

Changing role of HR: future role of adaptive and flexible HR models leveraging technology, automation and responding to the “Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous” (VUCA) world

00:00:07 - 00:00:13 Hi and welcome to our first episode in the changing role of HR podcast theme.

00:00:13 - 00:00:17 I'm Jane Latimer from the NSW Public Service Commission and excited today

00:00:17 - 00:00:21 to introduce Jacqui Curtis, Chief Operating Officer at the Australian Taxation

00:00:21 - 00:00:26 Office. As you will hear, Jacqui is a very experienced HR professional who's

00:00:26 - 00:00:31 led the transformation of HR in several government agencies. Throughout the

00:00:31 - 00:00:35 podcast Jacqui describes the key capabilities needed to build a highly

00:00:35 - 00:00:41 credible, adaptable and flexible HR function that can create confidence and

00:00:41 - 00:00:46 in what is often a very ambiguous and uncertain environment. Listen out for her

00:00:46 - 00:00:52 descriptions of what comprises key HR skills, including exceptional HR

00:00:52 - 00:00:58 foundational skills, business acumen, curiosity, storytelling, workforce

00:00:58 - 00:01:04 planning, people analytics and more There is a lot to learn from this podcast.

00:01:04 - 00:01:09 Enjoy. I am Tanya Hammond, CEO of Talent HR Solutions, and I have the

00:01:09 - 00:01:13 pleasure today of speaking with Jacqui Curtis. Who will be sharing her

00:01:13 - 00:01:18 insights with us in relation to the future role of adaptive and flexible HR

00:01:18 - 00:01:23 models, leveraging technology automation and responding to a volatile and

00:01:23 - 00:01:27 uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. Welcome, Jacqui. Thanks Tanya.

00:01:27 - 00:01:31 It's great to be here with you and a fantastic opportunity. Thank you our

00:01:31 - 00:01:34 listeners will be very interested to understand a bit more of your background

00:01:34 - 00:01:39 Jacqui and the current roles that you have. I joined the Public Service in the

00:01:39 - 00:01:44 early 2000's, I think, but prior to that I'd worked in private sector and in

00:01:44 - 00:01:49 education, in business consulting and in HR roles. And I took that experience

00:01:49 - 00:01:54 into the education space to become a sort of teacher and lecturer at Canberra

00:01:54 - 00:01:58 Institute of Technology. When I joined the Public Service, it was in a tiny

00:01:58 - 00:02:02 agency, the Australian Public Service Commission, but a critical agency with

00:02:02 - 00:02:07 a really big focus on people issues across the service and I stayed there for a

00:02:07 - 00:02:12 few years, eventually made my way up to be an SES officer. And then I went

00:02:12 - 00:02:17 to Medicare just at the time as it was being absorbed into a mega department

00:02:17 - 00:02:22 which became DHS Human Services. Eventually I looked after the people

00:02:22 - 00:02:30 function there as a FASS before joining ATO, Australian Tax Office in 2013 as

00:02:30 - 00:02:36 the Head of People. And I did that role, a very big role in people has about 10

00:02:36 - 00:02:42 SES officers and about 600 people, all in the HR space for an organisation

00:02:42 - 00:02:47 which at the time was 23,000. And then later on got promoted to the Chief

00:02:47 - 00:02:52 Operating Officer of the Tax office. It's been a really interesting career. And

00:02:52 - 00:02:56 along the way I've always been a member of the Australian Human Resource

00:02:56 - 00:03:01 Institute and a couple of years ago was made an adjunct professor at the

00:03:01 - 00:03:05 University of Canberra for Public Policy and Administration. Bit of a mixed

00:03:05 - 00:03:10 journey, but very exciting and very challenging. Thanks, Jacqui. You've also

00:03:10 - 00:03:14 got a very special role, which is probably worth also sharing with listeners

00:03:14 - 00:03:18 around the Profession. I understand you're the head of the Profession of the

00:03:18 - 00:03:22 Australian Public Service?, I think it was about October last year so coming up

