Steve 0:00

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Trish 0:45

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Steve 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 2:30

Welcome to the At Work in America show. My name's Steve Boese. I'm with Trish Steed, of course. Trish, good to see you.

Trish 2:36

Good to see you too.

Steve 2:37

I hope you're staying warm.

Trish 2:38

I'm trying to, right? It's freezing cold across the country it seems like.

Steve 2:45

It's ridiculous. I want this all to be over with, and hopefully soon it will be. We are so excited today Trish, we're diving into DEI at HR Advisors in a heavy way. It was one of our big, top seven workplace trends for 2025 that we wrote about in our report, which is still available, by the way, at h3 hr.com You can get that there. We're going to dive into some of the issues, and especially around some of the leadership issues as well. We're joined by Christie Smith, welcome Christie, how are you? I'm so excited to have you here.

Christie Smith 3:18

I'm great Steve, nice to be with you and Trish.

Steve 3:21

It's great to see you. Christie is a C suite advisor. She's the founder of The Humanity Studio. She's an author. Her most recent book is essential. I don't know if we can quite see it behind her. I saw it before, but it's back there, but we'll talk some about that. But she's an author, international speaker, and formerly the VP of Inclusion and Diversity at Apple during, notably, Trump's first presidency. And I think we all know why that's relevant to mention today, but Christie, first of all, thank you again, and maybe we can learn a little bit more about you and your background before diving into some of these topics.

Christie Smith 3:56

I'm happy to happy to share. So, I always start, when people ask me about my background, especially in the context of DEI, with the fact that I'm the youngest of eight kids. I grew up in New Jersey. I have five sisters and two brothers.

Steve 4:15

I did as well, grew up in jersey.

Christie Smith 4:17

Yeah, there you go. Jersey is great.

Trish 4:20

What exit, right? I'm not from there but I know that!

Christie Smith 4:25

I can't even remember the exit, so I'm sure I'll get a lot of comments on that, but nonetheless, I grew it at it grew up at a time in the 60s and 70s where we were going through significant racial issues and Civil Rights issues in this country, the Vietnam War, women's rights movement; and there was an obligation, despite being the youngest around our dining room table, to first acknowledge our privilege as a middle class white family; and secondly, our obligation to give voice to the voiceless. So, my life ,really around inclusion, diversity, civil rights, human rights, started around that dinning room table, and I was fortunate enough in my career as a consultant to work with senior leaders. I've always been in the space of organizational psychology, talent organization work, and so always work with senior leaders and companies around their talent strategies, around their business strategy and growth strategies and how do you accomplish your goals with, frankly, a diverse workforce, because it exists within their organizations. As you stated, I had the great privilege of being recruited by Apple to be their first diversity and inclusion leader, or inclusion and diversity, as the title suggests, and really re-imagine how we think about inclusion and diversity. To do it at Apple was a great privilege and honor. And then, you know, going to Accenture back into my consulting roots to build our talent and organization practice at Accenture, and focusing again on leadership, talent, organizations, and diversity as a reality within that, and certainly technology and the impact of AI and automation and data and analytics. And then, you know, retired, failed at retirement, and wrote the book "Essential" [Essential: How to Distribute Teams, Generative AI, and Global Shifts are Creating a New Human-powered Leadership and started The Humanity Studio.

Steve 6:44

Christie, thank you so much for sharing that background. It is a diverse background. You know, no pun intended. But you also think about, you know, when you mention your time at Apple, and that's such a great example, where it is a company that is providing products and services, literally, right in their mind, for everyone, everyone in the country, no matter their background or their educational level, their race, their physical disabilities, any other disabilities they may have. So, accessibility is usually important. That connection between what that organization, and many others, too, was trying to do and these issues is so important because that's the nature of the markets they're trying to provide services for and products for.

Christie Smith 7:26

I think what was so powerful, and continues to be powerful about Apple is, you know, Steve Jobs was all about diversity. I remember seeing a picture of his first team, and it included people from all walks of life: parents with babies, you know, multi racial people. It really started as a company with the value of diversity. When I was there, what was so compelling is, you know, we had the opportunity, and we're very involved in the products, you know, software products like the emoji. You know, my team was very involved in deciding what do the emojis look like? What color skin, what hairstyles, what hats, what earrings, all of these kinds of things the software engineers brought us in to consult on. If you look at the camera, we were brought in to consult on making sure that the camera caught all colors of skin realistically. The work that we did around that, certainly in the retail stores being engaged in, you know, the learnings that we did, and in the customers that we saw, and the workforce within, you know, retail. So I think that the company really demonstrated through, not only product development, but also the ethos within the organization to be diverse, its commitment to inclusion and diversity that we really don't see in other companies today.

