

HR insights podcast

Series 8 | Episode 11

PSA: This transcript has been written with assistance from AI.

Why the chief of staff role is making a comeback?

[00:17.6]

Welcome to HR Insights, the podcast topical discussions with and for our global HR community. My name is Stuart Elliott and welcome back to the podcast HR Insights. In this episode today we are joined by Claire Butler.

[00:32.6]

She is a strategic leader and has extensive experience across global markets. And we're going to talk about one of the most talked about roles today, the Chief of Staff. We unpack what the Chief of Staff role really entails, why it's re-emerging as a strategic business function, how it bridges the gap between leadership, operations and culture.

[00:53.0]

Claire shares her personal experience stepping into the role and reflects on what motivated her to make the transition from, from HR into a Chief of Staff role. We hope you gain practical insight into this and it complements an article that I wrote recently. This is why we're seeing the Chief of Staff role come back into favour.

[01:10.1]

Enjoy the listen.

[01:20.0]

Welcome to the show. Thank you for having me. How are you? I'm good, thanks. You? Yeah, I'm very good. You're a little nervous? A little bit. First time recording, first time recording a podcast. Very good. Never thought I'd be doing it. Well, there's a first time for everything so it's really nice to have you on the show, for the audience.

[01:36.9]

Do you want to give a little intro into you and your background? Yeah. So I've always worked in insurance. I've spent 15 years, over 15 years in the insurance industry spanning kind of life insurance companies, general insurance and specialty markets.

[01:52.3]

Okay. Very cross functional experience. When I became, began my career I worked in the customer service, I moved to finance, operations, claims. So it was always that type of general everything, a little bit of everything. Then I suppose I got an opportunity to transition into a HR role following an acquisition in one of those companies.

[02:17.0]

So I did that. Spent about four years there in their Dublin office. Had the opportunity then to move to London in 2015. And from there it was rapid career growth within, in London and the company was going through growth, it was going through massive change.

[02:37.2]

There was lots of transformation. We acquired companies and we were moving in and out of territories. So I really had the opportunity to get involved in lots of fun things. I would say that's cool. It was cool. That's very cool. And look, obviously listeners can hear your accent as well.

[02:53.3]

So you're not from England originally. Where are you from originally? I am from Dublin. Perfect. Born and raised there. Born and raised in Dublin. Very, very, very cool. And I suppose what do you do outside of work? I love to travel. Y. I will always say I am, if I can't be found in work, I'm in Heathrow Terminal 5 going somewhere.

[03:12.7]

That's not a bad place to be. Heathrow Terminal 5 is quite a nice one. I like it over there. It is good. No, I just. I love to travel and then most of the things that people do go to the gym and hang out with friends. But travel is definitely number one, particularly since COVID After then I try and get in at least five or six trips a year.

[03:32.6]

I love, I love the travel. While we're chatting on travel in Terminal 5, I'm going to tell a little story and I'm digressing here. My claim to fame in Terminal 5 is I sat down to go on a trip once and, you know the Fortnum and Masons at the end, so it just sits out there and I look around and this little lady came and sat next to me and I looked round and it was Dame Judi Dench. No. Yeah.

[03:53.8]

And next to her was Stephen Fry and she felt I was like, I don't think I should be sitting here. This feels like I need to be an A list celebrity to now be sat here. But it is my claim to fame a little bit. I, will never forget that moment, actually. I think there's lots of celebs spotting in Heathrow.

[04:10.2]

Terminal fights. I think there is. And the best bit about it was it was 8 o' clock in the morning and they both ordered a glass of champagne. Nice. So that's very good. But we digress a little bit. So you mentioned, obviously insurance, though, has been, I suppose, your career, though, and all parts of different insurance.

[04:27.7]

And we obviously want to talk about, I suppose we're here today to talk about chief of staff. So firstly, what is a chief of staff? And there's a couple of other questions I'll digress on. But let's start with that one. Okay. I think the amount of times, I tell people that I'm a chief of staff and it's usually followed by, oh, that's cool, what is it?

[04:46.3]

With a really confused face. So it's an interesting question. I think you could ask 10 different people and you get 10 different answers because I don't think there's a straightforward answer to the question. I think it really depends on a couple of things. It depends on the person you're working for and also where the company are in their journey.

