

- 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. Joining me today on the podcast is Valerie Grubb. She is a keynote speaker, executive coach and trainer. I actually was originally introduced back in 2018 to Val during a presentation she gave at SHRM's annual conference. And I still use those tips today, Val, that I learned during that presentation. So thanks for joining me today.

- Oh, absolutely. You've certainly made my day hearing that you're still using the tips 'cause that really is what it's all about.

- Oh, I absolutely agree.

- Yeah, when you hear something it's about, can I implement this and do, and really put this into practice? And so you've made my day mic drop moment for sure.

- Well, good. When I was thinking about what I wanted to chat with about, I was like, where do we even start? You've got this amazing career in HR, helping HR professionals rise to the next level from being better negotiators to increasing their productivity, not to mention writing a book called "Clash of the Generations: Managing the new Workplace Reality" so important right now. So I thought we could start with maybe you sharing a little bit about your background and how you got to where you are today.

- Absolutely, so I actually spent 20 years in corporate America before going out on my own. My undergrad was in mechanical engineering and I spent 11 years with Rolls Royce making aircraft engines. I then pivoted careers to end switched industries and helped to found a company called IAC for Barry Diller. You may not have heard of IAC, but we bought Home Shopping Network. We bought Ticketmaster, we bought Expedia, we bought match.com. Didn't help me get a date on match.com, which I'm still a little bitter and angry about but hat's a different story there. After IAC, I then moved companies and helped to found the women's cable channel Oxygen for Oprah Winfrey. And when we sold Oxygen to NBC universal, I went to NBCU for six months. Absolutely hated it and decided to go out on my own. And that was 14 years ago and I have never regretted that decision.

- Wow, how fascinating. I didn't know that engineering was in your background, so cool.

- Yeah, yeah. It was my parents pushed me into it. It's a great career, it gave me a structure like how to structurally solve problems. And it has helped me to this day, even though I may not doing hardcore engineering and figuring out fan blades and things for

Rolls Royce or whatever, but it just gave me a real structure and a discipline, which I use in my productivity. That's part of the project management sort of style that I follow in becoming more productive in my day in tackling problems and figuring out how to solve problems. And that's really kind of what I was known for when I was in corporate America, is that I may not know how to do it, but I can tell you that I can figure it out. And I think that's a skillset that sort of defines HR. Like you're the, just get it done person. You're the get it done department. And so a structured approach, I think has always served me well in HR and anything that I've done.

- Absolutely and you could not have teed up my next question better because I really wanted to focus in, on increasing productivity. You know, a lot of HR professionals are high discretionary effort people, but it doesn't necessarily mean we are the most efficient people.

- You're not alone. I would say there's a lot of other departments within corporate America who would jump on that bandwagon as well. Others aren't doing it better, I would say.

- Yeah.

- So don't feel you're alone.

- How do we identify where those gaps are for us? Because like you said, we're so focused on getting it done that sometimes we forget to evaluate how can I do it more efficiently?

- Yeah, you're absolutely right. And that's, again, we all, I think there's something about HR that if you're drawn to this profession, you are somebody who also likes that check mark. Like you are a person who can figure it out. And so, you get involved in a lot of things and the challenge is, look, it ends up July and you go, have I started any of my big projects and now I've got six months to get 'em done versus the 12 months at the start of the year. And so my advice, what I would suggest, and I can say, what has worked well for me is to track our time. And I know this sounds like a pain, and by the way it is, but we need to get a hand on where we spend our time. And so what I suggest is for one week, track what you spend your time doing, then analyze that on Monday and see where you're being inefficient and then make a plan to do something about it. Now, if you look at that and you go, oh my God, Val, I'm never gonna track my time for a week. If that sounds overwhelming, that's fine. Then start with a day, track today what you do and then analyze at the end of the day or tomorrow morning, where were you most productive? When were you not and why? And then make a plan for the next day to kill those inefficiencies. So plan your harder tasks for your productive time and everything else for that not so productive time. As an example, I only briefly check email in the morning because that's when my brain is like firing on all thrusters. So I have to work on the meaty nasty stuff that takes a lot of brain

