



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Head, Heart, And Hands: Hiring For Full Engagement

Shannon Waller: Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. I am thrilled to be able to share with you the expertise of someone I have had the pleasure of knowing for a very long time. She used to work with Strategic Coach. Her name is Alex Swiech. And she is expert in talent acquisition and human resource issues. And we are going to talk about all of the uncertainty in the hiring marketplace. And where the heck have all the people gone?

So, Alex, thank you so much for joining me today. I am thrilled. I was thrilled to be kind of reconnected with you through friend Nicole. And I just can't wait to plumb the depths of your wisdom and knowledge about the hiring marketplace right now. Because it's really interesting times. So just before we jump in, let people know a little bit more about you because that's a very brief introduction. So your company, how long you've been doing this, and why you're doing it. So why is this your passion?

Alex Swiech: Absolutely. First of all, thanks, Shannon. I too, am very excited to be having this conversation. Always love talking about people stuff with you, which I have been doing for many years. So Swiech Consulting. So the company has been doing, I've been doing it for about two and a half years. In fact, I decided to strike out on my own in January 2020.

Shannon Waller: Excellent timing.

Alex Swiech: With my own business in HR consulting. And why I decided to do it was sort of a little bit on a whim. I had been in another organization for a while. It was time to part ways. And I've always worked with entrepreneurs, been around entrepreneurs, and never really had sort of the guts to do it on my own. My husband and my closest friends said, you know, you can do this, you should do it. And I went upstairs and registered my company, and went for it.

That's what happened. And the intent was actually to live in the HR space doing fractional HR support and policy development and employee relations. And of course, with that, occasionally recruiting came along, but it just kept showing up. And then obviously with what the past two years have looked like, it ended up being a core part of my business. So I focused on recruiting and finding talent and then helping your existing team and onboarding and implementing them once they're there.

Shannon Waller: I love it. So it kind of is a whole spectrum, soup-to-nuts kind of offering that you have. And I'm sure we could go deep into-- I love the whole idea of fractional HR.

Alex Swiech: Definitely.

Shannon Waller: How great is that? Because for a smaller company, having a full-time person can be like a little hard.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, it's enough for them to do the budget, all of those things around it. So yeah, that was one of the pieces for me. Because in particular, having someone who's done it for as long as I have, to be frank, you can get the price point for having me fractional rather than having a subject matter expert on staff full time.

Shannon Waller: That's amazing, and how long you've been an HR for as long as I've known you. So how many years is that now?



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Alex Swiech: Yeah, so I graduated in HR a back in 2001, from Sheridan College, and then did a little bit of side jobs here and there. And then I started at Strategic Coach, and in 2004, doing recruiting for Strategic Coach for about eight and a half years. I helped build the team. It's amazing to see how many people are still there. Yeah.

Shannon Waller: You did a really good job. So as of this recording date, 21 years.

Alex Swiech: Yeah.

Shannon Waller: Like, that's amazing. So congratulations.

Alex Swiech: Thank you.

Shannon Waller: And you've seen a ton of changes, I'm sure

Alex Swiech: Absolutely.

Shannon Waller: One of the biggest changes. So let's dive into the whole incredibly odd marketplace that we have right now, in terms of talent acquisition and finding really great people. And I love that you work with entrepreneurial companies. You are an entrepreneur, and you work with entrepreneurial companies. So it's kind of an interesting place that we're in right now. And so let's describe what specifically you do in terms of recruiting.

And then we'll get into some of the interesting issues, mindsets of people you're talking to, mindsets of companies, what to look ahead to in terms of our potentially different economic system that we're in, if there is a potential recession, looking likely, you know, how people can be successful with this. And again, I just really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you as an expert because I really feel like people are flailing around. When you and I chatted before this call, it was like talent marketing. Like, I think people need to market for talent the same way as they market for customers.

Alex Swiech: Couldn't agree more.

Shannon Waller: Right? And so this is such a rich topic, but I feel like everyone's needing some signposts about how to do it well. You know, the type of "Whos" in terms of "Who Not Now" that you're looking for. So when you are first starting to work with an entrepreneurial company in terms of who they're looking for, what's your starting point? And then let's talk about the market and who's out there. And but let's start with the beginning. So when you're looking to work with someone, what are some do's and don'ts for someone who's looking for great team members?

Alex Swiech: Yeah, absolutely. So when I start to work with someone, the first thing we do is have a discovery call to figure out what is their pain point? What are we looking to solve? We can figure out what the role is that they're looking for. I think what I'm seeing as far as do's and don'ts is, in this "Great Resignation" that we're all in, people are looking to replace the exact person that left.



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And I always try to look at whenever a key team member or any team member leaves, for that matter, there's a silver lining there. There's an opportunity to reset, relook at the role, relook at the team as a whole, and sort of create what's going to get you to the next phase of your business. And so that's usually the first conversation that we're having. Most clients don't know that that's the conversation that we're having. We end up having good discovery conversation. So it's sort of where we are, what are you looking for, and what's your pain points from there. And then we go out into the market.

How I approach that is a little bit different in that I don't go straight to posting a role right out of the first conversation, but I likely am hanging up the phone and reaching out to my network or people that I know or doing some cold sourcing from people that I've come across before that I think might be a fit. And then we look at building the job description.

A "don't," I think would be, is spending too much time doing that. The job ad itself does not have to be a fulsome job description. It just has to be to your point, it's a marketing piece, you just have to make sure that you're presenting what you need and what you want from a candidate. And that's not getting down to the granular responsibilities. You want to give them the story, tell the story of what the job is, some key responsibilities that they need to know, you know, enough to want to know more. And then you have that conversation. We get hung up on that a lot, I find. A lot of clients, it's the back and forth of rewriting and reevaluating a job description rather than a job ad.

