

Speaker 1: You're listening to The HR Bartender Show, a casual place to talk about all things work. Here's where you get practical advice about how to be a better employee, manager, and leader in today's workplace. So grab your favorite beverage, pull up a stool and join us in the conversation. The bar is always open. Now, here's your host, Sharlyn Lauby.

Sharlyn Lauby: Hi, everyone. Thanks for being here. I'm your host, Sharlyn Lauby, author of the blog HR Bartender. Before we get started today, I want to take a moment to thank our founding sponsor, Ultimate Kronos Group, also known as UKG.

Speaker 3: To be a powerfully productive business, you need powerfully happy people. Two leaders in workforce management and HR have joined forces to become UKG, Ultimate Kronos Group. With comprehensive HR solutions they'll help you create more meaningful connections within your workforce that will make your people smile. UKG, our purpose is people.

Sharlyn Lauby: Welcome back everyone. We're recording a mini season of The HR Bartender Show focused on talent and technology, and I am super excited to speak with today's guest. Dan Schawbel is a New York Times bestselling author, a Managing Partner of Workplace Intelligence, a research and advisory firm helping HR adapt to trends, drive performance, and prepare for the future. Long considered a go-to authority on HR talent and leadership, Dan has spent his career researching and advising on workplace and career success. Through dozens of studies he has exposed some of the biggest work trends of our time, including the skills gap, the four-day workweek, the burnout epidemic, which have been highlighted as cover stories on The Wall Street Journal, Money Magazine, and HR Magazine.

In today's business world there's just so much information out there that we don't know what to trust, and we don't know how to use it. That's why I asked Dan to join us today because he has a talent for just cutting through the clutter and giving us workplace intelligence backed by real data and powerful stories. So Dan, thanks for being here. While we're recording this conversation in the middle of a pandemic, things are changing every day. So I want to start the conversation with a takeaway. What's one thing you've learned over the past year that's going to become a part of your next normal?

Dan Schawbel: I think that's a great question. To respond to that, I'll say the importance of location. So we just did a study with WeWork of a thousand C-suite and a thousand employees in the US. We're trying to investigate where people wanting to spend their time, and the answer was in multiple locations. To me that just validates what I was thinking over the past year. We knew that eventually we would, or some of us would want to return to spaces like an office space, or corporate headquarters, or coworking space. I think now we're at a point where people are going to be dividing their time between multiple spaces. So the big finding was that people want to spend about a third of their time in a corporate headquarters, about a third of their time at home, and

about a third of their time in third places. So a third place is a coworking space or a cafe, for instance.

So I think what this boils down to and what we found is over 90% of people want more control over how, when, and where they do work. That is deeply human, meaning that, as human beings, we want more control and freedom in our lives. Therefore, when we approach work or when we approach life, that's something that is at the core of who we are and what we want. As I reflect on that, I think about how I work and how I want to work in the future, and I think it will be changing the setting. I think you and I, we've had good speaking careers, we've gone to a lot of HR conferences in other conferences and companies.

Part of what makes traveling and speaking special is you're in different places and in different spaces that create situations where you're meeting people, and you're more creative, and you're taking a new ideas and that kind of brings new meaning to life. It's more data that you can use to advance yourself and have a better scope of how the world's changing. So in short, what I've learned through my experience and what I've learned through real research is the importance of location for accomplishing work and connecting.

Sharlyn Lauby: You were talking about how we get our work done. I think one of the reasons that we're able to do what we do is because of technology. Do you see organizations being able to, or making the investment, increasing the use of their technology over, let's say the short term, the next one to five years? If so, where are they going to make those expenditures?

Dan Schawbel: Oh my God, I could talk to you for the next four hours but just about this topic. We did a study with the show's sponsor UKG last year, and that study we did was really fascinating for a few reasons. One of them is we found and it's validated through a study EY did, and various others PWC. A lot of companies have found the same conclusion is COVID was the green light when it came to the prioritization and execution of investing and deploying technologies, right? So all these companies, they have a list of priorities that they focus on every year. Some of these big technological trends like artificial intelligence, employee monitoring technology, that was kind of towards the bottom of those lists. COVID raise those all the way up, and at the same time at the bottom of the CEO's list was employee engagement, that went from the bottom to the top, number one position.

So that just shows you how much things have changed and accelerated, and what you were saying before is actually so important. 30 years ago, if we had a pandemic like the one we just experienced over the past one year plus, the unemployment rate would be so much higher. So technology has supported half, about half of the entire workforce, because the other half of the workforce doesn't have the ability to work remote. So I think it's across between essential/hourly workers, people who work in a warehouse, a pharmacy,

supermarkets, and then those people have to be in physical spaces so they can't work from home. Then, remote workers are basically knowledge workers. So I think over the past year we've seen not just people have been more interested in hybrid in terms of where they work, and having freedom and flexibility, but it's COVID has revealed that we have a hybrid work force as well.

