

- 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 podcast, I have with me Hope Timberlake, keynote speaker, coach, author, founder of Forte Consulting and principal at Timberlake Communications. Hope, thank you so much for jumping on with me.

- Thanks for inviting me, Shari, I'm excited for our conversation.

- So I will have to say just so our listeners know, you are not related to Justin Timberlake. The question has come up a couple times. I'm sure you get it a ton.

- I get it all the time and the number of disappointed faces that I receive when I tell them that, no, I am not related. I wish I were.

- Maybe someday we can have him on and both of you and we'll have like this kismet conversation.

- Oh my gosh, you better invite me on when you get him. Definitely.

- That would be awesome. So we are wrapping up women's history month. And so I thought it'd be so great to have somebody who spends some of her time really helping women level up, you have a book, we'll talk about that a little bit later, but I thought I'd start with, how can women more effectively influence beyond speaking up? Like how do we follow through and how do we do that when we have limited bandwidth?

- Yeah, that's such an important question because while I'm a huge believer in the power of speaking up, the reality is we have, so our jobs are complex. We have so many different interactions and so much on our plates. It's hard to rely simply on speaking up when there's so many other ways to influence. So two things that I like to talk about with influence are one, to always be thinking about adding value. And this is what I tell men, women, young, old, anyone in any role, this is not exclusive, like, oh, women, you need to add value because I think if we were going to find people who add value, typically the women are the ones who do. And often we're also really good at execution. We see a task in front of us and we get it done. And what I see often in my coaching practice is there are so many times that people could take a step back and think, okay, what's the bigger business objective here, or who is, who am I meeting with this week that has a need that I can provide a perspective or I can provide some input that pushes our mutual objectives forward. So having that, when you look at your calendar for the day or the week, think like, okay, are there certain meetings where I can think beyond just the task at hand? And I can think, how can I add value to move our team forward? Our meeting, our business forward, our objective forward. So that's

the first thing. And one of the things that we wanna do or how we wanna do is relationship build. And again, women can be the best relationship builders, at the same time, there are a lot of different nuances to that. So as we're thinking about like our calendar and we look at the day and we think, all right, I'm meeting with Craig in accounting, and Craig is really analytical and very details oriented. And how do I bring the level of accuracy and precision that Craig needs in order for him to hear me and my ideas. So again, it's not about adjusting who you are for someone else. It's about being strategic and persuasive and influential. So when we could adjust to both their communication style, Greg's analytical, I might be big picture of person to their motivations. What do they really value? What do they need in their role or in their career? And the content, can I be really explicit about adding benefits or impact so that they respect me? They see me as a valuable partner and I'm able to push my ideas forward as well.

- Such great tactical advice. And I love the part about not just building relationships for relationship's sake, but really digging into what that person's communication style is. I like that you brought that up. You know, I've done disc training in the past with a lot of employees and teams, and it's amazing once you dig into that, it's like maybe you've butted heads with Craig in the past. And if you just took this different approach and came with the data and the precision, like you said, oh my goodness, game changer.

- Totally it is. And I'm very careful to say, this is not saying that your way is not an authentic, good way. It's that, how are you going to be strategic and influential? And let's do it by really thinking about meeting their needs.

- Speaking of kind of complexity of women balancing a lot of different things. You know, something that I think comes up is, you know, in order to advance, you may need to spend less time with your family. You might need to have less flexibility. You might have to travel more. What are some tips on how we can navigate those conversations?

- I love that you're asking that in such a lovely, calm way, because this question makes my blood boil a teensy bit. It's a good question, it's an important question. It comes up a lot. And what I say is, can we shift the narrative? Can we see that either the person who is telling us this or implying this to us, it's just a limited perspective of one or a small group or the culture of the company that's doing this, it's time to shift, it's time to see things differently. I think sometimes we, and this is again, cross-gender, across ages, sometimes we buy into what's been the norm and the culture in the past. And what I think that is a perfect opportunity with the pandemic to show that we can have a family life and a home life and a personal life and add great value to the business. So it's a really opportune time to say, yes, I can do all this and I'm gonna