00:03:22 - 00:03:26 for a year. I had just come back from a holiday in Italy with my husband,
00:03:26 - 00:03:32 returned to the news that I was to be the inaugural head off the APS HR
00:03:32 - 00:03:35 professional stream. And that's the first professional stream that's been
00:03:35 - 00:03:40 established across the Australian Public Service. And its part of one of the
00:03:40 - 00:03:45 initiatives in the Public Service review. HR was chosen because it was seen as
00:03:45 - 00:03:50 incredibly important function to support and enable the service and its work
00:03:50 - 00:03:53 force to be able to deliver on outcomes for the government and the community
00:03:53 - 00:03:58 . They thought HR would be the one to kick off with as a professional stream
00:03:58 - 00:04:04 and that's me, the head of that stream. And your coup role at the same
00:04:04 - 00:04:09 time! Exactly its actually a joint role really. Fantastic! And I guess over those
00:04:09 - 00:04:16 years
00:04:16 - 00:04:19 of your role in learning and the APS and also in your old role at DHS and in the
00:04:19 - 00:04:23 ATO HR over that time, I imagine has changed a little. What's been your
00:04:23 - 00:04:29 observation of the biggest changes that you've seen in the HR function? It
00:04:29 - 00:04:33 really has actually changed Tanya, when. I think back to my early sort of
00:04:33 - 00:04:38 career in HR, a lot of it was about making sure you sort of did all of those
00:04:38 - 00:04:44 basic things really, really well. And I think a lot of it was themed around
00:04:44 - 00:04:48 personnel management, payroll, getting the recruitment right, making sure
00:04:48 - 00:04:53 that performance management was around but it was in its infancy. Really it
00:04:53 - 00:04:58 was sort of the basics, and I think, and I've said this before a lot of the time
00:04:58 - 00:05:03 HR was seen as those little ladies in the back office that did all those kinds of
00:05:03 - 00:05:08 things and it didn't have a lot of status and a lot of profile. And of course, over
00:05:08 - 00:05:12 the years, that has really changed significantly to where we find ourselves
today in the public sector anyway, where it's actually been called out as a

00:05:12 - 00:05:18 critical professional stream. I would say in the most recent times in the last six
00:05:18 - 00:05:22 months, in particular because of the bush fires that were experienced in
00:05:22 - 00:05:28 Australia over the Christmas January period, and then leading into the Covid
00:05:28 - 00:05:35 pandemic that really has seen the HR profession harness the opportunity that
00:05:35 - 00:05:41 the crisis provided to show that they are really front and centre of and what
00:05:41 - 00:05:45 enables organisations to deliver on the outcomes that they need to deliver.
00:05:45 - 00:05:50 They really are critical and they are a very important function when it comes to
00:05:50 - 00:05:56 crisis management because they create confidence and certainty in what is
00:05:56 - 00:06:01 often a very ambiguous and uncertain environment for people where they need
00:06:01 - 00:06:05 that concrete advice and the good judgement advice of good people people.
00:06:05 - 00:06:10 Thanks Jacqui and I think you've had a significant journey I understand in the
00:06:10 - 00:06:15 ATO and in times led a fairly large transformation of the HR function. My
00:06:15 - 00:06:19 understanding is the key component of the transformation was positioning HR
00:06:19 - 00:06:23 so that the business had a genuine understanding of what they needed from the
00:06:23 - 00:06:28 HR function and also the value that HR could provide to them. I'm really keen
00:06:28 - 00:06:33 to understand and I'm sure the listeners will to, what key insights you can share
00:06:33 - 00:06:37 with them around what you did and how the function was transformed.
00:06:37 - 00:06:42 And now, if the evidence you use as a leader that demonstrates the value of the
HR
00:06:42 - 00:06:47 function to yourself and other leaders. Let me just sort of step back a bit. I
00:06:47 - 00:06:51 think I've been incredibly fortunate to have worked for some really
00:06:51 - 00:06:57 inspirational leaders and three or four that I'll call out. When I was at APSC,
00:06:57 - 00:07:01 Lynell Briggs was the Commissioner, and she really was future focused, and
00:07:01 - 00:07:05 she could see the importance of things like talent and succession management

00:07:05 - 00:07:11 to enable the workforce to really be high performing and effective. She sort of
00:07:11 - 00:07:16 got me thinking about the future of things in HR and she was a little bit ahead
00:07:16 - 00:07:19 of her time in many ways, I think the lots of things she was pushing then have
00:07:19 - 00:07:25 come to fruition now. And then at DHS HR was given a pretty leading role
00:07:25 - 00:07:30 there as well again Catherine Campbell, Barbara Bennett they were people that
00:07:30 - 00:07:36 were leaders at the time, and they really did turn to HR to provide advice and
00:07:36 - 00:07:41 guidance and deliver outcomes in the people space that would help them on
00:07:41 - 00:07:44 their big, transformational journey. But they definitely weren't front and
00:07:44 - 00:07:49 centre at that time. They were a key player and very valued. The difference in
00:07:49 - 00:07:54 the ATO and what sort of enabled HR to not only have a seat at the table but
00:07:54 - 00:08:02 actually seen to be a key contributor to Identifying and developing strategy for
00:08:02 - 00:08:07 the organisation is that the Commissioner had a view that if you really want to
00:08:07 - 00:08:13 bring about change, you can't just rely on changing processes, you can't just
00:08:13 - 00:08:18 rely on having new equipment, etcetera etcetera or saying that you're going to
00:08:18 - 00:08:25 change. You actually need the people who are in the organisation to drive that
00:08:25 - 00:08:28 change, and in order for them to do that, they need to adopt the new practises.
00:08:28 - 00:08:33 They need to know how to do that. They need to have the tools to be able to
00:08:33 - 00:08:38 work in new ways, though he said change is all about people and therefore,
00:08:38 - 00:08:43 rather than put the change function into a business area which is normally
00:08:43 - 00:08:48 where change functions sit, I'm going to drive this massive reinvention and
00:08:48 - 00:08:54 transformation programme out of the people space and to do that you need a
00:08:54 - 00:09:01 people leader and people function that is highly credible isn't just focused on
00:09:01 - 00:09:07 functional, very important functional, foundational elements of HR, but

