

- 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.

- [Shari] Welcome to another exciting week on the HR Mixtape. We have a jampacked week for you. All recorded live at the 2023 Society for Human Resource Management, SHRM Conference. We've been right there in the trenches soaking up the knowledge and are ready to share it all with you on the HR Mixtape. This week, we're not only stepping into the future with a deep dive into SHRM Labs, but also learning the vital role of HR in preventing predatory violence. We've got experts sharing their insight on creating a robust personal brand to empower your professional journey. And we'll also be unpacking the complex relationship between artificial intelligence and human resources. But hold onto your hats because the excitement doesn't stop there. We set up shop at the Paylocity booth on the Expo floor and we're answering your questions, submitted live. It's all about empowering you, our listeners, with the tools and information you need to thrive in the world of HR. So make sure you turn in each day. You don't wanna miss a single episode of this thrilling series, so fasten your seat belts HR enthusiasts, it's gonna be one informative ride this week. Joining me today is Guillermo Corea, Managing Director at SHRM Labs. Guillermo has been involved in digital technology for over 25 years. He is charged with establishing SHRM as a research thought leader and product test bed for technologies impacting the future of work and the workplace. Previously, he led SHRM's E-commerce operations and identified non dues revenue opportunities through a variety of activities, including business and product development and content and technology partnerships. Guillermo, thank you so much for taking some time out of your busy schedule here at SHRM to sit down with me.

- [Guillermo] Sure, my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

- [Shari] So I'd love if we could start with a little bit more about your background and how you, kind of, ended up in HR.

- Sure. An interesting question and probably interesting story. So, I came out of school right when the internet was hitting and I'm an econ major, but I said, "Hey, this is the future." And I jumped into the internet, digital media, whatever you want to call it, and I basically, you know, my career has been built around that. You know, I've done it all from E-commerce to digital marketing to, you know, running software teams you know, it's been digitally focused. And then eight years ago, you know, there was this opening at SHRM and, you know, I took a look at it and I said, well, you know, it's a nonprofit, but I knew the SHRM brand and I said let me check it out and see what's going on there. And I was pleasantly surprised about the brand, you know, what it is that SHRM stands for and what it is that we do. And so you could say that over the past eight years I've

gained, you know a great deal of experience in HR. I think so, you know, it's kind of interesting that's how I got into the HR field. To answer your question.

- So you work specifically with SHRM Labs. I'd love if you could share a little bit more about what SHRM Labs is and the work that it does.

- Sure, absolutely. So, SHRM Labs is a relatively new team that was built at SHRM. We're only a three-year-old team. And, you know, essentially we support SHRM in elevating HR as the thought leader in workplace innovation. The way that we see it is that if anybody should be leading workplace innovation it should be HR. Because when you think about it HR leads the number one resource that organizations have which is, you know, the workforce that they have, right? At the same time, right, we also have to address a second audience that we're very close to, which is the founders, the innovator, the startups that are out there, right? And so three years ago when we were, you know putting together our strategy, okay, so what is it that we're gonna be doing? Right? Number one, we're a mission-driven organization. So hands down, number one our number one audience is our members. You know everything that we do is focused on our members. And like I was saying very closely behind that is the startups. And so what we did is we created programs that help both of those groups engage and begin to communicate. So first off, we kicked off things off with a pitch competition a global pitch competition that I'm confident in saying that it's become the top pitch competition around workplace tech. It's a global competition. We also launched an accelerator, or the workplace tech accelerator which focuses on bringing in a cohort small group of companies into a program where they can be immersed in the SHRM experience so that they truly learn what the marketplace needs and you know what our members are looking for, right? Because a lot of the time we get members saying what happens is you have HR on one side, you have the founders on the other side, right? The founders or the innovators, they see a problem they jump on the problem, they think they found a solution they bring it over to HR and then HR says, that's not for me, right? And so we're kind of like helping bridge that gap and help a lot of these innovators understand what HR needs so that they can cater their products to the needs of the workers and the workplace. And then the third piece big program that we launched is something that we call the workplace tech community. Think of it as the, I call it the TripAdvisor for HR Tech. And we didn't do that by accident. We actually did a survey with our members where our members said, hey, we're looking for a safe space where we can come in, review all the HR Tech that's out there, look at the reviews look at the ratings, communicate with our colleagues figure out, you know, what's good, what's not good. And so that's exactly what we created, you know.