[05:06.3]

So, for example, you might be a chief of staff in a startup, very broad role, you're doing everything, you know, you might do a bit of HR, a bit of finance, operations, etc. In a larger company it might be more structured. So again, you know, you'd be, tend to do maybe a bit more kind of a focused role maybe on strategy, et cetera.

[05:28.5]

So I think it varies a lot. I think the way I used to describe myself is like a kind of a, air traffic controller. So kind of, you know, moving all those pieces around. I've heard other people describe it as like a producer are in a movie.

[05:44.3]

So you're that kind of behind the scenes person. But I think at the core I think you're trusted, confident for maybe the CEO who you're working for and the leadership team, you get things done. So like you're executing on the strategy maybe behind the scenes.

[06:00.7]

As I said with that air traffic control, you're kind of connecting people. So you're making sure the right people are in the right, the right room. And then just as I said, kind of solving problems, maybe more behind the scenes. So it might be that visible. But you're kind of problem solving, solving behind the scenes and making sure things are getting done.

[06:19.3]

Yeah, it's, it's an interesting. Because I've seen over more recently I've been seeing people from HR move into it. I'd also seen people that have been I suppose, eas to sort of CEOs and CFOs move into that type of broader role as well. Yeah, and it's interesting the sort of types of profiles because it doesn't seem to be one profile.

[06:40.1]

It almost depends potentially on the business or what they need. Is that right? Yep, definitely. I think as I said, just maybe on the journey of the actual company or. Yeah, exactly what they need. So for when I moved into my role there was lots of change, organizational change going on.

[06:58.0]

And I think my HR background, even though there was an established HR team there, but that's what I worked with the CEO on. So. So he kind of liked that background and people skills because there was lots of stuff going on. So he wanted me by his side and people knew me and trusted me.

[07:14.8]

So that kind of helped when I moved into the role. Yeah. And I suppose we were going to talk about, I suppose the next question in terms of like what did you do in your role? So there's a bit of all design work by the sounds of things, bit of people work, what other things sort of make up the role as well. There's a lot of projects so I would be either leading or supporting on strategic initiatives or projects that were going on some, from a HR perspective.

[07:37.3]

So I did partner with the HR team to, lead on some of the people's strategies and be that kind of business voice. For the HR team. I, would prepare Updates for the board and the executive meetings, work with the CEO to do that.

[07:55.1]

Would you report to the CEO as well? I did. You do? Okay, yeah. I spent time briefing him and prepping him for meetings, so running around all the parts of the business and, you know, finding out what's going on. So he was prepared going into those meetings. I was kind of the alternative voice of him.

[08:13.4]

So, you know, I found sometimes you'd be in meetings and, you know, everybody might run out of the meeting with a different view of what happened. So I'd kind of, you know, just go back and just make sure everybody was clear and they knew why they were asked to be focused on why they were doing.

[08:30.3]

Sorry, why they were, asked to focus on that particular thing. And because there was lots of change going on, I think everyone was running a million miles an hour and always didn't have the context. So because I'd be sitting in other meetings with him, I'd bring that additional context to say, this is, this is what he wants, this is what he's looking for. Yeah.

[08:47.6]

Which was helpful. Yeah, yeah. Because I can imagine a lot of CEOs are just kind of myself in this a little bit, but I find sometimes good with certain things, but miss some of the detail sometimes. Are you a bit of a safety net for the CEO as well, in that sense?

[09:03.6]

Oh, I would say so, yeah. Yeah. And it was just again, because I think, you know, as you say, don't always have the details. So it's like, we need to do X. And everyone's like, okay. And they mightn't necessarily agree with it. And I'm like, okay, this is, this is the additional context you might be getting.

[09:19.6]

And people are like, oh, okay. So, yeah, it was that kind of additional person sweeping up behind, giving the additional messages and the context and the detail to just make people understand. Because that's what people want. They want. Understand why they've been asked to do something. Yeah. So, yeah. But no.

[09:35.2]

Two days with the same. Yeah, I can imagine. I can imagine that they were, they were definitely a variety of days, let's say. So what skills do you think then are key for a chief of staff? So I think strategic thinking. I think having that big picture mindset and just being able to connect the dots across the organization.

