— Hey, and welcome to "PCTY Talks." I'm your host, Shari Simpson. During our time together, we'll stay close to the news and info you need to succeed as an HR pro. And together, we'll explore topics around HR thought leadership, compliance, and real-life HR situations we face every day. ♪ Oh, ooh ♪ ♪ Yeah ♪

— So joining me today on the podcast is William Tincup. He is the president and editor-at-large of RecruitingDaily, a writer, speaker, advisor, consultant, investor, storyteller, teacher, and, as I just found out, artist. William, the list is endless. Thank you so much for jumping on with me.

— Well, and I left a bunch of stuff off though. Let's be honest. No, I'm just kidding. Those things, when I was writing up that bio, I just started really writing off how do I interact with people, and how do I interact with the practitioners, how do I interact with technologists? And it just, there was more words in there, then I had to like scratch them off. And there's actually a couple of them there that are too similar, anyhow. But it's kinda like your different personalities that you shift into when someone needs something from you. Like someone needs a creative solution, then you access that part of your brain. Go, okay, you need something creative. Let me think about that for a second. Let me be creative. Okay, you need something practical. Okay, well, then you go there and you give them practical. So I consider myself blessed in that I can go to those different areas of my brain when needed. And I'm also blessed that I get to interact with a lot of different people that need different things. So it's nice to be multidimensional, but also there's a lot of folks out there that are multidimensional that aren't thrown into multidimensional situations for whatever reason. So we've got some folks out there that are untapped that could be be used in different ways and leveraged in different ways, so. But thank you. Wonderful introduction. And yes, we're surrounded by artwork. And now I'm getting really interesting art questions from my kids about like what is the meaning, and how did you design this, and what do you think about this? And so I have to tap my art history degree to kinda like bring them into some of the theory behind the paint.

— Well, you totally teed me up for my next question. Your background is fascinating. You have a BA in art history, an MA in American Indian studies, and an MBA, and this really long career in HR. How did you end up in HR as the thing that you're doing and really being the thought leader in right now?

— True story. I just got my degrees framed last week. They're sitting, they're off camera. They're sitting right there from a Hobby Lobby or some Michaels, MJ Designs, somebody like that. But I literally, 23 years later, I just got my degrees framed. And... But I did it for... I didn't have 'em framed just because... Just kinda didn't really feel... I earned the degrees. Didn't really feel like I needed to look

at them. So, and I didn't really, I thought it was a little bit pretentious to get other people to look at them. But I got them framed because my kids asked me about them. They're like, "You went to college, right?" I'm like, "Yeah, I did." So I thought it'd be good for my sons to see them. When I first started my academic career, I had done so after about a six-year retail career, Walmart, and some of that, I worked with Sam Walton and worked in Bentonville and did a bunch of really, really interesting stories, which is a whole other podcast of things that I learned at Walmart, especially from Sam. When I went to or decided to go to college, the college advisor at Alabama basically said, "One in four graduates work in their degree." I said, "One in four, 25%. Okay." So she said, "Listen, the chances are by the time you graduate, that's gonna be less. So what do you like? Don't think about what you're gonna work in. A lot of kids come in, they're like, 'Ah, my dad wants me to be a business student,' and they get into business and they hate it. They not only don't want a career in it. They just don't like the subject matter." And so she said, "What do you like?" I said, "Well, I'm an artist." She goes, "Do art, do art history, do something with art." Go over there and explore. Do photography." And it was the best advice ever because what she was really doing was saying, go unlock the things that you already like, and that you're already passionate about so that it's not a stretch. And if that's chemistry, great. If it's marketing, fantastic. Whatever it is, it is. But go do that, and then get used to the system of education, and then figure out what you're gonna do with it afterwards. And with the MA in American Indian studies, I thought I wanted to be a curator of American Indian art. And then I interned at the Smithsonian a few times and saw how the sausage is made and decided I did not like the politics, actually, ironically. It's the politics of being a curator that art is interesting. The art on the walls, that's interesting. Collecting art, displaying art, giving people a wonderful art experience, all of that stuff, yes, I still find fascinating. But behind the scenes, none of that stuff is interesting to me, never was. So at that point, I did a pivot and wanted to be an entrepreneur and knew I wanted to be an entrepreneur. And so then that's why the MBA. The MBA, out of all three degrees, the MBA was actually the first private school experience I've ever had, which was interesting. So it was like three professors for every student, like that crazy kinda things like that, which I'd never had public school education. And they were two big public institutions for college. I'd never experienced that, so that was interesting. But also, an MBA is mostly a degree in common sense. And after working for Sam and after working at Walmart and being around customers and all this stuff, I found it relatively easy compared to learning 15,000 works of art. Like, okay, just take some time off and go and memorize 20 works of art from the history of the world, not easy turns out, okay? So I think from there, when I got out, I worked for an entrepreneur in Dallas, probably one of the brightest, most creative people I've ever worked with. And I was a small shareholder. And we raised money, blew through it. It was the dot-com era. And blew

