Steve 0:00

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Trish 0:45

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Speaker 1 1:57

Welcome to At Work in America, the podcast that leads the conversation on the future of work, proudly sponsored by Paychex and Workhuman. We go beyond the headlines to uncover bold ideas, fresh perspectives and the real stories of people shaping workplaces for the better. And now, here are your hosts, Steve Boese and Trish Steed, bringing you the insights and trends that will inspire what's next in the world of work.

Steve 2:31

Welcome back to the At Work in America show. My name is Steve Boese. I'm with Trish Steed, of course, Trish, how are you?

Trish 2:36

I'm great today. How are you?

Steve 2:37

I'm really good. The sun is out. It feels like spring is coming where I'm living. So that would be pretty awesome if that were the case.

Trish 2:46

I don't understand how in Lincoln, Nebraska, we went from like, actual negative double digits just a few days ago to like 60. So I'm hoping I don't get sick, but we'll see.

Steve 2:58

Let's knock on wood for spring to arrive soon. We are so excited. Today, we are diving in in March on the network, into DEI in a big way. And we are so pleased to welcome, I think, for the first time on our show, Trish, Torin Ellis. Torin is an advisor, consultant, coach and speaker. He's the author of the newly published Reducing Bias in HR Using Artificial Intelligence report, which is fantastic. We had a chance to read it before the show. And Torin, welcome to the show. How are you? It's great to see you.

Torin Ellis 3:33

When we talk about diversity and inclusion, you talk about spring entering into the landscape. We appreciate that. Trish talks about the weather in Lincoln, Nebraska. You probably have, for the first time, on your show a corn detasseler. I grew up in Davenport, Iowa. I used to get up in the summertime around 5:30 in the morning. I would show up at work, get in one of those baskets on your tractor, and I would pick corn for like, four or five hours. So, you have in the midst a corn detasseler. Thank you for having me.

Trish 4:12

 Torin, see you're a wealth of information and secrets. This is great indeed. I love it. Well, I tell you what, I was raised in St Louis, where there is corn everywhere, right? Southern Illinois, kind of. There's a big controversy. So since you're in Iowa, born and raised, right? Is it Iowa, the corn state, or is it Nebraska? Because I mean, we're the CornHuskers here (Nebraska).

Torin Ellis 4:38

I was born in South Florida. So my blood runs so-flo all day. I lived in Davenport from ages 12 to 18, and so I'm going to give Nebraska the corn capital of the world.

Steve 4:54

I've been in that part of the country a few times now, and I'm always struck by just how into the corn everybody seems to be?

Trish 5:04

Here's thing when you're when you live near corn, when you're a teenager anyway, or maybe early 20s, like, that's the place where you kind of go if you want to go out into the corn fields and have some drinks and, you know, maybe...

Steve 5:17

no comment

Trish 5:18

You could hide from the parents and the police, right?

Torin Ellis 5:24

I'm sorry, what's the name of the network again? I just want to make sure. I just, I want to make sure that I don't cross any of the gray lines. I want to stay inside of the gray lines.

Steve 5:32

We'll cover a lot more of these topics, Torin, on my other podcast, Corn Future daily, which I'll record later. But yes, we, we are here with you to talk about something, not corn, but something that's really important, and with respect to what's happening in the world right now, it's happening our country, what's happening in technology, and your report really talks about this really interesting intersection between things that are happening in the workplace and in the culture and what's happening in technology, which is DEI. In fact, we're gonna ask the first question Torin, and as we talked a little bit before the show, it sometimes gets confusing to figure out how we should be referring to this, right? Like we talk about inclusion, we talk about diversity, we talk about belonging. Sometimes people get caught up in the acronym. Some people say, drop the acronym completely and just speak the words diversity, equity, inclusion. Where do you kind of land on that as you have these conversations with your clients and with the community?