00:09:07 - 00:09:14 actually can understand the business, has really good business acumen and a
00:09:14 - 00:09:21 commercial lens that it can bring and working partnership with the business, to
00:09:21 - 00:09:25 look at things and say OK, if that's what we're trying to achieve for our clients
00:09:25 - 00:09:30 , or the community, or government these are the types of things in the
00:09:30 - 00:09:35 HR space and the people space that will enable us to do that. And later down the
00:09:35 - 00:09:40 track as we got more sophisticated before even saying, well this is the
00:09:40 - 00:09:45 direction and the outcome, what can HR do to enable it, coming to HR and
00:09:45 - 00:09:49 saying we're looking at our workforce, looking at the environment and looking
00:09:49 - 00:09:55 at the future, what is it that you think might happen that might change the way
00:09:55 - 00:10:01 we operate or enable us to do something differently? And then working this
00:10:01 - 00:10:07 strategy to use that as a key input and that's what's different at the ATO, and
00:10:07 - 00:10:13 that is what I truly believe now is recognised across the APS by senior
00:10:13 - 00:10:16 leadership and the secretaries. And I think this is why they've called this out
00:10:16 - 00:10:21 and said, you know what we need a very high performing, expert Human
00:10:21 - 00:10:29 resources capability and we need to invest in it. This is why things they're
00:10:29 - 00:10:33 changing and they're changing rapidly towards professionalising and
00:10:33 - 00:10:40 recognising the value that HR brings, I think that's what's changed. There's
00:10:40 - 00:10:46 still a way to go because our history is that HR and some other corporate
00:10:46 - 00:10:54 functions, this is true as well, have been seen as less a status. I suppose my
00:10:54 - 00:10:59 vision is that in a few years time people will talk about Human Resources
00:10:59 - 00:11:04 experts the same way they talk about legal experts or finance experts or any of
00:11:04 - 00:11:08 the other professions that we really recognise in a front of mind. If you take
00:11:08 - 00:11:14 that then to the work that you did in transforming ATO where did you start?

00:11:14 - 00:11:18 I think the most important thing to actually understand is what the capability of
00:11:18 - 00:11:24 the HR workforce was and where the capability was. Because at that time there
00:11:24 - 00:11:28 was a lot of capability in the central corporate area but there were also pockets
00:11:28 - 00:11:32 of expertise in the business, and business had built that up because they
00:11:32 - 00:11:36 weren't necessarily getting what they needed from the central HR function. So
00:11:36 - 00:11:41 I spent a lot of time talking to the people in the HR workforce understanding
00:11:41 - 00:11:47 what skills and, experiences they had. I wanted to work out what's the depth?
00:11:47 - 00:11:51 What's the bench strength of the talent that we have and then thinking about
00:11:51 - 00:11:56 okay, well, how does that then translate into being able to deliver on the true
00:11:56 - 00:12:01 value HR can deliver, if you've got the right skills and expertise? I also talked
00:12:01 - 00:12:05 to the HR workforce and the business because obviously you need to
00:12:05 - 00:12:08 understand what they weren't getting and what they were getting. So strengths
00:12:08 - 00:12:12 and weaknesses. But one of the things I found very quickly was evident was
00:12:12 - 00:12:17 that there was quite low morale in the HR work force at the ATO and I have
00:12:17 - 00:12:21 actually experienced that across the service. Sometimes I think the profession
00:12:21 - 00:12:24 feels that it's sort of a bit used and dumped on and called on when there's a
00:12:24 - 00:12:29 crisis or needed or there's a problem but not necessarily valued consistently,
00:12:29 - 00:12:34 over time. There was a lot of work to be done in building the capability of that
00:12:34 - 00:12:40 workforce and what I said to people at the time was, if you want to be on this
00:12:40 - 00:12:43 journey with us and we've got a huge opportunity here and we've got a leader
00:12:43 - 00:12:48 who believes in what we're doing, I need a commitment from you. If you
00:12:48 - 00:12:54 haven't got the expertise or the qualifications or the professional depth of
00:12:54 - 00:12:59 experience, you are welcome in this team, but you need to make a

00:12:59 - 00:13:05 commitment to get it. And, if you do, the organisation will support you

00:13:05 - 00:13:10 resource wise, your time, finance, whatever to take you on that journey with

00:13:10 - 00:13:14 us because we need people who are committed to the outcome that we're trying

00:13:14 - 00:13:19 to achieve. So that was the internal lens. A lot of people jumped onboard,

00:13:19 - 00:13:23 invested in them and they've got qualifications and they joined up to things like

00:13:23 - 00:13:28 professional associations, et cetera. Some people just it wasn't for them

00:13:28 - 00:13:32 , overall it was a very big cohort of people that said, I'm on that journey. The

00:13:32 - 00:13:38 other thing is I said a lot of time talking to the business, looking at the