- How exciting. And I love how you talked about, you know creating something and then realizing it missed the mark. We've done that so

much in HR in our careers. We know exactly what that feels like. So I can resonate with that a lot. You know you were hosting a pretty exciting competition here at SHRM. Maybe you could share a little bit about that and the impact of past winners that you've seen.

- Sure Absolutely. And so that's the first program that I was mentioning to you. So it's called the Better Workplaces Challenge Cup. It's a three-stage pitch competition. Think of it as the Shark Tank for HR. Okay and so we got going virtually in late February. The companies went through three rounds the ones that made it into the semi. Well, we split it into two brackets. One for US-based companies just because of the size of the US market, right? And then for the other side of the bracket is the international side, right? And there we had competition rounds in Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Africa and to an Asia Pacific. And the reason for that is because we have a large presence in India and in the Middle East. And so from there, you know, the two finalists are competing here at the SHRM Conference you know, the annual 2023. And what I couldn't think of a better place to have the finals, you know, than here where, you know we're having the largest HR show that we've ever put together, the largest HR show in the world. You know, we're hosting over 25,000 people, so you know, they're gonna be battling it out this afternoon. And we have a special keynote speaker that's gonna be speaking at the beginning, Susie Welch, CNBC contributor and NYU Stern professor. So it should, it's gonna be a great event.

- How do you see with everything you've been involved in the tech space and then now being in HR how do you see HR Tech evolving? You know, what do you, I guess what do you see and what are you most excited about for the future in that very specific niche?

- Yeah, so there is a lot happening, obviously, you know with what happened the past three years with the pandemic, right? That accelerated HR Tech. I think, you know, instead of looking at it in a 10-year period, you saw like so much happening over a very, very short period of time, right? I think things are beginning, you know, it was people were drinking from a fire hose, right? Three years ago. And now I think people are beginning to take a little bit of a slower pace, right? And really beginning to look at, okay, what is it that we truly truly need now that we know exactly how I think it's shaking out, you know, where the work people now understand what the workplace is gonna look like over the next, you know, 5, 10 years. But I'm very excited about a lot of the disruptive technologies that are out there like the voice, certainly AI, you know, Chat GPT has been, you know, ever since it came out in what March, you know, so AI, virtual reality I'm a big proponent of that. It was exciting to see a week ago the release from Apple and honestly, you know, and now having a computer without actually having a physical computer, you know, everything's like sitting there in your eyes if you know, think about it, right? The one I'm most really excited about though is the HR blockchain that is

certainly a technology a disruptive technology that I think a lot of HR professionals really, really need to start paying attention to. It's in the very, very early stages. I compare it to think of the internet back in 94, for example, when it was just getting going, right? There were only a few people that, you know around the world that we're really like delving into it. And that's kind of like where we are right now with the HR blockchain. It's really gonna be, I see it as the internet of careers in the future where employees are gonna be the ones owning their data, their career data and not the employers that they've worked for, so.

- Tell me more about block time for those who are listing and they're like, okay, what are you talking about?

- Yeah, so it's funny 'cause a lot of people typically when when they hear blockchain they immediately go to Bitcoin.

- Yeah.

- And by the way, I had the same reaction at SHRM when I first brought it up a few years back. And you know, the thing about it is that Bitcoin is built on blockchain technology, right? But blockchain is not Bitcoin, you know so blockchain is basically think of it as a large ledger, you know digital ledger that's out there that everybody has access to. And you know, if you make a change on this ledger, everybody knows about it. And so that's where you, you know we're gonna be able to see some great things around for example, verified credentials, right? Verified skillsets, verified even health information. I'm actually gonna be doing an HR blockchain session here at SHRM Annual. And one of the examples that we're gonna give is that in the UK, so in England, spouses or partners, for example, can exchange PTO time, right? But right now, the way that it works is that, you know, you have to get a letter from your employer saying that you have X amount of PTO and then you have to give that to your partner. Your partner gives it to their company. That company then has to verify that the data is correct with the company that initially gave it. Right? Now imagine if all that information was on the blockchain, it would be automatic. You would be able to transfer your PTO time or your sick time or whatever, you know leave time you have available to your partner instantly, you know, and everybody, and it's all verified there ready to go.

