

CES 2023: Lead at the speed of life

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Christie Smith [00:00:05] Hi, everyone. My name's Christie Smith and I lead Talent and Organization here at Accenture. I'm here at CES for the first time. It's crazy, this place is amazing and I'm at our Accenture Innovation Hub, which is just remarkable. We're looking at Metaverse, we've got great headsets that we're looking through and seeing what the future of technology will bring Web3 and the Metaverse. So excited to bring you into this conversation. I'm joined here today by Kelly Monahan, who is not only a really good friend, but she's the director of the Future of Work at Meta. Kelly and I've had the opportunity to work together for a long time and do a lot of research together, so this is going to be a fun conversation, talking with you about the Future of Work and both of our perspectives on what's needed in the workforce moving forward in the midst of all this incredible technology, so looking forward to spending a couple of minutes with you. Kelly, so great to be with you today. Tell me a little bit about what you're seeing in the workplace today and what's shifting.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:01:17] Yeah, it's a great question and it's to your point, it's so exciting being here today in the Accenture Innovation Hub is a spectacular place to be streaming this from. There's a couple of things that I'm seeing in the research and data that are truly different today, because you and I both know the future of work is probably one of the biggest buzzwords that are out there right now and so what we try to cut through the noise and figure out what's actually different today, that was not true five or ten years ago and I do think there's two things in

particular that we can focus our conversation on. The first is flexibility in remote work. I think we entered into one of the greatest experiments over the last couple of years of can we move our jobs remotely? And for the majority of us, the answer has actually been yes, things did break down, but as part of that, it's something I know that you've been doing research on. There is this disconnect between leaders and employees, especially when it comes to their productivity at home. So I want to put it, go ahead.

Christie Smith [00:02:09] No, I think this is a really important point and one that I'm personally extremely worried about. Only one in six employees feel connected at work. One in six, that's pretty scary. And I don't think that's a result of technology and I think that's a result of leadership and what we've found that only one in four employees at work feel as though their leaders are meeting their needs in this new ways of working that we find ourselves in. So I'm a little concerned about both the blaming of technology and remote for leadership, getting a pass on really adapting to what's needed in the workforce and what's needed for employees and employee connectivity.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:02:55] Yeah, I think that's spot on and I actually think one of my fears is I think technology is further along than our mindset right now is at work.

Christie Smith [00:03:01] Completely agree with you. Completely, that's brilliant.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:03:04] Yeah and I remember actually doing some

research a couple of years ago and we were talking to CIOs actually through Accenture, and they had said they literally had employees carrying desktop computers out of their offices, plugged them back in at home and I'm worried about is we actually haven't changed anything in that model. We have to do a major workplace redesign if we're going to actually capture the benefits of technology. So that's the second thing I wanted to bring up is we're at CES, we can't ignore technology and in particular artificial intelligence and the way that it's making us more intelligent, I think you actually wrote a chapter on this, "Radically Human" at Accenture. So maybe we can talk a little bit about what that means and how AI can actually make us more human.

Christie Smith [00:03:45] Well, Kelly, don't sell yourself short because you helped me with that chapter. I think it was really important and what we wrote about certainly Paul Doherty and Jim Wilson, who are the primary authors of "Radically Human", we're talking about were the advances of technology. I think that what was so important was to write about talent as a common denominator and how do you use that technology? And we've blamed technology for the replacement of jobs, for the lack of its own ability to help us do our jobs better and what we found in writing that chapter is that actually technology, it sets aside the human intelligence that uses that technology. Actually, what we're doing is looking at it as a multiplier to not only individual's success and opportunities at work, but also productivity and meeting customer clients and the business strategy needs.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:04:49] Yeah, I think that's spot on because I just think about one of the things I know we talked about when writing that chapter, I thought you gave me this analogy that made me so hopeful about AI and technology coming into the workplace, that it's ultimately a mirror for human behavior. The ability, especially for HR leaders but even beyond HR, for our business leaders, CEOs to have a newfound insight and how people are actually behaving at work and as a researcher, I can tell you of all the research we're doing right now, there is a big perception and reality gap. When we look and ask people how they're doing, but then actually have the AI generated insights and the behavioral insights of how people are behaving, there's a disconnect and I don't know how to help close that gap, to be fully honest in terms of how people think, but then how they behave.

Christie Smith [00:05:29] Well, I'll tell you, I think that this is embarking upon not only the next wave of how we think about work, I mean, we've gone from the Industrial revolution to the intelligent revolution. Now, I think we're really into technology and computing. Now I think we're really moving to human intelligence, human behavior is the next wave to tap into with regards to taking advantage of all of this potential with technology. Technology's not the enemy, folks. It is actually the key to unlocking the potential of human behavior, human opportunity in the workplace. But as I said before, the linchpin of all of this is leaders and managers, one in four employees said in a piece of research that we did felt that they could raise issues to their leaders. One in five felt like, as I said, leaders are meeting

their needs. We need not only a mindset shift within the cultures of work around how do you lead and manage with technology. Interestingly, you and I did a piece of research together with CEOs, and we've found that CEOs feel as though they are lacking the skills and capabilities around empathy, transparency and compassion to meet the demands of new ways of working in the future of work and only 26% feel as though they have the ability to build future ready organizations. Future ready meaning, how do you bring digital technology, employee behavior and leadership together to be the multiplier to huge success, and we know that when they do, they increase revenue by 7.5%. That's incredible, so, you know, it's not always about the revenue. It is about putting employees at the center.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:07:36] Yeah, but I think that revenue point is so important to get attention of the C-suite, to be fully honest with you. So if we don't if not, it becomes another employee engagement, more fluff, and it just becomes noise in the bottom line of the research we continue to find for decades. At the end of the day, this isn't new that if you treat employees well and you do right by them, stock prices tend to go up.

