

# HR insights podcast

## Series 8 | Episode 2

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

### The shifting priorities of DEI

[00:27.2]

Hi everyone. My name is Stuart Elliott. I'm the owner and CEO of Elliott Scott hr. And welcome back to our podcast, HR Insights. Now today we are going to talk about dei, edi, whatever you want to call it nowadays.

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But it's an important one because we recently ran a UK HR trends report and part of that was actually identifying that EDI has definitely dropped down the priority list, shall we say, in terms of what people are thinking and where it stands in the broader HR landscape.

[01:02.2]

We're joined today by Nikki Davies, who is an expert in this space who's based out in Hong Kong. She has worked with a number of large MNCs over the years and she now is essentially an entrepreneur with her own company and coaching business as well that serves clients predominantly across across Asia Pacific.

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She's a recognized global diversity equity inclusion strategist and Nikki has basically crafted a wonderful career in this space. So we've asked her to join the show to talk in more detail about what EDI is going through at the moment.

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There's definitely been a shift in terms of prioritisation, and the idea of this conversation is not to hide away from that. It's actually to talk a little bit more and highlight the reasons for that as well. It's a really interesting conversation. Nikki has some wonderful views and we hope you enjoy listening to the show. Thanks a lot.

[02:06.5]

Hi, Nikki. Welcome to the show. How are you today? I'm good. Sure. How are you? Long time no see. Yeah, it's been a little while, hasn't it? Yeah, I'm very good, actually. The uk. I look outside my window and it's blue sky. Weather's good. So, yeah, I'm not complaining.

[02:22.9]

Ask me three months ago when it was dark and miserable, and I probably had a different answer for you. But you're Hong Kong, correct? Yep. Still based in Hong Kong. I think that's where we first met many moons ago. Still here. Yeah. Is that, is that home for you now, do you think?

[02:39.7]

Yeah, it's been home for quite a few decades already. So, yeah, I'm coming up from my third decade in Asia and in Hong Kong being based here. So, yeah, quite a long time. Wow. And actually, before we, before we go into things, what's kept you in Asia then so long?

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Is there a reason why you love it so much over there? Well, I think we'll talk about this a bit later. But, you know, the fact that it is such a diverse environment that we work in here, Hong Kong is more and more.

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I'm realizing that it's got the best parts of every city in the world. It's got the best parts of New York, the best parts of London, the best parts of Bangkok. You can find it here. And as you walk the streets in Hong Kong, you just have just the best parts of everything.

[03:28.5]

It's easy to get most places in Asia, you know, it's. It's pretty convenient. And with my work where I'm, where I work in, you know, this region, I. I find it, I find it very convenient to, to be here. And yeah, the, the tax breaks are not, they're not something that I complain about.

[03:47.9]

And it's been great to raise kids here. Yeah. Wonderful to raise kids here. And the opportunities and the companies I got to work with over my career has just been phenomenal. Yeah. Cool. Do you want to give a little summary in terms of your background just for our audience as well? Sure.

[04:03.2]

So right now I am drawing on my 30 year career as a coach and as a consultant, and I'm working with a large number of clients on Variety of projects and I'll talk to some of them. As we're going through this podcast today, I saw some of your questions and I think, yeah, I can give some examples of the work that I'm doing, but predominantly coaching and consulting.

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And the consulting work is based on diversity, equity, inclusion strategies. How to pivot in this environment is a huge topic just now. Working on things like psychological safety and also helping to build resilience for employees and leaders during this time of volatility and change.

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Yeah, that's a lot of the work I've been doing. Previously. I worked as an entrepreneur, I did my own startups for many years, pivoted into multinationals, worked built a career through HR in learning and development, campus recruitment, finally was leading diversity, equity and inclusion for global organizations, and then decided that it was time to set out, do my own practice and yeah, so lead the charge.

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I call myself Fun Employed Stuart, so I only do projects that I think are fun, my friends. He refers to himself as pre tired. I prefer fun Employed, but yeah, that's where I'm at. I quite like the Fun Employed is a nice way to put it, but yeah, huge amount of experience.