Torin Ellis 6:32

I'll give you two responses, Steve and Trish. The first one is: I'm really not all that concern with what an individual calls it or what an organization calls it. I just want people to be committed to that pursuit of humanity. And so how you shuffle the letters around, It's totally up to you. I know that I made a post back in July when Sherm took the E out of the acronym, and it really kind of just disappointed me, because I really wanted them to fight the largest organization in our space. I wanted them to fight to expand the letters, rather than retract and discount letters, if you will. But that's the first response. I don't care what you call it, but the second response right now is: a lot of individuals are shapeshifting organizations shapeshifting because of what's happening in the political space. And so I tend to get it and where people are landing at this particular point is that rather than use the acronym, which has been hijacked and associated with very hyperbolic and vitriolic positioning and language. People are suggesting legal scholars, academicians, and others are suggesting that we just say it all the way out. Diversity, Equity. Just say the entire word rather than lean on the acronym. And I guess my bonus response is, just do something, you know. So if there's a combination of the two, as long as you're doing something I think that's good.

Trish 8:16

I'm glad you clarified that, because I think if you're in human resources or are really just a business leader, we've been moving this direction for a couple decades now, right? And I would hate to think that we're going to slide backwards, or think that we don't have to do anything because someone has hijacked an acronym, right? So I love how you've phrased that. I wrote down "pursuit of humanity". I think that's a goal as leaders, we should all have always right? Not just because we're told, you know, we're having a certain program, right?

Torin Ellis 8:50

Yeah, and, you know what Trish, to that point, you know the program word is, It's almost like a trigger for me, because when I hear people say diversity, and they immediately say, program, (and you didn't do this) but when I hear the two closely associated with one another, I'm always in that position of defense and reminding people that diversity and inclusion is not a program. It's an effort. It is really being rooted in an organization. It's redesign, it's restring, it's process redesign. It's really embedded in the organization. And so I hope that people really when they hear this small exchange in the podcast, is that they really understand you have to be committed to the pursuit of humanity. You have to wrestle with what it means to be human if you are going to be committed to the principal and convert to the equity inclusion and below.

Trish 9:47

Well, why don't we dig in on the report a little bit? I know we're kind of continuing on from a conversation you had with one of our hosts, Sarah Morgan, on her podcast, which is running before this one. With her, you talked much more broadly about the report. You hit on a few key items. But what we would love to dive into, and Steve, you can feel free to jump in, is we want to really start talking about some of the lack of trust that people have in the workplace in general, and then how this focus on inclusion and equity and having a very diverse group of employees can really help build that trust in the workplace much stronger than maybe what we're having right now.

Torin Ellis 10:30

Yeah, so you know, some of the factors of trust are humanity, capability, transparency and reliability. First and foremost, when I think about HR professionals and certainly Trish, I could have written the report from a myriad of angles as it's related to reducing bias in artificial intelligence, but I centered human resources for a couple of reasons. Number one, I believe that they are extremely important in the organization, that they are the vanguard of protecting the stakeholder they should be focused primarily on protecting a stakeholder and then the shareholder, and that if we do that, and we do that in that order, that we will see sort of dividends and returns that we are looking for. I think that trust is lacking in a number of our organizations because we've chosen not to be as reliable. We've chosen not to be as transparent. We've chosen to discount the need for empathy and humanity. We have chosen, we've made some direct choices, not to show our stakeholders some of these aspects in the pursuit of returns and profits and some of the other things. And certainly I'm not against organizations doing well. We have to do well, but I think that we should be taking care of our people. The other thing that really stood out for me is, you know, inside of the report, we asked a number of questions, what's your company doing to reduce bias? And surprisingly enough, there was one little insert where 12% of people said we're doing none of the above. Now for your listener, we asked a variety of questions, is there regular bias training? Is it developing standardized interview questions and processes? Is it implementing diverse hiring panels are using AI driven tools to help in the process. Are you ensuring there's a degree of representation in your interview process? We asked, What are you doing to reduce bias? And 12% of the respondents said, we're doing absolutely nothing. And so for me, those are the individuals and organizations that I like to get with, because I want to understand, well, why are you not doing anything to protect Steve Boese, who's of a certain age. Yes, he may be a white male, but he's of a certain age, and that ageism is real. So what are we doing to protect Steve Boese in the process? This pod is airing in the month of March. It's International Women's month. It's National Equity, I'm sorry, pay equality for white women. What are we doing in our organization to make sure that we're not continuing the sun break pay equity in the month of March for white women and in the month of August for black women and in the month of September for Latino women. Why are we not doing anything so that 12%, while it's such a small number, it's an important number, because what I don't know from the report Trish and Steve, how many employees fall under that 12% were they in companies with 1000, 10,000 100,000, a million people? So I want us always thinking about, how is it that we can do better inside of our organizations?