Christie Smith [00:08:01] Yeah, I mean, I was at a conference recently where I heard the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella, talk about the fact that what we have to move into is looking at employee experience, looking at employees at the center, and how do we create psychologically safe places. How do we train leaders to be more human centric? Suspension of self-

interest, in terms of developing the team and opportunities for the team. He said, we used to think about those as soft skills, he said, wrong. They are the hard skills that are necessary for companies to be competitively advantaged in the marketplace. I think we're moving into a whole different arena. Kelly, talk to us a little bit about where you think with the advances of technology that we're seeing here at CES, it's really mind blowing. What do you think the impact on the future of work is going to be?

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:09:03] So I got to two views. I see a very optimistic view as we're talking about here, where we actually use this to unlock human potential and actually free managers, even a lot of the burden they have. When you think about what AI and ChatGPT that was released, we're jumping towards customer applications, but in my head, there's so much employee applications that can be do to help self-service data, rich data insights for managers. So as we talk about psychological safety, as we talk about managers and leaders behaving differently, it's really hard to do that without the data they need on their teams, for my own psychology assessments.

All of that and I think the ability to have newfound insights on how people are thinking and feeling at work and the impact that then has on revenue is a game changer for management. I do see this like very human and human ingenuity emerging as we work alongside of these technologies, very optimistic. The pessimistic side of me, which depending on the day, depends with the headlines I'm reading, is we don't

get this right and we don't capture the demand of all this technology we're seeing at CES, we don't change our human behavior and shift our mindsets.

Christie Smith [00:10:09] That's right.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:10:10] and that scares me because this is a powerful tool. It's powerful understanding the intelligence of people. The more you get to know about me, the more vulnerable that relationship becomes and so I think what's going to be critical is establishing trust and really retraining our leaders and managers of how do you use these new insights to be empathetic. Because I think at the end of the day, I don't know if you agree with this or not, I think people want to do right by people at work. I don't think we come into work trying to become these nasty leaders and, we don't come into work trying to become unproductive. But over time that happens, and we don't have the right systems in place and that we're not utilizing technology in a way that does good for people.

Christie Smith [00:10:47] Yeah, there's so many things I want to say in reaction to that, but two I'm going to focus on and they are related but disconnected. One is the power shift in the workplace has dramatically shifted from leader, manager to employee, right? Yes. We read in headlines every day, your research calls this out is that most companies are fighting for a labor market with the right needing the right skills, the right digital capabilities in those skills and that those employees or that those skill sets are really hard to come by in a tighten labor market. So that's one I think the other piece that is

incredibly important and frankly I think I'll go on a ledge here, but I think is the next pandemic is mental health. I think we have not been addressing in our workplaces coming out of the pandemic, coming out of the pressures in the economy, coming out of a war in Europe, coming out of the racial issues of George Floyd and that continued to persist in the workplace. Coming out of those things, we are reaching, I think, an inflection point around mental health. And organizations the private sector has been solving for a lot of these issues, not the public sector, as you once believed and so the responsibility of organizations to focus on these things like mental health is becoming critically important and it's got to be on the agenda of the CEO. It cannot be abdicated to other C-suite leaders, it has to be on the agenda of the CEO and I truly believe that is the next pandemic we're going to face.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:12:44] And Christie, I think we have to talk about that and acknowledge that and I think especially, you know, as we've done some research on Gen Z. We know in a couple of years one in four workers are going to be from the Gen Z generation and they are not going to tolerate the environments that we've created. You mean it's just going to be we thought as millennials, we changed the game, we got beer kegs and ping pong tables. I think we need to move beyond now the workplace into an actual psychological identity and safety and these concepts that are actually kind of complex about human beings, when you think about it. We're moving on to a more elevated conversation but how exciting for CEOs today and yes, the

weight of that responsibility, but to engage and the next big wave of human behavior.

Christie Smith [00:13:25] Yeah, well, I've said this to you a million times. I think I'm a millennial trapped in a boomer body. So I am on fire here learning about all of this, I rely on my 16-year-old, but I also rely on great opportunities to come through Accenture and being in this Innovation Hub and being at CES. I'm really looking forward to continually learning and making sure that our voice around keeping the humans at the center is primary in the conversation, because if we don't, we will have a really missed opportunity and I think a crisis on our hands in terms of human behavior.

Dr. Kelly Monahan [00:14:06] I totally agree and so, I think as we close, I just think for my generation and the generations before us, it's our responsibility to change this. I mean, at the end of the day, the future, as we talked about the optimistic or pessimistic path, we're in the driver's seat totally. All of us here at CES are in the driver's seat. We're coming with the technology and I just want to thank you for being on stage today and talking to me and bringing the human to the light, because if not, I don't know how it is going to be saying this message.

Christie Smith [00:14:29] Well, Kelly, the thanks is all mine. You know I adore you and I think the work that you have done has made me a better leader and the work that we've collaborated on because we had a huge impact in the world, so thank you. And hey, everybody out there on Instagram, thank you. We know that

this is going to take a movement and you're part of that movement to keep humans at the center and to make the change that's necessary because change is changing. So thanks, everybody, and thanks, Kelly. Take care.