

Changing role of HR: the reality of what business partnering is and how it can be achieved through business acumen, 'soft skills' and problem solving

Speaker 1
0:00:05 - 0:01:53

Welcome back to The Spark shaping a world class HR podcast programme. I'm Jane Latimer, and we're very fortunate today to be hearing from Kirsten Watson Chief People Officer at Transport for New South Wales discuss the changing role of HR and the reality of business partnering. Whilst Kirsten describes herself as an accidental HR leader, I'm sure you'll agree her perception of the skills, attributes and mindset needed by today's HR practitioners reflect a deep understanding of an extensive knowledge of our profession. Listen as well, for her tips on how to guide your own learning journey to continuously grow your skills. Enjoy. Hi, I'm Tanya Hammond, CEO of Tailored HR Solutions. I have the pleasure today of speaking with Kirsten Watson, who will be sharing with us her insights in relation to the reality of what business partnering is and how it can be achieved through business acumen, soft skills and problem solving. Welcome, Kirsten. Thank you, Tania great to be here. The first question I ask everyone is a little bit about your background and your current roles. So as you said I am the Chief People Officer at Transport. This is the first time that transports had this role, I took it on about a year ago and love it, I really love working with the executive on the significant transformation of transport to become a really joined up, customer focused organisation, that's less about the mode of transport and more about end to end customer journeys. We've got cultural aspirations of the customer at the centre, people at the heart and working together for the greater good. And when Rodd Staples, the Secretary, created the Chief People Office Role, it's a role on the people and culture division.

Speaker 1
0:01:53 - 0:03:45

It was with the objective of really bringing to life, that cultural aspiration of putting people in the heart. And this, he said, is the challenge that we would know it succeeded when people really felt that in their daily lives. It's a great challenge to have. I think we've done a lot in a year. We're a long way from saying the job's

done, but it's a job that I love doing. I'm an accidental HR director. I really fell into HR, to be honest, and I actually fell into public service, in many ways. I started my early career doing consulting, the multinational consulting firm in a practice, novel at the time, change management and worked on organisational reform programmes, which were, to be honest, a lot more about IT implementation back then. And through a series of moves interstate and different opportunities, I joined the public service in 2003 I think it was. I was working on projects and I sort of took on general management role of miscellaneous business services? Let's call it. And they were all quite disconnected, but one of the things that was within that was facilities management. Fast forward through that, I was keen to do something more strategic with facilities management and led one of the first workplace reform programmes in the New South Wales Public Service, in the McKell building, and my peers in HR, I was very keen to have them involved in this because I could see the power of the physical environment to drive cultural change, but they didn't really become very involved in it until through the machinery of government and other changes that were happening around 2008. Structural changes happened and HR was moved under my responsibility. Because HR was also going to be working with me they also moved into the open plan environment.

Speaker 1
0:03:45 - 0:05:52

It was great having HR so much more involved in that workplace change. But for me it was also great being able to get more involved in HR. When I first started working in change management, it was quite separate to HR, the practices of change management and HR were quite different disciplines. I could see the power in both and I feel that more and more especially this year during COVID-19, but also any large organisational reform requires people to be engaged through that process and who better to do that through, than from HR. So we at Transport have got the aspiration in our organisation of a 40 year strategy. But we've got a 40 year future transport strategy and we've got a 0 to 10 year blueprint and within that blueprint we've got would say a big hairy ambition to become Australia's best place to work by 2029 and it's in that context that what we're really focused on is creating a place where we have thriving people doing meaningful work. And I think so much of my career experience is a line in the pursuit of that objective. That's really interesting and it would be good to explore that a little bit further into

our conversation, but I'm really keen to hear, so you've said that you're accidentally into HR - if you think of 2003 to today, if you kind of fast forward what's been the most significant changes you've observed in the role that HR is playing from 2003 to now 2020. So I think the shift in expectations of our internal clients and customers that what we ought to be able to do for them, is so much beyond admin processes and speaking with the naughty people. The strategic value that HR can bring in terms of unlocking the potential of the organisation by having our people understand the strategic objective of the organisation.