[09:53.5]

I think that's definitely key. Stakeholder management, I think that's an obvious one. You know, you're often that bridge, as we. As I just talked about, between the CEO and leadership and other leaders across. Across the business. So that's important that people trust you, influence, because you are also.

[10:14.1]

You are often influencing, maybe without direct control or authority. So I think just having those influencing skills is helpful. I think emotional intelligence is key. Yeah. Again, just going back to managing people and managing relationships and being able to navigate politics sensitively, which there always is within organizations.

[10:39.4]

And I'd say just being adaptable and being resilient. No two days are the same. Priorities change. You gotta be able to just kind of roll with the punches and move and. Okay, I was doing this today. Now, this is the. This is the focus. And just be able to remain calm under that pressure.

[10:56.5]

Yeah, makes sense. One of the things that stood out when we initially spoke about this topic, you said to me the role was very broad, but a lot of the time not very deep. Yeah. So you spanned the whole business, but you couldn't then be an expert in all of those fields.

[11:13.2]

And that sort of really resonated with me that you're trying to sort of juggle every part of the business, but you're not an expert in that. Is that. I suppose, reflect on that. Is that still true from what you're thinking? I would 100% say that's true. And it's difficult at the beginning because. Well, for me personally, I like to know.

[11:29.2]

So I like to have all the details. I want the detail and the deep expertise to feel like you're adding some value, but you just can't. You can't. So to know enough, be comfortable that you don't need to know everything. You rely on the people that are the experts, but just be able to connect those pieces and.

[11:46.8]

Yeah, And I think part of it is it's a bit of a, I suppose an insecurity. It's like, I don't know, you know, everything that that person is talking about, but you don't need to. Yeah. At all. Yeah. And actually, because you don't, you come with a different perspective, which I think is helpful.

[12:03.0]

Yeah, I think it's really helpful. And it's funny when, Part of the reason, obviously, for talking to today is we wrote an article recently about how this has sort of come back into trend. And one of the things we wrote about was how it's Almost like a sort of CEO in training, because you're mirroring or following what the CEO is doing and trying to be an extension of that individual as well, which I think is really interesting.

[12:22.2]

But that brings us around nicely then to the question of why has this role started to come back into trend? I've got a few thoughts on this as well. But what from your side? I think the pace of work has changed so much over the last few years. And leaders are expected to lead transformation.

[12:42.4]

There's people issues, there's just so much to do and they can't do it all. So they need somebody to drive that execution under the leader. So I think that's part of it. I think similarly and related to that, I think as corporate functions, so like hr, marketing, finance, they get stretched.

[13:01.1]

They need to push some work back into the business. And again, somebody needs to own this, Someone needs to pick it up and run with it. Because I came from an organization, in my HR role where it's like, what does the business want? So there'd be a lot of true proper business partnering.

[13:16.7]

What's the strategy, what do they need, et cetera. And if you're trying to push things back into them all the time, you kind of need someone to run with that and help out. So I think that's they're kind of related. But I think that's definitely something.

[13:33.0]

I think it's from a talent development perspective. I think it offers high potential exposure to strategy, decision making at the top. So I think it can be a nice retention tool as well. So, you know, whether that is why it's come back into trend.

[13:52.4]

But I think it's definitely something where it's like you have somebody, high potential person. It's like, okay, there's a need. How do we give that person an opportunity? Yeah, I think it's a great way for go back to that sort of mirroring the CEO a little bit in terms of sort of what you're doing there.

[14:08.2]

We've also seen, I suppose from an HR perspective, we've seen it, seen it more that HR headcount has probably been frozen over the last year or two. I think we all know the recruitment market's not been brilliant, so getting HR headcount's been harder, but getting business headcount has been a little bit easier.

[14:27.6]

That's true. So one of the things that we have seen is that if there is a problem to be solved, the business can potentially say, well I'm going to go and get a headcount because I'm paying for it. So I can just add in a role here that technically should straddle hr. Yep.

[14:43.3]

But I'm going to own the headcount and it's going to sit with me. So we've seen a bit of that purely just from a headcount perspective. Yeah, it's a strange one but I suppose it does make sense too. Well having worked in HR the business it was just so much easier for business to get headcount.

