also need to just bring in with them
03:59.080 --> 04:02.080
a few news articles and a few pieces of research.
04:02.080 --> 04:05.760
I always encourage everyone that works in the human resources space to be better with
04:05.760 --> 04:10.640
the numbers and the research and the knowledge that you can obtain from just about any source
04:10.640 --> 04:13.520
and a lot of it free sources related to those things.
04:13.520 --> 04:20.400
So I go in with my guns loaded and with the idea that at the end of the day, it's my job
04:20.560 --> 04:22.600
to help tell a story.
04:22.600 --> 04:27.680
And I use those numbers to tell the story, to be the evidence that the story has a positive
04:27.680 --> 04:30.000
outcome and a positive ending.
04:30.000 --> 04:34.320
And that if we pay attention to things that matter in our society today and in our companies
04:34.320 --> 04:40.000
today and that those employees are bringing those things to our attention, then that's
04:40.000 --> 04:43.080
how you overcome those initial objections.
04:43.080 --> 04:44.080
It's a sales job.
04:44.080 --> 04:45.420
You asked me a sales questionnaire.
04:45.420 --> 04:46.420
It's a sales job, right?
04:46.420 --> 04:47.420
Inside your own organization.
04:47.940 --> 04:51.340
That involves great storytelling and with a purposeful outcome.

04:51.340 --> 04:52.700
Yeah, for sure.
04:52.700 --> 04:57.340
You know, in your session, you talked about how empathy and action
partnered with learning
04:57.340 --> 05:00.380
and belonging can really create workplaces that thrive.
05:00.380 --> 05:03.380
How do you see those three things working together?
05:03.380 --> 05:08.920
We call them the culture trio and we call them the culture trio
because what we've seen
05:08.920 --> 05:14.980
in practice at SHRM, but also with people with whom we work and
amongst the 325,000
05:14.980 --> 05:20.540
employers we have globally and the companies they represent, those
three things tend to
05:20.540 --> 05:22.740
be part of a secret sauce for success.
05:22.740 --> 05:25.100
Now, companies certainly measure it in different ways.
05:25.100 --> 05:30.260
They think about different ways to build those cultures within their
organizations and there's
05:30.260 --> 05:33.220
no one size fits all approach.
05:33.220 --> 05:39.180
But the idea that you have that as a purposeful objective should be
part of the mission, vision,
05:39.180 --> 05:43.860
and values of your organization and employees, particularly younger
employees, resonate with
05:43.860 --> 05:44.860
that.
05:45.820 --> 05:49.860
It helps them build their personal resiliency to get through days when
they aren't perfect
05:49.860 --> 05:53.060
or things aren't going exactly their way.
05:53.060 --> 06:00.180
It builds the capability to learn, the ability to be entrepreneurial
in an organization.
06:00.180 --> 06:03.980
When an employee at any level understands that someone cares about
them and asks about
06:03.980 --> 06:08.020
how they are and can actually put themselves in their shoes, well,
that builds a managerial
06:08.020 --> 06:10.460

employee connection that's hard to break.
06:10.460 --> 06:14.840
What are some success stories that you can share either internally at
SHRM or with organizations
06:14.840 --> 06:19.040
you've worked with where they've started to make this shift to talk
about empathy as
06:19.040 --> 06:23.280
a business skill and the positive impacts it's had?
06:23.280 --> 06:28.240
I can tell you a couple of examples and I'll keep them general just so
we don't hurt anybody's
06:28.240 --> 06:29.240
feelings here.
06:29.240 --> 06:34.480
But some of the most interesting things I've seen in our actual
customer base at SHRM,
06:34.480 --> 06:41.040
our membership base, are stories where that leaders, people at the
very tip top of their
06:41.040 --> 06:45.240
organizations have shown their vulnerability.
06:45.240 --> 06:48.520
And when they've shown their vulnerability, they often talk about that
on public stages
06:48.520 --> 06:49.760
in front of their employees.
06:49.760 --> 06:54.160
They videotape things if they weren't comfortable doing that and then
shared that in their online
06:54.160 --> 06:57.600
methods however they do that in that particular company.
06:57.600 --> 07:04.400
And what happens when a leader shows his or her vulnerability at that
level?
07:04.400 --> 07:07.600
That ripples through an organization.
07:07.600 --> 07:11.740
Now when that does happen, you need to ensure that you're prepared for
increased calls
07:11.740 --> 07:19.120
to whatever your medical services groups are or your EAPs or your
employee support mechanisms
07:19.120 --> 07:23.360
because we know that it opens up dialogue that should have been
occurring in the first
07:23.360 --> 07:24.360
place.
07:24.360 --> 07:28.600
So that's actually one thing that we see that we love is when leaders