power because I am at my most efficient in the morning. And I save inefficient things like answering emails or other goofy stuff, I'll do that when I'm least efficient. And so, and what I find is if I start something mean and nasty in the afternoon, it takes double the time. And instead of when I'm most productive, and then it's really about, once I understand when I'm at my most productive, then blocking my calendar and sticking to it. And another trick that I do is I always finish one project in the morning. I don't multitask, I pick one thing, I keep everything shut down and I get that done. And that helps to set me up for success in being singularly focused, knocking in and out, getting it done. And that success for me, really fuels more success. And I think that, I think a lot of times we leave all of Slack and email and our phone's on and everything else on. And every time we get a ping or a little icon comes up, that says, you've got mail, there's this habit of going after it. And that seriously kills our inefficiency. So get up in the morning, make sure your boss hasn't sent you, make sure there's no hair on fire in the morning by your standards and by your boss' standards. Close that thing down, focus on doing one task and getting it done, something worthwhile, get it done, and that success is gonna set you up for the rest of the day and just really be ruthless about how you spend your time.

- I love those suggestions. There's a couple that I use in my own day in how I manage things and email in the morning for 30 minutes and then email in the afternoon, because for me, email is everybody else, Teslas for me. And it's kind of mundane. Like you talked about, I can just sit and respond to emails. Doesn't create a lot of brain power. I also do the close my email, close Teams and focus on a task because my flow state gets interrupted if I have all that stuff up to interrupt me. And like you said, I think it was really important that you pointed out expectations of your boss, right. Have that conversation. So they know if somebody's hair does catch on fire, how should they get ahold of you? There's always gonna be a way.

- Yep, absolutely, absolutely. And I mean, we have our phones and I keep that on, I have it on silent, I have it on do not disturb, but I can and just being very open and communicative with my boss or with my clients, they understand that, they understand efficiencies and rarely do people's hair catch on fire. Like it just really, I mean, how often has that truly happened? It just you can count on one hand over a lifetime where I've seen where it's truly been hair on fire. And so I just think that we have to, we just have to be so protective of our time and understand that email to me is just a email to me is the definitive time thief. 'Cause if you started right now, like how many emails do you get in a day, Shari? How many emails do you think you get in a day?

- I'm probably somewhere between 80 and a 100 a day.

- 80 and a 100 emails.

- Yeah.

- And let me just say no email or maybe five of those you can answer in two minutes or less, the rest, you have to read all the history. You've gotta reply. You gotta think about what you're gonna say, and then you've gotta reply. So you're talking 15 minutes, uninterrupted, 10 to 15 minutes, maybe for those things that actually really have some me to 'em and how many times have we started email and you wake up and you're like, oh my God, it's 11 o'clock I gotta get doing something. And then it's almost lunchtime. So it's really this idea of tracking what sucks your time and then doing some and focus and doing something different about that. Even if it means brute forcing yourself. And I'm telling you, when I first started this, I practically had the jitters thinking that, oh my God, the world is coming to an end. And what I found is that it wasn't, that as long as I have an auto reply that says I'm on a project, I'll be back on at noon central time bear with me. If it truly is urgent, text me and my clients have my cell phone and they can text me. So that's how we start to train people that I'll get back to them and really kind of seize control of our calendar versus letting just the time go by and letting other people use our time.

- I think finally.

- I would say this saying that look, people will use your time as if it's free because it is to them. And so, that's what we have to not get caught up in, in this drama of what everybody else needs from us.

- Figuring out the best way to manage your email early on in your career and if you haven't done it yet, stop what you're doing and figure it out. And the reason I say that is because once you have found a rhythm that works for you for email, then you don't have that added stress of just thinking about email all the time.