Steve 13:57

Yeah, Torin, thank you. Much like lots of other folks, we've been working on this for a little while now and covering it, what's happening in the corporate world in the last several months here in the US, right? And how some of the very things you're talking about Torin, companies are explicitly, some very big companies are explicitly saying, No, we're not going to do that anymore. You know, whether it's Google or Amazon, things like requiring diverse hiring slates, right, which has been one of the tools right that organizations have employed for quite some time to try to improve right, the pipeline of candidates getting into their funnel, and diversify that pipeline candidates. Now, some big companies are said, we're just not going to do that anymore. We're going to stop. So we're in a weird environment now where, even if organizations were doing some of those things, we're not part of that 12% maybe they feel like externalities, if you will, are pushing them into that category. So I wouldn't be surprised, torn if you do that survey again six or nine months from now, that. 12% becomes 20% you know, or perhaps even more.

Torin Ellis 15:04

And that is a problem, you know, the regression is really an issue. And what I'm looking for is, I'm looking for organizations to continue to push the boundary forward, to continue to push the perimeter of inclusion forward, to expand the tent for everyone. And I often tell people that when you do diversity and inclusion the right way, when you are programming for the margins, when you are developing products and services for disenfranchised, that the marginalized and the individuals with accessibility challenges when you are developing in those particular ways, when you are exploring communities and geographies that are often silenced and unheard from. We actually do community, we do humanity. We do life better. We have a sense of purpose for the people that are inside of our organization. We connect them to admission and get them excited about showing up for work and delivering outside returns and NPS scores and some of the other things that we are looking for. So I don't want to do this report a year from now or nine months from now and see that that number of 12% has gone back up to 20% the last thing that I'll say about that, Steve, is this, I've often been asked, well, Torin I don't believe in being intentional about curating diverse hiring panels or adding diversity to the slate of consideration, and I feel like that's reverse discrimination. And here's the example that I share with them. Often I say, well, so if we have five white men that are going after a position, and you can only put three men forward, what do you tell the other two? And the recruiter will always say to me, Well, I tell them that we just chose three other people that were more qualified. I said, then, why is that any harder? When you are intentionally focused on adding representation to the consideration? You just simply tell the others that weren't chosen, we just put forth people that were more qualified. We're never suggesting that we lower qualifications. We're only suggesting that we be intentional.

Trish 17:26

I love how you frame that Torin, because I'm just picturing I worked in HR for many years, almost two decades, and did a lot of hiring, a lot of coaching, a lot of leadership, things with the teams. And what strikes me in your description and the way you're framing it is that we are all, in some way, members of a diverse population. And I think when you hear maybe some of the rhetoric on whether it's television or radio, whatever, you might think that it's that you're not part of it, and I don't need to care about this. So I'd love just to hear your perspective on why is this important for every single person, whether they've participated in your research so far, or maybe they're just hearing this and kind of noodling on it for the first time. Why is it important that we all understand we have issues of diversity, whether that may be a physical ability or disability, maybe it's something a mental right, neuro diversity that we have. How would you respond to people listening to this and maybe thinking like this doesn't apply to me, but it really does, so...

Torin Ellis 18:40

I want to give a really, really unusual example. Let me go with the disability community. Several years ago, when Julie Sowash and I were recording our podcast, there was an article in the Washington Post. And I don't remember the title of the article, but the theme of the story was focusing on states that had some sort of financial support for caregivers of people who experienced and what do you call that an unpredicted disability? So I may have jumped off of a diving board, hit the water the wrong way. Now I'm paralyzed. Well, my spouse or someone has to care for me, because it was unexpected, it was an unexpected disability. In the article, the reporter said that there are only really like nine or 10 states, don't quote me, but there are only like nine or 10 states that have benefits for that caregiver. So I go on Twitter, and I'm like, This is amazing. This article is amazing. It was revealing. And there's some lobbying and legislation, and there's some things that we need to be, you know, fighting for in our respective states. Well, the Disability Community took me to the woodshed. And the reason they took me to the woodshed is because they said this article in the Washington Post, it didn't center the disability community, it centered the able bodied individual. And so now I'm defending myself and saying, You all don't know who I am. I'm an ally. I'm like, you know, deep in the work of DEI and, you know, and so honestly, Steve and Trish, I'm making it worse because I'm trying to defend myself, rather than just simply listening to their voice. And Cornel West says that all the time, a condition of progress is to allow those that are suffering to speak their truth. I didn't let them speak their truth. I'm trying to defend myself. And so the reason I share that story is because what Julie educated me on, she said Torin you should have allowed and understood what they were trying to say. What they were saying is that that reporter should have talked to the people that were disabled, the people that were experiencing the disability, blah, blah and blah. And I said, amazing. So I say that because I want people to understand diversity and inclusion includes all of us in some particular way, some more than others. But this pursuit of humanity is all of us, and when we are silent in the face of injustice, when we are not calling out our organizations for doing things that are attractions against our stakeholders, that is problematic, we should have never had a me too moment. It should have never been that way. And so women are still feeling that, I will tell you, we started talking about my hair in COVID. Even in COVID, there were reports that were coming out that said women have been women reporting microaggressions had increased in a zoom environment. How in the world can we accost women virtuall? So I just know that we have problems that need to be explored, and there are solutions for them, and bearing our healing and saying is not a solution.

