



Walk in the Cloud

Accenture and Workday: Resignation, or The Great Reconnection?

Ellen Bencard, Walk in the Cloud Host

Ellen Bencard leads Accenture's marketing campaigns in the UK while also managing to nourish her journalistic roots as an established blogger on the arts, travel and fine dining. Her corporate work usually finds her behind the scenes, coaching her team to bring together big ideas, insightful commentators, exciting events and innovative channels in ways that inspire prospective clients. But this isn't the first time she's stepped into the limelight to show off her training as a reporter, writer and presenter. She's anchored a web-based YouTube series for BT called Top Tips for CIOs and was Northwestern University's on-site media spokesperson at the Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and fellow alumna Meghan Markle. Born and educated in the American Midwest, Ellen's lived in the UK since 1999 and is a proud dual citizen.

Colin Anderson, HR Digital Transformation and People Analytics Leader, Accenture

Colin is responsible for the Global Workday Alliance for Accenture as well as other Alliances within the Accenture Workday Business Group. In this role, Colin is responsible for Accenture's Workday strategy, innovation in the "Workday New" and partnership with Workday.

Colin joined Accenture through its acquisition of DayNine Consulting where he previously launched DayNine and led sales, delivery and operations in EMEA and APJ. In this role, he was responsible for hiring and developing teams in the UK, Germany, Australia and Japan. This included developing DayNine's client base in the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Australia, Japan and Thailand, with nearly 100% client satisfaction.

Carolyn Horne, President, EMEA

Carolyn is president of EMEA at Workday. Prior to that, she served as Group Vice President for Workday Northern Europe and South Africa.

She brings more than 25 years of experience in the industry, and an exceptional level of expertise in enterprise software and business to her role at Workday.

Carolyn joined Workday shortly after it launched in Europe and built the presales team from three to over 50 employees in just two years, while also working with leaders in the region to build sales teams across Europe. After becoming VP UK and Ireland, she set up and launched Workday South Africa, and more recently expanded her role to the Nordics.

Before joining Workday, Carolyn spent 15 years working at SAP, most recently as Chief Operating Officer of SAP UK where she oversaw more than 1,000 employees and ran the operations, value management, alliances, presales, and business development businesses. Before SAP, she held consulting roles at Peoplesoft and QSP.

Intro: Walk in the Cloud.

Ellen: We all get by with a little help from our friends. But what happens when some of those friends leave unexpectedly? Today, we're talking about The Great Resignation, that much-covered trend of lots of people switching jobs as life edges towards post-pandemic freedom. This is Ellen Bencard with Accenture's Walk in the Cloud. Today I'm walking with friends who know a few things about attracting and, most importantly, retaining top talent—Carolyn Horne from Workday. Hello, Carolyn.

Carolyn: Hi Ellen. Thanks for having me here today.

Ellen: Sure thing. And Colin Anderson from Accenture. Hello, Colin.

Colin: Hey, Ellen. Hey, Carolyn. It's great to be here.

Ellen: Colin, let me get started with you. Is The Great Resignation fake news or a real worry? Are the executives you work with talking about this and taking it seriously?

Colin: First I think it's really undeniable that things are happening. People are leaving and they are moving to other companies and resignations are high in basically every industry and every country, every corner of the world resignations are up. So in some sense, I think you'd say it's undeniable. That said, I think it dramatically, dramatically oversimplifies what's really going on. And I'd like to think about more of "The Great Reconnection" and in some ways "The Great Reconsideration," you know,

people have had an extraordinary amount of time to reflect and to think, and to basically, you know, be around their homes and say, how do I feel? Am I feeling inspired? Do I like what I'm doing? Am I engaged in what I'm doing? And, ultimately at the end of the day, I don't think that people are looking to resign. I don't think they're looking to quit. I don't think that that's what's happening here. I think people are looking to be engaged and love the work that they're doing. And so I think, look, if those things are true, people are going to stay and employers that are able to create those experiences for their people—I don't think are going to have the resignation problem. And for those that aren't, they're going to find it somewhere else.

Ellen: So how do Workday and Accenture work together to help clients in that area? Colin?

Colin: Well, at the end of the day, as a big user of Workday ourselves, as our core people platform across the company, a lot of it is around how can we use the tools to both facilitate understanding of how people are doing and how people are feeling as well as to understand what their aspirations are and what do they desire? And I think we'll maybe, you know, talk more about this as we go, but I think using technology to sense and understand people, we're rolling out a really exciting new capability from Workday: Peakon for active listening, but also some of the traditional things around what are my interests and what are my desires and how do I capture those. But the technology is only a piece of it.

People have to then do something with that information. So how do you have a culture where people think about asking the question about how are you feeling? And they look at the data to say, "My people aren't doing well in this area. And can I actually do something about it?" Or my people have told us, "I have this interest or this desire. Well, have I done anything about it to get them lined up to a career path that's got to be aligned with what they're looking for?" So I think technology can help, but you got to have the behaviours as well.