People are in various situations, geographically, but in terms of having to be in one place or the other based on their role department and the nature of the work. So I think that there has been massive changes and technology has been the underpin, the kind of safety net, the enabler that allows people to continue to work. I think that if you look at the top skills that people acquired over the past year, it's all digital skills. Therefore, you could argue that people are... COVID has forced people into a situation where they had to acquire and advance in all these technology skills because they had no choice. So it goes back to what we were saying about being a human being, when you have no choice, you figure things out. Companies were saving money in real estate and needing to enable their workers with the right technology so that they could be able to continue their operations.

Therefore, some companies like Salesforce, I know, and various other companies invested and gave a stipend to people working from home. So that they could continue to work in that same capacity in terms of office equipment and technology and wifi. So there was a level of support from a lot of the bigger companies, especially to get people up to speed. But I think that we're better equipped now if something were to happen in the future. I think that there is no going back, Pandora's box is open and it's hard for a manager to make a case of why. So it needs to be in the physical office five days a week, and it's hard to make a case against technology not being an important part of how we work and the advancement of that technology as being a key part.

Here's, what's really fascinating, I'll end with this. Because a lot of the study we did last year with UKG was around trust and how critical trust is for employee engagement, employee experience, et cetera, is at the same time that more and more people were working remote. Remote work topped out at like the high 60s, low 70s between May and like August or so of last year. At the same time, more and more people said that they work remote at least sometimes based on a Gallup poll. The amount of investment in employee monitoring increased. So what does that tell us? That tells us that organizations do not trust remote workers out of sight, out of mind, not just in terms of potentially getting promoted promotion, which I'm investigating more in the next six months, but also in terms of levels of trust.

So I think, and in the UKG study, we found that remote workers are less trusted than office workers. So I love piecing everything together to understand why investments are made and how one trend affects other trends. That's one of my conclusions is that with the advent of remote work, at the same time there was more of investment employee monitoring because there was a lack of trust. So

if you're a leader, if you're anyone, part of the goal for maintaining employment and advancing is building trust.

Sharlyn Lauby: I have a tendency to think of tech in a couple of different categories. So first of all, there's the technology solution that helps the business operate better. Think of better accounting software or supply chain software, and then there are solutions that help employees do their jobs. So you're talking about remote work, and digital skills, and employee performance. I'm wondering, are organizations focused on the latter and that is giving employees better technology so that they can deliver results? Would that have an impact on the trust conversation if employees had the technology to deliver better results? Are organizations making the connection?

Dan Schawbel: Great question. Yes and no. I love the argument of people saying that remote workers are less engaged, they're less productive, they're more distracted, because it's just not true. There's not one study that shows that remote workers are less productive. In fact, every single study and there's a lot, and I've published three out of the 20 or 50 studies around this, it all points that people are more productive, right? But there's a cost to all that productivity and that's burnout. So all the technology, I don't know if you've experienced this, even though I've worked remote for like 11 years now. All the screen, there's no way it can be good for you. I have a lot of friends that literally get sick from it. I remember at the start of COVID, I was in this massive Zoom with like 50 people.

I had to tell a story and I was on it, and playing trivia afterwards for two hours. I was so sick and I was sick the next morning, too. To me, that's feedback that shows, hey, we don't even know. We're not going to know to like 40 years out, if all this technology when we were younger had impact on our health long-term. Because it's advancing so quick, so we have no idea how this is all going to impact. So getting back to more of what you're saying about corporations and technology, I think they want to advance technology because it's not just good for workers to have the latest and greatest, but they need to compete too, right?

If they're not adopting it, there was a whole study by Intel and Dell, I think they do this every year. They ask a question, I remember a few years ago and it rang true. It has more to do with the office, but office technology. If you go into a physical office, a corporate headquarters, and it doesn't feel technologically advanced in terms of being able to book conference rooms and just the latest laptops and all this stuff, you're less likely to work for that company. So there is a perception that lower quality tech or not having advanced tech creates this view that the company is not relevant. If you're irrelevant as a company or to an individual, you're in big trouble.

You really are, because people will stop caring about you, buying from you. People don't want to work for you as much anymore. You start winding down, especially because things are advancing so much. So if you look at the Fortune

500 lists now versus 10 years ago versus 50 years ago, it kind of keeps changing. A lot of the biggest companies now are technology companies. I remember I interviewed Brian Chesky who's the founder of Airbnb. He said that every company is either a technology company or will be one.