take that meeting virtually, or I'm going to be doing this call at 7:00 PM because we have to work with Asia and I'm going to be doing it from my kitchen. And there may be kids in the background. It's hard to find, but if you can look for other role models, male or female, who do a really good job of setting boundaries or who are able to find that like we are, maybe we're not even setting boundaries, but we're integrating our personal and our professional lives. It's helpful to have those in mind because otherwise it feels really oppressive that the only way I'm going to move up the ladder or be well respected is if I'm on the road or I'm working 12 hours at the office. I think this is a really, really tough issue. And I do think it's time for people to reframe and see the value that people can bring to work even if they're not in the office or on the road like we used to be before the pandemic.

- We at Paylocity, we do a biweekly executive call and it's 30 minutes. It's a chance for anybody in our organization to ask our C-suite team questions. And this one that we had just this morning, one of our C-suites had his daughter on his lap during the call and I absolutely loved it. Granted, it was a little distraction 'cause she's adorable. But again, it just highlighted like, hey, there is work life balance, integration, sway, whatever the word you wanna use for it, even at that level and seeing those models I think is so important, like you said. As we think about helping younger generations, as women who are maybe more successful or have been more successful in influencing in their careers, how do we teach that? How do we help those who are more early in their career learn about the nuances of influencing and speaking up, especially as they're starting to just learn, how do I lead across? How do I lead up, if they're not in a leadership role?

- Yeah. I feel very strongly in the data support that we need a diversity of ideas and experiences to create good decisions, to help with innovation, to reduce mistakes and having younger and newer people new to their career as part of these teams and part of these decisions really does help the business. And so one of the things is to challenge and inspire people newer in their career to realize they have interesting perspectives. It might not be as well that it might be, it might be that it's just a off the cuff idea. It might not be the perfect contribution, but to really encourage them to share those ideas, knowing like anyone at any age of their career, there may be mistakes being made. They may share an idea and it may not be the right idea. But if we have a culture that accepts that and welcomes different ideas, different perspectives, that's gonna be really helpful. Another thing that I do a lot with younger women, I really like working with high potential young women, women professionals. And one of the things I do is I call it, we call it the COP model. It's looking at what capabilities do you bring to your job? All right, so where are you good at? What type of skills do you bring to the job? And then the P in the COP model is what passions do you have? What are

you really excited about? Intrigued about, want to pursue? And then the 0 is what does the organization need? And when you take some time to reflect, it's a really, I did a really fun keynote and exercise about this. And when people take time to reflect on where, what their skills are, what their passions are and how can they apply those to what the organization needs, they now have a bigger aperture of seeing how they can add value, how they can benefit those around them. And it's a really empowering exercise and a good way of seeing things more broadly than maybe how they typically view their role.

- I could see it being useful too, as you think about your next steps in your career, helping to define that for yourself and then deciding is the 0 part, right? The organization, can I use my passion and capabilities here the way I want to, or do I need to find that elsewhere? I love that model. We'll include some details to those great resources that you have and how to maybe bring you into an organization to talk about that. You know, we live in this world of instant reactions and instant gratification. You know, often I kind of know what my kid is doing based on his Snapchat story during the day, while he's at school. And I think about this when it comes to women and introverts, you know, people who like to listen and analyze before providing their opinion, in order to have a larger presence, sometimes these people have, don't have their ideas fully thought out. And so they don't wanna jump into a conversation. They wanna be more thoughtful in their response and they don't wanna come across as shy. What advice do you have for, I guess I think creating that space so that they have the time to think, but also not missing an opportunity to speak up.