Trish 9:17

Yeah, it's so interesting that you had sort of that just being completely embedded right in everything that they were thinking about, whereas I think a lot of organizations may not see what they're doing or what they're creating or they're building as having that reach. You know, when you think about a even just 20 years ago, most people didn't even have cell phones, right? And so it's it's one of those tools that really levels, or can level the playing field for many people when it comes to finding a job, communicating on the job, that sort of thing. So I love the idea that not only is it a product for everyone, Steve, to your point, but but it makes sense to me that it would also really be looking at, how are we making sure we're inclusive, right? For anyone who's using that particular tool. My question for you, though, would be around, I don't know, I was thinking before, before we recorded this, that, you know, when you think about d, e, i and b, right? It's, it's sort of grown over the years, and each of the components is related, but they're not the same, right? There are companies that have great diversity, like you were talking about with Apple. Maybe the, maybe the downfall is, is in the inclusion piece, or maybe it's in the equity piece. So, I'd love to just hear your perspective on how those things fit together, or do they, and how do different organizations at what's important. It might not be equally important for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, right?

Christie Smith 10:48

I think a company has to first start with, what are they trying to achieve, and how did they get there? So with Apple, you know, we had in I and D [inclusion and diversity], we created a mission statement, if you will, that says, "it's everybody's job to bring everyone in," right? So I believe so strongly in that statement, because it's accessible for every organization, no matter your product or your customer base or your client base, or your ecosystem that you're engaged in, right? We are in such a talent-crisis and skills-crisis globally that it is costing us billions of dollars. I mean, think about the US alone. We are short jobs or skills, 4.6 million skills, or workers in this country with the right skills. By 2030 it's going to be a 6 million person shortage of talent. Companies are struggling with the pace of change in terms of technology, in terms of, even roles or jobs that exist within their organizations, and finding the right talent. And so they've got to look beyond the straight white male frankly, where companies were mostly built upon. The idea that you're going to be able to compete and grow in this marketplace by not being inclusive, by not creating a culture of belonging, of thriving, clearly, that's not happening. Employee engagement is at an all time low, and it's costing us $8.8 trillion a year. I mean, employees are disengaged, and so we have to focus on not only diversity and equity, but we've got to focus on what does inclusion look like, what does belonging look like, and what does employee engagement therefore look like because employees are customers, so if you're not engaging your employees, you're probably not engaging your customers either.

Steve 13:12

Christie, thank you for sharing that. And I, you know, shout out to the straight white male as well, but I'm glad you said that, because one of the things that I've been thinking about, and Trish and I talked about this, like, as recently as this morning, honestly, before the recording, was that, for a while it felt like someone like myself (white guy grew up in Jersey) I had a lot of privilege, right? As I always talk to people in the corporate space, I've always had the benefit of the doubt, right? I never had to do the extra bit or prove the extra bit to prove I belong somewhere, or got access to an opportunity, right? I just know that, right? I can sense it in my whole life that I am not the right person to be involved in this. But lately, Apple's mission statement, I wrote it down, it's everybody's job to bring everybody in, right? What you just said, I feel like it's my job too. And I'm thinking I want to pivot just a little bit to what's going on currently, without diving into sort of heavy politics too much, because that's not our show. But, it's a difficult time to be for both P individuals and for corporations to be wrestling with these these topics, but they're impacting everybody. I'm the parent of an LGBTQ person, my son, and I think, I literally think every day about what's going on in our in our country right now and how that might adversely impact him, both from a personal level, perhaps, it's crazy that I've got to say that in 2025 and also professionally, right? Who knows, right? It's a scary time, and that's one tiny example, but it also means, like, yeah, it reminds me that my voice needs to be part of this. too, because we're all part of it, Christie. So that's a long winded kind of speech. I apologize for making a speech, but I felt like that was important to say for me. Thank you, Trish for indulging me as well.

