



HOW HR TECHNOLOGY LEADERS CAN NURTURE A MORE ENGAGING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Workday Chats

Phil Wilburn: Welcome and thank you for joining us for our Workday Chats today I'm Phil Wilburn your host of today's discussion, if you have any questions, please share them down in the comments below. Today I'm joined by some stellar amazing leaders, let me introduce them to you Sylesh Ballolla, Leader Digital Strategy, Cisco, Tara Fortier, Chief of Teams, Digital Experience at Cisco, Ed Miller, managing director at Accenture, and Elise Shelley, VP of business technology strategy and operations at Workday. Thank you all for joining me here today, so excited to have you.

As companies navigate the return to the workplace and assess hybrid and flexible work models, the employee experience is more important than ever. We wanted to have this conversation with you today discuss how HR technology leaders can partner to nurture a more engaging employee experience and let me set the panel here with some context for the discussion.

Professor Anthony Clots coined the term the 'great resignation' to describe the concept that a wave of people may soon be leaving their current employer as they re-evaluate their career paths coming out of the pandemic and I can tell you we're certainly starting to see that across all of our industries and the initial data backs this up. In April, 4 million Americans quit their job, which is a record high according to the Labor department. And more than 40% of the people who responded to Microsoft work trends index, which is a global survey of 30,000 people, said they're considering leaving their job this year, I do think this is an employee experience kind of problem we're facing. The big question is how can businesses prepare for this shift? Ed, I'm going to start with you, I know Accenture has been doing a lot of research in this area so can you tell us what are you seeing in the data from your research.

Ed Miller: Yeah thanks Phil. As it relates employee experience, I've really found that organizations around the world are no longer speaking in platitudes as they talk about



employee experience and really bringing core to their business strategy. And conversations with our clients are taking on a wholly different meaning. Organizations are pushing for much faster insight to action cycle to drive meaningful and measurable services and support to the workers around the globe. People aspects of the business are very much front and center now and on the C suites agenda. It's not just the CHRO and CHROs around the globe are focused on rewriting the mission. Their own mission to focus on the care resilience of their workers around the globe. I think we all know the challenges over the last 18 months or so have brought this message to the center. Organizations really emphasizing the importance of protecting and supporting the organization's most important stakeholders for its people. We're seeing organizations now being really hyper focused on architecting a culture that leaves people what we call net better off not only elevate the workforce, but also the communities around us. And that's really the synopsis of the research you mentioned last fall we published a study called Care of You Better. Now that research we created what we call our net better off model and the research says that when organizations meet six fundamental human needs through work, companies can really unlock their workers full potential those needs are emotional and mental, relational, physical, financial, purposeful and employable. And our research has found that there are five practices and we take those together, they really form that sweet spot for where organizations should focus on on employee experience and investing in their people. And that's really enabling continuous learning that's listening to what your people need on the front lines. It's using technology to enable flexible and more creative work. It's championing workforce wellbeing and equality. It's really studying and sharing people metrics around the organization.

Phil Wilburn: I've really seen you know I love the research that's coming out there, one of the things that strikes me is the expansion of this idea of the employee experience right. Historically, in HR we're very you know, like are you happy, do you have good work and now it's mental health wellbeing burnout how easy is it

to get done and how easy is it to work from home how easy is it to take time off when you need to. I really see this expansion here. We've seen this across the board internally at Workday that people care so much more about the entire environment in what you're doing to set them up for success, so I appreciate that and you know, some of your insights and the research along the way, and feel free again to chime in again. I know you and your team have been experts studying this so that's great. You know, employee engagement and experience are huge key factors that exactly like you've talked to and I'm going to bring in Tara and Sylesh, who actually have been leading one of the largest global transformations of employee experience at Cisco and congratulations, by the way, on amazing transformation and the process that you're doing and it's great to have Ed who's a researcher and studying this and then we have practitioners, Tara and Sylesh, you're here you're doing the work. And Tara why don't we turn it over to you to kind of frame up what are some of the key factors, the organization should assess to improve the employee experience, maybe talk about this into the initiative that that you've been driving at Cisco.