Sharlyn Lauby: I read a study that talked about companies that have outdated technology, employees spend their time doing work arounds and that that's a contributor to stress and burnout, because it keeps... If I spend all my time doing work arounds, I don't get enough time to do my work. So there's this never ending cycle of, I don't get to catch up, I don't get to do my best work because I'm spending my time doing workarounds where technology is concerned. You and I sat on a panel recently talking about employee performance, and I liked your comments about the future of performance management. So I was wondering if you would share a little bit here about how you see technology playing a role in managing performance.

Dan Schawbel: I think we're on the same page at higher level where, yeah, giving feedback along the way is important so there's no surprises. That an annual performance review if done right might not be the worst thing, right? But it also, again goes back to an employee's responsibility is, they need to collect their own data. People need to start collecting more data. So I think where you're going with this and what I believe in as a data nerd who's done, and the end of this you'll be 60 research studies, is collecting data. Technology is getting more and more sophisticated allowing us to collect data about our actions, our results, and the different projects we do.

That's valuable because performance reviews can be very easy if along the way you've collected all this data and you've measured the results of everything you've done. Because then once you get to the performance review, and as well as getting feedback along the way, it's kind of already written for you. It's almost like saving a project to the last minute. If you, say a book is a great example, you could either write a page a day or five pages a day, or a week before it's due, you write the whole thing.

Sharlyn Lauby: I want to circle back to something that you said a little bit earlier about the conversation on trust. Because when we're talking about performance management and you just alluded to it, your performance review should not be a surprise to you. You know how you've performed over the past year. If you're getting good conversations from your managers and your coworkers, you should know what your performance review is going to look like. You've done a lot of research. You've mentioned some of the research that you've done regarding trust in the workplace. How do we help organizations bridge the gap, the trust gap, where remote and hybrid work is going?

If I'm an employee and I want to spend a third of my time in the office, and a third of my time working from home, and a third of my time at a pool in the Caribbean and I can still get my work done. How do I bridge the gap so that my

manager knows I'm still delivering, and doesn't have to wonder whether or not Charlene is going to meet her deadlines and do all that good stuff?

Dan Schawbel: I refer back to what Aetna did back in the day. It was in The Wall Street Journal about how you couldn't work remote, unless you proved yourself to your manager in six months. Now, I don't know if six months is the right amount of time or not, but I do kind of like that idea, right? Because as someone who's hired people, I like to feel comfortable with them first and then that trust is built. So that it doesn't matter where they're working as much anymore, right? So I do understand that perspective, and it is like I was saying, part of the UKG study is harder to build trust remotely, it just is. If you're in person with someone you get a different feeling for who they are, that you wouldn't get remotely, even with video conferencing. It's just a different experience that can't be replaced.

So I think about people I've interviewed who are leaders at big companies like American Express. I talked to one leader there and she was in her office, but she would travel and meet people from all around the world. So at some point, the in-person does matter a lot in terms of building that trust. But really what it comes down to is communication. If you're a remote worker, since you're not seen and heard, like in a physical location, around your colleagues and manager, that means you have to double down on communication. You have to communicate way more because you're not with them and you have to be even smarter with what we were saying before.

This connects to your last question about performance reviews. You have to be even more mindful about the work you're doing and what you're accomplishing, these again, people are not seeing you in person. So I think when working remote requires more effort in that respect, which could play a role into why people are working harder and longer when they work remote and there's less work-life boundaries. Because I think instinctively you feel like more is expected of you.

Sharlyn Lauby: Do you think that the past year has been helpful to managers in understanding that remote work is a possibility? I mean, I have to say, I've had people tell me I had no idea that we could get work done remotely. We've always been an organization that it's been all about the in-person experience and we were really wrong. We were really wrong. We didn't think that we could operate this way.

Dan Schawbel: I mean, it goes back to what I was saying before, hybrid makes the most sense as long as it's doable at the company. But if you're a factory worker, hybrid doesn't really make much sense. But we did a whole study with a company called MyWorkChoice of a thousand hourly workers and a thousand HR leaders back in January. One of the most common questions I get asked about flexibility over the years is, okay, what do we do for warehouse workers? What do we do for people who work at supermarkets or people work in hospitals? The answer

based on the research is flexible hours. So it kind of goes back to this idea of people want flexibility, people have inherent needs, and are different phases of their life cycle. You have a kid, you don't have a kid, you're married, you live alone.