Christie Smith 15:10

I would say on that point, you know, I think we created that, mission statement of "it's everybody's job to bring everyone in," and that includes straight white men, right? I did a piece of work many years ago when I was at Deloitte on covering, and that research has continued. Part of covering is hiding a significant part of who you are to the detriment of your sense of self. Now that could be an LGBT person covering and not disclosing that they're gay. It could be a black woman straightening her hair to look more white. It could be a number of things, but what we found in that research, and again, that research continues today, is that straight white men cover too at an alarming rate. They cover age, you know, they cover perhaps a physical disability or a mental or emotional disability. So this is not an issue to say, I mean this whole argument around pulling back DEI is, is just ignorant, in my view, because, you know, DEI isn't, you know, an attack against the straight white man, right? It is that everyone has to have a level playing field and contribute to our economy. If we don't have everyone contributing to our economy, our economy will suffer. It's just basic facts, right? We lost over two $2 trillion during the pandemic of women leaving the workforce, $2 trillion to the US GDP. That insane. So, you know, I think that we're in this polarized environment of you know, there is no ability to hold the conversation in the middle when it comes to what are we really trying to achieve? I'll go back to that question when I'm working with leaders, when I'm working with CEOs or businesses, is what are you trying to achieve? What's your purpose? What's your strategy? Now, who do you need to execute on that strategy? What are the skills? What are the customers? What's the ecosystem, partners that you need to succeed?

Trish 17:51

I'm so glad that you brought it back to that, Christie, because one of the things in just preparing for the conversation today, I've read a lot of the things you've written and watched videos and sort of, you know, got your opinion on how leaders really all kind of feel like they don't necessarily know what to do when it comes to many different issues, but this being one of them, I'd love for you to share your perspective on: a lot of leaders right now are in an age where they are either boomers or Gen X for the most part, right? Maybe some millennials. When we weren't raised, right? I was raised in the Midwest about the same time you were both growing up in New Jersey. We weren't raised to where we had to deal with some of the things that are facing organizations today, right? These just weren't. You know, it's different. If you talk to someone like my children, who are Gen Z, and to them, this would just be a very normal thing to talk about and work through. How do you talk to leaders about, and maybe it's broader than DEI, but how do you talk to leaders about leading through things that you may not have even experienced yourself?

Christie Smith 19:04

Let's take a step back, because I think that we are in a very unique time when you look at workers globally in the workplace, right? And leadership is hard, it is really, really hard. Why? We're in a disruptive, very uncertain world today. You know, you have employee disengagement at the highest rates it's ever been and costing us a lot of money. As I said, we have a skill shortage, as I talked about, there are socio and economic environmental issues across the globe that are impacting leaders, and they're having to take a stand on there's evolving expectations of employees, of leaders, and added to all of that, new technologies. It is the combination of all of these things that employees in society are looking to private sector leaders to solve for, more than they're looking to their public sector leaders. Now, if you look at that reality and you look at trust scores, you know, trust in leadership is at an all time low in our corporations. You know, the latest scores or research suggests that only 62% of workers worldwide trust their leaders. Now, 62% might sound really good, but that's skewed by China, Russia, Saudi Arabia. If you look at Western countries, it's in the 40 percentile. If you look at trust in public sector leaders, it crashes to the 20% and sometimes lower. So there is a void of leadership today, and we are looking for the highest ranks, even though it's kind of miserable in the 40 percentile, we're looking for those private sector leaders to solve for all of these conditions that I talked about before, thus making leadership more difficult than it's ever been. The reality of Boomers or Xers who are in leadership positions today, we found in our research, in our book, they're handling it in three different ways: one is, well, I've always done it this way. I'm just continuing to do it this way, right? I'm waiting it out for retirement, yeah, not really going to lean into any of these things. I'm an old dog. Don't want to learn new tricks. leave it to the next person or abdicate the responsibility to somebody on my leadership team, but I'm not necessarily dealing with it. And then the third is, you know, I'm leaning in heart, right? I'm going to do something about this. So, you know, over 1000s of leaders that we did research on, you know, 100% of them said they know they need to do something fundamentally different, because they are no longer just corporate citizens. They're global citizens, right? 25% are just thinking about doing something differently. So the mindset of leaders today is worrisome, right? And they are going on models that are not sophisticated work models. They're not sophisticated enough to deal with a multi-generational workforce that we have today, especially with Gen Alphas coming in, Gen Zs, and even Millennials. So, the complicating factor is that we're trying to solve problems of today with old models of yesterday, and that includes this fear of being able to speak across difference and about diversity, inclusion and equity, about standing up for the purpose that you know you you and the values of your company. I mean, we clearly are seeing many back away from their DEI efforts, and maybe for some good reasons, but certainly are not talking about what they're going to do differently and how they're going to feel, you know, deal with these issues within their organizations. They're feeling the repercussions of that from an economic standpoint.

