

HR insights podcast

Series 8 | Episode 14

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

The truth about workplace wellbeing

[00:01.6]

Bianca, welcome back to the show. How are you? I'm very well, thank you. Stuart, how are you? I'm very good. It's always a pleasure to have you on the show. Thank you. I'm excited to be back. Round two. I was gonna say two or three. Have you been on? No. Two I think. Is it just two? Yeah. Okay. I wasn't sure. Yeah, I couldn't remember actually, but there you go.

[00:18.4]

You're so familiar to me. I thought it was three times. For the people that don't know you though, do you want to do a little intro for us? Of course. So my name is Bianca Rigo. I am the founder of huge. We are a sustainable high performance platform for businesses.

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I'm also a speaker and quote unquote, well being expert apparently now is what my head of comms puts on my. I quite like that. 13,000 coaching hours worked in sort of health and wellbeing space for almost a decade now.

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Launched Humanos about three years ago. So we've done a really exciting journey. We really sit at the intersection of human connection and powerful technology to help individuals and organizations and what we call their journeys of sustainable high performance. We blend coaching, habit tracking, behavioural insights, anonymizing data to help businesses build proactive and personalized wellbeing performance strategies based on the diverse workforces that we now see and, and diverse needs.

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We also run our humanoid experiences. So it's like an in person element to what we do to bring together forward thinking people, leaders, business leaders to discuss relevant future of work topics. As we know it's just changing so quickly and we really want to provide that support to businesses.

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Background in psychology, started my career for all my sins in tech sales in a very Wolf of Wall street type environment. So, so you know, know firsthand. The pressure and stresses of the corporate world combined with the terminal illness of my father sort of led to my own deterioration of my health as we went into last time, my own journey on burnout.

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So that sort of then led, led me to ask myself some questions and push me in this direction. Inspiration I suppose for what you've created. Thank you. Yeah. And, and talk to us a little bit more then about the platform because I think that's quite interesting. So you log in, it's an employee platform, correct?

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Correct. So it's really interesting. When we first started Human OS, we raised investment in 2023. There was really two reasons that I decided we needed to do this at the time I was working a lot in the corporate world, I was delivering a lot of talks, I was helping design wellbeing strategies, particularly during the pandemic.

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Post pandemic, working with the likes of American Express, Snapchat, cdw, University of Cambridge, NHS Berkeley, Cisco, Dell, some huge companies, but also working with companies with 10 employees and startups, scale ups and everything in between.

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And it really didn't matter on the size of the organization. There was always the same patterns of behaviours and the same problems, but just happening at different scales, I guess. So really the one of the first reasons why I wanted to build Humanos was how do we democratise coaching and how do we make world class coaching available to everyone in the workplace from a human level?

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Because we know people are seeking development and personal development, professional development, we know that the world is changing so much and personal and professional, those lines are so blurred now that what we need to be providing as a workplace is very different.

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So on one hand it was that to help individuals take ownership of their health, their well being, their performance, to be able to both do their job effectively but also to live their life in a way they want to live it. And then from the business perspective, actually how much untapped potential do we sit on because we don't give people the correct tools and support.

[04:03.7]

So when we look at high performance, we know that on average around only 11% of our workforce at any one time will be high performers. That number drops to 2% and we're looking at two years in a row or more. And that came out of the Culture Amp data this year. So actually from a business perspective, how are we mobilizing this performance piece?

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How are we tapping into the potential and getting more from our people, getting them engaged, motivated, performing better, returns for the business? That was one goal. And then the other goal when we first started we was why are we still guessing at well being and performance strategies?

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It's 2023 at the time and even in the past two years how much technology has changed. But we should not be guessing when it comes to what we're implementing as a business. So how do we as a company collect that data in, an anonymous manner? Things like stress, energy, mood, just key data points that businesses can then take to say, okay, this is how I make a better decision here when it comes to the wellbeing performance strategies, actually this is how we better predict as a business what the year ahead looks like and what's the impact on our people, how we can buffer for that, what we need to bring in Resource wise, what we need to eliminate.

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So just how can businesses make more informed decisions to again improve the bottom line of the business? Effectively, that's how we started, and that's changed massively in three years. We still do that, but we started off with personal trainers, nutritionists and therapists.

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Now we have personal trainers, nutritionists, therapists, men's health, female hormone perimenopause, financial well being coaches, sales coaches, physiotherapists, sales coaches, you name it. We've probably got coach for it now.

[05:49.3]

Again, based on the demands of the workforce and actually what people want and what they want support on. And I'm sure we'll come into this, say that intersectionality piece, you know, if you're a male caregiver, from the north, what you need from a company and what you need in terms of support, it's very different to your transgender grads in their first role in London.

[06:11.1]

And so what we've done is create something that can change based on the needs of the person, where they're at in life, their goals, their challenges and of the business to create this sort of adaptable solution. Yep. And then just with how fast text accelerating. Now we've got AI coaches in there, we've got, got the human coaches.