through it, and then decided I've learned everything that I don't want to do, and I know that I want to have more control if there is such a thing. So I started my own firm and haven't looked back. When I sold my ad agency to my business partner, we were focused, and they are still. It's called Starr Conspiracy. It was called Starr Tincup at the time. Focused on marketing HR software and services in to recruiters in HR, so. And I, for the firm, did all the HR stuff. So I did payroll. I did the internship program. Name an HR topic, and I did it for the firm as a partner. And I just fell in love with HR. I mean, the easiest way to say it is HR knows all the dark things about a firm. They know the pay equity issues. They know the sexual harassment claims, the investigations. They know everything, like all the dark crevices of a firm or a company. They know all of it. And yet, by and large, they're still very hopeful. And I find that fascinating 'cause I'm not that way. And so I wanted to be surrounded by people that aren't like me 'cause I can be pessimistic or cynical or dark. And so I wanted to be surrounded by people that weren't like me. And so I sold the equity in the marketing firm, and then got certified through SHRM and HRCI, and then just started doing HR. And just 'cause as a marketer, I could see things differently than a traditional kind of an HR practitioner that came up through the ranks, got a degree in HR, HR manager, HR coordinator, all the way through the specialist and whatever. I could see things differently through a marketing lens. And so then I got out and started speaking on circuit and doing a lot of webinars. And just a lot of I guess the thought leadership that I think about today is, at least as I did it at the beginning of that part of my career, was how would we do it if we weren't doing it this way? So take onboarding as an example, okay. Onboarding, let's just act like it's broken. How do we fix it and just reimagine it? And for a lot of HR practitioners and recruiters, it's hard to, 'cause you're fighting so many fires, it's hard to reimagine stuff. So you need someone to come along and go, hey, why are we doing this that way? And then give some examples of maybe potential ways to do it differently. And I still do it. I still do that. So I still kind of poke the bear that way from time to time.

— Recruiting has been such a passion for you. And I'm curious your perspective on how you see the role of a recruiter changing as candidates want, frankly, more of an experience out of employers now.

— Yeah, News at 11. They should've always wanted more. This is actually kind of the, this is kind of coming home to roost, right? When we think of candidates and we've historically thought of candidates as a kind of a faucet that doesn't have, it's an endless supply of water. You just turn it on and there's candidates. Well, when you think like that, you commoditize, in your brain, you commoditize candidates, like, oh, we'll have 10,000 people apply to this job. We don't really need to create an experience. We don't really need to create feedback. We don't really need to do these things. And so you can see where kinda got twisted just from the get—