- Yeah. This is a great question and an important one as well. In a perfect world, we would have, we would get contributions, place equal value on written contributions and spoken contributions. The reality is most companies in the US really do value that spoken word. And we can really lose out on a lot of great ideas by not listening to the thoughtful responses and thoughtful contributions of introverts. If you are an introvert or even if you're a manager and a manager of I'm sure, probably some introverts in your team, the book "Quiet" by Susan Cain is really amazing. It's "The Power of Introverts in an Extroverted World" and has great tips on both for introverts and for those around introverts for integrating them. At the same time while we're still valuing the spoken word while companies tend to value extroverts, I have a tip. I have a strategy for introverts for what I call, in quotes, "preparing to be spontaneous." And what that includes is, again, I'm a big fan of looking at your calendar and predicting what's coming up and seeing, okay, let's just say there's one meeting each day where you're like, I want to contribute, or I need to contribute for visibility and for my career's sake. And in that meeting, I'm going to decide before I get into the meeting, I'm going to identify, what does this team need? What is this objective? What is my contribution to meeting that objective? And then let me craft one

or two specific messages that will help move the objective forward. I'm gonna rehearse them out loud, take your phone and audio record. It might feel silly to do this level of work in the beginning, but it's the idea of like, really think about what's going to be important in the meeting. Let me craft a message or two, let me practice it. And now let me jump in when I hear an opening, or maybe it's not even a perfect opening, but at one point you can say that's an, Shari had an interesting idea. One other idea we should consider is this. I'm not saying it's easy, but the more you do it, the easier it becomes. I become a swimmer because I love exercise, but I can no longer do a lot of hard impact things. And I hate jumping in the cold water. It's my least favorite thing. But the more I do it, the easier it becomes. And I would say, it's analogous to introverts. I get it, it's fearful. It's hard, it's challenging, but you're prepared. You've got your one or two messages and make it a micro goal of like one meeting a week or one meeting a day. I'm going to contribute at least one idea. And the more you do it, the easier it will become.

- And HR professionals have so much to bring to the table right now. If you're not taking advantage of the time right now to start speaking up, it's a missed opportunity. You have a whole book dedicated to this, and I won't say the whole title, but it's called "Speaking Up" comma colon something, I'll include it in our show notes for people, and I'm not gonna spoil it, 'cause I really do think you should go out and read the book. But I'm curious if you could share a little bit of tips or ideas on how women can conquer the fear or I guess leverage fear to speak up more. I think so many times we look at fear as this bad thing, instead of looking at it as the motivation to get to the next thing. So what are some tips you have around that?

- The way in which you ask that question is exactly one of the strategies, it's reframing. Like when we reframe that fear and those nerves and think, oh, okay, this is something that is giving me adrenaline, or this is something that is different than my normal day. Thank goodness I don't have a boring, stable reaction to everything in my day. This is this moment of adrenaline and reframing that of like, wow, this is really tough, but how good am I gonna feel on the other side of this? So there are three specific strategies that I have really embraced and people tend to love and one is flipping the script. And so the script is that that inner critic, that limiting story you're telling yourself, it might be, I have nothing to contribute or I'm not senior enough, or I'm not prepared, or no one listens to me, whatever it may be. And to flip it to its opposite side and say, okay, I have something to contribute. I have an interesting idea. I have something that will help the company. So you flip that script and then you go through, and this is something we should add in your show notes. I have a worksheet that's great for this. You go through and you look at how do you, can you find evidence of your news story? How can you identify actions that you'll take to support your new story? And how will your life be better when you live this new

story? So that's the first strategy is flipping the script. The next one is diving in. It's like what I was talking about with the pool, just diving in, introverts speak up, you know, people who are scared of cold water, jump in, but research shows there's another good book called "Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader." And the one of the premises is that when we actually take on the behaviors and actions of a leader, we will then start to think and feel like a leader. So old research used to say, well, you need to feel confident, you need to think that you're confident. You need to do that before you can look like a leader. And this is reversing that. So taking on those behaviors and you'll feel better. So if I'm fearful, I'm fearful, I'm fearful, I'm gonna take on the presence of someone, a role model, who I really respect, and I'm gonna feel more confident. And the last one is removing the target. Like we had these goals, we had these perfectionist goals of, oh, I need to be perfect. I need to do this right. I need to beautifully planned before I say something. And if instead, just think, all right, I'm gonna do a micro goal. And my micro goal is I'm gonna say one little thing at the meeting today. It might not be the perfect thing to say. It might not even be someone might even argue against it, but that's okay. It's okay. I'm gonna separate myself from the outcome and just make my goal that I contributed today and be okay with whatever reaction I receive, again, hard to do. But all three of these things can be really, really helpful in moving you forward, getting more accustomed to fear and eventually becoming sort of at peace with it, ideally having it less often.

