

Speaker 1: You are 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, and thanks for being here. I'm your host Sharlyn Lauby, author of the blog HR Bartender. Before I introduce today's guest, I'd like to take a moment to thank this season sponsor, Case IQ.

Speaker 3: Case IQ is the leading provider of modern investigative case management software to handle virtually any type of workplace incident. With millions of cases resolved and billions of dollars in litigation avoided, trust Case IQ to help you protect your employees, your organization, and your brand. Visit [caseiq.com](http://caseiq.com) to learn more.

Sharlyn Lauby: It's season three of the HR Bartender Show and we're focused on ethics. I am super excited to speak with today's guest. Jakub Ficner is the director of partnerships at Case Q. In his role, Jakub specializes in investigative documentation and workflow solutions for human resources, employee and labor relations, ethics, compliance and fraud teams. He provides training and education to improve accountability and defensibility of organizations' investigative processes. Jakub is a graduate of the University of Ottawa and Purdue University. And I'm super excited to have Jakub on the show because we've worked together in the past on a couple of webinars, so I'll be sure to drop archived copies of those webinars in the show notes. So, Jakub, thanks so much for being here.

Jakub Ficner: Thanks for having me, Sharlyn. I'm also super excited to dive into the topic of ethics.

Sharlyn Lauby: One of the questions that I've been asking everyone this season has to do with personal ethics. So, I'm not going to ask you to provide me any specific situations, but what's one thing that you do or you think about when you're faced with an ethical dilemma?

Jakub Ficner: Well, that's definitely an interesting question. Personally, what I like to do is take a step back. I like to review the options and ultimately choose the best possible solution rather than the perfect one. When I look at a perfect or a best solution what I'm really looking at is threefold, does it align with the organizational values and principles? Are there legal implications? And the most important one is around personal integrity, is it a choice that I can stand behind and does it align with my personal ethics and integrity? Because ultimately what I've found is taking a long-term view has ultimately been in the long run of things the most beneficial when we look at sustainability, reputation, and relationships. So, from I guess a process perspective, I would consider the stakeholders, evaluate the options. If it's a serious one I'd also consult. I have

mentors, I would bring that up to their attention and see what they think. And the other step that I do take is also document the process, because ultimately accountability and defensibility is something that I preach, so I take that with all of my various activities.

Sharlyn Lauby: I'd like to believe that there's no question that we all agree ethics is important, but from your standpoint in your role and you talked about how part of your role is to help organizations with defensibility, what do you see or how do you see ethics impacting the workplace?

Jakub Ficner: It's definitely shifted over the past decade or so. Ethics significantly influences almost all aspects of the workplace, from daily interactions among employees to major strategic decisions. Ethical practices can contribute to a company's success and sustainability in the long run. And when we look at the actual factors that play into that, it comes around trust and integrity. So, an organization that emphasizes ethical behavior is likely that they're going to foster an environment of trust among their employees, management and stakeholders. Reputation's a big one, you just have to open up the news almost on a daily basis and you see what happens when organizations don't take ethics seriously. Productivity and performance, there's been multiple studies that have been conducted from Gardner to LRN that have shown that ethical workplaces tend to be more productive because employees can stay focused on their tasks, rather than thinking about how I'm going to deal with the next ethical issue.

Employee retention and attraction is another big one, there's been a shift where employees are looking at an organization's culture and ethical values when determining if they want to take the job or remain with the job. And lastly, legal compliance and risk management. So, instead of spending all that time and effort battling compliance lapses, you can use those resources and shift them into more value added activities. To summarize, I think ultimately it's culture. Ethics greatly contributes to a company's culture and ethical environment fosters respect, honesty and fairness amongst employees, and that leads to creating a positive work culture.

Sharlyn Lauby: You mentioned that employees several times in the conversation, and employees play a huge role in ethics, the decision to come into the organization, the decision to stay with the organization. But that means the employees need to feel comfortable speaking up, not just something's bad or something's wrong speaking up, but I have a question, how do I handle this situation? What's one thing or a couple of things that you think about that organizations can do to improve psychological safety? That whole concept of I feel comfortable coming to you and saying I have a question, and it's of an ethical nature.