Trish 22:12

Yeah, exactly. Well, let's talk a little bit, maybe more about the report specifically, because I think, you know, I'm sort of hearing this and absorbing, and I'm thinking like, it's a little bit hard to know where to start, right? There is a lot to unpack, even just in the comments you just shared and the examples you just shared, right? So if I'm a business leader, I'm an HR leader, and I'm wanting to know where do I start? Let's start back with how artificial intelligence can help enable our organizations to do better across this entire spectrum of you know what we're calling de and I right. I'd love for you to talk a little bit about I know there was a spot here I wrote down that 23% of respondents believe AI will significantly reduce bias in hiring, right? And then 47.8% are unsure about whether it can truly reduce bias. So little bit of a different perspective on those. How would you if you're an HR leader or you're a hiring manager think about artificial intelligence enabling you to have less bias in your organization?

Torin Ellis 23:24

First and foremost, what I do is I'm trying to center on human centered AI design. And so I would make sure, Trish, that when I'm out exploring applications to bring into our technology stack, solutions that we think are going to make the workplace better, I would make sure that there are questions that are specifically related to diversity and inclusion. For short, diversity and inclusion inside of that solution, here's what I mean. When we went through and did our research, there were a number of respondents who absolutely had no questions or no application of attaching the AI solution to helping them to reduce bias. So that is a problem for me. I want to make sure that we are thinking about, is the solution going to help us in our diversity and inclusion efforts? Is it going to help us in some of the other things that we're doing, but to make sure that we specifically have 2, 3, 5 questions that are associated with our diversity and inclusion efforts. And if I'm an HR person, I am absolutely focused on human centered AI design. Is it ethical? Is it technically proficient? Is it good for our workforce and our community? I'm asking questions because I want to make sure that I'm making investments that are going to absolutely be good for our environment. and I think that, one of the fears for me is that: when I look at some of the research from Gardner and some of the other organizations, when I look at some of the work that Josh Burson has done, what I have historically seen over the last five years is that technology has always been an Achilles heel for the HR profession, and so when we set out to write the report, that's the reason why I focused on HR, because if it's in a Achillies heel, if we have these gaps in these deltas, and we're not sure, we're afraid and we're sitting on the sideline, what impact is that happening on the larger workforce? And so I said, let's write a positive report, focused on them, to bring them in, to call them into the equation, so that they can be a part of the decision making so that 12 months from now, 18, 24 months from now, that they are not considered a fringe decision maker as it relates to this technological investment, that they're not a an add on to the conversation around, how do we deliver value inside of the organization? I want HR to be a central figure at the table when all of these types of decisions are being made.