00:13:38 - 00:13:42 evidence. So sometimes what you hear anecdotally about the service is being

00:13:42 - 00:13:46 provided or the quality of things doesn't ring true. And I started to build a

00:13:46 - 00:13:51 business case that was able to demonstrate to people well, actually, this is a

00:13:51 - 00:13:54 bit of myth busting. You're saying you're not getting good outcomes here and

00:13:54 - 00:13:57 you're saying it's because you're not getting the right advice or you're not

00:13:57 - 00:14:01 getting what you're looking for from HR, but actually here is the evidence to show

00:14:01 - 00:14:06 that's not the. Or yep, we do have a problem here, and I recognise that we

00:14:06 - 00:14:10 need to build their capability or expertise here. So this is what we will do, that

00:14:10 - 00:14:14 was part of it. And that was making sure you could be confident as a leader

00:14:14 - 00:14:21 that when you went to the executive table and started to talk about possibilities

00:14:21 - 00:14:25 and solutions, et cetera you actually could deliver. There's no good going

00:14:25 - 00:14:28 there with the best ideas, and you haven't got work force that can deliver on

00:14:28 - 00:14:32 them. The other thing, obviously, was to work with the business to try and

00:14:32 - 00:14:36 think what are your pressure points? What are your challenges? Business

00:14:36 - 00:14:41 often doesn't know what it needs from HR. What you are is a translator and

00:14:41 - 00:14:47 also an ideator. I think that's the word we call an ideas person. An ideator of
00:14:47 - 00:14:52 what is possible and then you've got to build the trust and confidence of the
00:14:52 - 00:14:56 business to go on a journey with you and that requires you to have a lot of
00:14:56 - 00:15:01 credibility and influencing skills. Good story Jacqui about the importance as
00:15:01 - 00:15:05 you highlighted earlier around your vision for HR as well not just
00:15:05 - 00:15:11 at the ATO but more broadly. I'm interested how do you demonstrate then the
00:15:11 - 00:15:16 HR function now? Looking back, what's this story and what do you know that
00:15:16 - 00:15:19 you've been successful with that transformation? There were several things.
00:15:19 - 00:15:24 You asked me about the early days when I first started at the Tax office I'd go
00:15:24 - 00:15:28 along to these meetings and I'd be the HR person, there would be the
00:15:28 - 00:15:31 communications person, but everybody else in the room would be business,
00:15:31 - 00:15:35 and they'd be presenting on something you know might be a new initiative
00:15:35 - 00:15:41 around superannuation or some kind of GST taxation thing and usually your
00:15:41 - 00:15:46 corporate people in particular HR they won't ask any questions about that issue
00:15:46 - 00:15:51 or that part of the business. They wait to be asked, what can we do or how
00:15:51 - 00:15:57 many people do we need? But I would always speak up and ask questions and
00:15:57 - 00:16:01 challenge on things that they said etcetera, even if it wasn't in the HR space.
00:16:01 - 00:16:08 That curiosity then allows you to understand this environment and the
00:16:08 - 00:16:12 challenges and the opportunities that are there in the business, and that then
00:16:12 - 00:16:17 starts you thinking about OK, what could we do? The next thing is actually to
00:16:17 - 00:16:22 show you can get a result. So all the talk and planning and best will in the
00:16:22 - 00:16:27 world strategies is not going to get people on board. We chose to try and
00:16:27 - 00:16:33 deliver in either areas that were particularly "old head of pin" as Peter Shergold

00:16:33 - 00:16:37 used to call a wicked problem. We'd look at some thing,. there is a really
00:16:37 - 00:16:43 wicked problem here, let's put all our effort and energy into fixing that or
00:16:43 - 00:16:47 trying to solve that, to demonstrate that we truly can make a difference. And
00:16:47 - 00:16:52 the one that I'll call out as an example is for years we'd had a massive ComCare
00:16:52 - 00:16:58 premium in the ATO, \$50 million just in our insurance premium for our staff
00:16:58 - 00:17:02 . And coupled with that was unplanned leave. That was, I think, the second
00:17:02 - 00:17:08 highest department in the service, about 16 days per year on average per
00:17:08 - 00:17:14 person for 23,000 workforce. Lots of people had admired the problem and
00:17:14 - 00:17:18 tried to pick off bits of it. But we put a great deal of energy, and effort and
00:17:18 - 00:17:24 focus purposely on trying to do something about that, and bought all our
00:17:24 - 00:17:28 expertise to bear looking at it, from all different angles. The reduction in the
00:17:28 - 00:17:34 Commcare premium went from \$50 million to less than \$3 million this year,
00:17:34 - 00:17:38 so that's over a period of seven years. But what that means is, and this is
00:17:38 - 00:17:43 where you can really hit home as an HR person and many people don't, but
00:17:43 - 00:17:48 you've got to take it the extra step when you're making your case or your pitch
00:17:48 - 00:17:55 to the business and talking about results. 50 million to three million, that
00:17:55 - 00:18:03 equates to \$47 million going back into the business. That's \$47 million more
00:18:03 - 00:18:07 than the business could spend on their priorities. That's a very powerful figure
00:18:07 - 00:18:12 . And similarly with unplanned leave, that was another one we picked off early
00:18:12 - 00:18:19 to try and make a case for the value of HR, went from 16.5 days to 13.3 days.
00:18:19 - 00:18:24 Now it might not seem very much reduction, but if you then translate that into
00:18:24 - 00:18:29 the number of extra people the business could have or the extra days of
00:18:29 - 00:18:34 productivity that they're getting, all of a sudden the people in the business start