go is we thought of candidates as commodities. And the fact that they're not commodities now and nor will they be in the future, it's making us actually think about their experience. Well, we should've been thinking about their experience all along. There's no new news here. The new news is that we've woken up to the reality of surplus and scarcity. And also, I'd say with millennials and with Gen Z in particular, they're just not willing to suffer through a poor experience anywhere, at a restaurant, buying a car, a job interview. They're just not. I'm of the age, if someone sent me a 4,000-word job description, I'd read it. I'd read it, red-line it, look at it, consume it, think about it, all that stuff. If you send a 4,000-word job description to a candidate today, they'll read the first paragraph and that's it. If you don't capture their attention, they might read the second paragraph, but by the third or fourth, they're done. They're just done. And people see that as ADHD, or ADD, or their attention span. You hear a lot popular players say, "Oh, their attention span is just driving everything into the ground." It's like, no, they just make decisions faster than we did. So if they're not compelled by the third, fourth paragraph, they're not going to be compelled. And they just X out of it because they grew up with life with an X in the right-hand corner. So your job description's got a X in the right-hand corner of it. And so they look at it and read it, and go, mm, yeah, no, click, 'cause that's how they've interacted with everything in their life. And so I think if you're still thinking about candidate experience as a nice to have, you're already behind. I mean, you're already years behind not just your competitors, but just anybody that you wanna recruit because they have options. And I think we have to adjust to the kinda the new rules of talent based on not just the historical problems that we've had, but also they actually control and have all the power. We don't have the power. We thought we did. We'd come down from the mountaintop with these tablets and say, would you like a job here? We'll bestow this job upon you. And that was silly to begin with and it is absurd now. We should think of them joining our firm as we're the lucky ones that they're joining our team, not they're lucky that they're joining our team. And you see this in LinkedIn sometimes when someone wants to connect with me. I can always kind of tell. It's an ego litmus test, if you will. If their message says, "I'd love for you to be a part of my network," I automatically don't wanna connect with them.

- Yeah.

- Because they've sent me a message. I think of you being a part of my network. And that's kind of a very old mentality. It's together, we would have a wonderful network. I'd love to be a part of yours. I'd love for you to be a part of mine. Collaboratively, I'd love for us to have our networks together is really the way that we should think about talent, not just on LinkedIn, but the way that we should think about talent. And it's hard for us to switch our brains to they have all the power.

— I think about that whenever I see a job posting where you have like a quick apply link, and then you have to go in and manually enter all your information. Those who are applying for jobs now, they do not wanna do that work. Bye. That job is not for me. Because you're communicating something about your company just in that very tiny experience of applying.

— That's right.

— So yeah, I totally agree. You wrote an article back in 2020 titled "Are Recruiters Responsible for Pay Equity Gap?" And I, for our listeners, I highly encourage you to read it. That being said, have you seen recruiters make advancement in helping to rectify that pay equity gap? And furthermore, what do you see as new challenges in this area?

— Yeah, well, I got in some hot water. First of all, Indeed commissioned me to write an article. Then I wrote that article. And Indeed is, at the time, is based on location. So here I am not just challenging pay equity and the responsibility, but I'm also challenging their business model. So it was rather interesting to go through that process because I was basically saying pay equity, there's a way to hide inequities in location-based pay. Meaning you and I do the exact same job. I work in New York, you work in Topeka, and we would literally do the exact same job. The company would pay me 40% more because I live in New York, but we do the same job. I choose to live in New York. One way or another, I choose to live in New York, yet somehow, that inequity still exists because we've hidden it behind location-based pay. It's like cost of living. It's like, well, you choose to live where you live. You can always move.

— Right.

— There's land elsewhere that you can go to. You don't have to live where you live. It's a choice. And so I've always believed that we've hidden, male, female, if we just wanna break it down by gender, that we've hidden those inequities in location-based pay and cost of living. But to your question, pay equity, if we think of the flip side of pay inequity, how we got to pay inequity is pay equity is we have to think of it like diversity in that it's everyone's responsibility. It's not just the recruiters, but we'll deal with them because their hands are bloody. Because historically, recruiters have looked at a budget for a job, and if a candidate's, again, you and I go in for the same job, job's a $180,000 software engineering job. I come in top of that range, and you come in lower. Let's say you come in at 140. Historically, recruiters have looked at that as a $40,000 win, a $40,000, hey, we've got $40,000 back into the budget. The problem is, is that's a $40,000 inequity that we created 'cause the job was a $180,000 job. Meaning the peers both outside externally and