Steve 26:14

 I think it's important, Torin, to think about that in terms of where some of this will kind of manifest in the marketplace, will be influencing organizations, not just the providers, right, but influencing organizations who are the consumers of these technologies and the buyers of these technologies to think more broadly about their impact in the organization, right? Because hiring, for example, which I know you've got a strong background and a long background in; I do feel on the technology, you know, I've been in doing HR tech for a long time, and it's only the it's the exception, I would say, where we're talking about, hey, how this technology is going to improve outcomes around diversity and inclusion, or improve opportunities to give opportunities to more underrepresented groups. It's so much, It's always been a very tech centric conversation. It's been focused on speed, it's been focused on cost. It's been focused on efficiency, right, especially in some of the high volume scenarios that we've seen, which we admittedly know are important to organizations, right, and but still, the fact that AI is probably having its earliest impacts on all of those categories right and those decision factors right, speed, efficiency, volume, things like that, right; even reducing costs, both from a perspective of processing applications, but also reducing the number of people internally that might have to review applications and candidate profiles. So I think that's a tipping point here too. Is to say, well, how do we make sure a difficult climate that we're operating in? We've alluded to that a couple of times, that organizations will consider those factors when they're going out to market right and acquiring these technologies.

Torin Ellis 28:08

I'm certainly not assuming or suggesting that those considerations are not important. They are. And I think that it's just a matter of making sure that we have a diversity of voices that are helping us scope how it is that we go out and explore looking for these solutions. And so that is what I'm looking for. I'm looking for HR professionals to be a part of the what do you call it? The recon team? You know, when we go out to the marketplace and we need something for onboarding, or we want something for benefit packages, or we want something for employer branding. I don't want HR individuals to be left out of the conversation. I don't want them to be an after consideration. I don't want them to be told that this is what's being brought into I want them to be a part of the exploration team that's asking the questions. I just think that it's central that HR be included. And so I think that you know, having that fear, so one of the things that they talked about, 48% feel like it will replace the role of their their work. Okay, so if you feel that way, that's fine. What are we doing to change that? What are we going doing to mitigate that? Are you immersing yourself in learning? Are you submitting yourself to some sort of conference, event, association, academic, reading? What are you doing? Are you on the weekend toying around with some of the, you know, AI tools that are out there. What are you doing to allay or to diminish that risk or that feeling that AI is going to replace you? And so that's what I'm hoping, that the report, the reading of the report, the 7500 words, that's what I'm hoping happens. Is that more HR professionals say, you know what, I want to be a part of this. I need to be a part of this. And so to your point, Steve, all useful considerations, consistency and speed and efficiency and transparency and volume, all of those things are important, but nothing is more important than their participation as well.

Trish 30:24

Yeah, Torin, I think too, if I'm that HR person and I'm fearful that my job might be drastically changed or even eliminated, like to me, I'm feeling angry like I want to do something right. I don't want to just read your report and be like, Oh, that's interesting. I want to take action like you're saying. I want to get fired up about it. And I think that's what we need, HR people to sort of pick up that, that challenge, and do something, do anything but just sitting there and sort of letting whether it's the government or whether it's your organization who just made a big decision for you, right? That you weren't included in maybe that's not the right place for you. I mean, I think back to, you know, 15 or so years ago, Steve and I started HRevolution, which was around like, speaking up about how HR wasn't getting a seat at the table. And yet, here we're still talking about we might not have a seat at the table. I don't know. Do you, do you when you're talking to your clients, or even your potential clients, or other HR leaders, do you feel like we're fired up enough? I feel like, I feel like we're not. I feel like they're kind of like, oh, let's just sit back and wait. And I don't know, am I off base?

Torin Ellis 31:36

No, you're not. And what I would say to you is that I feel like, you know, there is another storm brewing, and here's a storm that is brewing, and I don't believe that we are talking enough about and I'm not a doom and gloom person, but I do listen. Sam Altman was on a podcast In January of 2024 and Sam Altman asked a question, Trish, the question was, how long is it going to be before we have a one person unicorn? And for your listener who's not familiar with that phrase, it's a billion dollar organization. A unicorn is equivalent to a $1 billion organization. Sam is asking, how long is it going to be before we have a one person, billion dollar company? Now you gotta know that if he's asking that question, those folks that are building technology and solutions are working feverishly to get there, and that on our side, we should be asking the same question, because our executive is probably saying, Okay, well, wait a minute, if they can do this with one person or five, then why do we have 500 or 5000 people, or 20,000 people, or 200,000 people? So I feel like, as HR professionals, we going back to the very top and trust and transparency, we as HR we, one, have to be a part of this conversation. Two, know how fast this training is moving. And then three, we go to our workforce, and we look at in terms of our workforce planning, what re skilling needs to take place, what upskilling needs to take place? What shifting of resources needs to take place? How do we need to recategorize work and so that it's maybe not full time, but It's project based, it's agile, and it's remote. What are we doing to move some of the puzzles around? So once again, we are taking care of our stakeholders. That is what I'm trying to drive home and so, Trish, to your point, I just feel like there's another storm brewing and that in addition to our, let's say, lack of use and participation in the AI, listen like you said, I don't want people to just read it and say, Oh, that was great before. I don't want people to attend the conferences and just be fired up like, rah, rah, rah, and then get back to the office and not do something. We have to act on the information. And I'm afraid of that storm that's brewing, because I believe that we are going to see a greater amount of displacement, and some of that displacement we could have predicted and planned for, and we could do a better job of protecting our peak.