00:18:34 - 00:18:39 to think aah that's really worthwhile. And that makes a huge difference, it is
00:18:39 - 00:18:46 very powerful. I use evidence, but I also use the language of the business to
00:18:46 - 00:18:51 not only explain what we're doing and why, but then demonstrate how
00:18:51 - 00:18:56 effective it can be. And that's where I think we need to as a profession, start to
00:18:56 - 00:19:02 focus more on the business lens and the business acumen that resonates with
00:19:02 - 00:19:06 people who are working at the front line. Thanks, Jacqui, I think that's a nice
00:19:06 - 00:19:11 segue into an area I've wanted to explore with you around the paradox that we
00:19:11 - 00:19:15 often live in, in HR. Where on the one hand, we're asked to be innovative,
00:19:15 - 00:19:21 experimental, have personal courage, be adaptive and the list goes on. But
00:19:21 - 00:19:24 sometimes we find ourselves working in an environment where this is
00:19:24 - 00:19:30 merely an expoused expectation and really not valued or rewarded. That's perhaps
00:19:30 - 00:19:35 slightly controversial, but I know a lot of HR practitioners experience that.
00:19:35 - 00:19:39 What's your advice to our listeners who work in this paradox and how best to
00:19:39 - 00:19:45 navigate this challenge? Interesting one. I would say It doesn't really matter
00:19:45 - 00:19:49 where you work. Sometimes you feel that you're being taken for granted and
00:19:49 - 00:19:55 undervalued. There are times that HR people do feel like that. I would say
00:19:55 - 00:19:59 corporate people in general often feel that way, they think wow here we are,
00:19:59 - 00:20:03 one minute we're called the back office and I think language is so important
00:20:03 - 00:20:07 . Tanya, often I'll be in meetings and I still hear some of my colleagues talk
00:20:07 - 00:20:11 about the back office functions, and I get quite irate because I say there is no
00:20:11 - 00:20:15 such thing, even as a back office, and most people don't even have offices, so
00:20:15 - 00:20:18 get with the programme. You've gotta have the courage to call those things out
00:20:18 - 00:20:24 . I think that one of the biggest challenges for people in the HR profession and

00:20:24 - 00:20:28 corporate more generally is we don't sell ourselves enough. We don't talk
00:20:28 - 00:20:33 about our success. We don't celebrate our success, were quite happy to take a
00:20:33 - 00:20:38 back seat a lot of the time and that's okay, you can be more distant, humble,
00:20:38 - 00:20:43 and that works for lots of people. But as a profession, we need to sort of
00:20:43 - 00:20:49 bandy together a bit more and talk about our successes and explain to people
00:20:49 - 00:20:54 what it is that we do and how we add value. And, you can do that at so many
00:20:54 - 00:20:58 levels. I've talked previously about doing at the business level,
00:20:58 - 00:21:04 but you can also do it at the emotional level and tap into people's hearts. Really, I
think
00:21:04 - 00:21:12 that's also very effective and often will use storeys about how HR interventions
00:21:12 - 00:21:18 may have personally impacted on an individual or a team and brought around a
00:21:18 - 00:21:23 significant change for the better for those people. And I think you've got to be
00:21:23 - 00:21:29 a powerful story teller if you want people to notice what you're doing and value
00:21:29 - 00:21:35 you, I think you've gotta have the courage to actually go to the table. Whether
00:21:35 - 00:21:40 it be an executive table, whether it be business meeting or team meeting on the
00:21:40 - 00:21:44 ground, it doesn't matter where it is stand up for your profession and be proud
00:21:44 - 00:21:49 of the profession that you're in. That's what are the professional streams do.
00:21:49 - 00:21:53 That's what we see all the time. I wouldn't want to pick on lawyers, but they're
00:21:53 - 00:21:57 great at that. I'm a lawyer. I'm a doctor. Well, I'd love HR professionals to
00:21:57 - 00:22:02 lead with I'm an HR professional. I'm a human resources expert. Whatever
00:22:02 - 00:22:07 you want to call yourself Chief People Officer, everything. Be proud of it! But
00:22:07 - 00:22:11 what happens though if the manager that you're working to doesn't seem to
00:22:11 - 00:22:18 embrace your ideas? I think if you are brave and you can go with those ideas,
00:22:18 - 00:22:21 however I guess in your profession or career, you have probably come across

