- You're listening to 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 live from HR Tech is Lorraine King the director of Employee Experience and Adoption for Digital Workplace at Haleon. She is an experienced professional who has worked in a wide array of technical, infrastructure and business facing strategic and operational roles for a Fortune 500 company. Lorraine has experience in EX and user-centric design thinking, product management, service management, communications and change management and was responsible for managing multiple cloud-based virtual collaboration solutions in a global enterprise. Lorraine, thank you so much for jumping on the podcast with me here on the floor of HR Tech Conference 2023 in Las Vegas.

- Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much for having me.

- So you have already done your session this morning. I heard really great things from some of our people who attended it. How was that?

- Yeah, it was wonderful. So I felt very privileged to be able to speak at Microsoft's seminar on all the cool and exciting HR technologies that are coming out of the Veeva space. And personally in my role, I've been very excited about looking at the Veeva Suite in Microsoft 365 and how it's been a real game changer for what we're doing to engage our employees and to enable innovation and to get all the folks on board with our mission. So it's been a very cool journey to get to where we are and it was a fun session earlier to get to brag about it.

- I love that and it's one of the reasons I wanted to help you on the podcast. I think there's a lot of people in the HR space who are trying to figure out how do I utilize the different technologies I have access to? So you know, working at Paylocity, obviously we are an HCM so we have lots of stuff that we give out to our clients but there's a lot of other technologies out there that companies have access to or trying to use. And you have this really unique background, this marriage of product and marketing. So I thought your background has this great synergy around product adoption and employee experience. So I wanna know what got you excited specifically about that work?

- Yeah, I love this work because it is almost a big cool human experiment where you really get to get into the psyche of colleagues of people. It's a psychology game but it's also something that's really powerful to drive business forward and to move our civilization in a forward direction. So when you look at my career path, I fell into the tech world. My role is around technology and of course

there's a lot of work that goes around the technology wrapper from working with engineers and working with operations folks. But what drove me into that role mostly and gave me the most passion was around the intersection point with tech and people. And I think HR is a very interesting and important partner in the technology game because technology can have a lot of connotations to people and how they think about it and are they intimidated by it or are they viewing this as an opportunity to help them? So like HR technology aside, that enables HR systems and such. When we look at how HR needs to drive technology forward for people, it's around getting them excited and removing the barriers because of intimidation or because people don't know how to use it or people afraid it's going to replace their jobs or whatever that is all about, it's getting HR to move its people and its culture in the right direction and embrace technology.

— I wanna focus on that embracing technology. I think there are companies that are killing it in a great great way and they're getting it right and they're introducing new technology and utilizing it and then there's ones that are struggling or ones that maybe don't have the best change management in place. I know that you've been successful in your organization. Tell me kind of what was the secret sauce for you guys as you think about, you know, companies getting it right both tactically and strategically.

— Yeah, and the journey of the company where I work now in Haleon is unique in itself in that it's brand new, it's birthday was last year in July and it was a demerger from another larger company. So we have a lot of different cultural backgrounds, corporate cultural backgrounds, kind of building out this new organization. But what I've noticed with organizations that seem to be doing it right and getting people excited and embracing and less resistant to change and to technology and disruptive tech is when they prioritize the employee experience or we like to call it, the colleague experience. When you see companies that are building out actual functions within their org and embedding employee experience and change management experts and whole teams around that within the tech stack and within the HR stack and within all the different types of roles and functions within an organization. That means that they're prioritizing that. And when people or companies don't prioritize employee experience as a key crucial element of delivering change or running their business, if they just think it's a side effect and should be, you know, in everybody's job description they should know how to do that. It's really not, it's a specialty and it's something that requires a lot of time, resource, attention and funding and commitment to drive forward from the leadership top down.