Shannon Waller: I know that right now, someone's listening to this going, "Thank goodness." They can get totally stopped in their hiring process. And part of it is that you need to be clear on what the responsibilities are, what the result is that that person is going to produce. But you don't have to know everything from the get go. That's a big relief for a lot of people.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, definitely. And then we leave the conversation, also Kolbe. Kolbe is an integral part of my recruiting process. Yeah, so if they don't already know about Kolbe and use Kolbe in their organization, we'll be doing Kolbe A on the business owner and the hiring manager. And then we go right into, we use the Kolbe Right Fit. So we do the whole process, which really helps inform our job ad.

So for me, you're leaving that conversation, you're going to get the information you need from the Kolbe to help shape and frame the job ad for who you're looking for. The right language that those people are going to come across it. It's going to resonate with them. Because it's an unnatural instinct.

Shannon Waller: It's totally gonna resonate with them. And actually, let's just talk about that for a moment. Because most job ads, they speak to the head and the heart. So it's like mostly the head actually. Here's the training, you need to have excellent communication skills. Who does not say that, by the way?

Alex Swiech: Great attention to detail, you know.

Shannon Waller: Well, that's that rules me out, there you go.

Alex Swiech: Ability to multitask.



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Shannon Waller: I know, they're so cookie-cutter. You know, skills are important. But that's only one part of the mind. That's just the cognitive. And then there's, do they actually care about the type of business that you're in? And I've heard people sending out just, you know, 50 or 60 resumes, and clearly they they're not taking any time to research you as an organization. So, you know, making sure that you tell your story, and that you actually attract the person who actually cares about what you do.

Alex Swiech: Yes.

Shannon Waller: Because people who don't care, don't strive. And that's the Kolbe part. Kolbe's all about how people take action. And the cool thing is, it taps into that deeper level of someone. Normally, I use the expression "head, heart, and gut" but I was talking to a client, Dan Rogers, he goes "head, heart, and hands." I like that because it's-- Right? I'm like, I might steal that, Dan. He goes, okay. Yeah, my poor wit.

And it's interesting, because to your point, when you articulate the role in terms of what someone gets to do in the role, you will attract the right people. And to use a Joe Polish marketing term, you sift, sort, and screen out the wrong people. Because people can be educated, they can learn, they can want to do it. But if they don't have the mental energy to actually do it, they will like, "Oh, no, I don't want to do any of those things." And someone who might not have thought that they would be a right fit for the role, when they read those things, they start salivating because they're like, oh, my gosh, they've written that for me. And you did.

Alex Swiech: And you hear that a lot: "You've written that for me." Yep. Yeah.

Shannon Waller: See? Okay. And what's great is in the Kolbe Right Fit, the Kolbe Right Fit and the Kolbe Bottom Lines guide, they have a whole section on words to use. These are the verbs that are going to attract someone who actually is passionate and always does those activities, whether they're working with you or not. So using that Kolbe language in your job description, in your job ad. Brilliant. Yes. I loved every second of that and I wish more people would do it. So I'm super excited to hear you do.

Alex Swiech: And then using Kolbe in the process too for me, I find it sort of, you're already narrowing your pool to likely a better fit because the language is already resigned and then you're going to Kolbe then in the process. And you mentioned, is the candidate really passionate about what you do and research and interested in your company? I find it's a really great tool in the process. If someone's not going to take the time, or they think, "I'm not answering 72 questions," you've already filtered out somebody who's not going to be a fit there as well.

Shannon Waller: Totally.

Alex Swiech: So that's another piece of it. But I think it's so beneficial for the candidate and the employer to have-- Candidates are walking away knowing their Kolbe results. Even if they don't come on board, it's been an amazing experience, and they're gonna go back into the market remembering that your company was the company that introduced them to this amazing tool



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that will likely change their their life and perspective in many ways. And that itself, when you talk about talent marketing, is worth the cost of a Kolbe.

Shannon Waller: 100%. And I think, you know, helping someone become more self-aware, giving them additional language to describe their strengths, because Kolbe only measures strengths. And if you're not familiar with Kolbe, which on this podcast I talk about a lot, but it's kolbe.com. So if you want to go check it out, it's so powerful and you've contributed, you've created value before you expect opportunity when you gift someone with their Kolbe, and then they can go, "Oh, this is how my mental energy plays out. I've been applying for these roles. But really, I should be working towards this kind of a role because that's actually where I'm going to shine."

And who doesn't want that? It's a very generous, abundant approach to look at, how are you serving the people that you are attracting to work for your company, whether or not they actually ended up doing that? Right. So I just love it. And we do it too. In our hiring process. As you well know.

Alex Swiech: Well, you introduced me to Kolbe. I did my first Kolbe applying to a job at Strategic Coach back in 2004.

Shannon Waller: There you go. I will not coach anyone without knowing their Kolbe. Yeah, and I started using it first of all, within the Strategic Assistant Program, which is a good thing because those Strategic Assistants are complete opposite in terms of how their mental energy plays out, completely different than me. And I would have failed miserably had I not known that. Kolbe actually gave me the confidence, because I got certified 1995, to be able to start my coaching career. Without that, I'm sure I would have crashed and burned.

So I love it. So this is really cool. So that's part of the process. And again, there's 36 questions, new, best and worst in case you're wondering, the 72. But yeah, there's 72 decisions you have to make. And out of that, you get a very accurate answer in terms of how you strive, which is what we're all doing together when we're working. It's not just your brain. It's not just your heart, it's what you're doing. So brilliant. Love that story. Awesome. So what's next?

Alex Swiech: That's like, two Quick Starts going back to what's next? Where did I leave off?

Shannon Waller: Good point. Good point.

