

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: Season two of the HR bartender show is focused on change, and I am delighted to speak with today's guest. Pat Wadors serves as UKG's chief people officer. In this role, Pat's daily responsibilities are driven by her deep commitment to the entire employee experience starting with a job candidate's first touch with UKG to building a strong alumni network of brand and culture ambassadors, all the moments that matter in between. Pat oversees the critical HR functions that bring this experience to life, including talent acquisition and development, comp and benefits, employee listening and people analytics, employee communications, HR tech, HR business consultants, and shared services and components of the workplace's services and physical security. Her personal mission is to ensure that UKG crewers around the world are better people for having worked at UKG. Pat believes that organizations thrive when they have a blend of people with differing backgrounds and ways of thinking and people who believe that they belong as a contributor to the company's success. As a multiple recipient of the National Diversity Council's top 50 most powerful women in technology, Pat is a frequent speaker on HCM, diversity and inclusion issues, and has served on the board of several prominent technology companies. Prior to UKG, Pat served as CPO, chief people officer, of ProCore Technologies and has held many multiple leadership roles at ServiceNow, LinkedIn, Plantronics, and Yahoo, so I am thrilled to have Pat with us on today's episode.

Welcome, Pat.

Pat Wador: Thank you for having me, Sharlyn. Excited to be here.

Sharlyn Lauby: In this season of the HR Bartender Show we're talking about change and I'm asking everyone what's one change you've experienced recently that's turned out well?

Pat Wador: Two things actually come to my head. One, I'm a new grandma so that's new for me. That's a change. So from a family dynamic learning to be a grandma is different and from a business standpoint, joining UKG, stepping down from the board to an operator was unique for me.

Sharlyn Lauby: Well, congratulations on both. Let's talk about the business side. As someone who is new to your role, what advice do you have for people when they're starting out in a new position?

Pat Wador: I always try to coach people questions are your best friend, ask 20 questions for every statement, don't rush to think that you have to know everything, be comfortable being perfectly imperfect and learning, meet the humans around you because their jobs will evolve so get to know them and they you, and you will feel more connected. You'll have better resilience, you'll have more advocates around you, it'll just be a smoother ramp up opportunity for you if you lean into relationships and questioning.

Sharlyn Lauby: What's interesting about your change into your new role is you're transitioning into a human resources role and sometimes when we think about HR, we get asked to come into the organization and create change. Even when an organization is running really well sometimes we're asked to come in and maybe do something or create something, while at the same time, we are trying to process the change of being in a new role. You mentioned stepping down from the board and moving into an operations position. Do you have a change model or a change secret or a change path that you use when you are personally trying to manage all of that change?

Pat Wador: Gosh, there's a few things. One is, and my employees at UKG will laugh that meet with me a lot is that I call it touching the elephant, Sharlyn. I try to understand the organization, I try to understand the dynamics. That's where all the questions come from. If I see that the tail feels like it's next to the ear, why do you have a design like that? I seek to understand.

I've made this mistake before where it feels like it's designed wrong, something feels off intuitively, and then I want to go fix it, but if I slowed my roll a little bit, I realized that that design was done intentionally for purpose to solve something else. And so that's why I've gotten wiser, if you will, on my questions, to seek to understand, and then understand did they achieve that purpose? Is it ready for the next evolution? Right? Because orgs, if done well, evolve with the company. If you keep the same org design, the same tenets at a small size organization, it won't scale to a billion plus. You have to be consciously evolving it and not holding it static. I just have to understand the nuance. I have to understand the intentionality of things. No one walks into an organization trying to mess it up or do it in an awkward way, they do it to solve something so I have to be respectful of that.

Sharlyn Lauby: I know for me, when I've been in a new human resources role, I always started that conversation by saying, "I'm not asking these questions because I have any designs on changing anything or I'm questioning anything, but I can't support you if I don't understand it."

Pat Wador: Right.

Sharlyn Lauby: "If you're moving into a team, I can't support something that I don't understand so the more I understand it, the more I can support it." That's always been helpful because it allows me then to maybe be the advocate for something that maybe employees would look and say, "We always wanted this, but we couldn't get it-"

Pat Wador: Exactly.

Sharlyn Lauby: ... "in the past."

Pat Wador: That's why just the questions are our best friends. I want to understand the nuance, the history, and then their desires. It's not even like, "Why is it the way it is?" It's like, "And where do you see it going?"

Sharlyn Lauby: Mm-hmm.

Pat Wador: Because they're closer to the problem than I am. They're the expert at this stage and so that can add some wisdom and make that path shorter, smoother, better in any way, that's my job as a servant leader. But questions, question, question, seek to understand, and then echo back. I realize that a lot of times, I think I understand. When I echo back, they're like, "Pat, you didn't get it quite right. Let me explain the nuance."

Sharlyn Lauby: There's a difference between, what is it, parroting and paraphrasing.

Pat Wador: Yes.

Sharlyn Lauby: Parroting is just simply repeating back what somebody says to you and paraphrasing is putting it in your own words, in your own special way.