[14:59.3]

So yeah I would absolutely say that's probably related to And the nice thing is now that HR professionals are moving in to these type of roles because I think traditionally it may have been more somebody coming from a consultancy or finance or operational background.

[15:15.8]

So I think you do see a little bit more and more HR professionals starting to move in and I think the skills are quite relatable. So ambiguity, trust to confidence. So like I do think it's just nice to see. I think it's really nice to see that.

[15:32.7]

I think the other thing that we're seeing as a trend is because there's been, I suppose there's been this sort of anti woke sentiment hasn't there over the last sort of year or so too which has seen other roles start to disappear. So we have seen far less diversity and inclusion roles.

[15:49.6]

We have seen far less well being roles that have been coming up and actually again what we're seeing a little bit when we do see chief us off, we're finding that some of their roles are things like DEI or bit of well being in there where again it's straddling a little bit across I suppose the business and hr.

[16:09.4]

But the reason is starting to work and again I'd love your thoughts on this but the idea is that when it comes from someone who sits in the business that tells you what to do, the business seem to listen sometimes more than when they do to HR where they feel as though there's an agenda.

[16:26.1]

Can you, can you relate to that 100? Yeah, yeah. Because when I said in my previous role where we'd kind of partner closely with the business, we would try and drive a lot of the messaging through the business as well. So through the CEO, through the leaders. So again as you say it just, it makes it much easier when it's coming to the business.

[16:44.8]

People are like oh yeah, yeah, yeah I'll do that. I'm interested in on this, on that role when you were in it, did people see you as part of the business. Yes, they did. Yeah. Good. And I, at the beginning was like, oh, they're just going to see me as the HR person still, and that's fine because, you know, nothing wrong with HR professionals, but I did feel. I did.

[17:06.6]

Definitely did. But I think it was more because they knew me. Right. So I've worked there for a long time, and they just could see. I think they were very conscious of not kind of directing their HR questions. Like, don't get me wrong, at the beginning, it was a little bit.

[17:21.9]

I know this isn't your job anymore, but. But it. That didn't stay. Right. Yeah. So they moved on. They moved on and they saw you as part of the business. I think that's key, that you want. That you want to see the role being different to what you were doing in an HR function. When we talk about, I suppose, your experience at the role. Yeah.

[17:42.1]

Love to know positives and negatives that you experienced when you went through this. Okay. I would say I learned a lot. So I gained a deep, much deeper knowledge of the insurance industry, the market, and kind of the challenges it faced, which I think was really helpful, because when I was kind of in the business partner role, I thought I knew, and I did know a lot.

[18:08.0]

But just when you're in it, it's different. You know, when you're kind of in it, feeling it in those meetings, you kind of get a better and deeper understanding of, you know, why they're doing what they're doing or when they're coming for head care, et cetera, et cetera. You just get a more broader understanding of it.

[18:24.5]

I think that's helpful. You see the. I suppose some sort of daily stress that they're under, or it is. You see it. So you're. You're kind of there and you're. Even the numbers. It's like, you know, we need to pay this person an extra whatever. And you're like, well, we've got to think about equity, et cetera. And they're like, but this is the drop of the ocean.

[18:40.3]

And you're like, appreciate that, but you realize actually this is a drop in the ocean. But, you know, we have to think of the wider context, et cetera. But yeah, it felt different sitting in. And I definitely felt like I just gained more knowledge in that respect. I think I really enjoy the.

[18:56.2]

No two days are the same, so that's not for everybody. But I really liked that keep on your toes bit chaotic type stuff. So I really enjoyed that randomness. The Randomness, variety. Yeah. I was like, oh, this is fun. I also like being in the camp, so just gaining insights, being closer to the leaders of what they think about when they're, you know, making decisions.

[19:21.3]

Did they let their guard down more with you? Do you feel it's a good question.

[19:29.5]

I think for me, I had a good relationship with them anyway because I'd worked there for so long in a leadership HR role that I, you know, I think it was something. I don't think something changed there. I think they kind of did that anyway, which was, which is good.