Alex Swiech: So we get the Kolbe profile, and we get arranged, and then we go into the market that way. And I think the benefit, specifically to doing the process this way, and having either a dedicated recruiter on staff or using a recruiter external—and either works for small businesses, entrepreneurs is to remove themselves from the process. So, because we all have a tendency to fall in love with people, and then we try to force fit them into the roles, right? So Kolbe is one way that I help mitigate that.

Shannon Waller: That is such a "don't." I mean, do get yourself out of the process. Don't be the one doing it. Can I just share quickly my experience? I want to get you talking more, but here's the reason because as a 9 Quick Start and as the owner of the company, or whatever your role, we are really good salespeople for our companies, and I am a good enough salesperson, I can



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sell someone into the role, whether or not they're a right fit. So that is why you are the worst person to do it. Because if you like them, and we fall in love with personality, we don't fall in love with striving. It's a whole different beast. Right? And we don't see that striving until you work with somebody. So you can't know that until you're working with someone. And especially if someone kind of shows up like us. You love them. And they could be a complete wrong fit for the role. So, oh my gosh, I could not agree with you more. Love that.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, that's behavioral--. So, it's Kolbe first, and then we do interviews. And so obviously, we're looking at skill set and all of the pieces, we do need from resumes and such. But to build off what you just said there, we as people, most intelligent people, we know how to answer a question in an interview. We know that if I'm meeting somebody and they're very energetic, and they can bounce around from topic to topic, Kolbe knowledge or not, I'm likely going to give a response that I feel that they want to hear. And that doesn't mean that I'm trying to mislead anyone in the hiring process. You want the job.

So, the next step in the process is obviously not to have the internal hiring manager, you want an HR expert and a talent acquisition person who, it's their experience, they have the knowledge, they've got years behind them of being able to interview properly, unbiased, all of those types of pieces. So we try to get through that process and then obviously have them meet hiring manager and it's also very important and a non-negotiable for assets. If you do have a team larger than yourself, that it is a collaborative recruiting process because we feel it's really important that people get to meet who they're working with and spending the day with. So if the owner is not going to be who they're directly reporting to and spending all their time with, we want them to meet the team because to your point, we're striving together.

We're working together and you need to meet the other individuals you're going to be working with day to day to be successful.

Shannon Waller: So that's really cool. So by collaborative process, you mean that everyone that they're going to be working with in teamwork is someone that's partially part of even before they come on, onto the organization.

Alex Swiech: So it's that delicate balance if you want everyone to have an opportunity to meet one another. But you definitely want to make sure that the decision of who's coming on board is still being made by an appropriate person. But it's so important for your team to feel a part of the conversation and for the candidate to get a chance to meet the broader team in case there's any questions that come up there.

Shannon Waller: Because I know some companies give the team a voice like, "Is this someone you want to work with? Is this someone you'd share a hotel room with?" Really interesting questions I've heard. Is that part of your process? Or you just want to see whether or not there's a connection? Do you want to see if anyone has some, like, their little sensors are going, "Hm, something's sketch about this person"?

Alex Swiech: Yeah, I think there was always that, you know, would you, to your point, would you want to go to dinner with this person, or to movie this person or, and socialize with that person. And I get where that came from, but can be a little bit dangerous, because just because it's not somebody we would be best friends with or want to socialize with doesn't mean that



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they're not going to be great for the role. So I actually like to make it clear that when I'm having the candidates or the other team members interview the candidate, it's just so they can dive deeper into the role themselves and probably get a more granular level of details because the owner is probably not going to know what happens day to day, step ABC but the team will. And so it gives them an opportunity to talk that way.

They're going to share with me the cultural piece and the fit and whether they think they're a great team member. But that shouldn't be a deciding factor, just because there was going to be unconscious bias there as well, sometimes, and even some team members I've seen unintentionally not want a candidate to move forward because they feel threatened as well by the candidate coming in. When there's somebody coming in who really is a rockstar and is blowing it out of the water, and everyone loves them, that can be intimidating to others too. So it's a balanced approach. We're present for all interviews. So myself or someone in the team is present for all interviews. So just so we can help mitigate that risk.

Shannon Waller: That is so interesting. So you know, my focus is Unique Ability Teamwork, my jam for a long time. It's interesting and the terminology, I don't follow it exactly, but A player, a B player, and A player, as defined by Dr. Brad Smart, where the term came from, is the most capable person you can find at that pay grade. So it could be a janitor, could be a \$15 an hour person, or it could be \$300,000 a year CEO, whatever. It's the best possible talent you can get at that pay grade. But the interesting thing is, sometimes when you hire a rockstar, they are threatening, which kind of means other people need to up their game. And what I know is, B players hire other B or C players. A players want to be surrounded by rockstars. Right? They actually like, "Oh, good. Now we're on the all-star team."

Alex Swiech: And challenge is exciting. Totally.

Shannon Waller: Now, they need to be confident in what their capabilities are and what they're contributing. I will say that, but it's interesting, when someone is scared of hiring someone, I kind of start looking at them. Like, what's wrong with you that you're not attracted to someone who's going to, like, so leverage us as a company? Because then it becomes more about them than the actual organization and the bigger goals. But that's a side conversation.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, no, of course.

Shannon Waller: But it does make me go, "Hmm, interesting." Let's talk about that some more.

Alex Swiech: So yeah, and then from there, one thing that we do have beyond sort of, as you touched on the on the talent acquisition recruiting, I grew up in the HR side of things, not on the recruiting. So I do help a lot of my clients onboard. And I usually am in touch for three to six months afterwards too, with the team, with the relationships that I've built, whether that's the key team member that they're working with, or things like that, and then I can still give that line of sight and communication to the owner so they know if there's anything bubbling up or if there's anything that we might want to look at.