Trish 34:21

I agree with you. And you know what? For every listener, you're going to get a copy of your report, right? We're going to post that in our show notes. The link to the report. Like I said, it is lengthy. Steve and I have been all through it. It is as former practitioners, both of us, It's so valuable, and you really can take action on it. You can pick apart, oh, this particular example, this particular question, this particular part of de and I and take action on it. So I love that we want to share tools that people will get fired up about and that will do something with right? My final question, but I know Steve probably has some too, my final question would be, we've talked a lot about kind of the challenges that we're all facing when it comes to this and all the uncertainties. What gives you hope? What gives you hope moving forward in this year ahead? Or is there anything?

Torin Ellis 35:11

 I always find something to be joyful for. So, what gives me hope is that we have more individuals that are determining that we can do more and that we can do better. When I think about the report, there were individuals and organizations that said we are using these solutions, and we are seeing a difference in learning and development. We're seeing a difference in adoption. We're seeing a difference in our engagement. What gives me hope is that we can explore how to make these solutions even better. How do we increase productivity? How do we now, instead of giving people one long list of benefits to choose from, how do we make them more personalized, so that Steve's needs where he resides when spring is coming, are a little bit different than your needs, Trish, where you are in the middle of the country. But how do you both get to pick benefits that are applicable and appropriate for your family? So what gives me hope is that we do have a legion of individuals, some of them are known, some of them are brewing, but we have some incredible individuals that are coming up through the ranks that are saying, I want to do more to take care of humanity. So that continues to give me hope.

Steve 36:31

Yeah, I do think that the technologies themselves have evolved so rapidly and so powerfully that they're up the potential on the opportunity for them to be deployed for very good and positive outcomes is, is really kind of unprecedented. Now, the question certainly, and we alluded to this a couple of minutes ago, is focusing, I don't know if the word is equally, but focusing proportionally or on outcomes that are not just slash costs, reduce headcount, get more efficient, right? Because one of the things I know you guys know in the corporate space, corporate America, for sure, right? Executives are risk averse. They follow the leader, if you will. They follow the trends. And there are definitely some trends out there, certainly the really, lots of people coming after DEI just in general, and now it's become sort of okay, in a weird way to say, Oh, we're just gonna cut 1000s of people. Like, I don't want to say without consideration or concern, but like, it used to be a CEO would be just vilified, right? If they were going to do a mass layoff of 1000s of workers. Now, it's, it's kind of ho hum, right? Starbucks announced 1400 corporate workers are going to be laid off just the other day. I didn't see much news about it, other than, okay, it's happening, okay, great, like, and that CEO is going to carry on, right? And it's fine, right? And it's so I think that the challenge certainly is for all of us who are care about this stuff and is to support the other people who are may have to buck against some really difficult I may have some difficult conversations in the workplaces, especially with leaders who are really going to be pushing hard on hey, let's get risk averse. Let's step back. Let's not get into trouble, let's not get sued. Let's do all the things which are going to be very fashionable to do, at least for, I think, the balance of this year. So I think that's the challenge, right? And hopefully resources like Torin is creating, things that we're doing, and many, many others, many, many others, are going to kind of keep our voices prominent and consistent right throughout the year. So I don't know Trish, you asked Torin the question, I answered the question too, sorry, but I think it's going to be very important, because I do think these challenges, and what's HR, I could definitely see Trish, lonely HR people trying to fight the good fight in their organizations, and really going up against a lot of pressure.