Speaker 1
0:05:52 - 0:07:54

So there's a strong alignment piece that comes there but with also a strategic advisory function that goes with well how do you do that? So it's both understanding the voice of the executives and translating that into processes that align but also understanding and having our finger on the pulse of our people and being able to advise the executive of about the best strategies in order to achieve them. As I say change Management is key to that. Even before COVID-19, there's no genuine BAU. Pretty much everyone is in the pursuit, something, and therefore things have to change, so it's really important that HR practitioners see their role as pursuing something that we're not at yet and therefore it's change management. I think in different organisations some people think of L&D part of HR or not to me it is absolutely. It's really important that all of the levers for people management are seen in the context of a broader system and investing in the capability about people is one of the clearest ways to demonstrate to our people how much we value them and also a smart bet in terms of pursuing new organisational objectives. The thing with HR in the past was that it might have been seen as administrative and the thing with change management in past is that it might have been seen as soft and fluffy, making people feel good about something. But the power of strategic HR, people and culture groups is that they're neither of those things. They're not administrative nor soft and fluffy. They're really clear on their pursuit of organisational objectives, increasingly driven by evidence and data and problem solving skills and able to measure their progress and performance in terms of people's increasing alignment with the organisational strategy.

Speaker 1
0:07:55 - 0:09:27

So obviously a large amount of change and I understand as the Chief People Officer of the workforce, around 30,000 people, that you're also leading a large

chain of HR business partners. Be really great if you could share your thoughts on what you see is a good HR business partner and what they do and how they add value to the organisation. So I think HR is a great function to be involved in and all parts of HR have their different challenges. But I've got to say partnering is one of the most challenging, in all of the different aspects that need to come together to make a really great equal partner. So I'll start, I guess, with some of the normal HR types of things that I think it takes for a great business partner to be successful. First is an interest in and understanding of the whole organisation's business strategy and context. It's impossible for an organisation to achieve its goals unless every division branch team and individual is aligned with those. And therefore the role of the partner is to understand that macro picture and what that success would look like that and then understand the organisational unit that you're working with no matter this size, no matter whether it's a division of 3000 people or a team of 50 people. What is it that that team needs to do particular do differently and when it needs to do it and how it needs to do it in order to achieve those organisations goals. So if I give you an example of what's happening at Transport.

Speaker 1
0:09:27 - 0:10:53

We're undergoing a very significant organisational reform which is moving us from the historical organising principle of agencies is formed on the basis of the mode of transport they deliver - trains, buses, ferries, roads to being much more oriented around the customer, with geography being a strong proxy for customer because it's within a certain geography that so we've got the division of Greater Sydney and the division of Regional and Outer Metropolitan and all modes of transport exist within that and need to operate in a really joined up way in order to deliver end to end customer journeys. So the you can see this is much more than an organisational restructure its a paradigm shift, and it's really important that what we did at the top level of the organisation, designing nine divisions with a very sharp eye to how those divisions need to support and work with each other that that principle of an integrated whole remains intact as we go throughout the entire organisation's design. It was all really early on how easy it was once we'd done that, design the top level or operating model design of the divisions that each branch is going to start running with the own org design which would have rapidly lost the entire objective of the reform.

Speaker 1
0:10:54 - 0:12:43

And so it's really important that each partner who's supporting each branch understands that overarching objective so that they can be mindful of the upstream strategic intent as they're doing their specific branch but equally that they're looking across the entire span of the organisation and, forming networks and partnerships so that the organisational unit that they're helping to design and select the right capability for is designed in full visibility and thoughtful processes with parts of the organisation within which it needs to work. Our people partners didn't understand that strategic context they could easily be doing things within those structures or within recruitment or other activities that would be not only misaligned but would undermine our strategic intent. So understanding the business in context is a really important one, also understanding the aspiration we call it the aspiration for the culture that we need to achieve and being a guardian, both an exemplar and a guardian of that culture, and helping the organisational unit that you're supporting to bring that to life. Also being a courageous voice when there's things in there that are misaligned. So our aspirational culture in transport is to really, truly put the customer at the centre, people at the heart and work together for the greater good. Those words roll very easily off the tongue. If we spent time unpacking them with our people. What would that really look like? Well, that really feel like what would it sound like? What would we be prioritising if those things were really true? And it becomes apparent that you can say that phrase very easily, but to live it is an entirely different thing.