[05:35.9]

And where are you originally from, Nikki? Originally from Glasgow in Scotland, but I got out of there pretty quick after university. I had a. A real need to go and explore and I got on a plane, came to Asia, got as far as Hong Kong and haven't left.

[05:52.5]

So as soon as I landed here, I was like, this is home. And yeah, I've not found anywhere better since. Very, very cool. Well, thank you so much for being on the show. It's really good to see you again as well. And I suppose we obviously want to talk about your specialist subject, edi.

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I feel like it's been such a heated topic over the last sort of say six months or so especially. But we ran a report in February and the report was really interesting because we did ask specifically around EDI and I suppose the trends that people are seeing within organizations and ultimately it seemed like there's a sort of almost like a reprioritization organizations when it comes to edi.

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And we identified five different factors as to that reason. And just to further our audience to listen down, if you've not read the report, economic pressure and budget constraints was one of them. Political climate and cultural pushback was another.

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Regulatory shifts and compliance focus again was the third point. Fourth was shifts in corporate priorities and fatigue and perceived lack of impact was fifth. Now, when you read this, Nikki, were you surprised about any of that or does that sort of feel like that's what you've been seeing in your space as well?

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So it was really interesting to read this report and the insights that you got. I would be lying if I said that it was a surprise. It absolutely wasn't. The number of organizations that are deprioritizing their investment here.

[07:32.3]

And I think that it's a reaction to the volatility and the complexity of the environment. But rather than looking at this as a retreat on edi, I find that it's more a day of reckoning for organizations that never truly understood the business case for edi, dei, whatever you want to call it.

[07:52.5]

And it's something I'm also hearing from fellow practitioners. It's a day of reckoning. The organizations that are saying that they're retreating and they're stopping funding were never truly aligned with the values of diversity, equity, inclusion in the first place.

[08:11.1]

One of the first areas that when you go into it is if EDI or DE and I is solely in your people agenda and is parked under HR and is not a strategic initiative or part of your overall business strategy, you're never truly going to see the bottom line impact.

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It's not going to impact your profits because you're not looking at the products, you're not looking at the markets, you're not looking at your customers if you're only looking inwardly at your employees. And that's where a lot of organizations do go wrong, is it's a people focused initiative.

[08:50.2]

So as I was reading the report, all I could see was red flags, right? Red flags of organizations that had jumped on political bandwagons when EDI was in fashion. And now we're seeing them jump on yet another political bandwagon saying, oh, this woke culture.

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They're just going to keep jumping on these bandwagons. And if you're so easily shifted by politics, you're not going to be focused on your business, you're too focused on the external environment than on delivering the solutions to the problems your business was set up to do.

[09:22.8]

So I think that you're seeing this as a day of reckoning for a lot of companies, especially when you look at your global organizations who are standing up and saying, no, this is who we are, this is part of our values, it's part of our culture. We remain committed to edi.

[09:38.9]

So those are the companies that are truly there, not the ones that would change the color of their logo. Every June, you know, every March, you would see all the women in a room puffing up Purple balloons. Right. Basically what, what happened there was very well intentioned HR departments and people who were employed as EDI individuals.

[09:59.6]

They were being used as, you know, a photo opportunity and unfortunately that's, that's now being laid bare. So I think that, yeah, the companies that are so quick to drop this hot potato were never really comfortable holding that hot potato in the first place.

[10:17.6]

And that's why there's so much work in your report that you touch on around culture, vision and values. Right. Because these companies are now having an identity crisis because they've been using all these words like inclusion and diversity and we're committed and then quickly realizing that's not our culture.

[10:35.0]

Because that's not what happens when the leaders who are saying these words are not in the room and they're having to really look at themselves and say, who, who are we authentically and what is our culture here? Yeah, if I speak to a lot of people at the moment, they'll probably say that there's, if we rewind the clock to what, November last year, they'll probably say that that's the sort of line in the sand moment, the US election, as it were.

[11:02.9]

Is that the reason for the shift or is there a broader sort of reason for the shift? So the reason for the shift, it actually came to me in 2022. I had this aha moment.

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I was preparing for a panel session on a Women's Day panel session with a large investment company and they'd asked me to look at some data and to share about what companies approaches to data to DNIR and how their company measured up and compared.