Ellen: Carolyn, I know Workday recently conducted a survey that offered some insight into that kind of thing into the difference in development opportunities and environment. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, and what lessons you got out of it for clients?

Carolyn: Yeah. And, you know, I was just listening as well to Colin. You know, I can agree more, Colin, with what you were saying about, you know, the reconnection, "The Great Reconnection," and that's really what people are looking to do. I would say, not to quit, as you say, they're looking for that inspiration to, you know, to go back to their organisations and be developed. And also the point you make about companies, employers listening is absolutely crucial. And back to your question, you're right. We did do a survey, and this is, you know, all of these topics are so incredibly important. We, Workday, we did a survey across nine countries in Europe, and one of the big findings was that over a quarter of

employees believe that they've lost career development opportunities in the last year, which is really incredible. And then that number actually rises to 47% in the 18 to 34 year old, so nearly half. So you can see why now that clever companies are really looking to reconnect with their employees and demonstrate to them it's still a great place to be. So back to your point, Colin, it's really looking, you know, that active listening—listening to the employees and then acting.

Ellen: So do you have examples of what we are doing? What steps do you take to make up for this lost time? And let me start with Colin and then I'll come to you Carolyn.

Colin: So I think at the end of the day, everything needs to be on the table. I think people like to think about, and I talk to a lot of clients that talk about well, "What's your return to office program like?" Or "Are you going to be working in the office or virtually?" We've coined a new way that we think about it, which is omni-connected. It's not going to be one or the other. All of these things and all of these channels need to be activated, we think, in basically almost every company out there, and another sort of new term that we've coined is "phygital"—how do you merge the physical world and the digital world? You know, we're doing a ton, for example, in the metaverse. So we've shared that we have purchased Oculus headsets for a lot of our new joiners, tens of thousands of our new joiners who are now doing their onboarding in getting to know each other in the

metaverse with their Oculus headsets. And so, sorry, if anybody was trying to buy them over the holidays or anything like that, and couldn't find them, I think we bought 35,000 of them for our folks that are joining. And so it's about again, how do you put everything on the table? How do you not go back to the concepts that were the concepts that we sort of worked and the constraints that we worked within a couple of years ago, but really totally reimagine it so that you can say, "I might not be physically together?" But if you believe this is "The Great Reconnection," how do you still create connection? And the metaverse, I think, is just one example of that and who knows where this is going to take us, but again, how do you create these "phygital" experiences? What does it mean to go to the office? Well, we think more and more, the offices are going to be a place that you go to have workshops and co-thinking sessions. You know, when we talk to our people, what they say is I want to be back together for learning experiences and social experiences. That's what they've told us.

Ellen: Carolyn, what's your take on that?

Carolyn: Yeah. I, you know, I'm with Colin on that, you know, I think, you know, post-pandemic, you know, people are looking, or at least it's been proven that they can do things in different ways, as you say, Colin, and you know, employees now are asking for that flexible working, they're looking for that hybrid way of working. So as you say, Colin, everything's on the table. We know that we can do this, but it's keeping that connection with your employees at all times, whether they're

working remotely, whether they're in the office, so that you do actually have that social connection, those learning connections as well, because that's crucial for any culture of any organisation, you have to bring the people together somehow. What we're also seeing, Ellen, is that, you know, back to the survey that we were talking thing about as well is, you know, employees are looking for development. They're looking for that learning. They're looking to see where they can take their careers, how they can progress, and they're looking for their employees to really help them and give them that guidance. And one of the things that we've been using, you know, using our own technology is machine learning to help people understand, you know, "based on the skills I have today, what are the career options I could take?" And, you know, what do I need to learn in order to get there? Who has done it before, you know, what people in the organisation have followed those paths and how can I do it?" And we know now that, you know, you don't have to be physically in the office to do that. So that's another example, but people are really looking for that direction in their careers.

Colin: Yeah. And maybe if I can add, Carolyn, I totally agree. I think the other thing is how work is structured and how work is done has fundamentally changed and must fundamentally change. For example, organisations that were sort of more traditional position-based organisations—"this is my job, this is the thing that I do, this is the description, and that's what I'm going to do until I move to the next

role." I think those boundaries have to get blurred. And in some ways it's more a consulting firm-esque dynamics that need to start emerging in many businesses where gigs and projects and project-based work are how we work. And what's the thing that ties folks together, their skills, their aspirations, and the business need. How do those things come together to do something? And then to move on to what that next thing is. And that's great for people that are looking to build new skills and try new things. It's great for the organisation, so they don't have to have these pervasive structures that exist here, and then there's a problem and I have to redo it. And so I think how work and how structures of organisations are happening have to evolve to do exactly what Carolyn was talking about.

Ellen: That's exactly where my head was going is, you know, we, we call this "Walk in the Cloud," we've got all of these amazing cloud-based technologies that we're now using for all the pains and the hassles of the past two years. Do you think that the lockdown and everything we did in the pandemic has actually given us a freedom and a familiarity with these technologies that's jumped us ahead. Carolyn?