Trish 39:05

And you're right. I love everything you both shared because I think that's inspiring. If I'm an HR leader, I probably am. I used to say when I was one, you know, even though you have a department of HR professionals, they're all doing something else, usually. And it's sort of like being an island, right when I was working at PwC for many years, I felt like an island most of the time. And so for me, this always worked, if you're looking for example, if I had Torin's report, and I would be looking at the responses, I would pick one question, and I would go out to my organizational leaders right my C suite, and I would say, let's ask this of our own, and let's just see. It's something you can deal with in a very specific way, and you don't have to boil the ocean, right? Pick one thing, that's it. And sometimes, if you think about it, it's not going from nothing to doing everything, right. Do something, it's to take one step is sometimes enough in the moment. So I again, Torin, you mentioned the word paralysis, and I think that's where lots of leaders get hung up, not just HR leaders. You get paralyzed because you think, wow, we've got such a long way to go, right?

Torin Ellis 40:18

And let me tell you, you know how having been in the diversity and inclusion space for well over a decade, Steve mentioned it, I started as a practitioner.I ran a boutique agency. I've always been external, providing support and service to the business community. My purview is a little bit different, and so I've never operated without thinking about the person who was being impacted. Whether I was a recruiter trying to take them from one organization to another, I always made sure that in my story, my narrative, my positioning, am I taking care of this person and their family? I'm focused on that and so even as a consultant, am I doing things inside of the organization that are taking care of the family of the organization, helping people be engaged? I'm not trying to go in and be a bull in the china shop and feed them with thinking that says, Oh, your your organization is toxic. No, I'm trying to get them to be even more committed, more engaged, more productive, retained, if you will. So my focus is always on family, and I believe, I firmly believe, that despite the atmosphere and what's swirling around us, that the good of us is going to rise up and that more of us are going to, as I mentioned a moment ago, we're not going to be solid in the face of injustice, right?

Trish 41:48

I was just going to say, I think you know, we want to make sure that people know like and I know this from following you for many years and finally getting to meet you this past year. It's not a cookie cutter approach, right, that you've taken with your clients over the years. It's a very specific approach to that organization and what their issues are and where they can make these improvements, step by step, right? So I love when you're talking about not being a bull in a china shop, right? We're not, we're not going in to try and destroy organizations and what they've already achieved. And so many organizations have taken steps to improve diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. I would just hate for us to think like we're going to just let that go right?

Steve 42:30

I think that's a great way to kind of wrap today. Torin, the report is called Reducing Bias in HR Using Artificial Intelligence. We'll link to it in our show notes. Highly encourage, it's a great read. Looks great. So congratulations. You mentioned this kind of your first foray into this kind of work, this type of report, building. Torin, I think you did a wonderful job. So kudos to you. Where can folks find you, connect with you, you know, just become part of your community?

Torin Ellis 43:01

LinkedIn of course, II'm at Torin Ellis.com across all of social media @ Torin Ellis, our next report is going to be on Gen Z, and I promise both you and Trish, I promise you that the way that we are approaching this report is provocative. And it's different than the way that many others have had. The conversation around Gen Z. They have some demands, and it would do us well to listen to them, and I believe that we can provide them with the type of work place that we wanted when we were in our 20s and our 30s. So thank you both for having me again. I'm @ Torin Ellis.

Trish 43:43

It makes me so excited, Torin, because I think that often we feel like we don't know what Gen Z would want, and the truth is we wanted some of those very same things. So I'll be fascinated. Are you doing that work also with Aptitude Research?

Torin Ellis 43:58

Nope, we're on our own this time. I'm not one that keeps the training wheels on, so I take them off, and, you know, if I scrape my knees up, fine, I take that and we keep on going. But this time, we're doing it on our own, but we're doing it different. We're creating an interactive website. We're trying to query a couple of 1000 individuals versus 1000 we're trying to release the report in multiple languages. So I am a very, very aggressive individual, and I hope that the marketplace receives it.

Trish 44:35

Please come back when that's out, and we want to share that and hear what you find out. I'm very excited.

Torin Ellis 44:41

Thank you very much so much. I appreciate you both.

Steve 44:43

All right, guys, thank you much for the time today. Torin, thanks for tuning in everyone to At Work in America, sponsored by our friends at Paychex and Workhuman. Trish and I appreciate you being a part of the conversation. If you enjoyed today's show, please subscribe. Tell a friend. Give us a rating, five star review. That would be Awesome. I think we deserved it today, Torin especially thanks for listening, though we really appreciate it and we'll see you next time on the At Work in America show.

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