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And I started to look at some of the data and I found a Harvard Business Review report talking about maturity of DEI DI maturity model. You can look at it and it talks about five stages. Right. There's aware, compliant, tactical, integrated and sustainable.

[11:57.8]

Right, and the sustainable word relates to what you talk about in your report as well. Right. So this is data from what was called the Slack Future Forum survey. It was in 2022 and it showed that 40% of organizations had integrated or sustainable approaches to EDI, less than 40% of them. Right.

[12:17.8]

So that meant that 60% of the companies were not, were not really getting the real benefits of DNI or weren't even on their way. Right. They were tactical, which we could see. Right. Most of them were compliant. Right.

[12:33.0]

And then a few were just doing those raising awareness sessions, you know, very busily talking about your, all these different employee resource groups. Right. That's, that's really where the awareness was sitting. But, you know, most people were or most organizations were still in compliant.

[12:50.3]

Most DNI functions sat in hr. Right. So that was a. That was kind of my line in the sand moment when those figures started to come out. Also, you know, when you start to see a pendulum move aggressively one way, which happened with things like the MeToo movement in George Floyd, you know, all these pivotal moments that sort of happened back then.

[13:17.4]

The pendulum swings aggressively one way, then it will swing aggressively back. You know, anyone who knows me or has heard me, I have been saying this time and time again, diversity, equity and inclusion means that we have to listen to all voices.

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We can't keep shutting down ones that we don't want to hear. Right. Or that make us feel uncomfortable. Comfort doesn't lead to progress. Right. Discomfort and dialogue leads to progress. So understanding, by shutting down those voices, we were not including them and we weren't listening to what was going on.

[13:56.1]

So of course it was going to swing very aggressively back. So, yeah. The definitive reason for the shift. And again, I don't call it a shift. This is basically appealing the Onion because we're just seeing what's actually there already. We're seeing, you know, some companies are truly have DEI in their culture, others don't.

[14:20.0]

That's okay. It's okay to be in. To be one of the companies that's. Yeah. Not so. Not so embracing of those agendas or that those topics. Because it's not fit for purpose for that organization at this point in time. Yeah.

[14:37.3]

Do you feel that the. I suppose what you're describing there is essentially a balance level, like the economy. When you see a boom market, you always know there's going to be a bust at the end of it. It sounds like you're describ. Exactly the same. It's just. It went one way, it's going to go the other for a bit and hopefully we do find a nice middle ground at some stage. Is that.

[14:53.8]

Is that what we're hoping for? You know, if we were static, we're not making progress. True. Right, Right. We're not. The status quo is never going to get us anywhere. Right. I'm all about like, what's coming up in the future being this is.

[15:10.3]

This is exciting times. Right. The fact that DNI is on everybody's lips. Right. People that probably didn't even know what it was are now saying things like, you know, DEI must die. Great. Tell me why that is. Right. Let's have a discussion about that.

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Let me understand, like how you haven't benefited from these things in the past. And what does it actually mean for you by shutting down these discussions and changing all these policies? Right. It's just rhetoric. It's really just rhetoric.

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And I think that, you know, great things never happen in your comfort zone. You need to be in an uncomfortable place. You need to be, you know, questioning, curious and finding solutions. So, yeah, I think that there's. There's always going to be a space for people wanting to be heard.

[15:58.5]

That's what inclusion is. Right. Whether you call it inclusion or listening or whatever, it's just a rebrand and it's rhetoric. Yeah, agreed. And I just think for everybody, it's reminding everybody that life isn't linear. Like, life doesn't. Life doesn't. We don't increase by 1.5% every year, year on year, and life is okay.

[16:16.7]

It goes up, it goes down. There are peaks, there are troughs. And it feels like this is the same for the dei, but the people that believe in it and the companies that believe in it will continue on that path because they truly believe it. Yeah. And then when the politics shift yet again and things swing aggressively back the other way, they'll be positioned to capitalize on the gains that they've been making steadily and continuously over the years. Right.

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Nothing like when you make these huge, big changes. Those are not sustainable. Right. Sustainability comes from consistency and authenticity every single day. All right. And those are the companies that are truly going to be the ones that will be left standing.