- It's interesting the point you brought up about precision in speaking. I used to think for a long time to be successful in business, I can no longer use the word um or right, or filler words or any of those things. And even when I started this podcast, I would spend hours like removing all those little voice things. And I'm like, but this is how I talk, like this is me, and people wanna hear your authentic self. And granted, if you have a whole speech full of ums, it's a little annoying. Obviously you gotta work on some of that stuff, but our natural speech patterns aren't perfect. We think as we talk and you should be able to bring that to the table, for sure. I love that advice.

- Yeah, our standards for ourselves are so much higher than our standards for others. And it's human to have a you know, a like, an um in our talk. So yes, I love that, that example you gave.

- One of the other things I find is when you're on this journey, right, this journey to speak up more, to have a different presence show up in a different way. Oftentimes, people who are further along in their journey witness scenarios where the vibe in the room is not super supportive of maybe the introvert speaking up, or maybe a junior person speaking up, or maybe, frankly, even a woman speaking up in a room. So how do we, who are a little further along in the journey or

wanna start being further along, how do we help correct the vibe in the room? Because sometimes it's not as obvious as being like, hey, Jan has an idea, I need to let her speak. Sometimes there's more of an undertone.

- Yeah, you're right. It's not always obvious. And yeah, it's complicated. It's very complicated. There are a couple things that I think are helpful. One is finding allies in the room, especially if you have a regular meeting where the vibe is off and you can think who is even just one ally I can have. And I use that term to say, we have some version of a pact so that when, let's say Shari and I are going to be in a meeting together, I'm like, whoa, the vibe is really cold in there, but let's support each other. So then Shari says an idea, or she's asked a question, she answers. And then I agree to amplify her message and say, oh, that's a really interesting idea, Shari. I like your take on this HR strategy that we could use in our business. And so if we can make a pact, we can support each other. We can amplify each other. That's really helpful. There's other ways too, like, let's just say the vibe feels like, all right, they don't wanna hear from me. They don't wanna hear from the women. They don't wanna hear from the introverts, whatever it may be, still think appealing to the objective in the room, like what everyone can agree on and just saying, okay, hey, you know, we've got a lot of chatter happening or perhaps it's tension and you're using a euphemism of chatter for tension. And you say, so I think the important thing we can all agree on is we need to hire a more diverse workforce in 2022. So let's focus on that aspect of our goal for today. Something that you can say that everyone in the room can agree on whatever that statement is so that you're bringing the tone down and you're reminding people that we're all on one team together. So let's be supportive of that goal.

- One other thing I'll add to that, if you are thinking about how you help your managers think about this more, you know, one of the things that I, what I have seen that seems benign, but can actually say a lot to women in the room is when you have senior leaders who are men and when other men walk in the room, they're like, how was your weekend? How was that golf thing? How is that, how is this? And then the females walk in the room and they don't get the same sort of, how was your weekend? What did you do? How was your family? How was the golfing, how was this, how was that? Teach your managers to do that. You know, going back to what you said about relationship building, you can have opposite sex relationships at work that help move the business forward. That's okay. It's okay to have those personal conversations, you don't need to silo them. So I think that's something that we continue to work on and to teach about how to do that in a way that feels comfortable, obviously, for everybody involved. But yeah, just setting that tone for those meetings. I love that.

- Yeah. Yeah. No, it's a good point because we do, yeah, people biased

towards the goal for whatever that is and how can we be part of that conversation too, and be like, okay, well, Frank, it seemed like you had a great time golfing. Did you know that Shari and I were, I don't know, we did wine tasting and it was really fun.

- Yeah, I absolutely love it. Well, Hope, you gave me a lot of resources. I'll make sure that they're in the show notes for everybody, including a link to your book and your website and all the amazing things you're doing. So thanks for taking a few minutes to chat with me.

- Thank you, I loved it.

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