[06:28.5]

You know, this is constant blend of technology. So yeah, it keeps me out of trouble. I was going to say it sounds, sounds like you're pretty busy, but you were saying to me before that the business has evolved. It was, I suppose, predominantly more of a wellbeing solution at the beginning and it's evolved a lot more from what you've described. Yes.

[06:45.1]

So we now call, we call ourselves a sustainable high performance platform. Well, being is a piece of that, but it's not the only piece. What we want to do is really help organisations overcome, what I believe to be the biggest problem right now in the workplace, which is engagement.

[07:04.8]

In the UK, only 10% of employees are engaged at work. Globally it's 23%. Europe's 13% UK is 10, with 33 out of 38 countries in Europe. So if you're a workforce of 100 people, there's 10 people, 10 people you've got actually working effectively.

[07:23.5]

Presenteeism is cost in the UK economy over 100 billion. Absenteeism is something like 7 billion. It's so actually, what we lose in terms of absenteeism is so tiny in comparison to what we're losing in presenteeism in which people being in the office but not being able to do their jobs effectively.

[07:42.4]

So what we were looking at, human OS is what is preventing people from being engaged at work. And then how do we create a solution that aligns individuals, their values, their wants, their motivation with the business, their values, their wants, their goals and brings it bring these things back together.

[08:03.0]

And that's much more our focus now. So autonomy, belonging, development, ownership, value alignment, well, being, resilience, you know, there's so much more to it than just we should feel good at work, should we?

[08:19.7]

We're not always going to, I was gonna say, probably doesn't happen as often as you want it to either on that side of things. No, but and, and talk to me as a founder a little bit because you we were again talking off air and you're sort of saying that the businesses have evolved and changed in what are you now, three years old?

[08:35.4]

Two, two and a half. Three years old. So you've gone from being that proper startup, and you're now getting to that sort of scale up piece, correct? Yeah, we're definitely a very scrappy startup in some ways. But then, yeah, but also, you know, the demand is growing, we're bringing on bigger customers.

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Our own engagement is incredible now like I said to your fair, we've just gone over 70% for the first time, which when you look at traditional sort of EAPs, they sit around 2 to 4%. So not only are we bringing on new customers, we're actually doing a very effective job with our customers.

[09:13.8]

And with that you have a lot more pressure, a lot more responsibility. Tech is moving so fast. You're constantly trying to navigate where do you bring it in, where do you still ensure that human to human connection, particularly because so much of what we're doing is trying to build human connections again.

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And that's really what we see in the workplace is this lack of communication and breakdown of relationship, cross department, cross generation, cross location, whatever it might be. So we really want to build those human to human relationships again. So we have to be very careful as to where we use the tech and we use the AI to scale and to lower barriers of entry to open conversations that might not otherwise be had, but also not to replicate that human connection.

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So yeah, so we, we're juggling a lot for a very sort of relatively small, lean team, lean resources. But everyone seems pretty happy, apart from my mental health. And I was gonna say because I, I remember starting up and I remember the first, the first year you run on adrenaline a lot like, and you're, you're pretty Excited about it or like it's your baby, it's yours?

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Like, yeah. You sort of feel like that first year, I don't know if it's a free pass, but it's a bit like that, isn't it? You sort of feel like you can just go, are you at that point now? It does feel like there's a little bit more pressure and therefore that does impact. Yeah. Your own sort of well being and mental health too.

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I, I've always really felt that I've always been someone who put so much pressure on myself ever since I can remember. Is that just a competitive thing? You're. I think it's a real mix. I speak to my therapist about this because it's so interesting because I never had parents who really pushed me.

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My parents always. I was very lucky. I came from super loving, super supportive parents in which their number one line would just be always just do your best. But that was never good enough for me. And I'm sure there's some sort of childhood trauma bullying that we go into as to why that is, but it's how I am.

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And so I've always put immense pressure under myself to want to be better than the best. And you are competitive because we were again, we were just talking just now. Ultra marathon recently. Correct? Correct. Yeah. And then you were doing some form of CrossFit competition at the weekend as well.

[11:39.8]

I'm so competitive. I was actually a LinkedIn post on this this week because I have taught myself to look like I don't care when I lose. I care so much. I care deeply and I. But I believe being competitive and also in the workplace, we almost now are ashamed to be competitive.

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I think being competitive is a really good thing. There is nothing wrong with healthy competition. There's nothing wrong with holding yourself to certain standards. Totally. And for me, with that level of competition, it's how you do everything.

[12:15.5]

Like I will not do something unless I know I can do it to the best of my ability. I just believe you shouldn't do it otherwise. But I also believe I was really thinking about this week. For me, the biggest benefit of being so competitive is I actually always want to be better than the person I was yesterday.