Speaker 1
0:12:43 - 0:14:35

And so people partners need a deep understanding of the culture that we're seeking to achieve because culture is formed by the choices that we make or don't make every day at a micro level, so the more people can understand the culture, the aspirations of the culture, the more they can find the things that are getting in our way. One of the biggest levers for culture is leadership because leaders have the longest shadow in an organisation. And so people partners are at a particularly influential position in an organisation because predominantly people partners are working with leaders at different levels throughout the organisation and leaders choices and behaviours have the strongest bearing, on whether the culture ships in the direction of the organisation needs to or not. So people partners need to be very trusted coach to the leaders they're supporting. They need to have a relationship that's based on trust and, framed in credibility, but also to be

courageous, to say that leader something along the lines of 'When you say this or do this, don't say this, and don't do this. This is the impact of your behaviour and being able to have that conversation,, I think that significantly different to being the person who's going to chase down the lost form or expedite a recruitment process, there's also a role for people partners to facilitate relationships more broadly within people and culture and across the organisation. Across the organisation, I see this happen quite a lot because often it's the people partner who's got one of the closest relationships with the leader that they're serving. And so other functions well often rely on the people partner to be a sounding board or an entry point to that leader. IT different organisational functions.

Speaker 1
0:14:35 - 0:16:21

We find we'll often come to us because we've got those established forums and relationships. But also it's important that within people and culture, within the operating model of people and culture, the people partners know when to draw in the subject matter experts and also know when to facilitate others working directly the whole unit, or the leader. I've seen this work well and I've seen this work badly, when the people partner is not confident of the role that they're performing and the value that they're partnering and advice and coaching and you know strategic perspective can bring. It's not uncommon for a people partner to take cover in a really specific organisational process and I've seen this play out a few times, in particular with recruitment processes. Now in a couple of organisations I've introduced specialists, recruitment teams with recruiters and sources and people who really live and breathe recruitment candidates and can do that process in a really professional way and more than once I've seen people partners see that is taking something away from them and resist that change. Because I think the concreteness of that recruitment activity gave them a sense of meaning and identity. And, I think it's really important that people partners see the value in specialist functions and bring them in and not use the cover of a specific process to give them a reason to talk to their leader. The reason to talk to the leader should be a deep understanding of the business and an understanding of their objectives and how to drive. And then the last thing I would say in this is that, and I touched on it earlier is to be an independent voice. You could do that by having the pulse of the people.

Speaker 1
0:16:21 - 0:17:53

Being able to hear what internal and external clients are saying and just having something to contribute it at the leadership table as a member of the team, when you add all that together, one of the people I was talking to recently talked about the two contrasts of partnering and that experience when X wasn't there and so a partner that they had that was within transport into one of the operating agencies of the time, the model, was that people partners were deployed in to, operating agencies from the centre and the first partner that came out took a real compliance and policing type of approach. He was going to tell the business what they weren't doing right, was going to report back to the centre and, force the business to do the things that the partner should be doing the way they thought they should be doing it. As a result, that partner insisted that they ought to be invited to the leadership meetings as well. But this leader said no to that, because the trust just wasn't there and so for a whole raft of reasons that people partner didn't succeed. When the next people partner was introduced to business, she said, look, I'm just going to spend 3 months getting to really know your business. I really want to understand significant operational infrastructure, business What we do. How you do it. Who your people are what your issues are, and I think once I've absorbed this and I've observed all of the things that are going well and not so I'll be in a better position to work with you and show you what I can do to help us succeed.

Speaker 1
0:17:53 - 0:19:45

The really key differences there were seeking to understand, we're in this together, also calling out sometimes we're going to need we... We're going to need to do things because that's in the broader context of transport, but I'll be really clear about that. We'll work out how to do that as well as to meet our organisational unit objectives. I think it's in that context that the people partner can really succeed when they've got the courage, the confidence and the trust and the relationships to assimilate all of those that might seem like competing priorities. But it's just the day to day, the day to day life of a HR business partner partner can often be completely, as you begin your day thinking that you're going to do X and you end up doing Y. And it is, frankly, the nature of that role. It can be really reactive it can be. I do think that part of that is because we still don't have our operating models entirely right, either, I do think that we could have much more streamlined processes and systems and visibility of problems before they come up. So I'm really committed in our people and cultural operating model in Transport. At it's

most simplistic level it's got three parts, although it looks much more complex than that, there's partnering, there's specialised functions or what some people might call centres of expertise and, then there's services and systems and that services and systems part is really underdone. So I've established a new team for us to work on services and systems, and it's that it would be a strong interface with transport shared services, which is where the transactional work will be done. But my first objective is to see, watch people partners in particular are doing so we can commit better systems and reporting.