And then, in an ideal world, 90 days in or three, about the three month mark, we'd like to have the candidate do a Kolbe B on their role so that we can see, now that you've lived it, now that



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you're experiencing it, what they think is needed for the role and do the comparison to their A-A, and

Shannon Waller: Oh my gosh.

Alex Swiech: All that good stuff and the insights that come from Kolbe.

Shannon Waller: K, that's advanced. Just saying. And a Kolbe B, if anyone's not familiar, is your assessment of your role. The Kolbe C, which is part of the Kolbe Right Fit process, is what the supervisor, manager, or boss, whatever word you like to use, it's their assessment of the role. But the people in it are usually the ones who are most accurate, thank you very much. And then you can identify really strain, or stress, actually. Sorry. Stress is between who you are and what the role requires. Strain is between someone else's expectations of you in the role and who you really are. So Kolbe B actually can identify any of those pain points as your different version of pain points, but you know what your, any issues that could be coming up and then that team can work. So you must have a really good stick rate with that kind of that thorough process.

Alex Swiech: Absolutely. And it's interesting. When I work with clients who haven't heard of Kolbe, you start them in the process. And then usually within a year, you're in house doing the the entire team for Kolbe, and well. Virtually, I should say. In house on Zoom doing a session about Kolbe. A lot of people bring it in after you're using a recruiting process. But I would say a lot of my clients are familiar with Kolbe that I work with too. So yeah.

Shannon Waller: Well, and partly because we talk about it all the time. So yes, the more people who know about that, and it's the only tool that measures volition, and will, and striving instincts. So it is the only accurate, validated instrument that does that. There's lots of great personality tools out there. There's lots of great cognitive ones out there, but the only one that's validated and reliable for measuring how people actually take action, in terms of striving, is in fact Kolbe. So yes, we are doing our work to get that out there.

So let's jump into the current marketplace because that's the process, which is great. But we're in some very interesting times right now. And one of my questions for you, which you had a great answer for, is where the heck have all the people gone? I'm like I've been traveling, where are the people? Because it's breaking daily, you know, just supply chain stuff. I mean, obviously, COVID people had a bit of a step back from activity, but then it's like, the same number of people are still on the planet, if not more. Where the heck have they gone? So, Alex, what's your take on that?

Alex Swiech: Interesting. It's an interesting time. That's that's definitely one of the words that we use daily While we were--

Shannon Waller: Interesting, insane, confusing.

Alex Swiech: It has been a lot. So I mean, you touched on it there, the past two years, a lot of people stepped back, I think. Where we are right now. And where the people have gone. It's complex. There's a lot of layers, but the themes that are bubbling up are a number of people stepped back and out of the labor market over the past two years. And they haven't come back



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in yet. But I'd like to talk a little bit about that, I'd be happy to talk a little bit, I think that they're going to come back, a few of them.

So a lot of people stepped out. We had a lot of people go into early retirement. So the 55 plus age group, there was I think, Goldman Sachs did a survey recently in the United States where I think 5 million people left the labor market over the past two years. And in that, I believe there was about 1.5 million or so who went into early retirement. I'd have to look into that stuff. But it was definitely over a million people who chose, so just 55 and plus to go into early retirement. And then there was people who had the government benefits during COVID. I've talked to a lot of people. What I'm experiencing, so that the roles I typically higher for, I would say are mid-career, mid- to entry-level career.

And a lot of those people moved home or moved to different places, and were receiving government subsidies. And so they've reevaluated. And then we also lost a lot of people to virtual schooling. We lost a lot of women out of the marketplace who had to step back and haven't come back in yet. And then there's people like myself, but I did it a little before the pandemic, who decided to start their own organization, so a lot of consultants, and the gig economy and small businesses and such. And I don't think we've seen the sort of level set that's going to come from that, but we're starting to.

So the last time we spoke, I was saying that my feeling was a lot of people started their own business, whether it was consulting or even on the creative space or arts or crafts, there's so much opportunity now with the way we're leveraging social media and TikTok and Instagram to sell your products and such that, at first things seem really great and owning your own business can seem very exciting. But once you've been doing it for a little bit, people are realizing, you know, you don't get paid time off. There's no one making sure-- You have to be making money to pay others. I'm just starting to see that.

So Stats Canada just recently put out the statistics that 5% of people who were identified as self-employed in May of 2022 became full time employees in June of 2022. And self-employment overall in Canada over the past couple of months, I think, has fallen 2%, which almost balances out what we were seeing. So October 2021 was when Stats Canada put out self-employment numbers. It had jumped in more than it typically had in a number of years within that point of the pandemic. And now it's balancing out a little bit.

People have done it long enough to realize, oh, no, it's a lot of work. So we're starting to see a few people come back that way. So I think that's where some of the people have gone. And people are not looking for full-time employment. Now that's another piece of the puzzle. I'm finding a lot of people are looking for project and short-term contracts and that's related to the uncertainty: "Do I want to commit to you full time? I kind of want to try it out." I'm getting that from candidates a lot as well.

Shannon Waller: Interesting. So not being totally self-employed, but also not being, you know, a full-time, in the U.S. W2 or--

Alex Swiech: Yeah, they still have the capacity to continue doing what they may have started or tried.



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Shannon Waller: So they'll keep their side hustle.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, keep Your side hustle. Yeah.

Shannon Waller: So some people tried to make their side hustle a full-time hustle, and they're like, "Hmm, little more work, a little more stability, a little more certainty would be good." But the interesting thing is freedom.

Alex Swiech: Yes

Shannon Waller: You know, so they want freedom of time, they want freedom of creativity. And that's something people got to, some people got a lot of, especially if they were in the position to take benefits. And so it's hard to give up. So that's really interesting to me. So thank you for those stats.