- Oh my gosh.

- You have either dedicated time or you have a dedicated system. I just discovered that Microsoft One Note has some automation that you can create, where if you flag an email, you can have it basically create a page in One Note. And so for those emails that are like, I can't respond to this today. It's gonna become a project, I need to take more time. That's how I've been doing it. And it's been a huge time saver because then I have time built into my day to go look at that list. And I don't have to worry about that email, so.

- It's even things going into folders.

- Yeah.

- Like I have, when it comes to certain projects, it automatically going into folders. One Note has that Outlook has that, like really I think we just have to think about our time differently and just understand that to me, it's our most precious resource. How do you manage your money? Like money is a precious resource. I mean, think about the time that you spend to manage your money and think about money and plan, big purchases. And we need to have that same relationship with time. Because to me that is time is money. I mean, I know we've heard that, but now more than ever, I just feel like things have gotten more out of hand, like the pressures on HR over these past two years and look at how we rose to, look at how we rose to the challenge. And we now have to really think about how we spend that time and really get a process that works for us.

- What has been your advice on how to eliminate some of that time theft and I think I'm thinking very specifically about you have that employee or that manager who's always coming in to you for advice, but often, never takes it. And they end up just being this time sock and you don't wanna seem unapproachable. You want be a helpful resource, but you gotta create some better boundaries. Do you have some tips for that?

- I always suggest when somebody says that to me, I said, "What would you do if a friend came to you with that same problem?" You would have an answer for them. You would say you would coach them to have a conversation with that person and mention that you don't have the time to chat today. You would also coach them on how to call somebody on the carpet for not taking your advice. Meaning we spoke about this last week, you chose to, in the past several, in the past three incidences, you've come and we've discussed it. I've offered advice, You've not done it. So what's your goal with the conversation today? And again, it really is about, I love your comment about creating good boundaries. We have an HR and most leaders, most people manage people leaders have open door policies that does not mean that you can come in at any point that you want. That means that I will be, have an open door to listen to you and to assist, but I will fit that into my schedule unless it's hair on fire and seize control. Now is not a good time, I'm in the midst of a project. I will definitely schedule some time with you when here are my availability, here's my availability. And I have a tendency to schedule calls like that almost kind of back to back, things that I'm not walking out with some action items on. Cause I do those back to back, A, it limits it. I got half an hour. Let's get into, let's talk about this. But again, as we would coach a friend, we would say, look, Tyrell, you've come in these past three. We've had conversations, we've had three conversations and you're not following what I'm suggesting. Here's what I suggested. First, you did this, second time I suggested this, you did this third time, you suggested this and you did this. I don't think I'm not sure that I'm bringing value to you. And the key is, is that it, it feels a little bit like a waste of my time. So let's talk about how we can make this

more productive for you and I, you don't have to be mean about it. This is just a conversation about stating facts and let's make better use of our time together. So how can I help you that you will actually listen to it and think that I know what I'm talking about. That's not a conversation that we tell everybody else to do it. I think we sort of have to practice what we preach and what we, or what we're singing to the choir or whatever the heck we're doing, about what we ask our managers to do and our people leaders to do and others to do. We have to take that same brilliant advice and apply it ourselves. And we should never assume our time is just as valuable as the CEO's, probably more so because we touch more people on a day to day basis. And so it's not the best use of your time. You are wasting time if you're spending it with somebody who doesn't listen or who's just a flat time thief. And by the way, I've had these conversations with my boss. Now I'm a little more political of saying, oh, you've got, when can I, I'm in the middle of a project for you and I'm really on deadline for you. Can I get on your calendar for later today or tomorrow? So I'm a little more political if it's my boss, who's killing my time, but otherwise I still, I guard my time ruthlessly. And I think that we just have to be honest and have a conversation about, I do have an open door policy. It's just, it has to fit in with my schedule.