Trish 23:56

I was just going to ask you about the economic piece, because, again, I'm seeing sort of that younger generational group saying we won't do business with this company, we won't fly your airlines, we won't go to this store, we won't go to this restaurant, right? And then we're just a couple weeks into a new presidency. But do you see that continuing down that path?

Christie Smith 24:19

I think it's just the start. I mean, you look at what's happening with Target. Look at the calls for boycotting Amazon. We are going to see, I think, and frankly, I hope, a social response, a social-economic response like we saw back in the 60s.

Trish 24:45

Yeah? And I feel like now, though, they have the tools, maybe even more so, right? And so again, probably people, you know more our age range that are in these leadership roles, they don't even realize, yeah, we might get on Tiktok now and then. Or we might watch a, you know, an Instagram Reel or something; but, they know how to actually band together, right? These younger generations know how to use the tools in a much more effective way to get their point across.

Christie Smith 25:11

That kind of revolt or call to action is much easier today than it was when we were growing up. And you see it, you know, all over social media. You you also see it with the amount of people who are leaving the workforce. I mean, those younger generations have a heck of a lot more courage than I'm sure we did and I did growing up, and they're saying, you know, listen, I don't mind having three jobs. I don't mind being a freelancer. I don't mind, you know, working in a fractional way or starting my own business. There is such a disbelief by the younger generations, and anger, quite frankly, in our generations, that we are leaving them so many problems to solve for, right? And you know, they're going to go try to solve for it without our help.

Steve 26:14

You know, there's a couple different things I'm thinking about Christie, but I guess I'll bring this up. The book talks very eloquently about going back just a few years, right? 2019, 2020, especially, in the wake of the George Floyd murder and Black Lives Matter movement, and a lot of the corporate responses; and you list and describe many of them in the book, some of those efforts. Fast forward now five years or so, right? The climate we're operating in in America is certainly different. Many companies that you mentioned, Target, there's a bunch of other ones, we have done lots of stories about them ourselves, who are backing away. And I'm thinking like, what, you know, what happens then in three years or so if the climate changes back again? What if these leaders say now we'll pivot back to the things we said we cared about in 2020 right? You mentioned leadership is really, really difficult right now, and I'm not trying to act like leading, especially a large, well-known company where the policies that you stand behind or don't stand behind, are going to be national news, right? When the CEO of Google does something that's reported everywhere. So it's difficult, but, I mean, how would you advise leaders today, whether they're big companies like Google that everybody knows, or even just, hey, I've got a couple 100 people working for us, and we're a local manufacturing company, but we believe in these things, but there's so much noise telling us we need to stop, we need to back away. And now, oh, Target closed their DEI program. So what should we do? What would you say if you were sitting down with leaders like that, or they come to you for advice?

Christie Smith 28:01

I think there are a couple of things I think that you've got to look at your customer and your client base first. What do they look like? I mean, the big failing of Target was: they forgot that the majority of their customers are diverse, right?

Steve 28:20

It's weird that we haven’t to talk about women as being diverse, who are 51% of the population United States.