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And that's not just in terms of my output, that's in terms of my kindness, that's in terms of my self awareness, that's in terms of my resilience, my diligence, like all of these elements. I want to be better than I was yesterday. So I think that's where that competitive mindset really works to your advantage.

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And then from a startup position, when you know how tough it is and you know, you see all the statistics about how many fail. I am very honest about the fact that last year of our first full year, aside from the year I lost my dad, was the toughest year of my life. It felt like I was getting punched in the face every single day, all day.

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And if it wasn't for my resilience, I'm probably actually that pure grit that I cannot fail and I cannot give up. There's no way human arrest would be in existence now. So this year I think it's more about what I'm really trying to do is be more gentle to myself in that process.

[13:32.5]

Separate my identity with the identity of the business, which I think we as founders find really difficult. Or any again in the workplace, any top performer, we over identify with our role. It's why so many people, when they retire or athletes, when they are no longer athletes, they have these breakdowns, they turn to alcohol, escapism because actually they realize, well, who is my identity if I don't have this?

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And so that's a really big learning for me throughout this journey is trying to just be really mindful that I am not human. As I have an identity outside of that. And so the direction the business is traveling, whether we're having a good month, a bad month, a good quarter or a bad quarter, that doesn't mean I'm a good person or a bad person. Yeah.

[14:16.7]

And that I think, you know, you're shaking your head as a founder, I think it can be something it's really hard to detach from. I think it's impossible to detach from. I think you, you will try to do it to a point, but I think there's always an element of you that's in the brand that you've created and that's, that's something that just will never go away.

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And when I was selling tech and I was selling data centre's, yes, it was always irritating if you lost a deal because of ego or because of money, you're like, oh, I really could. You know, you're thinking about your Louboutin's in your head. You're like, I was tea, don't worry.

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Whereas now if you lose a deal, that's your baby. That's what you've created. Especially with purpose driven, impact driven businesses. And there's a lot of really interesting statistics around sort of happiness at work. And there's sort of three categories.

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It's people, people who want to do like good work and impact and leave the world a better place. They often end up burnt out and depressed because actually they're just constantly swimming against the tide and the change they want to create doesn't necessarily happen in their lifetime or happen fast enough.

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So they have really low well being levels. Then you have the people, the founders who are trying to create something that they believe in and.

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Oh, sorry, I agree. Yeah, you got to. And the founders who are trying to do something that they believe in and create a business and often they end up just exhausted because of sheer amount of work and actually how many fail.

[15:58.8]

And then you have the people who actually just have an interest, an interest in their job, an interest in their work. It gives them meaning but it's not the dream that they ever had. You know, they're not following this one soul passion. And they often are the happiest people in the workplace because actually it doesn't negatively impact them to the point it does with the other two groups. Yeah.

[16:23.4]

So I don't think I answered your question actually in times of it I think, I think it's just I always, I always enjoy talking to people that started businesses because I think it's the stresses and strains that you go through and the different stages and the evolution of the business that that's really interesting to talk about. But I'll move us on a little bit because obviously part of the reason you're here today, we've just done our own sort of resilience survey with the Resilience Institute which has been, yeah, it's been really interesting and we focus very much on the HR community for that.

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And ultimately what anyone who did the survey would have found out that they get a well being score. And in the wellbeing score we found that that was a 63% score overall. Now there are sort of categories of that and what we found was that I suppose resilient bounce was the lowest score.

[17:14.5]

58%. Bounce is how your ability to I suppose your resilience, the ability to bounce back from, from adversity. And we found that 77% had a performance mindset but bounce was just 58% and I suppose showing the HR professionals whole composure but they're under pressure and they're struggling to a certain degree.

[17:39.8]

So when you look at today's workplace, how would you describe the sort of state of well being? High performing but under strain. Okay, people are scared, so people are working hard, people are feeling the pressure the world is moving so quickly, particularly the past five years.

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You know, we've seen this whole sort of cultural reckoning on so many different levels from the pandemic to political uncertainty to economic instability to hate crimes, to social justice movements, to of course the rise of AI.

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Like there's so much going on, creating so much uncertainty. People are working really, really hard because they're scared. And life's expensive if we're talking about sort of the regions that we work in globally. So life is expensive, it's moving quickly, people are trying to keep up, but it's fragile. Yep.

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We just have to look at, like we said earlier, that presenteeism, the fact that it's over 100 billion people are in the workplace but they're not able to do their work effectively because they're exhausted, they're distracted, they're anxious,

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a lot of it is, you know, that they're hiding and they're masking from the fatigue. And so actually we're losing so much good work and output because although from the surface it's kind of like that swan swimming on the lake. Right. From the surface it looks like, okay, people are working hard at sea underneath everyone's just sort of paddling for life.