[19:46.7]

What else? I would say I probably sharpened my kind of strategic skills and execution. I think just, you know, again, just being in the business and just working for someone that I very respected kind of just narrowed my focus in on that.

[20:04.6]

I learned to work in a different way. Although I like chaos and, you know, fast pace this, it is a very unstructured role. So it's just kind of, you know, as I said, trying to, like, drive results, but maybe not having the technical expertise as I talked about earlier.

[20:22.1]

But it was, it was interesting to go through that. And I kind of came out of that going okay, like, I learned something there. I learned to work differently, not knowing all the time. But you can get results even though you're not the expert in something because you come with a different perspective. Makes sense. What about the negatives?

[20:39.1]

What were the downsides of working in the role? I think maybe not negatives, but more kind of where I felt a little bit uncomfortable. I would say it wasn't a well trodden path where I was. So the roles and responsibilities weren't 100% clear.

[20:57.0]

And that was more. It's not that I was like, oh, it was just more frustrating. So you might kind of jump in to work on something and then you might find someone else is actually working on. So it's just a little bit frustrating. It's like, who's actually doing what. I think you're often doing work that's invisible, so you're kind of primarily there to make other people look good.

[21:21.8]

So sometimes you might question what the value you're adding. So I think for me, I'd be like, you know, what value am I adding? Because I'm like, I just want to make sure I'm adding value. So I think that was sometimes a little bit uncomfortable. And then, although I am quite comfortable with ambiguity, I think the fact that the next step wasn't always clear was probably something that played in my mind, as in Career moving. Yeah.

[21:47.2]

Right, yeah. So what is next? Where do you go next? What you do? What does that look like? Yeah. And normally when I go into something I'm like, it's fine, like it's 12 months down the lines. 18, don't worry about it. But then it's more, it's not the oh, what am I going to do?

[22:02.5]

It's more what is, what am I doing from a career perspective. Next. So that was kind of, you know, where am I going to go? And but at the same time it did give me diverse experience. So that's always a plus. Without, without a doubt. Did you ever find that others didn't know what you did?

[22:19.8]

Oh, 100%. Yeah. Yeah, that was a regular thing. I think that's probably the one thing everybody will say. It's that they either get asked, what, what do you do? And then sometimes even trying to articulate that what you do is quite difficult sometimes because it can be anything and everything. Yeah.

[22:39.2]

You ever get asked to do something that you thought was 100% not in the scope of the role? Probably. Okay, yeah. I won't say what it is. I was going to make something. I can ask to make the tea or something like that, but someone has to do it.

[22:54.6]

I was going to say, I can imagine that someone might just say that and then everyone's looking at you like, that's not my role. Yeah, no, I did an EA role a long time ago once and I got asked that and I was like, this is not what I'm here to do. Yeah, so yeah, which makes perfect sense.

[23:09.8]

Why, why did you decide to move into achieve staff role from hr? What was the initial push for you on that side? Yeah, I think I definitely wanted to diversify my, my experience. I wanted to broadness, I wanted to get closer to the business.

[23:27.3]

As I said before, just knowing kind of the ins and outs that when, you know, I moved out onto a more senior HR role that I had been in it and I feel like, I don't know, I feel like it's everything, it's something every HR professional should do if they get the opportunity to do.

[23:44.9]

Maybe not achieve a staff role but just maybe spend some time in the business, whether it's on secondment or something. Just to get that kind of look and feel what happens on a day to day basis. Completely honestly, since writing the article, I've had a few people come to me and say it's made me think about what I would do next and I was having a conversation with someone just yesterday around.

[24:06.4]

They were, thinking, well, maybe not chief of staff, maybe a CEO type role or something like that. So what's been so good about talking about this a lot more is that it's definitely, I think, broaden the mind of a lot of HR people to go, I don't have to just be in hr.

[24:21.6]

Yeah, I can do something else. Out of interest, did the business come to you about this role or did you go to them? They came to me. Yeah. Yeah. So the CEO who I was working for, the company was. We had a new group CEO in place and there was lots of change and there was some restructure. And he said, I think I need someone to help me.