Tara Fortier: Yeah absolutely and thank you so much for having us here we actually had the fun of not just knowing after this event but it's been one of our partners in what we fondly call program Olympus here at Cisco so about two years ago we started on this journey and had some aging technology. And some driving business needs and Ed mentioned, you know, looking at your employees as their whole selves and ways in which to offer benefits and to maintain compliance and things we really needed to make a technology shift and a change. And with that change, we decided that we were going to implement the program in a different way that we've never done before. And so we started off with this program and we really had a couple of very key factors that we looked at and our people being in the number one



driving seat was one of the biggest factors. We also created dynamic teams and we created them to be cross functional in nature, so we pulled folks away from their day job across all the functions within Cisco. And they joined this one dynamic team with a common mission and a common purpose and there were a bunch of different factors that are really critical about it and we created the teams in the way that the cross functional nature of them in some ways folks were completely reporting in different organizations. Their leadership structure and the way we set ourselves up had them engaging with new folks and working with new team members. When we created the program in and of itself, we created a core and one of the things that was really, really critical for us was on having a set of guiding principles and so our peer Todd Scott, who runs our Workday practice and kind of gave us these design principles and they were something that we went through throughout the entire implementation of Workday and every single one of those steps, we pulled ourselves back to those and we looked at those and we brought them back up and said, are we honoring what we committed to do, are we staying true to who we said we would be and what our focus is.

Phil Wilburn: I think this is a great example because I remember when we were preparing for this and having this discussion, Tara you'd set up - hey we started the program thinking about this in one way like technology but expanded so much bigger and tell me a little bit about that process of thinking, Oh, we started here and expanded a little bit bigger from that perspective.

Tara Fortier: Yeah the program started out with some technology right, it was we have aging technology and the more that we looked at that and we saw the connection point amongst all of that, and we said wait a minute if we take advantage in order to take advantage of the new technology, you need to look at how you work and how you operate. And our partners Accenture was amazing at that because they actually helped us really step back and say we need to do some transforming internally. And they partnered with us through that entire process from how we work.

When we set up the team we forced a model that was - there is no badge color. We are all one team it doesn't matter if Ed's paying your salary or Cisco's paying your salary or somebody else's paying your salary, we are one team. And we have one mission, and we kept that philosophy through every step of what we did. We revisited it for every one of our major.. we were we were blessed I will say because we finished our last localization session right before the pandemic so we were in our last one. But every time we came together as a whole team, we did volunteer, we did volunteer activities because at Cisco it is so much a part of who we are as a company to give back and allow our teams to bring their whole selves in every location, we spent time volunteering and giving back into that particular community which just help to strengthen more that culture and that core of who the team really was.

Phil Wilburn: Again I love the way you approached it and organized the team and I think the outcome, the results you're seeing now is really proving it out right you're seeing a big focus, you know, you start with the technology but then you realize hey it's not about the technology it's about the experience of all of our employees and you created the team for that. Sylesh, let's just bring you in. You're the digital strategy guru there. You know, Tara talked about some of the guiding principles. How did the guiding principles come to light and what were some of the impacts for the digital strategy that you were driving?

Sylesh Ballolla: Absolutely so as part of the digital strategy, one of the key things that we always focus on how do we bring employee experience to the part of the outcome especially with technology and how do we do all of this with disruptive agility in mind. So, going back to what Tara talked about with respect to some of the guiding principles, one of the key notions that we always kind of anchor back on is this idea of how can digital help us be more human within the enterprise.



So what does it look like, for example, one of our design principles is trust. So, how does it translate or how does it manifest into this environment. So since we are doing a global transformation initiative, we did not want to just do what was done in the past, we really wanted to take an approach of how our employees experiencing these processes and policies that we have put together. So what is the role of trust in all of this if we are talking about employee experience and engaging employee experience. Then, do we really care that when I put in a transaction it is really approved by my manager because we are expecting the managers and the employees to have that conversation, have that connection or have the touch point. So that's a very important aspect, again, some of the things, it might look very minute. Close to 200 different decisions on how our processes will be put in place with hundred and 25 different members across the globe come together right. So again, when we talk about design linked global processes, we talked about if it is really required by a regulated requirement, only then we are going to make that happen. How do we bring about simplicity in these transactions you know remove any kind of collector. I think that was a key focus. Again thinking about employee experience, thinking about that cultural aspects that Tara talked about. And also Ed, you mentioned about communities. So how do we think about communities coming together, and then we can do success. So those were some of the key things that you can come from design principles.

Phil Wilburn: I wrote this down just for reference. Very few digital strategist say they think they talk about technology but you said how does our digital strategy help people be more human, I mean come on, like that's pretty I was like okay wow alright digital strategy is talking about being more human. that's fantastic talk about really focusing on the employee experience when you're talking about how do we make this a more human experience and elevate our guiding principle of trust. You know, again it's transformational and hey you were part of this whole process. You know, you talked about the research done at Accenture what did you see or what were you surprised by about the process of really being focused on the

employee experience as they went through this transformation.