Speaker 1
0:19:45 - 0:21:43

Just try and get some more of that reactive aspects up. We almost call of what this strategic we need to be strategically reactive so that we're not chasing our tail. I often ask, I know you started reflecting around the role of the business partner and talked about the fact that you have to have that kind of macro picture the strategic context. I'm often asked what do you mean by the term business acumen. I'm sure you are asked that as well. Well, from your perspective, what does it mean for you and why is it really important for business partners to have that business acumen. I'll start with the why first, we're only here to serve the business and to help them achieve what they are here to achieve. Not here to make award winning HR processes our objective is to achieve the business objectives. And so everything that we do, we have to question. Does it make the boat go faster, or does it actually slow it down or steer it in a different direction? If the target is the business objective, I just want to debunk the myth that we're going to ever trade off compliance or basic obligation that's given. No business can succeed if it's breaching its basic obligations. So that's that's the same for HR as it is for any function. So why we need to care about business acumen? It is because it's measuring business outcomes. This is the way ourselves should measure on success. What the business needs to achieve. And that's why really immersing yourself in the entity within which you're serving and the org unit that you're partnering with to understand what is their strategic intent. What is their operating model, where are their value drivers? how do they measure success? Are they on track or not?

Speaker 1
0:21:44 - 0:23:33

And it will be different in different parts of the business, and I think that makes for a really invaluable business partner to actually be able to put some of those pieces together from different parts of the business, because the advice they can give into

the business will be much more rounded as a result. But if I look at transport, we've got parts of our business that are using the term strategic planning. We've got parts that are focused on infrastructure capital build. We've got parts that are focused on operating day of service operational delivery and each of them have a different value chain within them, different cycles, some of them a daily cycles. Some of them are 10 year cycles, but its understanding what the nature of that business is and whether it's operating model is best aligned with that. I think org design is one of the areas which is really hard to find people with deep experience so I'd encourage people to really invest in what they can do to get good experience in org design. I really don't mean org structure design. I mean, thinking through operating models and service delivery models, then all the way through to the detailed boxes and lines on the page, so it's important that what we do isn't theoretical, but it's housed in what the business itself needs to achieve within the organisational context. Read business strategies, attend leadership meetings, ask questions, talk to the finance partners. Site visits are really important to get out and talk to people. Just ask them what they're what they're doing, what their job is and, what gets in the way of them doing a great job and how we could make a better. There's a really practical things that people can do to increase their business acumen. Great response.

Speaker 1
0:23:33 - 0:25:21

I did have the pleasure of interviewing Rodd recently You'd be interested to know he shot the same, the importance of getting out in the organisation. See, understand. So you have the ability to emphasise, you've walked. You've seen the complications and as you have said earlier you've got so many different components of what you do to make the whole and I guess the world is really different now and from a term that we're hearing a lot more around volatile uncertain complex and ambiguous world. You touched on this a moment ago around the process that it's not enough now to have great processes. We've got to operate in quite a different and adaptable way to support our organisations as we go through this ongoing change, what from your perspective are the personal attributes that you believe individuals require of a great HR business partners within this modern context. So I'm going to start again with trust and relationships because when there is so much volatility, and an certainty, you want to be starting from a basis that you could believe the person who's in front of you believe what

they're saying, that they'll do what they'll say and that they have your back and vice versa. An example of that is, one of my peers was telling me about the partner he's working with currently. And she'll say to him, now you know, I'm really committed to the success of your business and he'll say, Oh no, what have I done now? He's just ripe for the conversation because he knows that she's coming from a place of wanting him to succeed and he's open to having a conversation. So I think the second thing is being able to communicate really well. Leaders don't have much time.