[19:26.4]

And that's really what I think is representative of most workforces right now. Yeah, I, I, I, I would agree. I also think it's interesting when you sort of say, like look at five years now. I think five years, five years ago we were in the middle of a pandemic and I find that incredible to think that actually that's not that long ago.

[19:44.9]

It feels like a, feels like a lifetime ago in some respects now. And it's amazing how the world has sort of moved on and, and even when you think back what, two or three years ago, we were in that process where we were swabbing every other day when we like to get on a plane or do something or you're having to go through these sort of protocols.

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And it's only in the, what last 18 months that the world has become much more normal. But then that normality has then been replaced by this geopolitical uncertainty and this real shift in terms of, I suppose, where HR has had to align itself and, and now we're seeing this sort of, I suppose, right wing rhetoric, whatever you want to describe it, that's come through that's much more prevalent than the, maybe the left wing rhetoric that we saw previously.

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So I think that HR has had to sort of really flip flop all over the place over the last five years. And interestingly, the lowest scoring areas, the resilience report, were things like sleep, calm rhythm, energy management. Are they usual for things?

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Are, they, I suppose, are they the first things that do seem to disappear when people go under pressure and stress? Sleep is usually the number one thing that gets sacrificed. Now, if we think about it, the majority of people don't just have a job. Right.

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They have multiple other responsibilities in their life. Usually they're caregivers in some form, whether that's for children, whether that's for elderly, maybe it's for both. Yep. They're trying to balance the demands from work in one of the most competitive times and, and keep up with those demands.

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They're also trying to find time to exercise, to eat well, particularly post pandemic. We know there's this huge shift in how people approaching their health and understanding this is something they do need to prioritize. So they'll make time to go to the gym or to get their steps in, but then they also want to spend time with their loved ones.

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And so then they want that one hour of Netflix because it's that one hour of the day where the kids are in bed and the emails are off. And so it's the only time we get together and we hear this so much. And I understand it. So sleep is often the number one thing that's often compromised. And I, went to the other weekend because what I do in my free time is go to biohacking summits.

[21:58.7]

And I went, as you do. As you do. As you do. Yeah. And I went to biohacking summit a few weeks ago and I loved how Tim Gray phrased this. He said that we had to. He's a huge biohacker for the non biohacking nerds listening to this. And biohacking, what is that exactly? Biohacking is anything from.

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It's anything that improves longevity effectively. So we have lifespan, how many years we live, we have health span, how many of those years are going to be in good health? Right. And we want to focus on health span as much as we focus on lifespan, because there's no point living to 100 if you're for 50 of those years in pain. Right.

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And so then biohacking is anything we can do to increase that longevity and increase that health span. So it can be something as simple as breath work and, regulating the nervous system all the way through to everything we're seeing at the moment around ice baths, infrared saunas, red light therapy, whatever Else they're trying to sell on social media.

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Cryotherapy, that's another one that seems to come up a lot. Yeah, everything in between. Yeah. And so yes, I went to the biohacking summit and Tim Gray, who's one of top, I love how he phrased this, he said we need to reframe sleeping as repairing.

[23:14.9]

You don't build muscles in the gym, you damage muscles in the gym, you build muscles in your sleep. And it's the same with your body, it's the same with the brain. The brain is a muscle. And so one third of people don't sleep enough, another third of the people, another third people don't get the correct quality of sleep.

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Number one way to know if you're not getting the correct qualities of sleep is if you are exhausted when you wake up. People think being tired when you wake up is normal. That is not normal. You are not meant to feel tired when you wake up. And so that is the number one sign you're not getting the correct quality of sleep.

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And if we think about it at a very, very basic level, without going too geeky here, if you're not sleeping correctly, you're going to increase cortisol, the stress hormone. As soon as we increase cortisol, we're going to increase inflammation in the body.

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And so there's a two way relationship that happens here between the brain and the gut. And the gut is everything from your mouth to your bum. And as soon as we release cortisol, the gut realizes and recognizes cortisol.

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It then sends signals back to the brain to say we're inflamed, there's a problem here. So you create this self perpetuating cycle of cortisol release effectively of stress. And so as soon as we impact our sleep, we're going to increase that stress response.

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As soon as we increase that stress response, we're going to send the body into fight or flight. So then that's everything you were talking about. Those other sorts of parts of that, the energy and the regulation, they're all going to be impacted because the body is no longer coming from the place of calm, place of regulation, it's coming from a place of survival.

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It's thinking saber tooth tiger, it's thinking danger, run, fight. And so then in turn it's going to impact how we can function on a day to day level. And then lo and behold, you get to the bed, next slide and it impacts how you sleep.

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Yeah, because your stress is so high. So then again your Sleep gets impaired. So it becomes really difficult then to break that cycle. And then when you add in the life, the young children running in the alarm, that constant, do I get up early and go to the gym or do I get that extra hour's sleep?