Ed Miller: You know, I think that that there is a common misperception when you when you think about technology programs and trying to expand scope to be beyond the core technology configuration that it's going to slow down the timeline that it's going to take longer to get the right stakeholders aligned, that you're going to spend more money than what it costs to implement the technology but, but I think in taking a holistic approach for the transformation Cisco was able to be very purposeful about the solution they were building and it's not just a solution to build to get to go live but solution to us beyond go live, and I think it made to Sylesh's point it made the decisioning much easier because everybody had the common purpose and mission kind of front and center of their agenda, I remember being in a design session in Raleigh and we had you know 125 people in a room and just the pace that we were going through, making decisions based on those principles and visions was really something I'd never seen before. So I think getting everybody aligned to - what is the broader purpose of what we're building, can really help with that some of the sticky decisions that often slow down technology deployments.

Phil Wilburn: The focus on getting principles so impressive the thoughts that you can do this at scale globally and as quick as you did, also very impressive, and the fact that you're actually making it easier for people to work there. We trust you're having this conversation; you want to submit time off, you get the time off right. It's easier and it's so competitive right now the employee experience. If you're making it harder for people to work there, they're going to leave. They're going to find different ways. Elise, I'm not delaying you. I'm going to bring you into the conversation but you're also a Workday friend, so you know, I want to bring you into the conversation. You have been at the front line of Workday's response during the pandemic when



employee experience even became even more important. And also leading our overall technology strategy. I'm just curious what have you seen when it comes to employee experience, technology strategy over the last 18 months to two years.

Elise Shelley: Well it's been a ride and we've gotten to partner Phil, you and I, on a lot of things in this space, so you know your team really helped us understand what we were seeing from a sentiment perspective so Workday, long before Covid started had started pulse surveys of employee sentiment every week, and so the important thing there is, we had a really good benchmark for how employees were feeling at different phases of the quarter and the year and we've had some really good trends and data to go off of, we were able to build on that throughout the last 18 months and really keep a pulse on how people were feeling and responding. And the anecdotal feedback, the qualitative feedback is super important and we make space for that, but when you're trying to understand what's going on across such a large group of people, you know at such a rapid pace, having that data to drive decisions was really critical and so that allowed us to form programs and responses, you know really rapidly throughout the last year plus you know both employee programs like you said employee, wellness, mental health, understanding where people were feeling the most pressure the most friction, but also technology. So it also allowed us to understand how can we make a level playing field with technology, how can we drive more asynchronous work practices using the tools and solutions that we have and that are in the marketplace knowing that people might be working different hours than they than they used to. So there were a lot of changing dynamics that we had to adapt to and like you said at this point in the game, going forward I think it's going to continue to be so important because it's still kind of a rapidly evolving environment and we know that employee experience is a differentiator so we're hyper focused on making it easy to do work and engaging and delivering a great employee experience we know it's we know it's a critical factor.

Phil Wilburn: yeah and I think you in particular had led a lot of the technology decisions. I'm thinking of the feedback that we are getting early on, like, hey, by the way, everybody go home and people are like with my equipment with my monitor I'm taking my monitor we're like yes take whatever, take your monitor at home so forth, like that, and then technology had to do all of these things, I would say one of the most popular things that happened and I don't know if this is going to keep up at least, is our BT slack channel. All of a sudden, you transform the way in which we could get technology services and respond. And that has had, trust me I've used it a few times, that has transformed away and what I like is you made it simple and easy for people to make progress and you really focus on the employee's experience as opposed to you know complicated process along there. What other technology decisions did you have to make during the pandemic to make it really employee focused, I'm curious.

Elise Shelley: I can't personally take responsibility for our RS BT channel. We have an outstanding end user services organization. That's another part of that data collection and input mechanism. They're the ones that are talking to employees every day and figuring out where the pain points are so that that was one way of meeting like you said the employee where they're at how do they want to get help what's fastest for them, and so I think that was a hallmark of the book The rapid response and I, you know other technology decisions or how do we collaborate more effectively, using the tools that we have, but also, we are continuing to keep a close eye on what's emerging in the collaboration space and the productivity space. Again, knowing that in I think the return to office is going to be more tricky in a lot of ways than then going remote. And back to that level playing field, when we all went remote at once, it was wild and challenging in some ways, not being in a room being able to whiteboard with your team But we were all we were all on kind of the same level in terms of our experience and



going back into the office, I've tried it a couple of times, and it's going to be a process to adapt to people that are in different locations, might be working different hours because the work environment is going to be different and more flexible than what we left 18 months ago. So really focusing on how we can enable with technology, continued productivity and engagement through the next phase.