Christie Smith 28:26

100%, but also people of color, right? So they, they just really missed the mark, right? I think that first we have to say, okay, you know, what is our customer base? What is our client base? We need to do market research to really understand, you know, why people buy from us or do business with us. What is it that they're attracted to? Most people are doing business because of, you know, a purpose statement of a company, what they stand for in the world, right? And if your insides don't match your outsides, you're going to get called on it. Talk about those younger generations who ferret this out, but all generations because of the access to social media and such leaders reputations, companies, reputations are getting called into question, right, left and center. People join companies because of their purpose and their values, right? If you are not living up to that, then you will be like Target and like many others who said, you know, forget it. You're going to be called to account, right? So part of why I work with leaders is to say, Okay, who is your client base? You know, start with purpose. Let's go back to what is your strategy. You know the performance context is purpose. Purpose informs strategy. Strategy informs culture. What are the cultures and subcultures in your organization that you need to create to sustain the right talent, to keep the right talent, to grow the right talent, all of that culture informs structure and op model, and those things inform okay, what's the right talent I need right and what are those critical roles within my organization? So when I'm working with leaders, I take them through that performance context with the additional work of understanding client base, understanding customer base, understanding employee expectations, and understanding certainly ecosystem partners, without that full look, Leaders are simply reacting to what are the political pressures of today? Now, I've got to say that I am absolutely disappointed, even in my old firms of Deloitte and Accenture, for you know, retracting their commitments to diversity inclusion. It's mind boggling to me, and I think it's flat out wrong. Now, do I understand they both have big government contracts and big government public sector businesses? Absolutely. Do they need to keep people in those businesses, and, you know, people need to thrive and have jobs and all of that. I do understand that, but to blanketly say we are not going to focus on DEI is, I think, wrong. Rather, why are we not saying, as leaders, "this is the climate that we are working in. We understand that we are taking a look at our DEI efforts, because we need to do something differently, strictly from a talent standpoint. And you know, here are the set of programs, initiatives or cultures that we're going to focus on to make sure everybody has an opportunity to come in and belong."

Trish 32:25

I love the way you framed all of that, Christie, because I'm thinking, what if I am in a company that has sort of taken a step back and said, We're not going to have an official, formal DEI program? What you were sort of describing, I'm thinking of, is that interconnectedness. It's not just looking at hiring in a bubble. It's not just looking at a certain program, right? So even if you're in a company that has sort of stepped back, if you're a leader, I think there are still ways to act in a very interconnected manner. What would you say if I'm at a company like that, where I strongly believe that we shouldn't have taken a step back, but we have? What can those leaders do to still kind of keep the cadence going in maybe a less formal way?

Christie Smith 33:12

I would certainly engage, go back to that purpose. What are we trying to achieve, and what is the promise that we've made to our customers, to our partners and to our employees? Are we going to fill a void to ensure that we're living up to that purpose, right? How do we do that? Does that mean we are going to shift to leveling the playing field by providing you know, hours and time and commitment to the development of our people around AI and how AI is used? Are we going to invest in our culture and our teams by fundamentally looking at what our employees value, kind of work that they want to do, when they want to do it, where they want to do it? All employees are not going to be happy with, you know, exactly the answers to that, but are we looking at it? Are we open to those conversations? Are we operating with a sense of transparency and communicating to our employee base, you know, what kind of culture, what kind of investment we want to make in them? Those are all things that I think should be on the table and should be a matter of the course of business, but is not, you know, I think that the thing that is, we got to consider a couple of things with the mandates against DEI. Let's consider the source. The source is coming from straight white men who somehow are billionaires but feel slighted. Right? They are in positions of retaliation and are exhibiting that. So, you know, we're really having to consider the source and how small-minded that source is. The second thing that we have to consider is, you know, leaders aren't immune to fear, right? Leaders are reacting to these things, either because they're attracted to it or they're fearful, right? And they know that retaliation is on the table, right? So I think that, you know, let’s be really clear about those realities. And given those realities, let's make sure that we are supporting leaders in a way that through that fear, they can find pathways of courage, they can find pathways to engage their employees. They can, in essence, be, you know, we're doing work now on this notion of the corporation as an embassy. Embassies are there to protect people, right? How does a corporation become an embassy where there are areas where people thrive, can do their work but feel safety, right? How can employees go to do their job and not be discriminated against? So, I think that there's a lot that we can do, and there's a lot of empathy we should have, because of the realities that of you know, the small-mindedness and retaliatory behavior.