Carolyn: Oh, yes, I absolutely would say that, Ellen. I think, you know, now these technologies, as you say, we're now used to dealing with that. We had to pivot overnight during the lockdown to use and embrace these technologies to do our daily work, but, you know, evolve now, and using these to advance our skills, our learning, our careers

moving forward. And you know, and what we're seeing now is the younger talent that we have, you know, they are expecting this. You know, we're in a real danger of losing our good talent if we're not providing that ability for them to embrace and use the technology to do their work and learn for the future.

Ellen: And Colin, can I dig a bit more into the metaverse? I'm very excited about this. I've signed up for the trial. I'm waiting for my headset, but I know people are passionate about saying this isn't just Second Life again, this isn't computer gaming, it's going to change our lives. Can you tell me any more about how my work life might change?

Colin: Yeah. I think a little bit of what I said before about experimenting. This is an experiment that will work, but what all impact is it going to have, I think is a little bit unknown, but I can give a couple first-hand experiences. We had one of my leadership team meetings in the metaverse at One Accenture Park, one of the places that we've built in the metaverse. And I have to tell you, you know, this is a team that, we haven't seen each other physically in a long time, but we talk daily, right? We know each other very well, but we haven't seen each other physically. The whole dynamic of the meeting was different. It was more personal, jovial. We were laughing, bumping into each other, having these experiences that you wouldn't quite have it in the physical world either, but you certainly aren't going to have it on a one dimensional computer monitor either. And it changed the dynamic. The other thing that happened: I can't tell you the last

time I was as focused and in the moment is I am when I join these calls in the metaverse. Why? Your phone isn't going off, you're not seeing the text messages. It might be going off, but you're not seeing them. You have your goggles on, you're not getting your emails popping up. You're not getting your calendar, you know, reminder for your next meeting, popping up. You are just totally immersed in the thing you're doing.

Ellen: You're like a racehorse with blinders on.

Colin: Completely! And I didn't expect that. I left that like, "Oh my God," not only was it more personal and it just felt good, but it felt really productive. It was very focused. And so, you know, I think what's emerging collaboration. We know the metaverse can be a great place to do that. Learning—we know that learning is emerging as a really, really key thing. That's why we're doing our onboarding is... what's onboarding? Basically, it's a mix of collaboration and learning where I can actually go through a workshop. I can conduct something, I can try something I can get hands-on. And I think this crosses industries and experiences. And so, you know, those are some of the things that we know it's going to work. Where it goes from there, again, we don't know. But the people that have gotten those headsets—and hopefully yours gets to you soon, and for those that haven't gotten it yet—we've heard awesome things from people. I think I said earlier, like 35,000, I think it was like 60,000 actually that we bought. So our people like it and we're going to keep doing it.

Ellen: As we come to the end of our walk, I'd like to ask each of you the same question, which is "In this time of extreme change, if you have one thing that you would suggest your client executives think about, what would it be?"

Carolyn: My one thing is we need to think about how we lead, how we work and in lead issue sale, and we are facing so much change every day. And we're facing this once in a generational opportunity to really reshape business. You know, out of that comes positive change as well. And how we work in lead is key to that. And it's, you know, there's never been such an important time to connect with our employees, listen, take the feedback from our people and really turn that into action. And in doing so, if we, as leaders do that and we are actively listening, we will create companies, you know, the next generation of companies with a great culture that lead with empathy, listening to employees and providing fantastic learning and growth opportunities. And of course, with the help of modern technology are the right things to do to support our employees going forward. And it's just good for business, I guess, too.

Ellen: I'm excited. Colin, I'm leaving you with the last word.

Colin: I think the add that I would, I guess, have to, it is put everything on the table. As a part of leading and as a part of listen, get rid of the sacred cows. Try things, experiment with things because now is the time to reimagine what's been going on. I think we were forced, and in so many sort of tragic

ways to live in this world that we are living in now over the last couple of years, but I hope it gave us confidence that we as people and as employers and as citizens of the world, we can adapt and change and be incredibly resilient to new things. And so I think we should really, again, experiment with those new things, listen to our people, take the craziest ideas and give them a go, give them a try. I am incredibly inspired by what worked and what we learned that we never even would have thought of to try, and now it's the way that we have to do it. So put everything on the table and give it a go.

Ellen: What a great conversation. I think we need to get together a year from now and see where all that experimentation took us. Thank you for joining me today.

Carolyn: Thank you, Ellen.

Colin: Thank you.

Ellen: Listeners, I hope you have found something useful there, whether you're concentrating on attracting and retaining your people or thinking about your own future. If you have any thoughts on this or on the podcast in general, do look me up on LinkedIn and drop me a line. And with that discussion, we have reached the end of our second season of Walk in the Cloud. We're going to take a break for a little while, and when we return, we're going to dig into industries. How does the use of cloud technologies change as we move from one sector to another, and can diverse industries learn from each other?

We're researching that now, and we'll be back to you with answers in Season Three.

Outro: Walk in the Cloud.