Phil Wilburn: What does that look like? Give me how our organization is going to embrace that technology to create a better employee experience in the future.

Elise Shelley: I think one recommendation that we've had top of mind for a while continuing to lean into is understanding the personas. And so it's not a one size fits all, especially when you're talking about large organizations that are you know 10,000 20,000 50,000 plus people. And they're going to have different needs and so, for example, you know our sales organization. We've got people who are doing demonstrations to customers might have really different needs than our product design team who needs to be collaborating, they need more whiteboarding tools, they need more solutions that allow them to be doing that in the conference room with the same level of capability as someone sitting in their living room. And so I think that understanding the persona of those core functions and building out roadmaps to make sure that you've got a good understanding of what they need and lining up capabilities to help them be successful.

Phil Wilburn: That's good insight. Thanks Elise, appreciate your partnership over the last two years. It's been wild but it's great to have a good partner in that. Tara, I'm going to pivot over to you and I'm going to ask a similar question now that you've led this great transformation and have made all these decisions and you've really put a big focus on the employee experience at Cisco, what's next as far as technology. How can technology at Cisco make a better employee experience over the next two years let's say?

Tara Fortier: Having been through the transformation, we didn't deliver everything all at

once, that's not possible. So we're on a journey now to continue to work on. So, Sylesh and myself, we're both part of a function called digital experience and so we have a digital HR function and our leader is working with us, with the executives, we've got a digital roadmap for the first time, So we are making some solid plays towards, how do we continue to iterate how do we move in that more agile framework, how do we continue to give incremental value to all of our teams while still holding those guiding principles close to us and just turning them into and embedding them into an organization and just making it a part of how we actually work.

Phil Wilburn: I love that because you started with a transformation, now you have a team and now you see the really important aspects of this moving forward. Sylesh, digital strategy, what are you excited about in the next 18 months to two years on this roadmap? A particular program decision? What are you most excited about?

Sylesh Ballolla: Yeah absolutely. So there are a few things I would like to highlight. We did a lot of research in understanding how people experience things, especially going back to what Elise mentioned from a journey standpoint. Who's experiencing it what are they experiencing what's the journey look like, so we realized that the aspect of the journey of an employee is very important, and especially so when we are all connecting from different parts of the world. The second aspect that we probably realized is that now that there's a lot more people connecting to your workforce, we have talking about untapped global talent from different parts of the world, connecting to work with you. So then what does that experience look like. And the third thing that really excites me is we also understand that in places like Cisco we have so many different applications, so many different ways to get our work done. But it's very hard for us to have some kind of a systems of engagement, if you will, and an area where we kind of bring all of these experiences,



your journey, and everything else together and building that and making that happen is going to be a very critical thing. And that I feel is going to be the next big change for us. And the last point is we always talk about bots. I think we need to start to be very careful in terms of some of the strategies that we apply, for example, we don't want to be having a death by bot, so there are too many bots, so we've got to understand how that experience comes together. With this journey, and how does it make it more contextual and personalized for employees. So I think those are the big ticket items in our experience that we have. It's going to be interesting.

Phil Wilburn: Yeah very interesting, I think you are a digital strategist slash philosopher going on, we don't really have death by bots. That's a good thing, that would not be good for me, we need to have a digital strategy to be more human. I think Ed maybe you should continue to work with them, they got some great projects here in the future. Thanks for sharing that Sylesh. Let's talk about the future now. So we talked about what we have been doing the transformations, the real technologies playing and maybe I'm going to frame up a kind of a future perspective here. So what do you think given the imperative focusing on in the employee and making things simple and easy with them for technology, what do you think the workplace of the future is going to look like? What's kind of needed for us to make it to that next [Tom part] or to get employees really engaged and excited about coming to work every day?

Ed Miller: And I would say from my perspective, the workplace of the future is constantly evolving and I think what a lot of organizations are thinking about now is really this concept of digital fluency and digital fluency is really that interlock of technology, collaboration, the use of technology and that broader enthusiasm that workers might have around a technology. Some other research that Accenture put out earlier this year we call honing your digital edge, which is all about this concept of digital fluency and the research has basically found that you get more value in your workers in the technology, when you combine the right platforms with the right

methodologies. And getting workers excited about technology, understanding how to use technology, understanding how technology makes their lives easier and lives around them easier. Sylesh mentioned death by bots and death by 1000 bots but how do we leverage some of the newer technology innovations to make us more efficient and more effective in the workplace. So I see a lot of organizations really focusing on that broader concept of digital fluency and getting workers to adopt the technologies that are given for them and really understanding how technology can improve the way they work and improve the lives of others around them.