Pat Wador: That's what I tried to do. The echo back was like, "Let me show you what I took away from this conversation. These are my assumptions, this is what I believe you said, this is what I would do with that information. Am I on the right path?" so they can calibrate me. I called them flag pole moments, by the way. It teaches me am I off the mark, am I on the mark, as we move forward.

Sharlyn Lauby: Flag pole moments. Got it. One of the changes for us as human resources professionals is often when we have a new manager come into the organization or we have someone that's been promoted into a management role, we become a resource, so not only we've been talking about how do we process

change when we're new to the role but sometimes we become a supporter, new manager, new to the role, moving into a position. But one of the things that I found is that sometimes a manager gets the job and a challenge that they have is that they're implementing a change that maybe they don't agree with. It's gone through all the conversations and the solution isn't something that either benefits them or they don't feel that it benefits the team or the company or something like that. How can we as HR professionals work through that situation? I know we are often in that situation, we have all the conversations and at the end of the day, the company's decision isn't one that we particularly love, but we have to support it. I mean, it's not like it's illegal or unethical or immoral, but it's just not the one we would've chosen. How do we help managers through that?

Pat Wador: I think what you just said. I think part of the conversation is saying, "Look, we have to rumble on these topics." I like to channel Brene Brown. "Let's rumble with all courage and authenticity and say, 'What, why, when, how,'" get your knowledge together. I think there's so many different paths up the mountain. As I tell my team, the mountain's right. I know my mountain is the right mountain to go. How I can climb that mountain can go many different directions. But based on what I know today, I'm going to choose this path.

Now, 80/20 rule, 20% of my team will go, "Eh, wrong path, Wadors." It's just like, "I don't think that's the right one. I would've chosen plan B," but at some point leaders make a decision. I love decisions that are 49, 51 decision points, two great alternatives, someone's got to make a call, but that means someone's going to be disappointed wasn't my call. But if you teach the organization as an enterprise thinker, then rallying around that second alternative because it is a good alternative, may not be your decision, your point of view but if it is a viable option, then let's lock arms and move forward and learn from that optionality.

Because sometimes where I feel is that people walk into these situations and I'm like, "Eh, it's going to fail. I'll just wait for it to fail." That's not what a great leader does. You take that role and you take that choice and you make it the best possible chances for success and learn from it because there's going to come a time where they're going to choose your idea, your path forward, and someone else is going to be disappointed. Don't you want them to lock arms with you. How do you lean together and make this world better, make the company better, smooth out that execution?

Sharlyn Lauby: It's interesting that you mentioned that because it makes me think of consensus building. I think one of the biggest mistakes that organizations make in building consensus is that they think that the goal is to get everybody to love the idea-

Pat Wador: Yep.

Sharlyn Lauby: ... or to even get everybody to the idea and the goal of consensus building is to get everybody to live with it.

Pat Wador: Mm-hmm.

Sharlyn Lauby: Like you said, if people leave the room and they haven't been able to voice their opinions and just say, "Hey, I can live with it. I'm not happy about it, but I can live with it," then they go out and say things like, "This is the stupidest idea I've ever heard and if it's successful, I'll say I was on board and if it's not, then I'll say they didn't listen to me." Those are the people who can derail you in the organization. Going through the consensus, building exercise and saying, "All right, I need to know that everybody in the room can live with it. You don't have to like it, but everybody can live with it."

Pat Wador: I think, Sharlyn, beyond living with it's like lead with it. I understand you don't agree the path is perfect for you and your team, you're going to have to work harder than others, but I need you to lead through this with grace. I need you to lean in, lead through it, support it in actions and words and deeds, because there is no my team, your team, it's our team and so if we let them down and we don't lead through this, there's going to be another bump somewhere else, and it might be on your idea. I can guarantee you that there's always going to be a rough spot. There's always friction and change. Let's lead through it.

Sharlyn Lauby: I once worked for a company that whenever these bad decisions would come along, the decision that you didn't like, everybody was allowed 24 hours to be in a funk about it.

Pat Wador: Oh, I like that.

Sharlyn Lauby: Everybody was allowed 24 hours to be in a funk about it, openly, to the point where it almost got to be a joke like, "Hey, look, I'm only 14 hours in. You need to give me the rest of my time." But then after that, after you got your 24 hours, you had to figure out how you were going to get on board but everybody was allowed that 24 hours of just sort of being openly upset about it. Not to the point where were being detrimental to the operation or anything, but you didn't have to hide it.

Pat Wador: I like that. I'm going to steal that. You can be in a funk personally and privately with me and your peers, your first team, but not down.

Sharlyn Lauby: Well, it's interesting that you mention that because one of the things that happens when these decisions are being worked through and they're being discussed, often managers, now more than ever are having to deliver unpleasant messages, disappointing messages, and it's becoming a bigger part of their role. Managers are not always comfortable delivering the disappointing message. Now I know that we can make the process easier in HR with training programs or we can do one sheets and help people, but how do we help managers realize they can do this? Part of it is crafting the message, but the other part is delivering it. How do we help managers realize that they have this ability?