— I'm always amazed that when I talk to organizations who have implemented a new tech and they've done it with really good intentions, right? Hey, we think it's gonna increase productivity, we think it's gonna help us go to market differently or it's gonna help

our clients. But then you start to dig into it and it ended up adding more work for your employees or it took away like maybe a tool that they really used in a way that you were like had no idea, right because you were like too far removed. So I mean those are some of the things I've experienced where they've implemented things wrong. Is there other kind of consequences or wrong things that you've seen?

— That is such a good example of how I've seen so many companies work that tech is so passionate or the business of whoever is rolling out a new technology is so passionate 'cause they live and breathe it and they understand it and they know the power behind it. But there's a disconnect between folks who need to adopt, adopt those technologies to be able to realize that value. So from inception there should be a deep focus on understanding the as is state. A lot of people just look at the to be state, this tool does X, Y, Z. We were sold this, it's gonna be awesome, it's gonna change the way everything works. But we don't take a deep enough look at the as is so who are the personas who are gonna experience this differently when we roll this out? What's gonna matter to them? What are they losing and what are the pain points maybe that this new technology is going to solve so that we can speak in that language when we're introducing a new tech and get people excited about it 'cause they fully understand what's in it for them. So not having the enough foresight into the EX or the employee experience and the downstream impact of delivering the change has created a lot of turmoil and I think resistance and unnecessary headwinds when you do have a really cool technology that can make a positive difference, all through the end of the lifecycle when it is there you have to do that commitment to keep on embedding and keep on rolling through with adoption and training efforts because you can get a lot of excitement but people have short memories. And so you wanna continue that excitement as you're rolling something forward so that it actually sticks.

— How do you see getting feedback from your employees as you go through these processes? Because we all know, right, if you've done any sort of information around change management, right there's always gonna be your naysayers, there's always gonna be your cheerleaders, there's always gonna be your like neutral people. But when you're implementing technology that they're going to have to use, you can either make their lives really great or you can have a really negative effect from a wellbeing perspective. From a productivity perspective, what kind of feedback mechanisms have you seen successful?

— Yeah, so I think again going back to doing your homework before delivering change you kind of segment your audience and try to anticipate where you're gonna have the most resistant and where you're gonna have your champions and your cheerleaders. So you have to really have a tailored plan to address every single one and the ones that are the champions and the keen beans, you make sure that their voice is really loud. So that has a ripple effect through the organization.

Amplify that through your employee engagement channels and then for the folks that for maybe good reason are more resistant, be sympathetic and really put more of your resource into understanding why they're resistant. What are those mitigation strategies make them feel involved and listened to when they feel heard and you are responding in a sympathetic way, it does generate a little bit more willingness to go along on the ride. And if you can find out what it is that's the barrier or the blocker and show a concerted effort to try to support them and give them a little extra, I think that that has made a big difference when we experience those challenges. 'Cause there will always be those challenges.

– And I've talked about this before in the podcast, you also have to remove the old way of doing it.

– Absolutely. Yeah. And emphasize the benefits not, you know we can't just put under the rug all the things that people are gonna be missing things about but it's around sometimes and especially with innovative technology, it's not about replacing something that already existed with something better and shinier. A lot of it is like step level leaps and bounds. This isn't a replacement to this, this is a new way of working and this is why it's going to enable us to do X, Y, Z. So if people are looking at it as a like for like but, or like for a bit better that can also give people the wrong impression because they're expecting to do the same thing just with something new. And we need to educate, drive awareness, help increase that digital literacy that's trying to evolve people into using new tools to work differently.

– So you talked about innovation and digital literacy. I'm glad that you used that word. 'cause I think about as––

– I love buzzwords, right? They make for good tweets or threads or exes, I don't know, what're calling them Xes now?

– Yeah. Oh god.

– But how do you measure success on implementing innovative technology? Because like you said, it's not a like for like so you can't say, hey you know, we replaced this and now we're X percent more productive.