internally, that's what the job pays. So pay ranges and the way that we think of pay ranges is also very deceiving. And so recruiters are adjusting to that. They're being forced to adjust to that because you have states like New York and others that are saying you have to put salary into your job descriptions. Indeed and Google are both prioritizing jobs that have salary information in the job descriptions. So all those things are great. But to adequately kinda fix pay equity, as a company, we have to admit we have a problem. The board, C-suite, everyone's gotta get involved to fix the kinda historical wrongs. And again, now we're not just dealing with gender. We're dealing with race, dealing with all kinds of different things. Fix it, which is not just, it is money, but it's not just money, it's mentality. And then the hard work starts. So once we've done all of that, that's all just kind of rectifying historic issues, then we've actually gotta fix it going forward. And I believe that's where the real work starts with pay equity is now you can't allow yourself to fall into the trappings that we fell into before. So you gotta know what the job is. You gotta work with your compensation team. You gotta understand exactly what market rate is, what above market rate is, what's internal to your firm, what other peers are making, et cetera. And you gotta say, this is what the job is. There isn't a range between 170 and 220. It is what it is. For eight years of experience, that certification, that degree, this is what it is. And that is extremely difficult for people to get their hands around because of the way that we've just kind of, we have to undo a lot of thinking. But before we can even undo the thinking, we've gotta rectify the past. So I look at pay equity as a basic human right that we shouldn't have to, it's like free speech on some level, we shouldn't have to think about it. I mean, the framework of the Constitution, if we could go back and kinda edit that, it'd be nice if we could just throw that in there as one of the, I was gonna say commandments, but it wasn't commandments, but.

- Articles. I think you're were looking for articles.

- Yeah, one of the articles. But basically, make it to where this is actually something that you should never think about. Like you don't think about free speech. I mean, even today, you might think about it a little more than you did before, but you don't think about it. If you have an opinion, you can voice that opinion. And yeah, there's some guardrails to that, but pay equity should be basic. It should be something that we're fighting for. We're here now. Okay, fantastic. Fix the past, and then harder fix the future, and fix all the behaviors that got us into the hot water that we're in.

- I couldn't agree more. And as you were talking, it made me think about CarMax. I don't know if you have that in Texas.

- Mm-hmm, oh, yeah.

– But I mean, it's that same model of like you don't negotiate. You just go in, the price is the price. And for a lot of people, that's super refreshing. Buying a car can be a several-hour adventure sometimes. So I love that example.

– By the way, Shari, that's a great example. That's a great example. Saturn, when they first came out, I believe it's still true, but I haven't been to a Saturn dealership in 100 years, so I don't know, but they would just put a price on a car. That's it. There wasn't salespeople flocking around you or any of that stuff. It's just like, that's the price. Here you go, if you want that car, that's the price.

– Yeah.

– There's no discussion. There's no negotiation. We should've always been thinking about talent in that way, the job.

– Yeah.

– The job is, here's what the job is, and there. There's no negotiation. It's not that we don't care about you to negotiate. It's that we care so much about making sure that things are equitable, that there is no actual negotiation. You don't have to worry about the negotiation. We're not going to force the negotiation. The salary is what it is. But that's a wonderful example. CarMax is a wonderful example.

– Yeah. You talk a lot about the benefits of technology.

– Mm-hmm.

– How do you see the future of AI impacting the role of HR?

– So I think, first of all, I think that when we deploy AI, AI, right now, we think of artificial intelligence. The intelligence part isn't that intelligent yet, and that's okay. It's getting there. And over our lifetimes, it'll definitely get there. But when deployed correctly for HR, it gives you your HR. It gives you your time back. So you take some low-value, high-bandwidth task, and then you apply AI to those task, and it gives you that time back. And HR practitioners, they know this going into a week that they're gonna be fighting fires and most of their schedule is booked out. And so if they can use technology to get their time back, they can actually think about strategic things, things that they've always wanted, things that they've always wanted to get around to but just didn't have the time to. So I look at AI on the front end is where you're kind of taking care of some of the low-value, high-bandwidth things. Down the road, AI will connect dots that we can't see as humans. So we can't see certain things, and AI will be able to pull that out and show us those things exist, which is great. But I think that our kinda pathway with AI is that we should have fun

with AI. We shouldn't think of it as anything else other than just a way for us to do our jobs better.

- I'm excited about what the future hold. I think it's gonna be fascinating, the connection that we're gonna have and the simplicity it's going to bring to some pretty complex process that HR has.

- Yep.

- You get the exciting opportunity to interview a lot of others on HR-related topics. And this is a big question.

- Sure.

- So if you could simplify it.

- Sure.

- What are you hearing that HR professionals should be paying attention to right now?