00:22:21 - 00:22:26 people that, on the one hand they want you to do something, you do it. But
00:22:26 - 00:22:31 then you've done it and you come to them and they don't embrace your work.
00:22:31 - 00:22:35 As I said, you've got to use your evidence. You've got to use all the facts and
00:22:35 - 00:22:39 information. Everybody has different styles. I mean one of the things that I
00:22:39 - 00:22:43 learned early in my career is to try and work out the style of the person that
00:22:43 - 00:22:48 you're talking to. To find a way to interact and influence and get your messages
00:22:48 - 00:22:52 across and to get them to buy into what you do. With some people that's
00:22:52 - 00:22:58 presenting data and information and numbers because they're analytical people,
00:22:58 - 00:23:02 with some people is tapping into the heart strings. There are going to be people
00:23:02 - 00:23:06 that they won't value you until they're absolutely desperate. They need you.
00:23:06 - 00:23:10 They've got a people crisis or their hand, you know, maybe a person they're in
00:23:10 - 00:23:14 conflict with or underperformer. Or maybe something has gone wrong in the
00:23:14 - 00:23:18 workplace. And then they will call on you, and that's when you've got to be
00:23:18 - 00:23:22 ready to just deliver. And I think it's the same with most professions. Not
00:23:22 - 00:23:27 everybody is going to embrace you, so you just have to kind of live with that,
00:23:27 - 00:23:33 most people these days recognise the value of what we're doing. I think that's
00:23:33 - 00:23:38 only going to increase as we move forward and we become even more, not just
00:23:38 - 00:23:43 expert in our/ the technical elements of HR, but if we can start to be a bit more
00:23:43 - 00:23:50 future focused and a little bit more strategic in thinking about what are the
00:23:50 - 00:23:54 shifts in the ways people will work, in the types of workforces we will need
00:23:54 - 00:24:02 etcetera to prepare business lines and organisations for that change. I think
00:24:02 - 00:24:06 that's the space we need to start to move towards, playing in that space, more
00:24:06 - 00:24:10 than just holding on to what we know we're good at. is the foundational

00:24:10 - 00:24:14 elements of HR. And some of the things we can do there Tanya is to embrace
00:24:14 - 00:24:19 some of the new ways of working and concepts and techniques that are being
00:24:19 - 00:24:23 used more broadly in business. Just give you a little example about data and
00:24:23 - 00:24:28 analytics. I was talking to our integrity advisor just this week, and we were
00:24:28 - 00:24:34 talking about how do you use your data available to you and all your indicators
00:24:34 - 00:24:40 that are people indicators to try and identify where you might have issues or
00:24:40 - 00:24:43 hot spots or challenges in the culture of the organisation that are holding you
00:24:43 - 00:24:47 back and creating resistance so you can't move forward on? And one of the
00:24:47 - 00:24:53 things we were talking about is you can gather all different data sets so you
00:24:53 - 00:24:57 could look at unplanned leave, you could look at code of conduct cases for
00:24:57 - 00:25:02 example, you could look at engagement surveys. You can even look at things
00:25:02 - 00:25:06 like how many people are doing mandatory training, et cetera, et cetera, And
00:25:06 - 00:25:12 you can start to pull that together and if you've got good analytical capability
00:25:12 - 00:25:17 start to build a picture for a manager of that says to them you have got some
00:25:17 - 00:25:20 challenges, you're getting really big high complaints on this part of the
00:25:20 - 00:25:25 business and you can actually draw a link between what's happening in the
00:25:25 - 00:25:28 workforce and the complaints that you might be getting from customers and
00:25:28 - 00:25:34 pinpoint for them where their problem is. And that's a really practical and
00:25:34 - 00:25:38 useful tool for managers because then they can put their efforts into addressing
00:25:38 - 00:25:42 where the problem is rather than just a broad brush approach. And another
00:25:42 - 00:25:46 example, design thinking or you might have heard nudge theory where you're
00:25:46 - 00:25:53 trying to sort of use insights into people's behaviour, to try and then work that
00:25:53 - 00:25:58 into the initiatives and the approaches that you use in HR to get a change of

00:25:58 - 00:26:02 behaviour in the workplace. I talked a little bit about unplanned leave. We

00:26:02 - 00:26:06 have very successfully used behaviorally the insights and the knowledge of

00:26:06 - 00:26:12 how people think to inform our communication strategy around taking leave.

00:26:12 - 00:26:17 So in Australia the thing that I realised when I came to Australia, the sickie the

00:26:17 - 00:26:24 Australian sickie. We've now got some tools, posters for example. We have in

00:26:24 - 00:26:28 the bathrooms and kitchen areas communal areas posters to show you here's

00:26:28 - 00:26:33 Tanya, she's just been diagnosed with cancer or whatever, she's just used 340

00:26:33 - 00:26:38 days of accrued sick leave. That was her insurance premium for the future. So

00:26:38 - 00:26:43 we're pitching in a way that sort of resonates with people and taps into those

00:26:43 - 00:26:49 behavioural insights and similarly, we produce the managers a calendar of an

00:26:49 - 00:26:54 individual's leave, whether it be sick leave, annual leave, there's all different

00:26:54 - 00:26:59 types of leave you can have, study leave and present it to them, and we send it

00:26:59 - 00:27:03 to their staff member and say, if it's a high user, we will say something along

00:27:03 - 00:27:09 the lines of you know, Tanya, you've used 14.2 days this month on all these

00:27:09 - 00:27:14 different types of leave, your colleagues or your counterparts on average use

00:27:14 - 00:27:19 four days. And we actually have a picture of what the days are and how many

00:27:19 - 00:27:24 days of actual work availability there is to that person and that's a tool that

00:27:24 - 00:27:28 managers can sit down and have a proper conversation. And that leave may be

00:27:28 - 00:27:34 totally valid. It's not a gotcha moment it, but it's a tool to start a conversation.