[17:03.2]

You know, there's other ones that are not. Right. And you will. Yeah, there's reasons for that, and not all of it is because they embraced edi. Right. That's not what I'm saying here. It's the companies that truly stuck true to their values and their mission and vision and. Yeah.

[17:20.8]

And we're careful around protecting those. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Now, obviously, we spoke at the very beginning of the podcast that you're based in Hong Kong and that we love the fact that we're quite an international organization ourselves. But this report spoke to a lot of people that are UK based.

[17:38.4]

Is the shift being seen globally as well? Is this something that you're seeing across Asia, too? So, I mean, globally, I think that you would have to have been stuck with your head in the sand. Not to say that this has been a topic on a lot of newsreels.

[17:53.8]

Maybe it's dropped off in the last couple of weeks, but for a while, they are like de and I was in every headline. Almost. Right. But most of the work that I do is in Asia and you're working with Asian businesses here. And the Asia divisions of multinationals, we've actually always had to embrace EDI here, right.

[18:13.7]

In order to be productive and sustainable, Asia based businesses, especially the ones across the region and part of a global organization, have had to be inclusive, diverse and equitable. Right. We've got countries where the income earned in one country compared to another country is so disparate, there's a massive gap and there had to be ways to address those balances as Asia divisions.

[18:42.5]

So in Asia, you've always had inclusion at our core here, whether it was at the core core of your company, if you operate in this region, you have to embrace different nationalities, cultures, languages, right? Products have to be adaptable across different markets, affordable to different incomes.

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When you're in Asia, multinational companies would throw global strategies at you, right? Top down approaches. And it was really difficult for companies here to adapt global strategies to the context across Asia because, you know, it's not a one size fits all.

[19:20.8]

So where there was like one strategy for America, for example, in Asia, we then had to have maybe, you know, 16 to 20 different strategies because every culture and every country is so different. And that was something that a lot of multinationals that I worked with in the past and I still work with now still grapple a bit on that, that strategies for each individual market have to be very diverse.

[19:49.0]

There we go. The word diverse is in there. So Asia as a business model has had to embrace diversity. It has to have been inclusive of different markets to be sustainable. So for me, the West's best approach was always laughable when I would have like, I would have like global bosses.

[20:09.5]

Just why can't you just do this in Asia? Right? Why can't you report on racial diversity? Like that's just ridiculous. I worked for a UK listed company and every year that I worked with them at the agm, the chair of the board was asked the same question around why are you not, you're committing and reporting on racial diversity stats?

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It was just nonsense because the business had pivoted to an Asia and Africa based strategy and their whole organization was now based in Asia and Africa and we were wanting to be reporting on buckets of race.

[20:57.8]

It made absolutely zero sense. Yet every year the chair of the board had to answer this question. And yeah, it was just, oh my God, it's asked and answered. And that's just one example. The other example I would touch on is the fact that our Asia colleagues are constantly being asked to get on calls that are late at night.

[21:21.2]

And the companies that get it right are the ones that say, okay, we'll do your night one week and then our night another week. Right. And then it helps to get that equity and you know, not burning out your Asia colleagues.

[21:38.1]

And, you know, I think you know this, you, you've seen this and yeah, I, does that. I think that answers the question, right? Is it shift globally? Yeah. Yes, it is. But in Asia it's far more embedded and how business is done in this region.

[21:55.5]

And that's not to say that it's a utopia here. There's a lot of work that still needs to be done in Asia. And your inclusion of a lot of different diverse characteristics, the need for accommodations for certain individuals to make workplaces better is just one example.

[22:14.5]

But there's a lot of work that still needs to be done. And as I said to you before, I think I said this when we first met, you know, my, my goal and my hope is one day that working in equity inclusion is not needed because this is just second nature to most people to consider, value and respect each other.

[22:36.5]

Yeah, that's, that's all very fair. Interestingly, I'm getting a little bit off our questions actually, but out of interest, obviously within dei you have so many topics that come up and I suppose to your point, go back a few years ago, probably race was top of that list.

[22:55.8]

Has the shift meant that other aspects or areas of DEI have sort of come to the fore, like age discrimination or. Those are other sort of topics that maybe were less pronounced previously? Yeah, I think that. Is this an Asia specific question you're asking?