So just to recap, and I do think talking about, I think we should talk about people who stepped out of the labor market and early retirement. Dan Sullivan's comment about that is, that's part of the problem with big systems like airlines. You lost all the people with what's typically called institutional knowledge. Right. So the technically the systems are there, but the people who know how it really worked, gone. Right. And so you have a bunch of newbies who don't know how to make those connections, who don't know how to fine tune the system, you know, what's on paper is never how it actually works. And we're seeing that. We're seeing just a lack of knowledge about system.

Alex Swiech: Burned out, overwhelmed, trying to fill that skills gap that comes with years of experience. And they're walking away, feeding into the Great Resignation. And there's this narrative that the younger generation is walking away simply because they don't want to do it, or it's hard work, or they want more freedom. And I do think there's a component of that, but you just touched on it there. There's also a component of young workers who are still learning their skills, who are still just entering the industry. And the subject matter experts, the people with industry knowledge have left, and they're being expected to step up. There's some of them who can and there's some of them who are going to find that completely overwhelming, and crumble and step back as well.

So I think that's sort of impacting this resignation that we're seeing everywhere. And the gap, having those gaps, to your point, you can be the best leader in the world and care about your team deeply. But they can only do three roles when they're one person for so long before they're gonna get burnt out and leave. So I mean, that's the nature of what's happening.

Shannon Waller: Okay, so if we're in the employment seat, right, and right now it is, it's not a buyer's market for us. It's a buyer's market for them. Right. So how do we shape ourselves? How do we up level is a word I'm coming through today. How do we make ourselves legitimately attractive? Like not faking it? This is not lipstick on a pig? This is who do we need to be? Or become if you're not there yet, to attract really great people, either, I think probably flexibility — I want to talk about hybrid work as well — but who do we need to be to attract and keep and retain people without burning them out, giving them opportunities, satisfying some of those needs for freedom or flexibility? And there's probably some mindset shifts that need to happen. If we expect this to be like 2020 or 2019, it ain't.



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Alex Swiech: No. And it's never going to be.

Shannon Waller: No. And it's not even a new normal.

Alex Swiech: Yeah, you need to be who you are, Shannon. Employers need to be who they are. So what's happening is, in a sort of knee jerk reaction to this talent war, they're selling employee value propositions and employment brands that aren't truthful. And they're trying to sell a degree of culture and flexibility, and all of these things. That might be the intent, but it doesn't exist yet. So that's dangerous. I think in this market, you need to be transparent and transparent in who you are, what's working, what's not working.

Share your purpose, share your mission, share your values, share your current state, like what's the state of the nation right now? But here's where we want to go. Because most organizations have had to pivot over the past two years. And I think the right candidates understand that and will really being genuine, honest, upfront and transparent. Those are always good conversations. And when I follow up with candidates after those conversations, even if it isn't a fit, they're going to be the ones who are referring people to you recommending people to you because you are coming across genuine. So be clear on your employee brand. Be open and transparent, not only with who you are, but pay transparency. So that's a new thing that people are having to get very comfortable with. Sharing the salary range that you're going to pay for this role.

Shannon Waller: Pay transparency. I've never even heard that. Whoa.

Alex Swiech: People nowadays, I've always been a huge believer in that you should share the salary range for the role that you're posting because you should be able to have a genuine conversation with someone if they believe they're at the top of the range and you think they're at the bottom. You should be have a dialogue about that. but that's what candidates are looking for. They want to know the range. So last year, the number one thing that we were hearing was flexibility. Hybrid work and work-life balance. Right now, the number one thing is pay. So there are some roles that, unfortunately, I do think are being paid above market value just because they have to be in order to fill the role.

Shannon Waller: Can I ask what type of roles those are?

Alex Swiech: Actually, it's sort of what I would say more entry level roles. So people are entering the workforce making a higher salary than you typically would be. And that's a whole nother conversation. We're going to be feeling that for years to come.

Shannon Waller: Yeah. Because you can't put people backwards just--

Alex Swiech: Exactly.

Shannon Waller: Sorry, there's too much good stuff here, I want to delve into a little bit more. First of all, all of those things — being genuine, upfront, transparent — equals trustworthy. And so being trustworthy in this marketplace is absolutely essential. Do not fake it is what I'm hearing. And then the pay transparency, I saw a video of a woman who was so mad, she went



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on a rant, I don't know if it was TikTok, it was one of the Facebook reels that I saw. She was like, "I got this far in the process. And then they told me the salary range, and it was way lower." She goes, "They wasted my time." And I think she even named the organization.

She was not a happy camper. It went viral. Because it was like, oh, it's going to be great, there will be this future opportunity. It's all potential. There's no current reality to it. So as to exactly your point, that's what's going viral on social right now is when people are not being that. So that checkmarking what you just said, in terms of the column, but that most companies are very sketch about that. And I think part of it is because you can be hiring someone at entry level that's making the same as someone who's been your company for five years. Then what? Then you jack everyone's salary up? How does that work?

Alex Swiech: A lot of transparency around pay and being open with hiring and sharing that, that's always the number one concern I hear. Well, what if so-and-so finds out that this role is getting paid. And this role is paid getting paid that. Now I mean, I think that's enough for a whole nother conversation to talk about. What you need to do, you should probably go through an exercise within your organization, and to do an end to end evaluation of your current pay and where you're at. And if you can stand behind it as to how these decisions were made, then that's fine if somebody in a different department who's been there for five years is making the same as entry level because there might be a reason for that.