take their time and
07:28.600 --> 07:34.120
the opportunity to share who they are with employees.
07:34.120 --> 07:38.960
The second example I will tell you really involves how people talk now
about empathy
07:38.960 --> 07:45.480
or related words and related concepts as part of their mission,
vision, or value statement.
07:45.480 --> 07:52.480
One of my favorite phrases related to this is, we create a culture of
care.
07:52.480 --> 07:57.000
And when you think about how powerful that is, if I were a person
interviewing for a
07:57.000 --> 08:01.880
job right now in an organization, if I heard that and saw that and
read that and then better
08:01.920 --> 08:06.920
yet saw it demonstrated in the actions of the people that I was
interviewing with or
08:06.920 --> 08:10.800
talking to, I can't tell you how exciting that would be.
08:10.800 --> 08:14.640
And I know for young people in particular here entering the workforce,
it's almost a
08:14.640 --> 08:19.520
required element for them to believe that they're going to a place
that actually cares
08:19.520 --> 08:22.760
about them and will continue to care about them in the future.
08:22.760 --> 08:27.720
We had a leader during the pandemic who had shared that they were
struggling with some
08:27.720 --> 08:30.960
mental health stuff and that they were going to counseling.
08:31.440 --> 08:36.840
The comments that happened on that call, there were so many employees
that felt seen for
08:36.840 --> 08:38.920
the very first time.
08:38.920 --> 08:42.960
And it was just it was so heartwarming to see that, you know, it
doesn't matter what
08:42.960 --> 08:48.280
level you are in the organization that you can show empathy and care
and transparency.
08:48.280 --> 08:49.400
I think that's so important.
08:49.400 --> 08:50.400

Me too.
08:50.400 --> 08:55.400
And this idea that just by sharing that leader in that example, by that leader sharing in
08:55.400 --> 09:01.760
the example that you gave, that employee felt seen, heard and believed.
09:01.760 --> 09:07.400
And those are important elements in building engagement and authenticity and transparency
09:07.400 --> 09:13.480
and and other measures which have an outcome of being empathetic.
09:13.480 --> 09:18.200
Yeah. How do HR professionals start to flex the skill themselves?
09:18.200 --> 09:22.640
And I mean, inherently, I think we're very empathetic as an industry.
09:22.680 --> 09:26.160
And I think a lot of people get into the industry because they care about people.
09:26.160 --> 09:28.480
But we can get burnt out real quick.
09:28.480 --> 09:33.440
And so how do we continue to fill our cup so we can continue to be empathetic?
09:33.440 --> 09:37.280
You know, Sherm's own research shows that some of the most impacted people through the
09:37.280 --> 09:42.440
pandemic and its immediate aftermath were human resources professionals, because not
09:42.440 --> 09:46.880
only did the bear the brunt of having to deal with their own personal situations, they were
09:46.880 --> 09:51.600
also carrying the water, right, of many of their colleagues, their companies, their
09:51.600 --> 09:53.560
organizations, et cetera.
09:53.560 --> 09:58.480
So the care and feeding of HR professionals right now and in the future, I think, has
09:58.480 --> 10:02.440
become more and more of an important thing for all leaders at all levels, regardless of
10:02.440 --> 10:04.520
the function in which they work to think about.
10:04.520 --> 10:09.280
And I also think that HR leaders now have more understanding and more knowledge of the
10:09.280 --> 10:14.240

science of emotional intelligence and empathy than they have at any
other time in the past.
10:14.240 --> 10:16.640
That only serves our profession well.
10:16.680 --> 10:22.960
And it also gives us the capability to continue to think about if
we're good at empathy and
10:22.960 --> 10:28.120
all things related to it in the building our cultures, what will that
deliver for business
10:28.120 --> 10:32.320
success? I mean, I can't wait to see the results of some of these
longitudinal studies, right,
10:32.320 --> 10:35.120
that are being undertaken at the moment.
10:35.120 --> 10:40.240
And I would bet a paycheck on the fact that we're going to see a very
positive correlation
10:40.240 --> 10:47.160
between empathetic organizations and all stakeholder business results,
be that share
10:47.160 --> 10:52.000
price or profit or employee satisfaction or community service or
whatever else is important
10:52.000 --> 10:57.000
to you in that total stakeholder view of the world, because it's not
just about shareholder
10:57.000 --> 10:59.000
value anymore.
10:59.000 --> 11:02.320
I'm going to be super excited to see what all gets better whenever you
put time and
11:02.320 --> 11:04.280
energy into this effort.
11:04.280 --> 11:08.760
What an exciting way to end our conversation and what a way just to be
excited about where
11:08.800 --> 11:13.440
HR is going and the impact we can have towards and really bring that
empathy to life.
11:13.440 --> 11:15.720
So, Jim, thanks for sitting down with me for a few minutes.
11:15.720 --> 11:16.960
My pleasure. Thanks again.