Everyone's in, based on their age, based on where they are in their life, they have different needs. The big one that came out over the past year, and that's still an issue is women have fallen behind. One to two million of women have dropped out of the workforce mostly due to childcare responsibilities. So if we can let them work remote and give them more flexibility, that might help, and offer more maternal leave, hey, maybe they stay with us longer. Maybe that's good for that demographic of women. So I think that we have to be more thoughtful not just from a high level of having a flexible, agile workplace, offering the right technologies, but also from an individual level. I think that's where we're going, and I honestly think that's where technology is going to have a huge impact, right?

How do we create... It's not just about creating an employee experience. When we say employee experience, we're thinking about for everyone, right? But is that really going to be effective moving forward? I think everything just like Amazon is going to be customized to meet the needs of individuals, because everyone has different needs at different points in time and those could change. So how do you keep track of where people are? You need more communication, but I also think technology can kind of help customize the experience per person, and also notify people of what you're doing when. So that's another reason why I think employee monitoring will continue to gain traction too, is because it's going to get harder to know where people are, what they're doing. In some respect, it's like this... It's privacy versus flexibility, and I think there's a battle between both.

Sharlyn Lauby: Well, I think that you've opened a whole new conversation there in talking about the balance between trust and privacy and flexibility, but I want to be respectful of your time. So here's my last question, I'm confident that organizations are focused on economic recovery right now. If you could make one suggestion to the organizations and employees out there that will help them in the months to come as we're maneuvering through all of this, what would it be?

Dan Schawbel: So the thing that I've been looking at the most, which has really fascinated me, is the fact that because people are still collecting unemployment, because the job market is astronomically well right now. So it's the largest jobs gap I think I've ever seen in my career is 8.3 million unfilled jobs with a potential up to eight million more being created in the next year or so by the Biden administration. So the power has shifted from corporation, employer to employee, and we know this based on corporate actions. How corporations respond to the job market tells us everything we need to know. I'll give you an example, just today Bank of America commits to raising its minimum wage to \$25. Pinterest is going

to support more female executives. There's so many examples of things that are going on. Walmart is converting two-thirds of their workers to full-time employees.

This is happening because employees are gaining more power right now. It's not just happening because these employers are like, let's be nice to people. No, it's because they're forced to make changes. JP Morgan came out and they said, "Hey, we need to really focus on increasing employee engagement and building a better employee experience for people." Every day, more and more companies coming out with new employee benefits, raising wages, giving more flexibility. I think that that is what's going to happen anyways, right? It shouldn't be during this period of time when companies do this, even though it puts pressure on them to make changes. I think the smartest companies already have all of this in place. I'll give you an example, like be Darden, Darden at the beginning of the pandemic was like, we're going to take care of our people. We're going to make sure they continue to get paid and help them with unemployment, and all of that.

So get ahead of these things instead of waiting for the job market just to change. How much do companies have to change if they've already changed? So they have the leg up because 40%, it was a whole Microsoft study of tens of thousands of workers in the country. Over 40% of people are looking to change careers or jobs in the coming months. To me, that's a signal, hey, we have to really help our employees right now. So I think that from an organizational-employer perspective, let's not just do things right now and then take them away when the job market changes again. Let's start to do the right things and commit to long lasting change.

So regardless of what happens, people know they're being taken care of. That to me is the best retention strategy. If you lose 40% of your workers, you know that hiring is very tough.

Sharlyn Lauby: It's rough right now.

Dan Schawbel: It's costly. So you can prevent and save so much money by doing the right things. I would also say paid time off is extremely important. Promote paid time off, give people a vacation, incentive. PWC is paying their employees to take vacation days, right? We've gotten to that point because one of the top reasons why people are leaving their jobs is because they're burned out. When they're burned out, they start to think about, especially in a good economy, huh? Maybe I should go work at another company. So get around this. Get around this because I feel like all companies are shortsighted or not all companies. A lot of companies are shortsighted, so why not do the right things now, commit to positive change long-term, because it will end up saving you money.

I feel like we just pound this in and pound this in all the time, but it's just another example right now. Everyone's rushing, oh, we need to pay more, we

need to offer these benefits. Do the right thing in the first place and have a longer term strategy, regardless of if we're in a down market, a good economy, whatever we're in, have a longer term outlook. Then for employees, I do think it's important to take this time. People spent the past year or so contemplating what they want to do. It is truthfully a great time to start to put feelers out there and see what other opportunities are, if you're unhappy or really. I think everyone, every year needs to assess where they are and where they want to go and ask themselves if, is this the right position for me or maybe I should try something else?