[23:12.6]

No, just a general question because I, I probably heard a little bit more recently around age. And part of that is because the world is just getting older. But, but it's, it. I find it interesting that we've shifted now slightly, the conversation has shifted a little bit to other parts of sort of the DEI agenda.

[23:30.5]

And I, and I just wondered again whether that was something that was. Whether that's Asia specific or global. I'm not sure. So I think that it's again, going back to this never being still. And they're always being like, I need to, to pivot and to have a status quo.

[23:47.6]

I honestly like the age thing that's come, that's come up, the age topic that's coming up because we now have the generation coming into the workforce. Right. We're having a actual fundamental shift in how our workforce demographics are.

[24:05.7]

So we have an aging population who are living longer and remaining in the workforce longer because it's no longer feasible for people to retire at the age they did before. People are living longer. People are healthier. Right.

[24:21.2]

There is, you know, there's just, there's a number of reasons why we've got an aging population still in the workforce and not retiring when they need, when they did in the past. Yeah. But we also, at the other end have a younger generation who are coming in who have done your.

[24:39.0]

Who have done a very different or different path, trot on a different path coming into the workforce. Right. They've come in and they are expecting a lot more from employers than employers maybe provided in the past. Right. They're coming in with an expectation that they won't have to work very hard.

[24:59.2]

They're expecting employers to respect their mental health. They've got the language and they've got the ability to advocate more. This is in general, and to use language about mental health and avoid burnout. They're also a lot more knowledgeable and they see more role models about side hustles. Right.

[25:20.0]

So their income tends not to just be with single employer. Right. And making huge generalizations here. Right. Because I, I don't really like talking about, you know, these labels that we put on generations.

[25:35.1]

But, but if you look at data and you look at statistics overall, you start to see that age has become a topic because of the shift in your demographic of the workforce. Whereas, you know, in the past it maybe wasn't such a important topic because there was always like one large majority group in the workforce where now it tends to be split a lot further over.

[26:03.0]

And I think there's always going to be your topics that are of interest because media jumps on topics. Right. And talking about like these shifts that we, you know, the political shifts and you're, the social shifts and these things will keep coming up.

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So as we start to see more research and more understanding of neurodiversity coming out, then we're going to get a bigger focus on how companies can embrace this and make workplaces better, how we can have better products for neurodiversity.

[26:35.6]

And one of the other topics I was talking about a few weeks ago with another amazing person who does a lot of work around femtech. We were talking about, you know, how we're getting to know more and more about how women are different from men medically.

[26:55.8]

Like we've always known it, but the research wasn't there. And you're one of the topics that's talked about and comes up in your report is around, you know, the Use of AI. And you know, and I was just interested how your report sort of had your AI AI productivity sustainability on one side at the expense of edi.

[27:17.4]

So EDI is disappearing because these things are a topic that, that made me go, oh, I hope, I hope that the, that some companies out there and some leaders out there realize that if you embrace the learnings and the topic of EDI, when you're, you're making these AI models, we'll avoid this health gap continuing to grow.

[27:40.6]

Because the data set that's out there in that, the Internet and the multiverse right now. Right. All this data is out there, but it's all biased because for so long it was only men who were getting medical research on them. And that was why we have this misunderstanding about women's health.

[27:59.5]

If we embrace edi, we can feed that data into the algorithm as well so that the algorithm for medical care and for medical technology will serve everybody in a way that suits their needs.

[28:14.6]

And then we're really going to see great business models come out when we're embracing AI technology. And I'm working on, as an advisor with the great Femtech company just now, they're doing incredible work around making sure that that algorithm is really helping to, to close that health gap for women.

[28:36.2]

Yeah, there's, there's so, there are so, so many gaps. I have to say. The age when astounded me. I was at LinkedIn Talent Connect forum the other week and again UK start, but 47% of the UK workforce is above the age of 50 and that will move to over 50% within the next couple of years.

[28:53.6]

And, and I was, I was personally really surprised by that because you hear that and it's, it's a huge number. And then the reiteration that I think the only continent that's growing on Earth at the moment in terms of population is Africa. Everywhere else is reducing in terms of its birth rate.