- It was a term, actually, a CHRO used with me early in COVID. It was called radical flexibility. And it really stuck with me in that we have to rethink everything we've ever learned about HR through this lens, this new lens. And some of that was COVID, some of it was remote work, some of it's talent in the way that talent wants to interact with us, shortages in talent, all of that stuff. But we've gotta rethink everything. Everything's on the table now. And COVID, actually, it's an unfortunate situation, of course, worldwide, unfortunate, catastrophic, even, if we think of it that way, but it sped up a lot of things in HR that would've taken 20, 30 years to get to. We were already doing remote work to some degree before COVID. However, when you tell everybody on a Tuesday, Friday, everyone's going to be working remotely, you've gotta think differently. And I think that's really thrust HR into this idea of everything's gotta be rethought. We gotta rethink comp. We gotta rethink performance management. We need to rethink learning and training and development. We gotta rethink everything, which is liberating because you're not tethered to how you did it pre-COVID. You can still do it that way if it works. You can still do it that way, but you don't have to do it that way. And I think if we hadn't had COVID, of course we're still in it, but if COVID hadn't happened, we'd still be kind of grinding it out and these things would've just taken time to get to this place. The gig economy and all of these other things, we would've gotten there, but it would've just taken a longer time. Now in particular, I think the things that are kinda keeping HR up at night, the things that they should be thinking about is what is and isn't culture today? So that's one is, before, culture was, by and large, location-based. You go to an office, there's free lunches on Friday, and everybody's going to a ball game, and there's a softball league, whatever. Culture

was defined by a place. Well, now that you don't have those places, by and large, what is culture? So that's one thing to contend with is how do you think about culture differently today? And how do you render it? How do you display it? How do you then get candidates excited about it, et cetera? Two, how do you interact with different forms of talent? So now, there's this talent that's out there. And talent comes in many forms. It could come in the form of boomers that wanna retire but work 10 hours a week. Okay. So how can you interact with that talent? It comes in the form of people that want to work with you remotely forever. Even if you have a hybrid model, and even if you have a location model, they don't wanna work that way. Your choice. How do you wanna work with that? So I could go through thousands of examples of it, but the large part of it is how do we interact with these different forms of talent? And probably the third thing that's on pretty much every practitioner's mind right now is how do we tap the untapped talent market around the world? So take just in the US, there's 70 million people that have been through the prison experience. Okay. Out of that 70 million, now we're only 330 million people, so that's a big number. How do we interact with that population? How do we interact with second-chance or fair-chance folks? How do we do that? It's not kind of a question of do we, it's a question of how do we? And because it's untapped. I mean, that's just a big, giant talent pool waiting to be tapped. And so we've gotta think differently about the talent that's out there and we've gotta think about those untapped talent markets. And so I think it is a large question, but I'd start with radical flexibility. And then I'd start about those three questions in particular.

— I love radical flexibility. We've been thinking about this ourselves. And I've started to use the term that we're like in this reinvention revolution when it comes to HR. Everything is being reinvented. Everything is up for grabs, just like you talked about. So I could not agree more. I'm gonna switch topics a little bit.

— Sure.

— You serve or have served on a lot of company boards or in advisory positions. And I think that fascinates a lot of people in HR. They wanna give back that way. What advice do you have for our listeners who wanna pursue serving on a board? How do they kind of put their foot out there to be involved in something like that?

— So the basic part is ask. So when someone demos a technology that you really, really, really love, whether or not you can roll it out at your firm or not, you just really fall in love with the technology, I have three things that I look at, the entrepreneurs, the technology itself, and the market opportunity, like is this something that you could proliferate and to go broader than it is right now? But ironically, you start with just asking, hey, have you ever put an advisory board together? If so, I'd like to be considered when you do.

