— 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. On today's episode I have with me, Cammie Bricker, she is our Director of Change Management and Communications here at Paylocity. Cammie, thanks so much for jumping on with me.

— Yeah, sure, happy to be here.

— So, I'm really excited about the work that you're doing, but I thought we could start with maybe you sharing a little bit about your background and how you got into the change management communication space.

— Sure, so I've always been in HR in L&D pretty much my entire career. I started out supporting a call center as more of like a benefits leave of absence person but then moved into an HRBP role, so generalist type role, I did that for about seven years, and I will tell you through that experience, trying to help managers communicate change to their employees or trying to, you know, move through organizational changes, that was probably where I first, you know, realized how important it is to have a communication plan and have a true change management plan. And then, you know, later on in my career, I moved into L&D, I was a senior manager supporting a training delivery team, and we were at that time going through a lot of organizational changes at my previous organization too and so I just kind of continued that journey. And so it was probably put more on me the responsibility of, hey, how are we gonna communicate these changes to the rest of our organization? Just 'cause I had been in that HR position previously too. So I just continued that journey, and then as I moved over to Paylocity, you know, I took on a bigger role, larger scope, and when you have a larger team, that's another thing you have to think about and how those changes impact the team and the company and you know, the clients. And so just having to think about that more broadly, so it's just kind of always been part of my scope I guess.

— Communication is such an important topic right now. You know, as I think back over the last two years just from the HR space, there's been so much we've had to communicate, and then change what we were communicating, and then we're going this direction, and now we're going that direction, and so it's all kind of wrapped up. You know, as you've looked at these challenges over the last two years, when it comes to communications with employees, what are the big rocks that kind of come up?

— I think that, you know, if you think about it, well, we've had just a very interesting couple of years, first of all, right? Like we've talked about that so much, you know, COVID has changed things in a lot of ways, organizations that were not remote or didn't have a hybrid

approach are now, you know, going to that structure. And it's very different when you have people on site versus that you have people all over the country or all over, you know, virtually. So, that communication plan, you have to figure out how to engage employees at a totally different level. You know, there are a lot of employees that they thrive on coming to work and being with their peers, and if they also feel like they're not able to navigate, you know, the changes in the business or, you know, getting the communication that they need, then, you know, you can lose them and they can become disengaged. So, having a understanding of, you know, what's happening in the market and what is, you know, some best practices and some of the things that are important to employees is super important for, you know, managing that change, and then also, know, creating a communication plan around that change.

– What are some tactics that you've seen employers take to address these challenges?

– So, I think, you know, making sure that you're working from a top down approach, so you're taking it from your senior leaders and you're aligned on what the plan truly is and how you're gonna roll it out from, you know, just a leadership level to your employees. So, if you're not all aligned, then that's where employees can get a little anxious, they can get, you know, not trust what the communication is that's coming because they're hearing different things from different people. So I think alignment, regardless of whether you're virtual or on site, you know, those types of things, that's super important. I think the other piece when you think about, you know, this hybrid virtual world is the overcommunication. You know, there are things that happen on site where they can hear about things, you know, as they're walking around the hallways and those types of things. Well, they're not hearing about those things anymore virtually, so you have to have communication channels, so whether you use Teams, Slack, any of those types of communications, it's just really overcommunicating. And so I'm making sure that the messaging is clear and that it's concise and that, you know, you're giving them the why's behind changes as well. But again, in that virtual and hybrid environment, it's really important to make sure that, you know, leaders are communicating, you have someone in HR or someone that is kind of managing and helping guide those talk tracks and those communications so that it shows that alignment for business.

– Do you think anybody out there right now is doing this perfectly?

– So, I'm not sure that there are organizations that do it perfectly, but I think that there are organizations that do it pretty well. And those companies I feel like have taken a more personalized individualized approach to their own needs and their unique situation, it can't be something that's carp launch for all employees and all companies, the same type of plan, because there are unique needs in

different organizations, manufacturing, you know, restaurant, all the different industries, there's a different way of how they need to communicate with their employees depending on how they're structured. So, I think that what they do really well is talk to their employees, find out what's working, what's not, match it with the culture, get alignment from their leaders, make sure that they're taking a consistent approach and really holding people accountable to how they're communicating, and then holding employees accountable to how they're getting that information too. So, I think that's really what makes a successful plan.

- Communication has definitely evolved, you know, as I was preparing for this episode I was thinking back to much, much earlier in my career, and I remember walking around like a manufacturing setting and going into the washrooms and putting the flyers into the washroom stalls, you had those plastic holders, or spending hours stuffing payroll envelopes with communications or our mailers or stuff. You know, now we're in this digital revolution that was super accelerated because of the pandemic, 'cause, as you mentioned before, there were organizations that weren't even thinking about remote work that are now either fully remote or hybrid, and granted, there's still a lot of people who did not have that opportunity and still don't have that opportunity. So, I don't wanna discount that, but with the digital revolution, you know, most people have a smartphone, right? Most people are getting types of communications digitally. You know, when you think about digital communication and how it aligns with employee experience, I think there's a big connection right there and initiatives around, how do we think about overall employee experience? How do you think about building these communications experiences? And I guess the question is, you know, where do you even start? There's so many options, there's so many modes of communication and medians, whether you're getting a push notification or an email, or text message, or you're using your HCM, you know, how have you started to holistically think about creating those digital experiences?