Speaker 1
0:25:21 - 0:27:08

They've we really do need to be able to, get to the heart of a problem really quickly and I do find sometimes that people are too delicate, diplomatic and that's hard. It's really hard reading between the lines. So work on the good trusted relationship and then just go with the forthright communication. Especially with the leader that you're working with, mitigated with different audiences, is when you're sitting at the leadership table I think it's important that a partner can communicate and can participate in a conversation and hold their ground of that conversation. That means being able to frame contribution to a dialogue in a respectful and clear way and be open, to taking different directions, not being positional or defensive. It's certainly not accusing. Being tyrants of ambiguity is absolutely key. Tanya as you said priorities do change all the time. You've seen that COVID-19 is is, of course, a particular example where policy decisions were literally having to be formed overnight at the highest levels of government and then cascaded into operational implementation without all of the planning cycles that we would have needed and that's your service delivery perspective. We're seeing the same thing in HR. We're seeing needs from our people and having to go through that product cycle way more quickly than we ever have before. And so being out to say right well we weren't expecting to have to do that. We were expecting to have to do it now. But here's what we got to work there than being just put something out there and being prepared to test and learn and the just being prepared to fail, I think, is a really important part of ambiguity because by definition, you can't know if, it's going to fly or not. What, you've just got to put it out there.

Speaker 1
0:27:09 - 0:29:02

We've got to respond really quickly. I mentioned before being exemplars of the culture and leadership. It is really important when you're a functional role that you

are an example something needs to happen and so self regulation. I really feel frustrated sometimes. We all wish different outcomes could happen at different times. But it's important as it is full leaders that people partners know when to express it and when not to or at least you know where is the safe space within which to express that? Not just to feel like you, can, say how you feel to whomever there there is a X. If you like the culture and way of leading that, people need to respect sort of going with that? Is it compassionate? It's a really relentless role. And there are really high expectations on us. All the time and no human being is perfect and can get things right all of the time. So cut yourself some slack and if you feel like you could have done something better or if you shouldn't have done that thing or is this something just remember all the great things you've done And really show yourself some self care. Really Excellent point, Kirsten, Because we are human. And I guess what I learned as an hr manager Teo that trust when you built that up, you can have those conversations. But you can also be really human around the fact and authentic. You know what? I could have done this better. Heres' some learnings and speak to share that. From your perspective what are other skills or knowledge that you believe HR business partners need in their tool kit to effectively perform the roles that was not already covered. The better a partner can understand the breadth of HR the more effective I think the partner will be in partnering with other parts of the people and culture function.

Speaker 1
0:29:02 - 0:30:47

So recruitment, learning, policy, industrial relations and I don't actually think a people partner has to come from any of those necessarily, but needs to have awareness. And so finding opportunities to do some leave cover in one of those areas just to get exposure. Partnering with someone on a project to get little deeper understanding in those areas. I think that's really important. It is important, of course to be familiar with the industrial and legal frameworks within which we work. There are legislative obligations that we have, certainly from employment perspective. And I think it's essential that people partners, regardless of where safety sits in the organisation. People partners need to have very strong understanding of workplace health and safety and injury management requirements. Safety is everyone's role. And even if safety as a functional responsibility sits outside of HR, it's more than likely that well being will be

something that the people partner is one of the most effective people to influence. The understanding, how we could do that. Financial acumen is really important because people are typically the majority cost, especially of a government agency. So its important to understand what the drivers in those costs are and, the different levers that could be pulled to influence those costs. How to measure the value that we're getting out of that investment as well. Do you know what I found several years ago, which I've just found so valuable, in a generic sense was negotiation skills. Training courses which I think, typically procurement managers go on.