00:27:34 - 00:27:41 And at the crux of all really good leadership and management is the ability to

00:27:41 - 00:27:47 have a two way conversation with a person and understand what it is that you

00:27:47 - 00:27:50 are exploring together and how you might move forward on it. So it's a very

00:27:50 - 00:27:54 useful tool and it picks up on design thinking and behavioural insights. It's

00:27:54 - 00:27:58 good to explore that further with you Jacqui, because you mentioned earlier

00:27:58 - 00:28:06 your vision for the HR profession is for us to be seen on the same terms as the

00:28:06 - 00:28:09 legal profession, marketing profession where people who are performing that

00:28:09 - 00:28:13 role know what they're doing and they have the capabilities and the credentials

00:28:13 - 00:28:19 to do so. I'd be curious in a little bit more detail around what you see is the key

00:28:19 - 00:28:24 skills in this VUCA world? The different capabilities you've mentioned design

00:28:24 - 00:28:28 thinking, you've mentioned behavioural economics, and that evidence is key.

00:28:28 - 00:28:32 But what are your thoughts in relation to the key capabilities that HR

00:28:32 - 00:28:36 practitioners are going to need for the future? And, I guess, some advice for

00:28:36 - 00:28:40 our listeners about how you develop them? Right in the middle of the pandemic

00:28:40 - 00:28:45 there is a huge focus on work health and safety, but that that is ever present,

00:28:45 - 00:28:50 top of mind challenge. And I remember at DHS Catherine Campbell running

00:28:50 - 00:28:56 that mammoth, I think she had 32,000 people, always used to say my absolute

00:28:56 - 00:28:59 number one priority is the health and well being of my people. And I think in

00:28:59 - 00:29:04 today's world I mean it's always been important, but it's very, very complex as

00:29:04 - 00:29:09 we're seeing now, really strong capability in some of those foundational

00:29:09 - 00:29:15 elements of HR IS critical and we have in some places, not just in the APS, but

00:29:15 - 00:29:20 in some organisations also, lost some skills in particular around industrial

00:29:20 - 00:29:25 relations. Industrial relations is an ever present part of Human Resource, and

00:29:25 - 00:29:30 it waxes and wanes a bit, depending on what's going on in the environment

00:29:30 - 00:29:34 and the strength of unions and where people are positioned. But I think there is

00:29:34 - 00:29:39 , there's certainly some gaps there. For the future I suppose I've talked about

00:29:39 - 00:29:44 data and evidence and some of the sort of more futuristic skills we definitely

00:29:44 - 00:29:50 have to look at HR policy. Policy in the way in which you write policy is so

00:29:50 - 00:29:55 important to underpinning the outcomes that we get and the other thing I'd say

00:29:55 - 00:30:01 about policy is if you're espousing values in an organisation, for example, like

00:30:01 - 00:30:06 trust and confidence and you want to empower people, your policies need to

00:30:06 - 00:30:11 reflect that because if there is a disconnect between what the policy says, so if

00:30:11 - 00:30:14 you've got a policy, there's sort of prescriptive and says you'll do this and do

00:30:14 - 00:30:20 this and do this, which is what the ATO had when I got here, it doesn't connect

00:30:20 - 00:30:26 or align with what you stand for in your culture and your values. So this policy

00:30:26 - 00:30:32 piece is very important and people who are good at writing clever policy in HR

00:30:32 - 00:30:37 are going to be really critical to our future. And linked to that is strategy, I've

00:30:37 - 00:30:42 already sort of touched on it a bit. It's not just HR strategy. It's not just what's

00:30:42 - 00:30:45 our strategy around performance management or learning development or

00:30:45 - 00:30:51 talent or acquisition, it is actually about thinking about what's the strategy for

00:30:51 - 00:30:57 the organisation thinking beyond just your own organisation. But what's

00:30:57 - 00:31:02 happening broadly looking at future trends, looking at what's happening in the

00:31:02 - 00:31:07 business environment, and community, etcetera, people's expectations are

00:31:07 - 00:31:11 changing. For example, at the moment around new ways of working remote

00:31:11 - 00:31:16 working, working from home, the people who are running the organisation

00:31:16 - 00:31:21 will be expecting HR professionals not only to be ready when they go to them

00:31:21 - 00:31:25 and say, well, what will I do about working from home, but actually to have