Steve 36:58

Yeah, Christie, it's a challenge, for sure, because I do think, I guess I don't know this, but I'd like to think that most leaders really do want to continue with this work, who realized it was important, even if they only realized it was important in 2020. If they came to realize it was important only, then that's okay, right? And now they're being either pressured or forced or threatened, as you say, with legal means or other means and it's going to be a really challenging time for many organizations to navigate through this and still try to do what they really feel is the right thing for their organizations and for their people, and even for what they personally believe. It's easy to be like, Oh my gosh, target just did x, y, z, and look, we can all sort of, I think perhaps, agree that what they've done, we don't agree with some of the things that they've done, but also acknowledging, I think it's important Christie, and acknowledge the pressure that they probably facing right now, whether it's coming from internal it's coming from their board, it's from their board, it's coming from their shareholders, right? You know, I was just doing something not related to DEI, but I was just doing a thing on Southwest Airlines for something else we were working on. And, you know, some, some big investment firm gobbled up 11% of the shares of Southwest itself, forcing them to make changes that they don't really want to make, right? So the pressure is really, it's there, and it's we have to understand that too.

Christie Smith 38:28

Yeah, it absolutely is, but, but the response does not have to be as polarized as we as a society are in. Right? I think CEOs have a lot more power than they think they do. I also think that that the part of the power that they have is to build workplaces, be transparent and communicate, and build workplaces where they can meet their growth and economic commitments to shareholders or partners or what have you, and develop societies, because really, their companies are societies. If you think about Robert Putnam's work on you know what societies are. You know societies have to have two things, bridging capital and bonding capital. Bonding capital really needs to be developed around the purpose of the organization, you know, the work that each work groups do, and feeling that sense of belonging. The bridging capital has to be how do we work across difference? How do we engage in that conversation and hold the conversation at the middle? I do think that that is well within the power of the CEO and his or her leadership team. We've seen great examples of that in Beth Ford at Land O'Lakes. Mike Wirth at Chevron, you know, we've seen these, the ability of these great leaders to do that kind of work. Jane Fraser at Citigroup, right? So it is possible, but I think people are paralyzed with the speed of some of the things that have been put on them in this current administration.

Steve 40:15

I've been like, glancing down every time I get a news notification, I feel like, oh, what's the next shoe to drop here? Right? Is it going to be something crazy? That's maybe another show, but, yeah, I think thinking about it and talking about it's going to be important. It's only a month into this new administration here, and I'm glad we're adjusting this, at least on this show.

Trish 40:42

I think too, this is it comes back to, as individuals, we do have a choice where we work. I don't advocate for everyone just running out and quitting your job. I mean, absolutely, if you're in an organization that has made some changes that you feel very strongly are detrimental to people, you do have to make a choice, right? You're able to choose where you do business and where you spend your money and where you spend your time.

Steve 41:08

I haven't gone back to Target in a while. I'll just say that, um, since we've been talking about them a lot.

Trish 41:16

Costco is keeping theirs and so, you know, everyone is talking about, yes, we're going to Home Depot and not Lowe's or whatever. So there are, there are choices, and ultimately we're going to see certain companies probably succeed where others don't have that differentiator any longer.

Christie Smith 41:36

I want to be really clear in our book and in our research that yes, this is a moral conversation, the imperative is an economic one, right? I mean, we will not be competitive. We already don't have the right skills, certainly in this country, but globally, we are still, I mean again, that $8.8 trillion in lost productivity because lost engagement employees should scare every senior leader in the world. That's Amazon, Microsoft and Apple combined in annual revenues, more than that, and that number is only growing. And we look at $322 billion of lost productivity because of burnout. And that's a low number, because not a lot of people are admitting they have burnout, right? You've got nearly 60% of the global workforce saying that they are burnt out. So you know, these are things that are not, you know, let's have this moral conversation. And, you know, speak up here. These are actual realities to our economy, and these companies are feeling the absolute economic pressure, because people are fed up. And you know, to your earlier point, Steve, like in 2020, you can't be all about Black Lives Matter, and now not care about it, right? I would like to say that our global population is a lot smarter than these kind of indicators. I think, you know, the script has not been fully written. People will decide, to your point, Trish, about decisions, people will absolutely decide to be on the right side of history or not.

Steve 43:41

Christie, well, we probably should wrap. I do want to give you just a minute or two though. Let's talk about the "Essential" book, just a little bit. It came out in January, and just tell us about that and what you've done with that, and kind of what's maybe next for you?