Speaker 1
0:30:48 - 0:32:44

It was really structured around some pretty hard nosed commercial negotiations, but the skills of negotiation are actually very transferrable and very relevant to alot of what we do as well. So I think, being able to prepare in a structured way for a difficult conversation, negotiation can be part of that and increasingly, there's newer aspects to HR. And actually change management before. I think that's a good thing to become proficient in along with human centred design and co design. They're actually quite different skills to negotiation because negotiations, knowing what your outcome is and what you're prepared to give and take to get it. Co design, on the other hand, is being really open, to creating something in other people that were not even quite sure what it is yet and so they're very different skills. But in the toolkit of our people, and I think that they're very important. I mentioned org design previously and again because of the need for us to make sure that the significant cost base of our people is focused where we get the best value from means, skills and continuous improvements. Skills are also something that people partners can help to shine a light where we can support our people to focus on things that we need for them to be doing. You did share as well the negotiation skills costs. You talked about the aspect of filling in the opportunity to learn what people do. What have been some other kind of ways that you've come across as the best way to develop all of these capabilities for HR Business partners, particularly in this VUCA world. So when I first was given the role of leading HR around 2008, it was all very foreign to me at the time. One of the most valuable things said someone helped me with was establishing a peer network.

Speaker 1
0:32:44 - 0:34:36

So I just went around the met about half a dozen people in a similar role to me in different organisations and picked their brains and that was just one of the best and fastest ways for me to come up the curve quickly. Anyone in any role can do that.

So I'd say peer networks of really important within an organisation across the sector, from industries. Look for opportunities to meet like minded people and understand what they are doing. You can do that informally. Like I did or you can do that through more formalised networks. There's the, HR community of practice in The NSW Public Service, there is AHRI, there is a number of different ways that you can meet people and talk. I also like the bite sized information that comes from linked in. I do look for who posts good content, and I scan it frequently, and I don't always have time to read it. I use the save function and I pop articles that I want to go back and have a look at into my saved folder at the moment topics that I'm particularly interested in and other new ways of working under more flexible regimes and also well being. So I've got a particular focus on it. It forms a little bit of a library. I can share my team, not all of them are on LinkedIn. Sometimes it's so efficient to share them with the team. There's some great Ted talks as well. And then, of course, there's books, Dave Ulrich is known as the grandfather father of HR. I have a great thirst for learning. So there's bite size articles, a great for a little bit of thought, stimulation. But when I wanted to dive deeper, I had to go to books quite a lot. And when I was first becoming more familiar with HR, I really got a lot of value out of reading Ulrich.

Speaker 1
0:34:36 - 0:36:27

Now I'm working more on the organisational culture and leadership style I'm finding that podcasts particularly people might know Brene Brown and she's got a podcast called unlocking us. That's great. Walking your talk by Caroline Taylor and there's 21st century work clients, which I've got a lot of value out of? Another one coincidentally, also called Work Life, which is by Adam Grant. So some great podcasts and many of them linked to books as well topics that people want to dive into specifically. At transport we've got a corporate subscription to Gartner. It used to be called X and I have a lot got a lot of value out of that personally in the past, when I've needed to grab collateral and get some thought leadership, the other one that we don't have the membership, too, but I believe it's also called X, which is vital by Deloitte. And recently the Public Service Commission joined us away into something called the Lynda Gratton Institute, which has been an amazing thing to be part of Lynda Gratton from Harvard School of Business. She's a really thought leader in the future, work just very supportive of public service, in particular going into there there's a corporate way subscribe to something called Thinkers 50 earlier

this year, and there were many greats because, including Lynda Gratton, David Ulrich and many others giving hour long seminars. Hasn't that been one of the great things over the last couple months? Just the access to some of these amazing people within, you know, paid and free forums. I know I've been sitting up late listening to podcasts that late just because I can I have a bit more capacity to do that, which is terrific.

Speaker 1
0:36:28 - 0:38:21

I'm curious we have asked most of our speakers now as well Kirsten around the New South Wales government has a critical strategy around implementing best practise productivity, Digital Capability in the NSW, Public Service and drive Public Sector Diversity by 2025, really interested in how your HR business partners are supporting the leader, your leaders and teams in accomplishing the levels of productivity the digital capability and diversity required to achieve this outcome. Productivity is such an interesting thing to measure and the interest on it as we went into the remote, way of working was very interesting because previously turning up in the office seemed to be enough. But that's a measure of presenteeism really, isn't it? It's not a measure of even activity, let alone productivity. So I think productivity is a difficult one, and in some ways it's a bit contentious one namely, to measure from a human perspective, as well, we are asking our people whether they're working at capacity above or below which on three surveys over the last three or four months pulse surveys. In the last pulse survey it was 92% of people reported that they will working at capacity above capacity or well above. And there was, I think, in the order of 45 more percent of people were above all really above capacity. It's a self reported measure, but it is important, I think, to ask people how effective you're being with your time, not just how fully utilised is your time, and so people are at or above capacity. Sometimes it's what could we be, making it easier for them so that they could be more effective and more well at the same time, because we're seeing a decline in well being at the same time that we're seeing that reporting of people being at or above capacity.