Pat Wador: The trick I've used over and over again in my career is giving them the five bullet points, the salient spirit. What are we trying to do, why we're trying to do it, and now have them role play the communication, the cascade, they put it in their own words. If I over script you, they never feel authentically you and so it doesn't get into your DNA. But if I turn around and say, "Hey, we're making this org change and we're going to have to take away the manager title of some of your peers or blank, it's going to be a tough conversation. Now paraphrase this in your language. How would you do it? What sits, what doesn't sit? Let's percolate in the awkwardness for it a little bit and get you comfortable, not that you're going to feel good about the decision, but you're going to get comfortable with the why and who you're sitting in front of and be mindful of them."

I also try to teach the manager to think about compassion for the seen and the unseen and that means in the moment when I have a difficult conversation with you and I'm giving you disappointing news in your career, I have to be mindful of the fact that if it's right for the business and the overall health of the organization that you moved on or do something else, it's because the team will thrive, the company will thrive, the customer set will go up, whatever that thing is that I believe in, so I have to be clear with you about caring for you, have empathy for you, but also really channeling my compassion for the why behind it and the value because I want people to be net better off by having been in the organization and going through tough times is part of that challenge. It may not feel good in the moment, but teaching them these conversations and how to have it is part of leadership. Don't shy away from it.

Sharlyn Lauby: In your introduction, we talked about your experience with inclusion. My last question has to do when change happens in the organization and you were talking about when organizations, for example, make reporting changes, changes in their structure or their reporting relationships, people can often feel excluded, especially if they perceive the change differently. I've seen instances in my career where maybe we've split a department and managers were going to share responsibilities. Some people perceive that change differently. The managers might be super excited about it, but the employees maybe not so much, or the employees are excited about it, but the manager who didn't want that change, maybe they originally had a larger span of control and now they have a smaller span of control. What can the organization do to make the workforce feel more included while making these kinds of changes at the same time?

Pat Wador: Conversations. Lots of conversations. I think about it in a 360-like wheel. What's the business need and the strategy, what's the right structure to serve that strategy? What are the resources I have to manifest that org design and then what changes as a reaction to that change? I go back to make sure it all nests together nicely, and I have those conversations and then put it against the landscape of the maturity curve of the company. We know that as organizations get larger, we specialize, we have to go deeper, it gets more complex. Being a

generalist of many things, you're a specialist over time, and changing one's title from being basket weaver, pottery maker, and amazing sketch artist, to now coming a pottery maker and a basket weaver, then you're also just a basket weaver, and that's in your head, just A. What they fail to realize is getting really deep and complex and global and nuanced is a gift. You're becoming the master of an art, of your craft.

I think teaching folks about this evolution of generalist to specialists and the value you get in your career, that's why I'm saying net better off. If you're privileged to grow in an organization, add scale greater than 20% year over year, you're learning a ton of stuff. Over time, depending on the platform then in which you work, you're going to start specializing because to do good service to that function in that team, that org, you must go deeper. It's what you have to do. Knowing where you want to play, it's where the conversation. Do I want to be a pottery maker, a basket weaver, or an artist of this? How do I see myself growing? Because if I have these conversations when I do make those trade offs about your passion and your play and the needs of the business and the functional design, I might have grief letting those things go, that's natural, but I'm specializing in the thing that matters, becoming a master. It feels good in that craft.

Sharlyn Lauby: I know we could spend the rest of the day talking about how to help organizations manage change and how to help our employees manage change at the same time but we're going to have to have you back to do it again, talk more about this. For those of you listening in, please give a big, thanks and cheers to Pat for sharing her knowledge with us and if you want to connect with her, and I know you do, be sure to check out her contact info in the show notes. But please don't leave just yet. After the break, I'm looking forward to sharing my takeaways with you about this conversation.

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 and UKG's 12,000 employees help 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 for listening to the HR Bartender Show. I thought this episode with Pat was just particularly enlightening because we were talking about change in the organization and how we as human resources professionals can help the organization lead through a change effort. This is something we get asked all the time in our roles as HR professionals. Sometimes we're actually referred to as a change agent. How do we help the organization process change, both at the structural level in terms of what the organization chart might look like to optimize our resources, making sure that people are in the right places to how

do we help managers process that change and how do we help managers support their employees who are processing change? But what struck me about the conversation was it's all about communication and particularly keeping the lines of communication open so that as we are communicating change and how it was processed and how the decision was made, that if we, as an organization get too big, too siloed where we're not keeping the lines of communication open, we lose our strategic advantage to manage change because we're not able to talk about it, we're not able to process it.

And when that happens, there's something to that old saying that says with, "You don't have enough information, you just kind of make it up on your own, or you make some assumptions that maybe you shouldn't make." But we don't want people to do that because we have the information, they can get good data and analysis and a conversation going so that people know what's happening within the company.

That's what it's really all about. It's about communicating well and communicating often and letting others know that you're there to answer questions when people have them. That's a big part of being a manager and a leader in the organization. Being a manager and a leader, Pat mentioned servant leadership, but part of servant leadership is being a good leader means being a good follower and being there to serve others when they need you. I think on that note, I'm going to wrap up today's episode. Again, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. If you like this episode, you might want to check out the episode that I had with Kate Bishoff about how change and compliance work together. Until next time, have a great day. Cheers.

Speaker 1:

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