- Yeah. How exciting. I can't imagine going into an interview and kind of having all your credentials and all your history just readily accessible so you don't have to kind of explain everything that you've ever done. That's really cool.

- Exactly. And the employees are the ones who are gonna be able to determine, okay, I'm comfortable with giving this information. And if you think about it from a legal and compliance perspective, it's good

for HR, right? Because many time get HR gets contacted about, hey, did Guillermo work at this company? What did he do? What was his salary? Right? And HR is typically, you know, they typically hold back a lot of information just because they're afraid of legal and compliance issues that may come up out of that. But if you put that in the hands of, you know well you know, you put it first on the blockchain. HR verifies it, right, at your current company, and then it's up to the employee to decide whether they wanna release it or not at that point. Right.

- You know, with all of this technology I think HR professionals are always deciding what skillset they should add as they look towards the future. And I think tech is a big one. You know, I talk a lot about, you know, making sure you're staying on top of your tech stack that you're evaluating it that you're being open to new tools and ideas. You know, how do you see HR really delving more into the tech space or paying attention to it more or leveraging it more in the future?

- Yeah so, one of the things that we are definitely trying to communicate out there to SHRM members is that don't be afraid to do product demos. Right, now, you know, the con with that is that afterwards they get pounded by a salesperson.

- Yeah.

- Right and that's kinda like one of the reasons why we decided to create the workplace tech community to help HR kind of be able to have this safe space where they can come in and, you know, and just do product demos just so that they they learn and they understand what, you know what's out there, right? So that's the number one message, right? Don't be afraid to do product demos. And then the other thing is that we at SHRM Labs we're coming up with resources that we hope are gonna be able to, you know help HR professionals out there become more tech savvy. So one of the things that we launched here at the SHRM Conference is these comic books on disruptive technologies. So we have these like very easy quick reads, comic books on, you know a variety of different disruptive technologies like Web 3.0, the HR blockchain, AI, VR, XAR. So, you know, it's really interesting

- I wanna touch base on VR for just a second 'cause I too watched that Apple release and was like my mind is just swimming with ideas. Where do you see your, you know prophesize HR is gonna use that kind of technology the most?

- Well, you know, honestly I think it's gonna be on the training side of things, right? And it's already happening. Like for example there are companies out there like Walmart that they are using VR technology to train their employees be their store employees before they get out there on the floor, right? And they train them on a wide variety of issues topics. Like, for example, one of the ones that I was surprised

to hear about but it makes total sense, right? How do you deal with a bad customer or a customer that become, becomes irate at Christmas time or, you know, after what is it that they call it?

- Black Friday.

- Black Friday, right. You know, how do you handle that? So they actually have simulators at stores, right? Where they're employees get trained on all that stuff before they're actually live with the customers. And that has definitely helped the employees deal better with customers.

- Wow. I'm excited about the future of HR Tech. I think it's very limitless and I think there's so much that can happen that will help us do our job better and take some of that very tactical stuff away from us in a good way that we can really start to give back to our organizations more strategically and build the cultures and the things that we really wanna do.

- Yeah. Actually that's a great point that you bring up because, you know, and a lot of the HR professionals out there are, I'm sure are gonna agree with me, is that one of the biggest pain points that they have is that they wanna be viewed as more of a strategic function than, you know, I hate to be blunt about it, or, you know, paper pushing.

- Yeah.

- Right. And there are certainly tools out there now that can help HR really become way more strategic and you know, for those of HR professionals listening, if you haven't tried Chat GPT and figuring out how you can use that to automate a lot of what you're doing out there you are missing out on a lot.

- I could not agree more. So I love that plug. Thanks for taking a few minutes of your schedule to chat with me today.

- Sure, my pleasure. Thank you so much for being here, and thank you for being at the SHRM Conference, the biggest HR show in the world.

- I hope you enjoy today's episode. You can find show notes and links at the [hrmixtape.com](http://hrmixtape.com). Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.