So there's going to be a lot of change for good, but as an employee you need to start taking action. At least see what your value is in the marketplace now, it's a nice little assessment. Then for an employer is to have this longer term view and offering people things that are going to help them forever, I guess. Rather than having a short term perspective, let's briefly give a few more dollars. Let's briefly have a mental health program. No, it's like, how do we just have this as part of our value package so that we can hold onto people even longer. We don't have to... We don't get questioned as, oh, they're coming to our rescue now, where were they six months ago?

Sharlyn Lauby: Exactly.

Dan Schawbel: So I know that was a long response.

Sharlyn Lauby: That was a great response.

Dan Schawbel: But it was a reflection from both sides, both employee and employer and based on everything that I've seen in the market over the past forever.

Sharlyn Lauby: They have to balance out.

Dan Schawbel: Yeah.

Sharlyn Lauby: If you can find... If organizations can find employees... If organizations where they're at can find employees where they're at, it's that sync up that really creates a winning culture. I think a lot of times where you see disengagement in organizations, isn't always necessarily because the company is doing something bad or the employees aren't working or performing at a high level. It's because they're not synced up on where they want to go, or the company wants to go and where the employee wants to go. So you often just see that divergence and it creates disengagement in the organization.

Dan Schawbel: Absolutely. You said it way better than I did.

Sharlyn Lauby: I want to give you a big thanks and cheers for sharing your insights with us. But I also want to ask you one last question. I know you have a new project that

you're working on. So do you want to take a second and share with the listeners a little bit about your new project?

Dan Schawbel: Absolutely. So we created the Workplace Intelligence Marketplace, and as part of that marketplace, we have what are we calling the Plus Newsletter. So it's the premium version of our Workplace Intelligence Weekly Newsletter that people have been reading on LinkedIn 166,000 subscribers. Giving people more in-depth analysis, taking it to that next level of actionable advice using the research that we have so that people make better decisions about their career and their organization. We also have, we're going to be offering white papers. We have a whole expertise exchange. So you can connect with various experts to further your organization using their insights and advice.

We're really looking to help educate people in the industry. We know that things are constantly changing and we spend seven days a week, every week examining trends, understanding them, making the connections. This is so important because things are changing fast and not everyone can have their full-time job be examining trends. That's how I look at it. I mean, that's what the value proposition has become. Sharlyn, it's like, if you're an executive at a company, there's no way you're going to be able to spend a hundred hours a week examining trends. So we do that for them, simplify it, and then bring the best and the brightest to be able to add another level of support, as they try and enter this brave new world of work.

Sharlyn Lauby: Well, we'll be sure to put a link in the show notes so that people can check it out. Again, thanks, Dan, for being here and sharing your insights with us. I know everyone is really appreciative of you sharing your time and your expertise.

Dan Schawbel: Thank you so much.

Sharlyn Lauby: Listeners, please don't leave just yet. I'm looking forward to sharing my takeaways with you in just a moment.

Speaker 3: To be a powerfully productive business, you need powerfully happy people. Two leaders in workforce management and HR have joined forces to become UKG, Ultimate Kronos Group. UKG creates comprehensive HR solutions designed to make employees happier and build more meaningful connections within your workforce. They've even done that for themselves, being recognized as one of the top places to work. UKG's 12,000 employees helped thousands of businesses build better cultures every day. When you're ready to make your people happier, UKG is ready to work for you. UKG, our purpose is people.

Sharlyn Lauby: Thanks again everyone for listening to the HR Bartender Show. I thought this episode with Dan was particularly insightful, because I think he honed in on the word balance. When we're talking about tech and technology, not only are we talking about the balance that we have as individuals to make sure that we're not spending all of our time in front of a screen. That our talents are being used

holistically, if you will, on all the different things that we contribute to in the organization. So creating that sense of balance so we don't get burned out, and that we're communicating with other individuals and we're doing all of the things that we're supposed to be doing. But I thought the conversation about balance in terms of flexibility, and privacy, and trust was particularly interesting. Organizations are going to need to figure out how to create that balance.

As we talk more about a hybrid workforce, and we spend time talking about how do we get things done and how great technology in enabling all of those things to happen. We also want to make sure that we respect an individual's privacy. This isn't about being on, if you will, 24/7, 365, people can get burned out that way. It's not about invading people's privacy. It's about trusting people. It's about setting good expectations. It's about telling people, giving them the tools to get things done and then holding them accountable for results. So as we're talking about flexibility and accountability, we'll want to keep that more to mind, balance. If you liked the episode, I hope you'll also check out my conversation with Mark Wales. Where we spend some time talking about workforce management, and I can see the balance conversation coming into play there as well. The balance between staffing and scheduling. The balance between all the different departments of an organization getting involved in the workforce management conversation. So thanks again for listening, until next time. Cheers.

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