There might not be in which case, we'll look at it. But when I say pay transparency, it's also total compensation. So it might be not just base salary, it's share your benefits, share your bonus structure, if there was one. Share the other pieces to it. For instance, I mean, one of the huge things that I'm seeing that people want, and Strategic Coach has actually been doing for a long time, I don't know if you still call them Silver Bullet Days. But having things like that, and sharing that you also do people paid time off to volunteer and to get back into their communities. Everything you can share about that is important.

But if you feel that you can't compete on a salary basis, smaller organizations can't compete. So a small independent IT firm is not gonna be able to compete with Apple or Google when it comes to hiring somebody. But you can have a very strong, clear employee brand and employee value proposition around who you are your culture and the people that you have there. There is a company, when I think about career sites, and how important it is to have a career site that really tells a great story about who you are. There's a couple of great ones.

And there's a company called Klick Health. K L I C K. They do a video on their career site that showcases their team and their values and what they offer in their offerings. To me, it's my top three sites for, specifically where we are in the world in the marketplace, entry level people and people entering into the market, they're going to TikTok, they're going to Instagram. They're doing their research on salaries on Glassdoor, which is challenging at times because Glassdoor doesn't regulate what you put up as a salary. So, not that people would falsify that, but you have that challenge as well. But using video and showcasing your team is a huge thing as well when you're creating the employee brand and proposition.

Shannon Waller: Well, even just the term employee brand is exciting for me. It's like, "Do you have one?" And people like, "I don't know." Just hear the conversation. So having a clear employee brand, I know because we were working on on beefing up that part of our prospect



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site, well our open site, to have a whole careers section. And, like, we have a really cool team, we do super cool events. For our team meeting in June, we had a whole movie day with a full on gorgeous lunch and prizes, drinks. Which was fun. Went to see a movie, which was great. The Doctor Strange movie, which was super. So we also had something fun to talk about where we sat theater, and it was one of those really fancy theaters. So it's big, comfy seats and all that thing.

And it was such a joy to see, because a lot of us we haven't seen each other for a long time. So it was just so special to be able to do that. But like taking pictures of that event and showing it and then showing us all on Zoom the next day where we beamed in people from the U.S. and U.K. That tells people, and they could look at the faces and see if there are faces like theirs on there. And we happen to have a pretty diverse team, right. In a multitude of different ways.

So, like, sharing that stuff is so key and don't take it for granted. Because I think that's where my trap is. We have an awesome company culture. We've got our fun core values that, you know, have cartoons around them. Like, we have a lot of neat stuff. But are we showcasing it? Probably not nearly as much as we could. Right. So I love what you're saying. And thank you for giving Klick Health a shoutout because then there's a model to follow.

Alex Swiech: We're evolving. So Strategic Coach does a good job of showcasing and a lot of other organizations have too. It's just how people are digesting that has changed. So I think video and showing the team, or even telling the team's stories and little videos are huge for career sites. So I'd say know your employee value proposition, offer flexibility, you touched on streamline processes.

Shannon Waller: Oh, let's talk about those because that's fascinating.

Alex Swiech: Sure. So offering flexibility. Obviously, when you are showcasing your value proposition, wherever you sit on the spectrum of hybrid work model, put it into the world. Make sure that they know from the job ad what it's going to look like, but be willing to be flexible. So if you find someone who's a rockstar, and you want to bring them on board, and perhaps your current model is two days a week in the office, and they only want to work one day a week in the office, be open to having the dialogue in the conversation.

And that goes along with what I was saying about what motivates some employees and compensation for different employees. So when you had two people who maybe made a same base salary, different role, but perhaps the other pieces of their compensation look a little bit different. Maybe somebody has a little more vacation, maybe somebody has a different flexibility package, maybe-- We are all unique individuals working towards the same common goal, but our motivators, what motivates us is going to be very different.

And it's harder to do in very large organizations. But in smaller organizations, you can adapt and you can create packages that are very attractive to what motivates that individual. And that's something I've been really pushing with my clients in the past six months when we're trying to close the candidate that we want. It's, here's what we've learned about them in the process. Maybe we look at it this way, and you can build into contracts that you're gonna reevaluate that in a year, that nothing's written forever. Find a comfort that works for both of you. Open dialogue around that.



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Shannon Waller: I love this, and it's interesting because I interviewed one of my clients who actually, his name's Charlie Bassett, runs Bassett grocery stores in Ohio. And it's really interesting because he has 10 rules. First one's pretty funny one, don't be — it starts with D and ends with ick.

That's number one, which is very appropriate. But two of his other ones that I remember is hire fast. Right, like don't dilly dally. I mean, do your due diligence on the human but make a decision. And then he was also offering-- You know, if you can't compete on salary necessarily, you can offer a signing bonus. You can offer some flexibility. There can be things that you do that gives them the compensation, maybe a different form that's pretty appealing. Right? So I don't know, what do you think of that idea?

Alex Swiech: Signing bonuses are, definitely we're seeing more and more and in roles you didn't use to see. So I find some roles-- We talked about roles that are being paid above market value. There's a lot of roles, in my opinion, that in all the years I've been doing this that have been undervalued. And it's sort of the market that I work in, which is administrative support.

There is this feeling that, you know, that should be of a certain salary. But somebody with 20 years supporting senior executives that are creating deep value that are business partner, their salaries can look very different than somebody who's just throwing meetings into your calendar. And so I've had to have a lot of really nuanced conversations around signing bonuses for roles like that, which you wouldn't typically. You might give a signing bonus to a new sales consultant.

But talking about a sales coordinator getting a signing bonus is sort of unheard of, but not anymore. But to your point, to meet what's happening in the market. So if they're countered from another organization, and you're going to lose a candidate over \$2,000, I think it's worth the signing bonus. And the \$2,000 used to be, I would say pre-pandemic, we would say, well, if they would walk away from us for \$2,000, they're not right for us anyway.