- I think your advice about thinking about it, having a conversation with a friend is a really good framework because I think most of us can have that conversation. And it probably is a more casual conversation obviously than you would have with a manager. But I think the framework is still there. As we wrap up our conversation, I wanted to ask you about managing burnout. So you've done your best to manage your time, but maybe you're just still feeling overwhelmed. Maybe your workload is that way. Maybe you don't have the support from your supervisor you'd like, I feel like a lot of HR professionals are in this burnout space right now, especially when it comes to managing their time. Do you have anything that's worked for you as you've tried to make sure you manage burnout?

- Yeah, absolutely. I think sleep is my biggest issue. If I don't sleep, I'm telling you I'm a raging lunatic, Shari and everything is bleak. And I've figured out that what works for me and that's doing something fun before I go to bed, reading, watching a favorite funny TV show, having drinks with friends that something about focusing on something that's fun. And I need that between myself and bedtime, because if I work till eight or nine o'clock, or let's say I work till seven, have to get the dinner ready for the kids. And then I've got half an hour, an hour before I go to bed. I'm just exhausted. I've got to have. And the challenges is that I then my mind focuses on work all night long and it wakes me up. I wake up at three o'clock, four o'clock thinking about that I need to go to bed, having had something fun or enjoyable. And that break between the stuff I'm being paid to do and stuff that I want to do allows my mind to let that go. Because

again, I can tell you if I don't have sleep, it's gonna be a tough day the next day. So that is most critical to me. I also, I take a 10 or 15 minute nap in the afternoon, like I'm seriously about two to three o'clock. Oh, it's like, I just feel my entire energy, like start to lag. I don't fall asleep, but I just lay down for 10 minutes. I set the alarm, I just let my mind relax. And in that, when I get up, I am back at it and way more efficient because I've just given my mind a break. Now I've tried to, I'll walk around the block, again, it's just something to get up from my desk and give my mind a break. And that gets me through that afternoon when I know I'm sluggish anyway. And so, those are my big things, but I also, I practice positive self talk. I could tell you, I never let myself beat up on myself. And I say, never look, I mean, I do it, but I nip that bad mood. I nipped that negative self talk in, as soon as I hear it, as soon as I feel it in my head, I nip that in the bud, because all that does is just create this negative spiral. And it takes brute force to get your mind off of ruminating. Oh God, I'm so far behind, I'm tired. I'm this, that and the other. No, no, no, I'm going to, I'm gonna focus on one thing at a time and I'm gonna focus on one thing at a time for the next half an hour. I'm gonna give myself permission to focus on this for half an hour. I'm gonna set an alarm on my phone. So I don't have to look at the clock. I'm gonna focus on this one thing for half an hour, and then at half an hour, I'm gonna take a break. So again, and that's brute forcing my mind to focus on something. And if I do that at the end of that half an hour, I'm in, I feel like I've gotten something accomplished. And again, that helps me with this idea of burnout because I feel like when I'm in this burnout mode, that I'm just not getting anything done that I do a little bit over here and I do a little bit over here, but nothing's getting done. And there's something about that idea of success. And I celebrate that, even if it's the fact that boy, sometimes I just got through the day. Last thing I will say on burnout is I also just try to keep things in perspective. I am overloaded, everybody is overloaded. I don't know anybody who's not overloaded right now. If I work the biggest priorities, I recognize that there's only so much time that I can do. There's only so much that I can do. And particularly as what you said, Shari, that if my boss isn't supporting me, there's still only so much that you can do. So to be honest, work the priorities that are important to your boss to keep him or her off your back, and then focus on other things. I can't, you can't beat yourself up for that. I can't beat myself up for that. I really focus on giving myself a break. And sometimes it's just the best that I can do to get through the day. And it is about just nobody's gonna take care of us, but us. And so we have to learn to say no to our boss, because if we keep piling stuff up, we're not gonna be able to deliver it anyway. And we know that that's gonna affect our performance. So be conscious of the fact of, boss, I'd love to take that on, but I have these three other priorities for you, which one of these sits, which one of these do you want me to put by the wayside? Because I cannot do them all together. Well, you have to get them done. You gotta get 'em all done. I can't,

there's not enough time in the day. So which one sits? I don't have to be mean, but I have to be able to come back and set those boundaries and be clear in the fact that I'm already overloaded. Something has to give. And sadly, it's not gonna be me. So learn to, we coach others on saying no, but we don't do it ourselves. So now's the time to not raise that hand and volunteer for things. Now's the time to say, I'll get to that in three months.