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You know, it becomes really difficult for people to navigate. So, yeah, it's often the first thing that gets sacrificed because it's the thing that people think they need the least. Actually, it should be the priority because without that, everything else becomes really, really difficult. Yeah. Are you. Are, you a geek when it comes to your sleep and stats? Are you. Are, you a measurer?

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Is that, do you do that? I was a geek. The pro comes back to the competitive, addictive personality. But I had to break up with my devices a few years ago because it just. What did you have? Auring or whoop? You had everything. Everything.

[26:04.6]

I'm sat here. I do have everything. Yeah, exactly. And it just started ruling me, okay. When I was hospitalized from the stress and I was told I'd have to be on medication for the rest of my life, but I was told I'd have to have endoscopies every single year, my stomach was so damaged that I was told I'd probably never have a functioning stomach ever again.

[26:31.8]

Where are we now? This is eight years later. I haven't had an endoscopy in four years. I never had a medication. The last endoscopy I did have, I was told not only have I prevented any further damage of my stomach, I'd actually reversed all the damage and have a healthier stomach than the average person my age.

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For me, that all came down to the stress management piece. Yes, it was a bit diet, yes, it was exercise, but it really was, how am I learning to actually manage my stress? And so I spent so much time and energy really connecting with myself again and learning about my body, learning about my brain that, you know, we say trust your gut.

[27:10.8]

Like, I had no idea what my gut was saying. I couldn't hear that. I couldn't feel that. And even still, now when I get really stressed, I find it really difficult. Like living in London, running a startup. That stuff gets beat out of you really quick if you're being super intentional. Yeah. And so when I got all the devices, I almost became too reliant on them that I stopped listening to my body again.

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And so I always say to people, I think they're an amazing tool school. If you need to build awareness, if you're someone that has no idea actually how many steps you're doing, how many calories are actually eating, how you're actually sleeping, which is most people because they underestimate and overestimate everything. And I see this my whole time in coaching.

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How many calories have you had this week? And is it about calorie counting but it's about building awareness of what's on your plate? Oh, you know, not that much. Not this much. My favourite story, when I was doing a lot of one to one coaching and I said to my client, but I know you had two donuts yesterday.

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You told me you had two donuts yesterday. And I'm not shamed. Donuts, I love donuts. You had two donuts yesterday, so why aren't they on here? And they said, oh, does it count as someone else bought the food? Oh wow. I meant well if you ate them my darling, then yes, yes it does. I'm afraid he's like, oh, I need to do it all again.

[28:21.0]

Oh wow. So yeah, So I think building an awareness for people that may not have an awareness, these tools can be really, really powerful and they can help build habits and that sort of first initial taking ownership of your health and well being is really, really difficult and it requires discipline and it requires sacrifice and it requires being able to do something consistently day in, day out.

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And that is not easy. And so I think it's a really good tool to help people take those first initial really difficult steps. But then I do think we want to be careful when we're becoming over relying on them. I totally agree with that. I, I have to say I think the over reliance is a problem but I think it is really useful as a guide and a sort of I, I like it purely from a that sort of balance perspective.

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And there are, yeah, I never knew about heart rate variability until I sort of got it and sudden starting to understand that a little bit more in terms of my recovery and how that makes you feel and that I found very interesting. But it is, yeah, you don't want to get too addicted to it.

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But I do think that there's a lot to be learned from people that have no understanding of this. And I think it's a great starting point in that regard. And I think from a consumer, from a direct consumer perspective, we're quite far along that journey. Now you go, 10 years ago really HRV was only being used in SAS elite sports.

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Whereas now everyone's tracking their HRV and what everyone with a wearable is starting to track their HRV and understand what this means and how it impacts performance and how it predicts illness. But from a corporate perspective, I think we're only just at the beginning of this data journey and this is something that really interests me because at Humanos we integrate all forms of wearables on the platform because we want to simplify health for people.

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So what we do is we can take your whoop, your aura, your Garmin, whatever it might be, Apple Health, with the self reported data we collect and then we put that into a single point, biological age. So people can track how they're reversing their age or if they're going in the right direction, wrong direction, which is sort of step one, but really where I see this going then, and that helps us then predict for the companies their energy, their productivity, those things.

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But I believe in sort of next couple of years what we really could be doing as workplaces, if we're really trying to fine tune this productivity piece, this sort of moving from this me to we mentality that I think we need to really push in the workplace now, just because the world is moving so fast, you can't keep relying on the same people to be your top performers.

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And that's going to come really outdated really quickly in this sort of cyclical top performance. More like group mentality. Yeah, is actually the. What are we looking at when it comes to HRV in the workplace? How are we using average HRVs of teams to predict what their productivity is, what their creativity is, what their innovation is, how many days off they should be having, when they should be having them, what hours should they be working.