That's not where we're at right now, when I say about pay is the number one driving force, those days of posting a role and waiting for candidates to come to you. Those days are no longer, unfortunately.

Shannon Waller: You have to go get them.

Alex Swiech: You have to go get them you have to have somebody actively nurturing, I don't like the word pipeline when it comes to people, but nurturing sort of an ecosystem around your company so that people are constantly interested in what's going on and that-- We have a tendency to not look for great people until we need them. And I feel like that's where we get ourselves in trouble. So, you should always have somebody on staff who's willing to have a conversation with great people and who's willing to have that coffee and to follow up with people and check in with people.

Shannon Waller: Yeah, always belooking for great people is such a great guideline. We've done that. I think we've hired a few people on that. So sometimes you have a great service experience, and you're like, are you happy with what you're doing? Because I might have an opportunity for you.



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And they're like, "Really?" You know, because they just deliver such phenomenal service, you're like, "Oh, my gosh, I want that in my company." So I that's yes. And it's interesting, if you find, I mean, this is a few years ago, because I don't have these conversations all the time. Sometimes, someone will say, "Oh my gosh, I need this person." You're like, "Oh, my God, okay, you have to go searching." And then five minutes into the conversation, like, "I think I know somebody." It's like so-and-so's niece or so-and-so's friend who used to work with so-and-so and like. So some entrepreneurs have the bandwidth.

And I mean I've heard it called like, always be building your bench. Always be, you know, keeping great people who could be a right fit for your company now or in the future, keeping those relationships. Same way in Coach, if you're nourishing your Farm Club for your Top 20. You know, you're always just keeping your sensors out, but also coaching your team and your team leaders to do that. I think that's where it completely falls off the radar. Because most of like, everyone's just focused on doing their jobs, they're not looking for who's the next "Who," right? So that--

Alex Swiech: We're working managers, typically, in entrepreneur organizations, you're not just a manager, you have a job on top of being a manager. So we can all get caught up in our day to day. And that can lead to retention issues, just normal everyday retention issues, as well as looking out in the market. And also, I think it's important to look at the people that they're good. What could they do in the future? They're good for right now. So when I talk about flexibility, even in hiring, if somebody doesn't check every single box, don't close them off.

Let's think about, "What could they bring in a year? Where could we be? How could we adopt the role? Could we take something off their plate and give it to somebody else? What is our roadblock?" Sometimes we get, in particular, right now, people are feeling the strain. So they want somebody who could they can drop right in, who has experience and knows how to do the role, which I always find so interesting. Because yes, there is a knowledge and experience that's going to come with having been in an industry. But when you join a new organization, there's always going to be a learning curve, and there's always going to be training.

So you have to build that into your recruiting process and your recruiting time. You have to make sure that someone is going to have that dedicated focus and time. So maybe if they don't have a piece, we can spend a little extra time to catch them up and get them where they need to be. Because if you bring in a rockstar who's got years of experience and drop them in a role and then only check on them once every 10 days, it's not going to work out in the end anyway.

Shannon Waller: Especially if you're partly hybrid, and they're not physically in the office where they can catch stuff, the whole expression, "More is caught than taught." I learned so much by listening to Susan Aldridge in the office next to me. No one would have thought to tell me those things, but listening to it. And we don't have that opportunity when we're all in our home offices on Zoom. You can have specific coaching conversations, but you're not just going to hear it or catch those little subtext and those little across-the-cubby conversations. So I think that's a really good point.

Alex Swiech: It's starting to change. I know that this isn't a very popular opinion. But as someone who talks to candidates every day, there is a desire to come back not full time for



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most, but they are acknowledging what employers were saying, which is there is a component to it, that the absorption from just being around people, that's really important and missing.

So for organizations who weren't remote prior to the pandemic, they just didn't have the systems in place of remote organizations, culture is different. I know there's going to be a lot of opinions around that. But it is. And the type of people who want to be in the office working face to face with people, that's a different type of person as well too. So what I've been seeing with a lot of my clients is people start to come in one day or two days a week that it's been growing, not on our ask, but at the team's ask.

And they themselves are finding the good balance of when they need to be there. So that's a lot of my clients' theme is, you need to be here when you need to be here. Well, what does that mean? So you put some guardrails around it, but people are starting to be there for collaboration because they know they need to be there. So.

Shannon Waller: I love that. I love that and I love it that it's actually a little bit that person's direction, not just imposed, that people can be conscious. Obviously, you need to set up some structures, maybe some accommodations, so there's other people that are there for them to collaborate with. That would be an issue. But so many business owners that I know, especially if they're extroverted, they want the people around them and other people are like, "Why should I go through an hour commute and the hassle to be on Zoom all day?" Right? You get this dichotomy that's a struggle. Valid questions, by the way.

But really, "Come in when you need to come in" is a really great piece of advice and to recognize and-- Business owners want people in because they know that collaboration. They know that. But it has to be, people have to be willing. Right? You have to make sense. So "Be there when you need to be here" is very cool advice.

Alex Swiech: But there's this fear, we talked about being genuine, honest, transparent. And we need to do that in recruiting, we need to do that when people are onboarding, and we need to do that with our employees. So this dichotomy that everyone is experiencing in their organizations, having genuine, honest, transparent, direct, sometimes uncomfortable conversations, we need to have them. The longer we're not having them-- Having a conversation with an employee, saying, you know, "I'm feeling some tension here. We like to work in very different ways. Let's have a meeting to talk about how we can come together. We can bridge the gap. We can figure out how to make this work because it isn't working."

It's okay to say it isn't working. And I know there's a fear that the person is just going to walk out the door because there's millions of other choices out there. And there might be, and they might, but if we don't have those conversations now, we're not gonna be able to start to build what our business looks like in the future, because now we're, I know, we're not out of it, out of it. But we've learned how to work differently now.