[24:41.2]

And I was kind of at the point where I'm like, I've done my role in HR for a long time. What's next for me? So it was quite a natural thing. And I suppose it was another reason why I moved into the role. It was quite an exciting time. I knew there was lots going on, lots of changes, so there would definitely be something I could get my teeth stuck into, which was helpful.

[25:02.6]

And then ultimately I wanted to go work for him. I worked for him for a long time when I was in my HR capacity. We had a really strong relationship, really strong respect for each other, and I just wanted to learn from him because, I really enjoyed working from him.

[25:21.3]

Yeah. And what did HR say when you said, this is what I want to go and do? Did they stop that or try to stop it or were they supportive of that decision? I would say they were supportive. Yeah. Because I think it was known that I need to do something else.

[25:36.4]

So I would say they were definitely supportive. Yeah. Yeah. It's nice to hear you thought that that would have been good. But the one thing that also came through, I think from your answer just then was how key the relationship is in this role between who you're doing this role for. Correct? Correct.

[25:52.4]

Yeah, definitely. I think that's why a lot of the roles are hired internally or maybe an external, but someone they worked with previously. Yeah. Because I think you kind of had to. You have to align on maybe values and pace of work.

[26:08.5]

You know, you kind of have to, make sure you're on the same page there and, that you, you're kind of the, as I said earlier, the alternative voice. So you need to believe, I feel like, in what the person's saying to be able to go and deliver the messages.

[26:23.8]

Yeah, completely I feel like it's one of those roles where you almost need to be able to finish off their sentences exactly like that's. You want that kind of relationship and you want that kind of almost open relationship where you can critique and possibly criticize every now and again. And it gets taken in the right way. Yeah.

[26:41.1]

Because it's an important role. Yeah. Interesting. If we're talking about hiring this role. So if an employer is hiring this role now, what, what hints and tips would you give them? Now thinking about that, I think, and I know this is a hard thing to do, but I would say define the role as clear as you can.

[26:58.5]

And even if it's just, is this strategic, is it operational? Is it a little bit of both? Just being kind of clear in that respect. Just as we kind of just discussed there, that cultural fit with the leader is important. I think you need to give that consideration.

[27:15.4]

As we said, you are the person's voice, so alignment with that person I think is key. I would say hire, like this isn't real, but like hire internally. I think, you know, give that high potential person an opportunity, to you know, get exposure and you know, retain that person and then you're building the future leaders of the future.

[27:37.7]

So You know, I think it's a good opportunity to look internal and again, a difficult thing to do, but kind of be clear on maybe what the potential career path or kind of the exit plan is at the end.

[27:54.8]

Like even as simple as is the role for 18 months to 12 to 24 months, common type role in some respects, or is it this long term partner you're looking for? So just even being clear on that, because that might determine who applies or who wants to do it, because some people might be like, I want to do a second for 18 months to two years and then I want to go and do something else where there are people who want to kind of build that relationship and do that role for a longer period of time.

[28:20.5]

So, just trying to be clear in that perspective. They are both difficult things to do though. But yeah, I actually like the very first point. I really like in terms of being clear around the operational strategic nature of the role. Because I think the one thing I would say to anybody looking at hiring role like this is they can be very different things.

[28:40.8]

So you can have achievers are that's very operational and it's just a case of just getting things done. Or you can have one that's much more strategic in terms of its foundation and what you want it to achieve. Yeah, I completely agree with that. I think too often companies are not honest with themselves around what they actually want that role to do.

[29:00.2]

And I think that's, that's when it fails. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Because we see that anyway, you know, just from HR perspective, when you're like, well, what is the role? What do you want someone to do? Yeah. And they're like, oh, I want this. And then you push and it's like, that's not really what you wanted. You want something different.

[29:17.1]

And because this role is a little bit like that anyway, it is important to have some, some clarity in that perspective. As in, yeah, what are you actually looking for? Yeah, I think that's, I think that's a really interesting. I think it's the right question that the employees should be asking themselves.

[29:34.5]

If you were thinking, I suppose if there was an employee out there or the candidate out there at the moment thinking about moving into a chief of staff role. Yeah. What advice would you give them? I would say kind of linked to what we were just talking about. Be clear for yourself what you want to get out of the role.