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And what sounds like quite like sci fi futuristic is becoming really quite a reality really fast. And I think as long as it's done in a safe, private, consensual Manner, we could do some really cool things with this data and really improve lives in the workplace as well.

[31:34.2]

Yeah, well, I think, I think there's loads of other tools, not just wearables. I know there's I even do the sort of regular sort of three month blood testing just to check cholesterol and those sorts of things. Really basic stuff. And I know the one I use recommends little things in your diet that you can change.

[31:49.9]

And actually I've seen, I've physically seen my cholesterol drop as a result of it. And seeing that, and that's, that's not even using a wearable. That's something I suppose more basic and I think there's, there are lots of different starting points. One thing I do want to touch on and again with, with, with HR in mind because majority of, of our audience in hr, I'd say are, female women on a resilience survey scored lower, in well being than men.

[32:16.7]

And I suppose his first question really, is there a reason for that? Like, and what might it be? I mean it's a huge layered question. Yeah, there's a lot. Yeah. And when we're looking at the HR community, which this data has come from, you know, there's a few sort of guesses, predictions we can make here.

[32:46.0]

The fact that they are going to likely be more empathetic, empathetic people, that's why they're in hr. Most people who are in HR is because they care about people and they feel responsible for people. So you're going to see a higher level of empathy, which means that actually, during times of change and during times of uncertainty, post pandemic, when they've maybe been having to deal with a lot of difficult news, hard news, deliver hard news, you know, it's really difficult time and you have that, there's empathy as into that, you know, it's going to be people who are going to probably be more impacted by these things. Well, totally.

[33:24.6]

You mentioned the pandemic. I'd say the last two years you look at the growth of companies, companies haven't really grown and in actual fact a lot of them have been downsizing. So again, there's a lot of stress that comes with that. Exactly. And so then, you know, your male counterparts maybe have better resilience levels, potentially less empathy in some cases.

[33:44.7]

You know, we're stereotyping here, but these are predictions we can make based on general data. Women still carry a lot more of the, what we sort of call the invisible cognitive load. Right. So women are still. What I mean by this is women still do around like, I think it's 75% of the jobs at home. Yeah.

[34:05.3]

Children, cleaning, those sorts of things, which we know, you know, the world is changing, but it's not changing fast enough. But then even now with men, you know, we have some amazing men who are like stepping up, helping, supporting. The world is changing, but with all due respect, most of the time it's still the woman who's having to think about it.

[34:24.3]

It's still the women say, hey, can you help me do this? Hey, have you thought about that? And carrying a lot of the mental load, even if they're not doing the physical load, and a lot of time they still are doing the majority of the Physical load, load. So I think you then have that invisible load as well that is impacting women more, which again, you know, resilience is a learned behaviour, but it is going.

[34:44.2]

All of these different factors contribute to it being lowered. It's not an infinite resource. It's something that you can rely on, but you should not always be relying on. And then just, you know, with how much HR is changing, it's going to be impacting anyone.

[35:00.3]

We spoke about this little bit offline, you know, the, the role of the HR individual, the people leader, has changed so drastically and is continuing to change. So 10 years ago this was very much about people dealing with people. HR people is now in the intersection of technology.

[35:18.4]

Some of the big, biggest companies and companies are really innovative at the moment, are, combining HR and tech because it's changing so fast and so much that actually really have to have this technical capability to be able to steer a lot of companies forwards right now.

[35:35.0]

So for the HR individuals, you know, the world's changing, but also their roles are changing so much. A lot of people are really scared. What does this mean to them? Particularly not technically minded. You know, it could create a lot of fear, a lot of uncertainty and then the fact that they are, the voice of the business and the voice of the people.

[35:52.9]

So they've also got this massive amount of pressure on them right now. Like you said, said what businesses are growing, like, what businesses are feeling safe right now. So it's their job to then be relaying the good news, the bad news, the change and then they're taking the emotions upwards as well and being that buffet leadership.

[36:10.0]

So there's so many factors that play for them that, yeah, it doesn't surprise me that we're seeing the data we're seeing and to your point, then it goes home then, then you finish work and you go home and you've still got more. That's on top of that. Yeah, I suppose. What does meaningful support look like for these individuals?

[36:28.9]

Like, is there any advice that you can give to companies looking to support their HR teams? I believe all companies need to be taking more of an intersectional approach. What I mean by this is there is no more one size fits all like we spoke about at the start.

[36:46.4]

We have such a diverse workforce now with diverse needs, needs that if you're trying to have a blanket approach and a blanket policy to how you're supporting your people, it's never going to work. So really, how are you looking at support through an intersectional lens?

[37:03.1]

How Are you ensuring a diverse perspective and support system for the diverse people that you are that are within your team flexibility existence? Massive one. Particularly if there is people with caregiving responsibilities, which most of these people are, how are you giving them the flexibility and the ownership to at least take control of their days and their calendars so that they're not spending X amount on child care, traveling in a rush hour, like all of these little things that drastically impact how an individual's energy levels and how they are managing with the stress of life in 2025.