But we now have to start building the new structure and the new process going forward. And we need to know what that looks like and where people sit. And if some people want to be remote full time, maybe that's not going to be a fit going forward. So, it's having those conversations and opening that dialogue. The HR part of my business, I'm having a lot of those conversations



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with leaders and managers and team members just about what we can do to make it a fit going forward. Things have pivoted for sure.

Shannon Waller: I really appreciate that. You know, it came out of, just treating people as things and people don't like squish into a role, and actually treating them as a relationship, as a valued partner in the growing of your business. What works for you? What works for me? Is there a middle ground? But it's going to require a lot more flexibility in thinking, and then obviously doing, than I think has ever been required before. As we started to chat, there's so much more uncertainty and navigating that uncertainty is really what we're talking about. But it's also going to require keeping yourself calm, keeping yourself clear and intentional, and you're incredibly clear in giving direction about being authentic, real, genuine, transparent, honest, which makes you trustworthy, but also means that you have to be willing to have those direct conversations if especially if something's not working.

Alex Swiech: And some leaders might not be good at that. So and that's okay. I think, like, entrepreneurial environments, in particular, having worked in them, for them. I think I only stepped into a one organization that wasn't entrepreneurial and realized it wasn't for me very quickly. But there is a certain level of emotion that comes being in an entrepreneur environment. Because there's a different attachment. The person who built the organization is usually sitting across the table from you. So these conversations where you have to stay calm and be direct, sometimes it should be a third party that's having it that has made sure that they've had all the proper conversations that they can deliver the message.

Shannon Waller: Love that. Oh, my gosh, so much wisdom. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I've learned a lot. I don't even know if I could attempt to summarize a little bit. But the current state of the market, first of all, your whole hiring process, the importance of actually not being too stressed about the job description until you get into it, making sure you do Kolbe and Kolbe Right Fit, which I love that you do that. Actually incorporating that language, especially the verbs, because it's a doing role is so critical. And that means you actually attract people who are like, "You wrote that for me," which yes, you did. Which is super cool.

And then so much insight into where the market is. And I had no idea that pay was actually the major thing. I mean, I had little inklings over here, but it's not my world. So the fact that pay transparency is so key. And I think the part of the mindset behind that is people want to be able to assess quickly whether or not this even makes sense to pursue. And what do you need to know before you're buying something?

Alex Swiech: How much it costs.

Shannon Waller: How much it costs. When can I get it? And what kind of value does it create? Guess what. Other people are making the same buying decisions. Right? So if I'm taking this job, you know, what's required in terms of time? How soon can we get going? What's gonna get compensated? So just treating people the same way that we would take on a new opportunity, I think makes so much sense. The whole thing about having an employee brand, I'm sure we could have a whole conversation about that. And then just be willing to be, you know, recognize we're in a new world, and to attract people maybe back who've left the marketplace or who were in the gig economy, you know, maybe thinking about things from a project basis and being more



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flexible on that if that's not something you're used to, which, by the way requires an additional level of project management than you're used to having.

Alex Swiech: Yes.

Shannon Waller: If you don't already have some project management systems in place, please get one because it matters. Even if it's just Trello. You know, figure out some way to help people manage their workload, but I think that's super key. And then, you even said this earlier in slightly different way: Don't put three jobs into one and expect one person to last in that role. That's just pain. So I have got so much from this conversation I like. So thank you, thank you, thank you. Any parting words of wisdom either for the employer, or the potential candidate in terms of how to really be successful in these interesting times?

Alex Swiech: First of all, thank you for a great, great conversation. I really enjoyed having it too. And one more thing I'd want to say on the pay piece that's just really important is, when you put a job out there and you haven't put your salary in there, you might not even find or you might miss a candidate because they're only searching by salary. So you have to think about that when you post on LinkedIn, Indeed, all those places.

But a takeaway from me would be that we all should be, I mean, not to harp on the being genuine and authentic and honest. But we need to be clear on what we want, whether that's the employer or the candidate, be upfront. And a big one is, show up to your interviews, do what you say you're going to do. I feel like I learned that somewhere.

And be gentle with one another right now. Another thing would be, if someone has to reschedule or change timing on something, we're very quick to write them off. The world is a different place now. And there's a lot of different factors coming in. We talked about, you know, remote schooling and people working from home and all of those things. So just a lot more understanding and flexibility. And you'll get there. We will find somebody great, and you will find somebody great. It just might take a little longer. That's all.

Shannon Waller: Oh, awesome. Alex, thank you. Because this is a tough thing to navigate for so many people. And I just feel, I feel a lot smarter and more knowledgeable after talking to you. And you've given some really phenomenal direction about how to be successful, which is always the takeaway that I want. So people want to check you out, ask you questions, all the things, how can they track you down?

Alex Swiech: Yeah, absolutely. You can go to my website at swiechconsulting.com. And there is a form on there you can click or you can email at info@swiechconsulting.com.

Shannon Waller: And just spell the name again. So knowing everyone gets it right.

Alex Swiech: Sure, yeah. S W I E C H. Swiech.

Shannon Waller: Perfect. Take me five tries to get that right. Awesome. Well, thank you again. It is awesome to reconnect. You're always someone that I've had a ton of respect for, both in terms of how you show up and just your really awesome brain. And I love that you're on your own. I think you're a brilliant entrepreneur, and appreciate because we both love entrepreneurial



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companies and entrepreneurs and helping people be successful with their teamwork. So it's something you and I, you know, really share in common, approaching it from very different angles, but I love having a kindred spirit. So thanks for, thanks for everything you're doing.

Alex Swiech: Thanks so much, Shannon.

Shannon Waller: Take care.