[29:11.1]

Which means, which means that every, every location around the world will eventually have the same problem. Every location around the world is going to have the same problem. And how are we going to support you're an aging population with these outdated models if we're not having a new influx of individuals who are earning?

[29:34.3]

So people are going to be working longer and harder. Unfortunately we are. Well, unfortunately or fortunately, I really think that if you are doing purposeful work, which is something that, you know, you really do believe in, you know, it's, that's why I'm fun employed Stuart. Right.

[29:57.8]

I'm doing stuff and doing work Every day that, you know, excites me, wakes me up and, you know, keeps. Keeps me fulfilled. Right. And I think that as long as people are fulfilled and they're not just doing work, which is only just to fill, fill up a leaky bucket, then, yeah, I think it's.

[30:19.5]

Yeah, it's really good that we've got workplaces which accommodate people for longer and supports them and supports all genders and all people to continue to contribute to society. We don't all need to be put out to pasture.

[30:37.3]

Not just yet. Hopefully not. And in terms of, I suppose, impactful, I suppose, DEI initiatives, have you seen any recently that I suppose you would love to share with us in terms of, I suppose, companies utilizing this. Yeah, some of the EDI initiatives that I support, I support them as a coach, mostly a coach and a trainer.

[31:01.4]

And I really see the impact of these initiatives. They're. The coaching part is, is a small part, but from the feedback that I'm seeing and I'm hearing, the coaching is the key.

[31:18.6]

And that's because it's specifically targeted and it's proactive. Right. So a lot of the people that are on these programs, and then they're often for the first time, they don't realize how transformative it is to have someone there who can help you really hold the mirror up and address what it is that's fundamentally going wrong in your career, in your life, and your relationships and your communication with your colleagues, with your team.

[31:48.9]

And it has this ripple effect, like by addressing this, this individual who's part of an organization, they take that learning back. So, you know, these programs are really, truly beautiful to be part of, but also super, super impactful with diversity, equity, inclusion, but also productivity and sustainability lens as well, because we're helping to build stronger future leaders, too.

[32:17.2]

One of the other programs I really love being part of is when we're working with leaders, learning how to sponsor effectively in their organization. Right. Because too often in organizations we have really great individuals who are hidden and their potential is somehow not being unlocked and working with those leaders so that they can then effectively sponsor those individuals.

[32:40.9]

And again, going back to your trends that you've identified, helping the organization, those individuals to become more productive, to move from where they've stagnated as an individual to grow somewhere else in the organization and then supercharge the organization through sponsorship.

[32:56.7]

I mean, the program that I'm involved with that is really exciting to be part of and to see the impact and see the career growth of the people involved in those programs is Very, very rewarding. And then under my own consultancy, you know, the hot topics right now, psychological safety remains on the radar.

[33:19.0]

What does that mean? How can it be embedded? How can it be contextualized for each organization? Because it's no one size fits all. And I love that about psychological safety. So the workshops that I run, I usually take the individuals through a journey where we do design thinking and we come up with a solution which suits them specifically and works in their specific context and they find maybe one or two things that they're going to work on and then I'll revisit them in a few months time and come back to that.

[33:50.5]

And then finally about working with people on their resilience and helping to build organizational resilience during these times of, of volatility, reductions in force and, you know, increasing stress and pressure on people, because it's really the people that bear the stress on this, from the leaders all the way down to the most junior individuals coming into the organization.

[34:14.1]

So, yeah, those are some of the truly impactful DEI initiatives that I've seen recently. And yeah, it's exciting to be part of this, this journey. Yeah, I think it is. Yeah. The resilience piece I really, I really like.

[34:29.2]

Because to your point, I think the stress in the workplace is only going to go one way. I don't think it's. It's people that people don't seem to be sort of managing so well that it's coming down. I feel like stress just is a burden that just keeps loading up and loading up until it breaks. Yeah. And the resilience, the thing about resilience is when you learn how to use those stresses to actually like almost like the weights that you would in a gym, using those stresses and those challenges to become stronger.