- I really like all that advice. I too have struggled with the sleep thing. My mind kind of continues to go. One of the things that worked for me is I keep a notebook next to my bed so that when I wake up and I have those moments, instead of stressing all night, I just quickly write it down. Whatever the thing is, that's rolling around in my head and that's enough for my brain to go, okay, you put a pin in that now I don't have to think about it anymore.

- And it's smart Shari to do a notebook. Don't use your phone and put it in the notes section because A, you don't want that blue light, blue light's gonna wake you up and get your mind firing. But also there's the tendency to check email.

- Yes.

- Or to check social very quickly. And then that turns into, oh my God, I can't believe that person responded like that. I can't believe this is still going on. So I think it's very important what you just said is to keep a notebook, write it down, not your phone and leave that phone, turn that phone off and just brute force yourself to not touch that rascal.

- Yeah, the last thing I wanna say before we get off, you talked about, the brute force in the conversations you're having with yourself. And I find that fascinating because we see all these really great videos of moms teaching their daughters, these affirmation statements, right? I'm smart, I'm powerful. I'm whatever the I am statement is, but us as adult women, sometimes don't even do that for ourselves, right? I am smart, I'm confident. I'm a great negotiator. I'm, whatever the affirmation statement you need is. So I think that's something we can do more of. And that just in our heads, right? In the mirror, out loud, when we're brushing our teeth or doing our hair, like what a great idea to continue to reinforce the hard work that we've done on ourselves and where we're at.

- I do it every day, Shari. I do it every day because every day I go to bed, I'm behind. I've never had a day that I haven't been behind, but that doesn't make me a bad person and I will do my best tomorrow. And I was successful in these projects. This is still on the back burner. This is still on my list. And I will see what tomorrow holds and see about I'll block my time. I'll do my best so that I can really focus on getting stuff done. And other than that, it doesn't make me a



bad person. I think I do it every day. And I practice gratitude. When I wake up in the morning, I say three things I give gracious that I'm happy about. And I do that three things before I go to bed and remind myself, wow, today was a great day. I just, we just have to realize life is so fragile. I feel like after this two years, life is just so fragile. Like just enjoy, you've got to enjoy life. And I understand that you're being paid to do a job. We're all being paid. We all have to be paid to pay rent or mortgages and all of this, and that's all right. Plus it keeps us outta trouble, right? I mean, I'd be a wreck if I didn't have a job to go to, I'd be in some serious trouble living in New Orleans. But so it's good to have that structure in there, but I can't allow that to really tear down my self worth and my confidence and the key is that I'm letting that happen, if that's happening, I'm allowing it. And I think exactly, like you said, through that positive affirmation, reminding ourselves that my, gosh, I made the bed today. I did get something accomplished. Maybe that's the only thing I'm gonna get accomplished today, but by gosh, I didn't, this was not a waste of a day. So I think it's just, we just really, I think you're just so stressed we allow that to happen and it happens very slowly. And so, start now, start today. If you can't think of three, give yourself one thing that you're proud of for yourself, pat yourself on the back and say that today I did a good job, today I I did a good job.

- I absolutely love it. Thank you so much for such a great conversation and taking a few minutes of your day to chat with me.

- Absolutely Shari, a real pleasure. Thank you so much, always and good luck to everybody, be hard on the problem and be soft on ourselves.

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