It's that simple. It's putting yourself forward and being vulnerable in a way of, hey, listen, I've got some things that would be helpful. Now, practitioners, practitioners have valuable knowledge about how HR and TA actually happens, both historically and currently. So they know how things work. And most entrepreneurs, most technology entrepreneurs, they have no idea. If you were to give them a test on HR or recruiting, they'd have no idea how to pass it. They don't know how the job is done. They have a vision of how it should be done, which is fantastic. I mean, that's actually what you need. Hewlett-Packard had the same idea. So did Steve Jobs. I mean, you go down... Every entrepreneur looks at something and says, there's gotta be a better way. And so the technology entrepreneurs look at things in HR, all throughout all the components of HR, and they look at it and go, there's gotta be a better way. But they need practitioners to be a great sounding board and to actually kind of not tell them that that's wrong, but basically say, okay, it's right. Now how do we actually get practitioners to use it? How do we get practitioners over at the change management, how do we get people to adopt it? And so I think, for me, I've given the advice to practitioners, all senior practitioners, to be at least on one technology board. To learn how technologies works, I mean, it's actually kind of a extended learning, if you will. You're learning how technology works, but you're also helping them be grounded in how HR and recruiting actually work, have worked historically, but work today, and you help them. And so you're helping yourself. And equity in those plays. You're not gonna get rich per se, but it is nice when a company exits and you do get a check or something like that because you were a part of something. You help something. It's like being a teacher and your student graduates. You take pride in that. But I think you start with ask, and then you go from there.

— I love that. Super simple advice. Just ask.

— Just ask.

— Yeah. Okay, to wrap up our conversation, which has been fantastic, and I think we could stay on the podcast for hours, chitchatting about different things. But what advice do you have for more senior HR professionals related to what skills they should be developing for their future success in the light of everything we've talked about with radical flexibility, and reinvention, and everything that's kind of happening around us right now.

— It's interesting because years ago, I would've said STEM, science, technology, engineering, math. Go take coding classes. Go take stats classes. Go learn basically how math works and go do that so that you understand technology and you understand stuff. I then moved over to the softer skills of how do you learn more about empathy? I mean, most HR practitioners already have a pretty good understanding of empathy, but empathy's changing. So what we thought of as empathy before isn't

as much empathy now. It's like those are table stakes. So like, what is the future of empathy? And I think where I would, if I were a VP of people ops somewhere, I think what I would do to learn is I would form a book club, kind of old-fashioned, kind of stodgy, and it has nothing to do with books. I don't even care if books are involved. The idea is to get seven to 10 of your peers together on a Zoom call. I mean, you can do it remotely. You don't have to do it at Starbucks. But to be able to go, okay, we're in a cone of silence, cone of vulnerability, what are you being blindsided by right now? And think of it as a support group or group therapy, but learn how your peers are adjusting to the ground shifting underneath their feet. I think that's the thing that we should be focused on next. I mean, if you go back and you wanna do the STEM stuff, fantastic. That's not gonna work against you. Taking a stats class isn't gonna work against you. Understanding what's standard deviation or three standard deviations away, that's never gonna work against you. However... Or learning about empathy, going deeper into kinda to where we are currently and maybe even the future of empathy, none of that stuff's gonna hurt you. You can do that. If that resonates with you as a listener, fantastic, do it. But if at this point, I would want to know more about what my peers are seeing and then get their advice on what I'm seeing. And use my peers, in a healthy way, leverage my peers' knowledge of what they're going through. Like my CEO just said, "We're gonna be forever remote." Now what? Now that we've made that claim, now that we've put that on our career website, now what do I do? Like okay, that's something that nine other people can sit in a room or sit on a call and go, okay, let's just be objective and let's deconstruct the situation and give you advice. And create, I mean, you could create those groups. You can have multiple groups. So that you're always learning through your own experience and getting advice from others that are going through things that are similar, but you're also helping them problem-solve things that they're going through. And I think that's, again, kind of extended learning. It's like going back and get a PhD or a master's degree, whatever it is. I would just do that with my peers.

— I absolutely love that idea. And if you're listening and you decide to do this, tag me. I'd love to hear about it. I'd love to see this kinda come to life. I think it's really valuable to lean on your HR network and be creative and be vulnerable, like you said, the cone of silence. So this has been a great conversation, so much knowledge, so much that we can walk away from in this conversation. So William, thank you so much for taking some time out of your day to chat with me. This podcast is brought to you by Paylocity, a leading HCM provider that frees you from the task of today so you can focus more on the promise of tomorrow. If you'd like to submit a topic or appear as a guest on a future episode, email us pctytalks@paylocity.com.