[37:46.7]

So how are you supporting them in that? These things are the easy, simple, free changes. But we're seeing the reverse of that though. So the problem, the thing I would say to that is I was even speaking to Chi last week around this and their CEO wants to move them now to four days a week from three days a week in the office.

[38:03.7]

And, and that's a really big push. That's something that's, that's not going to go away. And increasingly the conversations that I'm having is all, is all around decreasing the flexibility to be back in the office more than they were previously.

[38:19.9]

And I think the biggest challenge with that is you are going to restrict so much of your top talent because you are going to price people out who are exceptional at their jobs, who it no longer makes sense to work or work in a company like that because it is now becoming so expensive for people to travel, to get child care, to help their elderly parents that if you don't have a layer of flexibility here, people who might be the best at that job are no longer going to be interested in that job because it becomes too expensive for them. Yeah.

[38:57.1]

Do you think it, it rules out the top talent or do you think it rules out the mid layer of talent? Because I suppose I would argue that if you've got great people, companies don't want to do that. And generally what I then see is companies bending over backwards a little bit for them. Whereas if you're a solid performer, you're all right letting them leave potentially.

[39:17.6]

So, so, I suppose I'd argue that I see the top talent is what, 10% of the business. So actually it's the bulk of the people in the middle that. But that's your, that's what come out says you're on top 10 potential. Right, right. So then it's all that money again that you're wasting that actually is at your fingertips already within your company that you could be getting so much more from if you gave them a little bit of flexibility to play with, which I think is one of the biggest, opportunities being missed right now.

[39:51.2]

And then again, it comes back to that presenteeism. This isn't a fluffy concept. This is hard data, science. Yeah. Only 10 of your workforce are engaged and now you're asking people to compromise again on what's given them meaning, purpose, energy.

[40:12.0]

We know when we are happier, more fulfilled people, we are going to perform better at work. Yeah. It is that simple. Do you find structure is good for that or, or bad for that? I think you need structure, you need compromise. There needs to be rules. This can't just be. We're going to pander to everyone and their individual desires.

[40:32.1]

There has to be, there is always a compromise in any successful relationship. Romantic friendship, employer, employee. There has to be very clear boundaries, very clear communication and a mutual respect. So I don't think it's about creating the, the perfect role, the perfect job, the perfect environment.

[40:50.3]

But it is about, this is what we are willing to do. This is where we need you to meet us. Yeah. Being honest about that. Because contradiction erodes trust. Yeah. And so what a lot of companies are doing is saying, these are the words on our kitchen wall. These are the values in our handbook.

[41:05.9]

We really support you. We want to create psychological safety. Fail fast, be innovative, have fun. And they were actually like slack, slacking at 10pm What do you mean you're taking the weekends off? What do you mean you weren't here for the 9:00am? What do you mean you're not here on the all hands?

[41:21.2]

And so what you're doing is practicing and role modelling something very, very different to what you're putting in the job description to what you're putting in the handbook. And that's when you lose the trust of your people. Psychological safety is the number one top predictor of high performance. When we see psychological safety, we see on average 76% engagement levels. Right.

[41:42.0]

And if you look at Google's project Aristotle Between 2012 and 2015, Cross analysed over 180,000 teams, psychological safety came out top every single one, every single time for high performance. So if your people don't trust you, if they think you're lying, they're never going to feel psychologically safe.

[42:01.4]

If they do not feel psychologically safe, they will not perform at a top level sustainably. I don't know why I suddenly thought of the British government when you said about lying. It was quite, quite funny one that, I thought my brain went there. But we're reverting back to we're gonna get cancelled. I know. Reverting back to the, the str. The structure piece.

[42:18.5]

It's interesting. I think the structure is both a good and a bad thing. I think some form of structure is brilliant because I think we all need that in, in our lives. But I think too much structure takes you away from some of the things that I think are really important in the workplace. And there was a study I was reading about that was done in Denmark around.

[42:38.5]

Interestingly, people that, drank at a younger age had better careers. Now. They didn't. It wasn't the drinking, obviously, but what it was is the breaking down of the, the barriers of talking to somebody. It was the fact that you let your guard down.

[42:53.6]

It was the fact that they saw the real you. It was the fact that the structure disappeared. And you just spoke and they were saying that you is what was really important. That's what helped careers. It wasn't the fact that you were structured and you left work. Because the problem with that structure is no one gets to know you. Yeah.

[43:11.5]

And, and I think that that's where a. I think that's, that's. That again, potentially is sometimes why I think men are less structured. Maybe I'm generalizing there, but I generally sort of see that. I generally see a lot of high power women who are so structured in their days.