Jakub Ficner: Well, if I had to choose one thing that organizations can do to improve psychological safety, it'd probably be build trust. Trust is a fundamental aspect of psychological safety. When employees trust each other and their leadership, they're more likely to share ideas, take risks, and admit mistakes. And so when

we look at it, there's a couple different ways that we found that organizations can build trust. One is lead by example, so this has to be a notion taken up by senior leadership and the leadership team. And they need to display that honesty, integrity, transparency and reliability are important to them. This encourages transparency and open communication, we always try to stress support and encouragement.

And lastly, admitting mistakes. That's another factor where mistakes happen, and showing that you can admit to a mistake is important in terms of fostering that trust with your employees. And I think overall the most important element is consistency. Trust is built over time through consistent actions. This includes keeping promises, following through on commitments and consistently treating people fairly and with respect. So, I always stress that building trust takes time and it requires consistent effort from everyone in the organization. However, studies have shown that resulting improvements in psychological safety and the overall team performance are well worth the effort.

Sharlyn Lauby: You mentioned about the relationship of building trust, one of the things that I think is happening right now is there's this big focus on being efficient. We're hearing organizations going out there and just saying, we've declared this time, we've set aside this time to become a more efficient organization. I can see the conversation about trust and I can see the conversation about efficiency, can you be ethical and efficient at the same time? I mean, honestly, I'm trying to figure that part out. Is it okay to, I want to build trust, but I want to build trust in an efficient way. Can I do that?

Jakub Ficner: Yeah. It's my belief that by integrating ethical considerations into all aspects of your organization, organizations can not only uphold high moral standards, but also streamline their operations, improve their performance, and build a more sustainable and successful business. And it all starts with establishing clear ethical guidelines. So, if we have well-defined and transparent ethical policies, they help employees understand what's expected of them, reduce overall time spent on making decisions in gray areas. So, instead of thinking, how am I going to handle the situation? How does it affect compliance, legal, or reputation? Having a clear policy will make you more laser focused in terms of the right solutions.

And then it's about promoting a culture of integrity, so what we want encourage is honesty, transparency, and accountability amongst all members of the organization. And by having this, you're having more efficient communication amongst all of your employees and ultimately building trust that if an issue does arise, you have the tools in place to deal with it, and have the tools in place to prevent those issues from occurring in the first place. We've seen organizations taking a more serious stance in terms of integrating ethics into business strategy. And again, by taking that ethical approach into business strategy, we're just reducing that decision making time by automatically discounting certain options. Then training your employees on ethics, so by providing the

training, employees will know when making decisions, what is ethical and we should be taking those paths and knowing what I should escalate and what I should not be spending excessive time deliberating. And lastly, and a big one is ultimately leveraging technology.

This is something that has been growing from all aspects of organizations, but when it comes to specifically ethics, it's about using technology to monitor and manage ethical performance. So, there's a lot of data, there's a lot of cases, there's a lot of triage and determinations that have to be made. And by leveraging technology, you can over overall build efficiency into your process. And what we always see is that by starting tracking your performance when it comes to ethics, that allows you to measure your ethical behavior and ultimately by measuring it, that's how you can continue to improve your ethical behavior. So, it all starts and ultimately ends, in my biased opinion, working in technology with technology itself. And by using technology, you can build efficiency in multiple different avenues of your ethical journey.

Sharlyn Lauby:

That makes a lot of sense, often when we're talking about being more efficient, especially now, one of the ways that we can be more efficient is by bringing a technology solution into our organization. It's not about cutting corners, if you will, it's about having the process in the right place. So, if a technology solution can help me manage the administrative pieces, the documentation pieces, the storage pieces, then it puts me in a position where I can spend the rest of my time on things like building relationships, building trust within the organization. You mentioned earlier training.