Speaker 1
0:38:22 - 0:40:20

And I, I think there's a really good interplay here between the productivity question and the digital capability question, because I don't think we have spent enough focus in the public service on really making the process of work smooth. We've still got paper based forms. Sometimes they need signatures from too many

people. Maybe they didn't need a signature. We don't make the delegations easy to navigate. All of that stuff. It's lunch just slows us down. If we approach the process of streamlining the process of work with a digital mindset of just how can we take out the unnecessary steps happen? How can we make this more predictable or more smooth flow? Then I think we'll see a good tradeoff between the two of those it does require some dedicated folks on that. We've invested in that. Transport's amazing success for really having teams focused on customer experience, looking at touch points to customers and the introduction of the opal card and signage and you know making all of that work as smoothly as possible and I think we need to invest in that now for our people. What is getting in the way of our people being as effective and well as they could possibly be and taking that digital capability to it. It is something that definitely our people partners can do. Diversity is big, the focus for us and in some ways that will never be done we're making some good headway. Transport for the last couple of years has focused on women in leadership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we're now in transport at 34% of Leadership roles are held by women. That's more than double what it was about five years ago. So it's a pretty big change. We're harnessing the power of disruption of our organisational reforms in order to achieve.

Speaker 1
0:40:20 - 0:42:10

But we're also leaning into the cultural conversations about the importance of equity and the way the team's function better with different perspectives. So the transport executive team leads direct reports is now 60% women. That's never the case in transport before the next layer down is now 50% women. We've got this big organisational change going through the list. It's easy to see, particularly in a male dominated organisation that men could find that threatening. So it's also really important that we have the conversation about why we're doing what we're doing, that we do everything we're doing in a really respectful way. And they we are always focused on putting the best possible person into the role. But we are seeing a different tone of conversation to emerge is a result of that. So I'm probably diverging onto what could be in an entirely different podcast but diversity is a big focus for our people partners, but through the hard levers of representation and pay equity, not just for women. Also, for people with a disability, we need to do much, much more in the area of people with a disability,

and multicultural as well, the people partners think about these things I know when they do their people plans for their divisions, which align with the division strategic plans. Then what falls out of that is the workforce plans? Think about it when we put together recruitment campaigns and engagement activities. We increasingly think about it when we put together, role descriptions and we challenge what the prerequisites are in the roles again? Another great thing that's come out of COVID-19 is that this small, flexible way of working removes barriers for people, people who couldn't commute for 3 hours a day.

Speaker 1
0:42:10 - 0:43:49

Okay, now realistically, do a great job at transport where we previously thought and they had to come into the city. And they don't. And that's going to remove barriers for people with caring responsibilities, people with disability and people who just can't afford to live in Sydney for different reasons. So there's lots of things that our partners can do and are doing to improve, both the representation and the experience of people with disability and diverse backgrounds across transport. I'm sure the listeners will really appreciate those insights as well. And if you could give our listeners one key takeaway when thinking about what it takes to be a trusted, and effective HR business partner, what would that insight be, I'd have to say to measure your success according to the success of the unit that you're supporting - together, we succeed, thank you. That makes a lot of sense, then thank you very much Kirsten, and I'm sure the listeners will join me in saying great insights and very generous responses across you know, the capabilities that they need through to the kinds of development opportunities that you recommend, great authors and thought leaders to listen to and refer to as well. So thank you, I'm sure you'll echo Tanya's sentiment that this has been a very insightful podcast and thank Kirsten for sharing so much with us today on what the elements of a successful people partner is great. Also hearing the amazing transformation during transport to New South Wales is on and the important role HR is playing. Thanks again Tanya and Kirsten, see you next week.