[43:29.0]

And it's, and it's, and it's amazing to see. Yeah. But that fluidity, that building that sort of network, the amount, I suppose of senior women that I say to them, when was the last time you were networking? And a lot of them will look at me and be like they haven't done it for a long time.

[43:45.0]

So therefore external career opportunities potentially don't come their way as much as they would like to. Or they will sacrifice themselves and not look at that because their family is the priority at that point in time. Yeah, it's really interesting. And I think this also comes down to that intersectional lens and also why it's so important to have the correct managers, to have the correct leaders.

[44:07.6]

Because really now it's about understanding your people, understanding them as individuals, what motivates them, what do they want, what do they need? Because there's going to be so many individual differences. And so if you're a manager of a team, you have to understand which of those people need structure, who needs more discipline, who needs more handholding, actually, which ones.

[44:29.3]

Those hate being micromanaged. They want to feel like they have ownership, co creation. They are allowed to fail to make mistakes. And this is what a good manager does. Right. It's that someone who can understand what is motivating the people in my team. How do I need to be a little bit different with each of them to get the best from them?

[44:48.3]

And I think that's really, really important because. Because again, if you're not getting that feedback, if you're not understanding what is actually motivating your people, how are you ever going to get them to work? Well, yeah. How are you going to engage them? How are you going to retain them? You don't even know them. Yeah, totally. And I think that's really important in terms of.

[45:04.4]

When I think of diversity nowadays, I think it's much more around diversity of thought as well as anything else. It's. It's having a really sort of varied section of the. Of the, I suppose the population in your team, being able to adapt to each individual, which I know can be time consuming, but I think you'll get a lot more out of your team too. Yeah.

[45:25.3]

In terms of sort of. One last question. Do you have any advice for leaders that are looking to support. I suppose that. Looking to support their. Their teams. So there's a really. Daniel Goleman is someone who I'm fascinated by.

[45:41.4]

He wrote the book Emotional Intelligence. He also wrote a book, I think it's good leadership that gets results. It's quite old now, but it's great. And talks about his six different forms of leadership and what we found. The perfect mix of leadership is 75% authoritarian, authoritative, and a leader who is so bought into the mission and you can feel their energy and you feed off their energy and, you know, they're living and breathing what they're saying and you want to do that also.

[46:18.0]

And then a 25% coaching mix. So a leader who's really developing those around them and making sure that they're not just getting the best of themselves, but getting the best from others. Whereas a lot of leaders fall into different traps.

[46:33.5]

It might be that they, you know, ego and just telling people what to do, not listening, lack of emotional intelligence, not valuing those around them. The leader who just, you know, works every hour under the sun and so expects everyone else to work every hour under the sun.

[46:53.7]

And if you don't, they don't want to know you. Again, not helpful. Do you want to do that? That's fine, that's great. But don't expect that of everyone else. That's not going to get high functioning team. The leader who Just wants everyone to be heard and, you know, yes, everyone's equal, of course.

[47:09.5]

But a successful team needs direction. It needs someone to take charge at times. It needs someone to make the difficult decisions, have difficult questions. We can't please everyone and we definitely can't please everyone in the workplace. And those leaders who try to avoid conflict, it's one of the most dangerous leadership staffs.

[47:26.7]

As a leader, you're going to have to have conflict and you can have healthy conflict in a safe and respectful and constructive manner. If you're avoiding conflict, you are only just going to create problems for you, for the team, for the business. So I think, you know, you want to have that balance of being the lead leader, who is role modelling the correct behaviours, who is creating an environment where people feel safe to fail, to take risks.

[47:50.7]

They're not punished for that. They are seen, they are heard, they are valued. That a psychological safety. But you are coaching them and you are not doing the work for them. But actually you are giving them what they need to do their work really, really well. Yeah. The leaders who are investing in themselves, the world is changing so quickly and as a leader, you're not expected to be perfect.

[48:14.2]

You don't need to be a robot, you don't need to have no emotions. But, you know, you should be investing in your own emotional intelligence skills, your own professional development skills. You need to constantly be evolving and getting better as well, if that's what you want from other people. Having that flexibility, having that trust, I think are really important skills that leaders in the sort of modern day really need to be displaying to be an effective leader.

[48:39.5]

Yeah, which, which all makes, all makes perfect sense. I could talk for a lot longer on this topic actually, and I think we're out of time at the moment. But Bianca, for our audience that might want to get in touch with you, what's the best way to get in touch with you? LinkedIn. I'm very, very active.

[48:54.5]

You are very active. I thought I was active, but you are very active. Founder led Brandon. LinkedIn Bianca Arrigo. Humanos.co.uk website. You can also find us on Instagram under the same handles, but LinkedIn website is probably the best one.

[49:13.3]

Yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming. It's a real pleasure to have you on the show. Thank you for having me again. I'm already excited for next year. Thanks ever so much. Have a good day. Perfect. Cool.