I can spend my time doing that where the technology can do what it does best, then I can do the piece that I do best. Let's elaborate for a second on this conversation about ethics and technology, where do you see, and I'm setting you up here, okay? Where do you see some opportunities for organizations to use software when it comes to reducing risk? Because there are lots of opportunities to use software, but maybe you could share a little bit about how software can help reduce organizational risk.

Jakub Ficner:

Well, ultimately, technology is about reinforcing ethical culture, it's not a substitute. And so going back to a previous point, it starts, well first with training. There's a lot of ethics training platforms out there, there's a lot of solid ones out there. And by automating the process of delivering your ethics training, you can reduce some of that administrative burden of managing the program. And that's really the first building block is let's leverage technology around ethics training. And then from there it evolves to, well, how do we actually encourage that speak up culture? So, now we trained our employees, but we want to make sure that they have multiple different ways of how they can ultimately voice any concerns that they have. And that comes with building a whistle blowing or speak up platform.

So, giving your employees multiple different avenues that they're comfortable with to submit any type of tip, allegation or referral to your department. And from there, it comes to what we ultimately strive is a comprehensive case management solution, and that is ultimately building that accountability and defensibility into your process. So, we want to build trust, we want a consistent approach, and you need to have technology to ultimately be able to govern and show that you are following your process consistently each and every time. You have a timely response when an employee does raise their concern, that they know that they can expect a timely response and a consistent response to that because you've got a system that enables you to see the appropriate steps, actions, and activities that you should take based on the nature of the case.

So, it goes from first encouraging employees to submit their concerns, now once you've done that, you have to have technology to ensure that nothing falls between the cracks and everything's resolved within a timely fashion, through a comprehensive case management solution that allows you to document your process and build again that accountability and defensibility into it. Which leads to kind of next point of evolution, which is now that we've structured our data, what can we learn from that data? And that comes through data analysis, so having that integrated business intelligence to be able to look through everything that's being reported to your organization and ultimately try and analyze it and look for risks. What should I be concerned about? Instead of taking that more reactive approach, shifting to a more proactive approach using data and taking a more data-centric approach to your ethics and compliance or employee relations departments.

And the one that I'm personally extremely excited about is the incorporation of AI into the overall journey. At Case IQ we're extremely excited about being able to incorporate the latest AI tools to be able to assist with these activities. Everything from the initial triage or assessment of a complaint or issue, to making sure you're taking a consistent approach to managing that complaint or issue once it's been reported, to being able to try and analyze your information using the latest AI tools. And so that's where once you start incorporating technology into your process, you can really have that litmus test of, do we have an ethical culture? Is there room for improvement? And taking a data-driven approach to determining what your next actions or activities should be.

Sharlyn Lauby:

I love this conversation about using technology to help us be more ethical within our organizations, and we could spend the rest of the day talking about it, but I know your time is valuable. So, I've got one more question for you, and it's kind of a follow-up to what you've been talking about in terms of using business intelligence to help the business be more proactive and put processes in place. I could see HR leaders, business leaders being very excited about that kind of technology to help them reduce organizational risk. But I could also see where I might pause as an HR pro trying to figure out the best way to introduce this to the organization, especially if I don't have a lot of incidents currently going on or concerns because this is a very proactive effort. So, can you share with us at all

some of the things that in your experience you hear in terms of how you tee up this conversation inside an organization?

Jakub Ficner:

That's a great question, as oftentimes it's an overlooked aspect of implementing or improving an existing program. It's important to stress that the introduction of such technology is about creating a safe, transparent, and ethical working environment. It's not about monitoring employees or implying distrust, instead it's about empowering them to voice concerns and promoting ethical behavior across the organization. So, ultimately where you should start is explain the benefits, start by explaining why the organization is implementing this new system, highlight the benefits such as increased transparency, accountability, and the ability to address potential issues proactively. Reinforce that having few issues doesn't mean that there's no need for such a system, instead, it's a proactive measure to keep the organization healthy and ethical.