[29:50.0]

Because it is a little bit ambiguous. You do have the opportunity to shape it so, you know, you can make sure you're getting the best out of it too. So I would just, you know, make sure, think about what you want to get out of the role. Because I said earlier I really wanted to learn. So that was my main focus.

[30:06.1]

Learn and get, you know, a wider view of the insurance industry. I think you need to be comfortable with ambiguity. So, you know, you wear multiple hats on a daily basis and, you know, have to kind of chop and change what you're doing.

[30:21.1]

And then as we just spoke about, what next isn't always clear. So you just need to be comfortable in that respect. I would say set boundaries as well. Okay. I think it can be quite demanding, quite reactive, the role.

[30:36.7]

So just make sure you're clear on, what your boundaries are. And, I would say embrace it, have fun. You gain so much cross functional knowledge. You are like at the top of organization or close to it.

[30:51.7]

You're, you know, building a fantastic network. So enjoy it. It's demanding, but it can be fun. You gotta make it fun. Yeah. And it sounds like it. And I'd say whenever I talk to people thinking about maybe a move like this, the big question I would ask is always, why?

[31:07.1]

Why do you want this role? What do you want them to do? Because again, it goes back to the operational versus strategic foundation and where you see it fitting into the organization. But I think it's crucial that you understand that if you're going to move into it. Yeah. I do think the other piece of advice I'd give to candidates when I see their CVs, I would definitely say to people, think about where after about 12 to 18 months, start to think about where you want to be longer term because you don't want to get pigeonholed or trapped.

[31:35.2]

And I think once you go beyond three years in a role like that, then I think there is a tendency that that can happen. Yep. If you want to come back to hr, my advice would probably be to limit your stint in a role like this for probably 12 to 8, 12, 12 months to 2 years. Yeah.

[31:50.8]

No, I agree. And, the other thing about it is it's a positive and negative, but you do get kind of connected to that person. So if they leave or they're retiring, which that happened in my case, you know, you have to think. You have to think changes things. Yeah, I was going to say that must change quite quickly then. Yeah. Like, I knew.

[32:08.0]

So I did know, you know, so what. Just tell me through that. Because in terms of that happening. So the person you were doing, the chief staff role retired. Yep. And then a new person came in. New person came in. So when I took the role, I did know he was, retiring, in 2025.

[32:24.3]

So I kind of, in my own mind had the 18, months to two years type timeline. And then we had a new CEO come in. But I think at the time I was. I had been there for 14 years. So I was like, it is time now for me to go on. So you chose something else.

[32:40.2]

Yeah, both step back at the same time. So it's interesting how that, how that happened. Yeah. If you, if we reflect and maybe give you a hypothetical on that, if a new CEO come in and you had to do that, do you think you'd have been able to or again, did it all depend on the relationship? I think it all depends on the relationship.

[33:00.1]

I think you can do it, but it's just how quickly you can form that relationship with that person. Are you on the same page? Do you have the same kind of values and how you like to work that kind of thing? So, it is possible. But I think for me it was just.

[33:15.3]

I had been there for so long and I'm Like, am I going to. When am I going to leave? So it was time anyway. It was time. It was Time to go. I was there 14 years, so. And I really enjoyed it because it, you know, it had been a company that, as I said, had changed a lot over the years, but I just felt he was retiring.

[33:35.3]

There was other senior leadership that had retired during the year and I was like, this is the time to go now. Yeah, yeah. And just. Would you ever go back to achieve a staff role? It depends who asked me to do it. That, I think goes back to the advice, doesn't it? I think that's absolutely crucial because it all depends.

[33:52.4]

It seems like it all depends on who asks. It all depends on who you're going to be working for. Yeah, I think in a, what I'd like, I'd actually like in a startup environment, I think that would be fun. I think, again, depending on who asks to do it, but I think, you know, just getting that broad experience you're all in together, you're focused on building something.

[34:10.2]

I think that would be a fun role. Yeah, completely agree with it. It's been really lovely to talk to you. Thank you so much for coming on the show. It's a topic I think that's going to run and run. I genuinely think that. And I think the way the market is, I think we're going to see more of these roles popping up and I think we're going to see more and more HR people move into them as well. Yeah, no, agree.

[34:29.4]

Thank you for having me. No problem. Thank you.