00:31:25 - 00:31:29 been thinking about that way in advance of the question ever arising and,

00:31:29 - 00:31:34 saying look, everything's changing community expectations, standards,

00:31:34 - 00:31:39 etcetera. This is how we need to build this into our business strategy in order

00:31:39 - 00:31:44 to be able to deliver for the future. And in fact, as I said earlier, sometimes

00:31:44 - 00:31:49 what's happening in the HR world in the people world can actually guide to the

00:31:49 - 00:31:53 business in developing their strategy because it opens up opportunities to them

00:31:53 - 00:31:58 . So new capabilities are coming through from example with our digital natives

00:31:58 - 00:32:03 , young people who are super good on digital. If you can harness that skill and

00:32:03 - 00:32:08 capability in workforce and build it, that enables the business to actually do

00:32:08 - 00:32:12 some incredibly different things at the front end, and that's what you've got to

00:32:12 - 00:32:19 do. So strategy, policy data, some of these new sort of capabilities around

00:32:19 - 00:32:23 design thinking, behavioural economics and really good expertise on the

00:32:23 - 00:32:27 foundations, like industrial relations and of course, the other one is workforce

00:32:27 - 00:32:32 planning, really big. Thank you for that insight. One of the questions I've been

00:32:32 - 00:32:35 asking all of the folk we've been interviewing is do you have any kind of

00:32:35 - 00:32:39 authors or individuals that influence you and that help you maintain awareness

00:32:39 - 00:32:45 of trends in the future of role of HR. I don't have anybody in particular that I

00:32:45 - 00:32:49 would want to call out. I guess I'm a person, just one of those people,

00:32:49 - 00:32:53 who goes around sucking up everything around me. I've been very fortunate over

00:32:53 - 00:32:57 the course of my career, particularly in the public service, to have done quite a

00:32:57 - 00:33:01 lot of work with ANZSOG and some of their key people, like Professor Porter

00:33:01 - 00:33:06 Heart and Robin Ride, Robbie McPherson in that space. And I think they have

00:33:06 - 00:33:10 fantastic ideas and they've always been a little bit ahead of the pack. When it

00:33:10 - 00:33:15 comes to what might be around the I love reading all of the sort of research

00:33:15 - 00:33:20 materials that come out of organisations like some of the Big 4, BCG Deloitte,

00:33:20 - 00:33:26 McKinsey's. They are always putting out future focused and very, very in

00:33:26 - 00:33:30 depth pieces of research, and it's publicly available. There's no one in
00:33:30 - 00:33:34 particular. I'm reading a book at the moment called Quiet, which is all about
00:33:34 - 00:33:38 introverts, and I'm not going to be able to remember the author's name. But
00:33:38 - 00:33:44 it's a fabulous book all about how we've become a society that values that
00:33:44 - 00:33:49 really extroverted leadership and those loud voices. They're the ones that we
00:33:49 - 00:33:56 get drawn to and get behind. This is all about why we should listen to quieter
00:33:56 - 00:34:01 people labelled them introverts. But it's not just introverts, it is a quieter
00:34:01 - 00:34:05 approach and the importance of that. So I'm always looking for things like that
00:34:05 - 00:34:10 , I guess, inform my thinking and challenge my perspective, which is what I
00:34:10 - 00:34:14 think you always need to. And yes I think that's really healthy. In concluding
00:34:14 - 00:34:19 today in our discussion, one key take away that you would share with our
00:34:19 - 00:34:24 listeners when thinking about the future role of HR and how we can best
00:34:24 - 00:34:29 evolve ourselves to be effective in that future. What would it be?
00:34:29 - 00:34:35 Back ourselves, have confidence in ourselves. Don't apologise for our profession.
00:34:35 - 00:34:40 We are really strong. We've got some amazing expertise, and I think the Covid
00:34:40 - 00:34:45 pandemic has just brought that right to the forefront and shown how much
00:34:45 - 00:34:50 depth of expertise there is in the HR profession. I think we need to shine a
00:34:50 - 00:34:55 light on that and put ourselves in the spotlight and be confident in doing so.
00:34:55 - 00:34:58 That'd be my one takeaway. Fantastic, thanks Jacqui, and thank you so much
00:34:58 - 00:35:01 for your insights today. Its a pleasure catching up with you. Thank you
00:35:01 - 00:35:08 Tanya. Thanks Jacque and Tanya for providing such great insights into what the
future
00:35:08 - 00:35:13 of HR can and will look like. Your discussion on the importance of considering
00:35:13 - 00:35:17 future trends, such as harnessing the capability of our upcoming digital

00:35:17 - 00:35:22 natives, to drive business outcomes, was particularly insightful. For the next
00:35:22 - 00:35:25 three weeks we will be dropping down more episodes on the changing role of
00:35:25 - 00:35:30 HR, please do join these sessions. And if you're interested in going deeper into
00:35:30 - 00:35:35 this content, keep an eye out for the upcoming masterclass lead by Tanya
00:35:35 - 00:35:38 Hammond, to be held late November. See you next week.