Make it relevant, explain how the system is relevant to every employee's daily tasks and long-term career development. You could discuss the significance of ethical behavior and personal growth, teamwork and the company's reputation. Provide training, so it's also important to familiarize your employees with the tools in place. Make sure the training is engaging and interactive as it encourages better learning. Simplify the process, make it simple. Oftentimes we've seen an organization deploy, let's say something like an intake form for submitting ethical concerns, but then they have multiple layers of questions that are all mandatory, multiple tabs that have to go back and forth, and ultimately that can discourage employees. So, simplify the process, keep it simple. Streamline is one of the key things that we always stress. Communicate constantly, regular communication with employees about the solution, and also that this wasn't a one time, here's the solution, but also part of continued communication with your employees.

And lastly, ask for feedback. After you've submitted the technology, ask employees for feedback. Are they finding it helpful? Are they encountering any issues? Use this feedback to improve the solution, the process, and address any problems that might've come up promptly and feedback's the best way. So, again, oftentimes we found organizations will deploy a solution, they'll say, here's our new solution for reporting your ethical concerns. It's a one blast to all employees and they lack the follow through. And so by following these simple steps, you can continuously improve your deployment of the technology, as well as continue to reinforce the importance of ethics and ethical culture amongst your employees.

Sharlyn Lauby:

I love the note we're ending on about simplifying ethics, that this doesn't have to be a complex conversation, but it does need to be a conversation. So, thank you so much. Let's give Jakub a big thanks and cheers for sharing his knowledge and experience with us. If you want to connect with him, I'll be sure to put his contact information in the show notes, and I will drop a link to those webinars that I mentioned earlier. But please don't leave just yet, I'm looking forward to

sharing with you some more takeaways from our conversation after a quick break.

Speaker 3: Case IQ is the leading provider of modern investigative case management software to handle virtually any type of workplace incident. Case intake, workflow, data centralization and reporting have never been simpler or more efficient. Whether you're dealing with potential employee discrimination, harassment or misconduct, trust Case IQ to provide the clarity and confidence you need to protect your employees, your organization, and your brand. With millions of cases resolved and billions of dollars in litigation avoided, Case IQ can help you make a difference in your workplace. Visit [caseiq.com](http://caseiq.com) to learn more.

Sharlyn Lauby: Thanks again everyone for listening in. One of the things that I enjoyed about the conversation with Jakub was talking about ethics and efficiency. I have to admit, sometimes when I think of ethics, because ethics is hard to define, it might sound complicated, or there could be aspects to ethics that are really complicated. But when we're talking about letting employees know our ethical guidelines, we can be very effective and efficient in doing that. When we're talking about building trust within the organization, we're doing that because it's the right thing to do, and it also allows employees to come to us with questions maybe about things that are related to ethics.

They can come to us and express their concerns about something that's ethics related. And then we have the ability to use technology as a way to make sure the training happens, make sure that concerns are appropriately documented, that should we need to investigate something, that we investigate it in a consistent manner. And that we have the ability to bring these pieces together and ensure that our efforts to create and maintain an ethical organization continue to exist, and I think that that's important. And that last dialogue that Jakub and I were having about being proactive, the time to do this isn't when, oh my gosh, we have a bunch of stuff going on and we need to figure out how to manage it.

It's one of those things that we do on the front end because there's a benefit of doing it. Organizations should think about this in the context of the recruiting experience and the employee experience, because it will help create that psychological safety that allows people to feel comfortable coming to us and talking about what's happening in the company, versus waiting until something happens. So, I hope that you've enjoyed the conversation with Jakub. Again, I will make sure that I drop some resources for you in the show notes. I appreciate you being here and listening in. Have a great day and cheers.

Speaker 1: Thanks for listening to the HR Bartender Show. To make sure you don't miss a single episode, subscribe on Apple Podcast, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you go for the very best podcast productions. While you're there, we'd love it if you would rate the show and leave us a review. The HR Bartender Show is an ITM



This transcript was exported on Aug 01, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Group presentation produced by HR Bartender and your host, Sharlyn Lauby.  
Remember people, work responsibly.