- When you're thinking about an employee experience and you're thinking about it through the lens of digital communication, I think it has to be something that's in the employee's flow of work and that's easily accessible to them. And so if you think about how just as a consumer, you live every day, think about some of the applications that you have that are super easy for you, and you can find information quickly, you get push notifications. How can you create a digital communication strategy that encompasses that so that employees are not trying to go to different resources all the time trying to find information, or going to change their benefits through multiple clicks, is there a way that you can create a plan that truly matches the consumer experience that you have every day?

- I love that you mentioned the clicks thing, if it takes me like more than three to five clicks to get somewhere, I'm like, yep, nope, I

hate this experience, I'm not using this app anymore, it's a waste of my time. And that like five clicks is a significant amount of time but we've so been trained with our consumer experience that we just assume that, you know, the rest of our lives should match that. You know, as you've rolled out these communication experiences, is there any one communication method that has really risen to the top as being better than a different method?

— So, I don't know that there's one communication strategy that, you know, works best, I think it again goes back to matching what your employees need, what your unique needs are for your organization. I think that what's important is that you keep it consistent and that you try to be concise, thoughtful, give employees, you know, the information that they need but also find a way to drive them to the tools and resources that you want them to go to so that they're comfortable doing that. And that in turn helps your communication strategy along the way. If you don't have the right tools and resources, or you're not, you know, having employees utilize them effectively, then that can really impact how you communicate down the line.

— I know that we've talked about, internally in our organization, the idea of a communication playbook, right? And really what that is it's a tool, it could be a PDF or a Word doc or whatever, but it kind of outlines the different tools and resources you have access to, what you should use them for and potentially the impact they will have. You know, as you've gone through this process, you know, what tools do you think about creating internally for your teams to do this better? Is it a communication playbook or is there, you know, other things that you've come across that have been really helpful to get managers to understand that the way they communicate, especially during change management is creating an experience for the employee.

— So I think about the space that we're in right now and what we're trying to do is really just tighten up our communication. So, we have a ton of communication that goes out to our leaders and employees just like every other organization, and we're auditing that right now to figure out, okay, so how often do we need to communicate X versus something else? And who needs to know that? And do leaders need to know that first and how would we expect them to communicate that down? So, that's kind of our first step that we're taking, and then thinking about how managers can easily access that information. So as we were talking about that employee experience, well, it needs to be something similar for them as well. And then the other piece to that is, yes, giving them some kind of guidance on, okay, so if we have an organizational change, so a new senior leader comes in, or we have, you know, just even our earnings call or something, how would we expect our managers to communicate that? And how would we expect our employees to digest that information? So, I think if you can create some kind of, it doesn't have to be, you know, a playbook per se, like

we were talking about, but just some kind of guidance to give them as to here's where you should be thinking about, you know, the impacts to your team 'cause this is a really serious change, or if it's just, you know, something that is higher level, you still wanna communicate that down but that can be communicated in a different way through a different venue, right? You could use a social media platform that you have internally or something like that, you could use Teams or something that's not as formal, but, you know, just giving them some guidance on what types of communication should be communicated how.

– So to recap, if you're listening for those like top four things that Cammie just mentioned, so the first one is audit, I actually really love that, you know, get a sense of like what communication is going out, who's getting it, and what mediums they're getting it in. And then you didn't mention this, you kind of alluded to it, but there's this idea around personas that you're communicating to, right? What you are communicating at maybe your senior leadership team level is gonna look differently than what you're communicating at your employee level, and how that information is being received or collected or what medium's being used. So, I really encourage you to put together personas for, you know, kind of the big buckets in your organization and then that tools and resources, right? Like as you're thinking about the guidance that you wanna give, what is the right medium for that communication and what are the things that do need to be communicated? I don't know how many times, Cammie, maybe this is true for you where I've been in a meeting where we've gotten information and I'm like, how much of this should I be sharing out? What's okay, what's not okay to share? Do I need to communicate it to my direct reports? Do I need to write a larger communication? That's another tactic is, you know, if you're in that leadership role and you're communicating things, tell your leadership team or tell your managers, these are the things that are free to share, right? Go ahead and tell your people this, get them the information. So, I absolutely love that, you know, a lot of what we do in HR is we spend time making talk tracks, that's another thing, if you're thinking about, you know, those communication experiences, what do your talk tracks look like? You know, Cammie, as we wrap up our conversation, I'm curious in the change management digital communication experience space, what is one thing that you're really excited about for the future in this space?

– I think innovation, I think that especially now that we have so many organizations, you know, grasping onto a hybrid approach or digital, and even those that are not, I think there's a ton of innovation that's happening to engage employees and I am really excited to see what different tools and resources come out to help companies, you know, roll out their plans and keep their employees engaged.

– Well, thanks for such a great conversation around digital employee communication experiences, I too am excited to see what's gonna happen in the future and potentially how AI is gonna impact all of this

digital communication. So, thanks for taking a couple minutes of your day, Cammie.

– Sure, thank you so much.

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