[34:59.9]

It's a mindset shift and it's, you know, seeing how people and, you know, maybe just like 45 minutes to an hour have the aha moment. It's really cool to be part of people's journeys, seeing that happen.

[35:16.9]

Yeah, I like the gym analogy because I think you always forget in the gym, don't you, that effectively when you're working out, you're tearing the muscle, you're breaking it, you're damaging it in some way to grow it. And I think that's a really good analogy in terms of the resilience piece. You almost have to be a little bit.

[35:32.3]

There's a bit of damage there that you have to learn from that enables you to grow. Yeah. And the analogy, no pain, no gain. Right. If it's not comfortable, you're not growing. It's the same thing with life's challenges.

[35:48.2]

And when you can get a little bit of perspective on life, like something doesn't go right, like a client doesn't call me back or something. I don't see it as like, oh, woe is me. I'm, you know, lost that client. What did I learn from that?

[36:03.8]

Like, why am I going to use that to get better the next time? What didn't quite go right? Why are they not calling me back? Is it just not the right time and you're getting that perspective and that grace to just go, well, let it go and you'll move on to the next thing. But learn the lessons and yeah, it's a reframe.

[36:21.0]

I mean, don't get me started on resilience because I will be here like forever. I just, I love it saved my life, it saved my kids life. Knowing this has been a superpower and this. Yeah. Ability to, to change how my perspective is wonderful.

[36:41.2]

And honestly, I'm so glad you said that because resilience. Interesting that we're going to run a global resilience survey. So we're actually running that for a period of time from this week. So we're looking for as many people in HR globally because we want to test the resilience from an HR perspective.

[36:58.8]

So we're running that actually for the next month. Be fascinated to see, see the results from that. Absolutely. Get me back. I'll talk about resilience. Absolutely. And then, and then I'm going to sort of group a question really. I suppose there's two questions.

[37:14.4]

This final part really is a. Why should HR leaders keep DEI on their agenda right now? And then the last part then is the advice for our audience in terms of dei. And I suppose the two can be. Could be interchangeable in terms of these questions. So for HR leaders keeping EDI on their agenda, my advice would be don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

[37:37.6]

Right. Right. And this is a period for reflection and questioning and really embrace the psychological safer spaces that were created through this championing of EDI over the last several years. It has impacted workplaces. Right.

[37:53.1]

It has given a voice to leaders to ask this difficult questions. So use that space then just keep what's aligning. Right. Honestly, you can get rid of the rest. If there is an initiative which is easy for you to cut from your budget, it means that it wasn't impactful in the first place. Right.

[38:16.2]

Cut off that dead wood. Find what it is at the core, which is impactful, and embrace that. Right. Don't try to fit a DEDI agenda into an organization that the culture is not there to actually embrace it.

[38:33.7]

Right. It's just going to be exhausting and it's not going to be adopted by the people who need to be adopting it, which is your employees. Right. It's not the leaders, it's the employees. Yes, the top needs to be saying the right things, but everybody needs to be believing it.

[38:49.4]

Because as I said before, culture is what happens when leaders are not in the room. Right. So leaders can be. And that's what we're seeing now, right. Is, you know, the culture was never there because as soon as the leader left with their inclusive language, everybody just reverted to type and the culture continued.

[39:09.5]

And, you know, I'm not gonna. I'm not gonna name names and people know those organizations and they can recognize them because most of us have worked in some of them in the past. Leaders, especially HR leaders, can consider your own personal leadership values and be the leader you authentically are. Right.

[39:31.1]

And think about what inclusion, diversity, equity mean and just be that person. Right. And show it. Show up every day consistently. Right. The 1% every day has compound interest over the course of the whole year. Right.

[39:46.5]

Work that muscle and then be the leader that other people want to emulate. And that's how HR leaders can really embrace EDI on their personal agenda, not just a company agenda if it doesn't align. Second question you had, was that any advice similar?

[40:09.9]

I suppose there was a little bit. There was advice there as well in the last answer, but yeah. Was there any other advice that you probably give to our audience at the minute? Yeah, I think that the final words would be EDI doesn't belong in hr, never has belonged in hr. Right.