Christie Smith 43:57

Thanks for asking. You know, we wrote the book "Essential: How Distributed Teams, Generative AI, and Global Shifts are Creating a New Human-Powered Leadership", because we saw all of these complicating factors enter into the reality of the private sector leaders lives, right and public sector. We focus a lot on the private sector, so leadership has changed dramatically. Expectations of employees has changed dramatically. Technology is forcing a seismic change in the way business is done and how it's been done. And so what we really wanted to examine is, well, what does this mean for the archetype of leadership? How does leadership, thus, need to change? And, you know, employee expectations figure strongly into this. Things like purpose, agency, well being, connection all matter greatly. So we really, you know, talked about this shift that's needed in leadership, from emotional intelligence, which is a wonderful construct and one that helps leaders examine themselves, to we need to mature to emotional maturity as the concept of leadership, which is how not all about me. Rather, how do I engage my workforce? How do I suspend self interest in service of my employee base and my customer base? How do we I become insatiably curious about the context in which people are coming to work, the customer's needs from us, how the business grows, how technology becomes part of that? And you know, how, how do we build these cultures that allow for the right skills, the right roles, the right behaviors to and the right learning and development so that our employees thrive and the business grows?

Steve 46:06

Christie, thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I read through a lot of the book before this podcast today. It's full of good stuff. You got some great stuff in there. We didn't really get to it about the C suite and kind of diversity at the very top of these organizations. We're gonna have to circle back to that, Trish. I've been writing and working on a piece for our work on some of the women in the workforce issues over the last few years. Do you trust you know, like, women get like, almost 60% of bachelor's degrees in the United States right now? Almost 60%, it's over 60% of graduate degrees in the United States right now. It's been that way for that way for a while, right? Like it's not, it's not a new thing. But yet, as we go, everybody's nodding as we move up the corporate ladder, right? All of a sudden, the representation of women, just about women. Remember about intersectionality at all right? Now, just women, their participation just declines, declines, declines, declines. And what are we at? Like, 10% of the Fortune 500 CEOs are women right now, something like that, or 11% and that's an all time high.

Trish 47:07

We need a whole separate show on that. I think it's just another example of, if you're a female and you're a young woman, 20-30 years ago, you're told that's a step you must take in order to try and level the playing field. It's not a guarantee to help. And then having children or making other decisions as your life progresses, you know, I was at PwC when I got pregnant, and I wasn't manager yet. I was supposed to be promoted that year, and I literally was, like, on bed rest in the hospital, Christie, and I was doing everything I could to make sure I got that promotion, and I did. Why in the world was I worried? Like, in hindsight, I'm like, Why was I worried about a promotion when I was having babies?!

Christie Smith 47:55

I have a lot of hope for our younger generations, because they are not operating on the same measuring stick that you and I did at all.

Trish 48:02

I think that's because we were teaching them not to

Christie Smith 48:05

They don't want to be anything like us. God bless them.

Trish 48:09

I was just in Oslo last week talking to a group of CHROs over there, and went afterwards over to the Nobel Peace Center, and they have this excellent library, and I bought a book for my daughter. She's 21 and it was all about how you don't have to say yes to things just because you're pretty, you know? So it's all a whole new spin on feminism in the younger generation, and how they're coming up, and how they can kind of push back on maybe some leaders that they're going to encounter who have a really skewed view, right?

Steve 48:45

trish, I want you to like to dig into this. I know you've got some new stuff coming, which is going to be sort of around this, so we'll let that go from there. Christie Smith, Christy, this has been so much fun. I really appreciate you being so generous with your time today. It's been fantastic to talk to you and meet you.

Christie Smith 48:58

Thank you. You too. It was really great to be with you both.

Steve 49:02

We'll put the links in the show notes to the book, and you can learn more about that and get a copy of it as well. I recommend it. Thanks for tuning in to At Work in America today. Trish and I appreciate everyone listening and being a part of the conversation. Remember, you can subscribe anywhere you get your podcasts, of course, and YouTube. Trish, it's blowing up. If you're watching this on YouTube. Hit our subscribe button as well. Leave us a rating, you know, five star probably, and that will help as well. Thanks so much for listening. My name is Steve Boese. For Trish Steed, for Christie Smith, our guest, we'll see you next time, and bye for now.

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