– That is a really good point. I've also, you kind of need to manage up and manage those expectations up too because sometimes when you are trying to roll something out, people are expecting to have that, well we did this this way and this was the metric, this was the baseline. What's our new baseline? And these aren't always apples to apples. I think one of the good things about how I've seen industry shift is more around the narrative and the sentiment rather than trying to look at some factor figure like engagement was, you know, the number of likes or the number of comments against this post is this. Well this

new tool doesn't really measure things like that. So how do we wanna measure success in other ways? And you can keep it really data driven as well. It's not just about doing a focus group and seeing how many smiles people have. It's sentiment can be digitized, can be quantified. And it's using those types of ways of looking at how people feel more productive or if they're spending less time in email and more time collaborating with their colleagues. Those are things that you can measure specifically that are indicators that you're shifting the organization in the way that you're attempting to.

— How have you had, or maybe you have some advice on how you have conversations with the C-suite on what you just said because I think you nailed it. It's like those are data points, they're human data points but you can grab that and you can quantify if you're having impact on the employee experience but there are some leaders who aren't there yet right?

— Yeah, no, I wish I had conversations with the C-suite on a regular basis, but in terms of how I try to be a thought leader to my leadership and beyond is there's so much evidence out there industry-wide around how employee experience and colleague experience, employee sentiment, engaged audiences drive more successful businesses. You have better bottom lines and you are more resilient to change. You can possibly continue to have that competitive advantage over others. So there's no doubt, I think just making sure that folks have access to that information and I don't think that there's any question that employee experience, if it's good, you're gonna have a better result. It's just that slight tweak. And then how do we measure that? And I think there are a lot of innovative companies, Microsoft is one of them that has tools today that helps understand employee sentiment and how employees feel with work. The key thing for me is that people need at this day and age a reason to come into work and a reason to give it their all. And if they don't have a good reason, you're not gonna get the most productive employees.

— I couldn't agree more. And I think that's, you know, a crux for a different conversation around hybrid work or return to work or any of those kinds of things. You know, as we kind of wrap up our conversation here and think through, you know what your organization has done, what do you think are some of the biggest challenges and opportunities, you know as we think about employee experience in the future? You know, and I don't know that we kind of know yet what that looks like. I mean, we keep talking about the future of work. I'm talking today about the new world of work, right? There's all these buzzwords, right? But it's how we work now has just fundamentally changed and it is continuing to push the envelope about what that term employee experience really means.

— Yeah, it's a loaded word or a loaded term. And in my mind and how we've been focusing on it because when I joined the company it was

brand new, employee experience and adoption. That function within digital workplace was brand new. We were building that from scratch and the role expanded really quickly when we saw the need for people to focus on employee experience as a tangible important piece, component of work and tech and HR. So we started to do things like well let's make sure our knowledge management is good so people have access to information that enables them to feel more empowered. All right, so then when we think about empowerment and folks have access to information, that's because they need to be educated and they need to be aware. And that goes into the whole training aspect of it and then it goes into, people feel like they have access to technology and functions that all support them and they aren't barriers, they aren't annoying tech processes that they have to muddle through. So it's looking at simplification and then when you look at all the new tech that's coming, change management and effective communications is a key component of employee experience. And then you look at beyond that and engagement and ongoing work with your colleagues so that you have the enterprise at like the company level able to communicate effectively and engage their audience. But you also have that cross-collaborative teams working with teams discovering other aspects of the business that now there's synergistic opportunities. So you have comms, change management, education, awareness, you have empowered employees, you have excited employees, people find work to be fun. It's a big umbrella. So that's why I think companies that are focusing on employee experience as almost an organizational function will have all of those pillars feeding into that. And it's not just, you know, one expert that helps with this overarching term employee experience but you have all of those components. It's all about employee design thinking from the beginning to the end of any initiative, any change, any program, even BAU, business as usual stuff, needs to have that focus.

— What a great way to end our conversation. And I wanna take out that that term you just said, employee design thinking, what a great takeaway to come back to your organization and start using that terminology as a strategic HR partner to business initiatives. Absolutely love that Lorraine, thank you so much for chatting with me today.

— Thanks for having me. A lot of fun.

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