Phil Wilburn: I think that I really like the idea of digital fluency. And also just getting back to the guiding principles, are we are making it easier for employees to do work and if we're not because - this is a cool technology but it distracts from it, then it's maybe not a good time to implement or roll that out. Elise, let's turn it over to you, what do you think the workplace of the future is going to look like from your perspective?

Elise Shelley: Oh, I don't know if I'm a philosopher that slashes but I'll give it a shot. I think one thing is just really focusing on things becoming a little bit more fluid across systems and tools. Employees don't care which system they're in and they don't want to go to nine different spots, they want to kind of be working within the context of their role and so again understanding those personas and what those natural workspaces will look like, I think it's going to be super important. And building on that, one area where we've really been investing heavily is employee UX and the past has all been focused on customer UX and product design and while of course that's table stakes, I don't think that we've placed the same emphasis on the employee experience. You can sometimes tell when you have a really technical person designing the user experience and that can show through and maybe it's not how



someone wants to use the tool so I'd say that's something that we're really focused on, investing in that research and understanding of the employee user experience and building that into things like search and Internet and just navigation across the organization.

Phil Wilburn: I agree 100% they don't care. Employees don't care. They just care if it works and they care if it's easy right, and so all of us as practitioners, we got to start focusing on that or we're going to lose it. Tara, what do you think the workplace of the future is going to look like? Maybe in general or you can talk about what do you really hope this Cisco future workplace is really going to feel like?

Tara Fortier: Absolutely well we're all coming at this from a slightly different perspective so I'll stick to where my strengths are, which is the teams aspect of it. I don't think what has gotten us to today can sustain. At a minimum, what we have done through the pandemic, I don't think our workforces can sustain through this. And certainly what got us to right before the pandemic, those types of models and silos and things, that won't help us. Focusing on ensuring that we are working cross functionally, focusing on the fact that our workers are people too, they are our employees. So for us on our teams that we have done and as we continue to look at things and we continue to work through the things that Sylesh is talking about, our employees are going to experience those things both as the members and the hands on the keyboard doing the work but also the benefits of when those capabilities are enabled within the company. So always maintaining that and staying true to whatever the foundation is that folks are doing. One of the things that are guiding principles is just because you can does not mean you should. And that's a critical thing to really think about. We have to celebrate things we don't do as much as we celebrate the things that we do. As we start to move towards that I think keeping our people focused as humans and workers and customers, depending on where they are in the world, I think that that sort of changes the game a little bit.

Phil Wilburn: Tara, I think you're in competition for being a philosopher yourself.

These principles have really stuck, you guys are like living by these principles right now it's fantastic. Sylesh, last words to you being the digital strategist and philosopher yourself, what do you really think that the future workplace is going to look like?

Sylesh Ballolla: I don't know if I'm a philosopher. The future workplace, I feel that it's going to bring a lot more talent into the workspace, a lot more people are getting connected to Internet. We got to understand that landscape and what does it mean, They come from different backgrounds, they come from different experiences. That's an important aspect to keep in the back of your mind and as Elize rightly mentioned, employees don't care what goes on behind the scenes, and then I would rather say that they should not care. If you kind of think about it from a Technology standpoint, I would still say that we got to start to think about how can we really make data driven decision happen. So how can we be very close to listening to what people are experiencing, what does their journey look like, how do we orchestrate that journey. So what does data driven decision making look like, especially when you're actually doing the work. So today, your experience with something is broken so I'm doing something and then I have to log back into someplace else to get my data, so what is that connected data. That we're talking about and then, finally, I think it's time that we start to make the best use of machine learning. How do we bring contextualization, personalization into your experiences. And then the continuity of that experience. I think that's going to be a big thing, We got to get this right and the strategies that we employ should make that happen.

Phil Wilburn: Thank you Sylesh, I really appreciate that and I appreciate everybody's perspective here today and I appreciate everybody joining us. I know maybe you were vollun-told to do this but it's been a great fun conversation.



I've actually learned a lot. We've been focusing on personas as part of a key focus on employee experience. We've been looking at journeys of where people are at. We're contextualizing with better data driven decisions, and to be a successful digital strategist and to make this work, you need to be a philosopher - that's the big takeaway that I heard from this. And we all need to create decisions that make us more human, which I think is fantastic so again, thank you all for joining and sharing your insights with me and with all of our audience here today I've really appreciated your time and everyone join us again in the next episode of Workday chats, take care.

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