[40:28.2]

The most successful companies embedded EDI in their business strategy. So take a good hard look at your organization. This is talking to all leaders, not hr. HR should have a seat at the table. But take a good hard look at your organization and honestly ask what could be improved through having better decision making, considering different perspectives, or making the workplace better for everyone.

[40:52.9]

That's all EDI is nothing more, nothing less. Better decisions, different perspectives and a better place to work. You don't need, you know, you don't need anything more different than that. But it's quite nice. It's quite simple.

[41:09.1]

Like, I quite like the fact that it's keeping things really simple and keeping quite straightforward for leaders as well. Like that. That fit. Seems to me it's there's a lot of common sense there. The thing with EDI is it's always been quite simple, but it's been overly complicated.

[41:30.9]

It's a complicated thing to solve. You boil the ocean. Because there's so many different things that. One of the strategies that I try to apply, and I still try to apply is, who needs this the most? Right.

[41:47.4]

What's the lowest level that you need? So there was one project I remember being advising on, and it was a retail space, and the retail space had a huge curb out the front of the retail space, and people weren't coming in to the shop.

[42:11.2]

So what did the company do? They got the curb and they put a ramp in. And it wasn't just people in wheelchairs that were coming in. It was people with buggies, people with broken legs.

[42:26.3]

They were then going into that shop and not going into similar shops that were on the same street. Right. This was in Africa, by the way, that this happened. So they then realized, oh, we put the ramp in because we thought we were being accessible for people with disabilities.

[42:46.2]

But what ended up happening was everybody was using the ramp to come in. And it was. Yeah, that was one example where I was like. That was an aha moment for me where I was like, oh, that's really interesting, because we.

[43:02.7]

Yeah, we saw who needed it the most. We accommodated that, and it benefited everybody. I love that example because I was like you when you were giving that example. My natural tendency was to go to the wheelchair. So that was my natural thought process.

[43:18.3]

And it was only when you said about people with buggies, and you're like, oh, yeah, of course. Like, that just makes so much more sense. Yeah. But sometimes all it needs is somebody who thinks in this way or like someone who understands EDI and has been trained to look in this way.

[43:36.6]

To call out the obvious, because you don't realize how obvious it is until it's there. Like, can you think of a time on your phone before there was subtitles? Right. That technology was developed for people who were hard of hearing. Right.

[43:54.5]

So now I think the majority of people actually scroll or go on social media and use that technology every day to transcribe meetings, to create notes, to feed it through AI, get your highlights to take minutes.

[44:11.6]

That technology, which was created for people that were, you know, disabled by society, that was a label put on them. But now they're able to. We're able to use that technology in ways that we couldn't even fathom when it was first conceived.

[44:30.4]

And that's the great thing about DNI like when you start to really embrace it and you start to create solutions for problems. Humans are amazing because they then embrace. They embrace this new idea and this new concept and use it in ways you haven't even imagined.

[44:49.3]

Yeah, and that's. That's really cool that you sort of. You mentioned that. And I think it's a really lovely way to sort of wrap things up as. As well. But I just want to say thank you for your time, Nikki. That's been hugely helpful because I think this is such a. Such an important topic at a time when I think people are saying that, I suppose it's going off the agenda and actually we should be thinking about it more and more at the minute.

[45:10.4]

Yeah, I think that it should be definitely moving out of the HR agenda and moving into the C suite and into the board. And those people are. You're. Thankfully, I'm seeing a lot of noise from boards saying nope and holding fast. And that's incredible to see.

[45:27.9]

So, yeah, as we said when we were preparing for this, you'll see an aggressive shift one way. Right. Then it will move back and the equilibrium will somehow come. But progress never comes when we're not. When we're static, we've always got to keep moving.

[45:44.9]

So, yeah, thank you so much for having me, Stuart. I really enjoyed our conversation. And yeah, the report is awesome. I really think that it's something that should be shared and I look forward to seeing future reports from you as well, especially around resilience.

[46:00.1]

Yeah, very good. And yeah, thank you so much, Nikki, for your time. I'm actually out in Hong Kong in a few weeks. I'll drop you a note and see if we can catch up properly. Absolutely. Let's catch up. See you soon. Awesome. Thanks, Nikki. Cheers.