

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You're listening to Work In Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Work In Progress explores the rapidly changing workplace through conversations with innovators, educators, and decision makers, people with solutions to today's workforce challenges.

How do people thrive at work? Experts say they need meaningful work and a sense of being valued and recognized by their employer and coworkers, and they need room for growth. The more that an employer can foster that kind of environment and the more a person can make their job more meaningful, the better for the worker and the company. Recently, I interviewed two leaders about how to make a job fulfilling. The first is Zoe Peterson-Ward, chief customer officer at Workhuman. I met her at the Workhuman conference in San Diego last month. She started out telling me how employers can make work more human.

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

We had, for many, many years, so focused on efficiency and grinding out the cost of doing business down to such a low level that we forgot that what actually makes people tick and makes people thrive is just as important in getting those business results. And so what has come to light, not just over the years of the pandemic, but many years before that, we've discovered that we can actually create a much more fruitful environment, not just for the business, but for all of the members of that community to get even bigger results, if we could just be kind, if we could just be grateful for the work and the commitment that people are giving in their day-to-day world, and the purpose that they are fulfilling, not just for their business but for their entire sustainable being. When you make those connections between purpose and work, it creates a much more productive environment. So it enriches the community, it enriches the individual, and I think just creates a generally more beneficial outcome for all the parties involved.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I think you're right about how it was before the pandemic, but I don't think the talk was in the zeitgeist. Yeah, it wasn't there that there's got to be a balance between your work life and your home life.

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

And I would challenge that, because when I was in my early twenties, I had that opportunity to go to listen to a training or participate in a development session with Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Successful People, and there was a lot of discussion about purpose. And one of the big things that I took away, all the way back then, before I was married, before I had kids, was the importance of thinking about what is going to be your legacy, not just in work, but in all of the hats that you wear? What are the things that you really care about? And are you providing space for those things? One of the examples, and so this is... Really, I'm updating myself going back this long, but one are the examples that they had us go through is they have this vase and they have a whole bunch of rocks, and they ask you to consider each of those rocks and try to put as many of those rocks as you can into this vase.

And you have this tendency of taking all the small rocks and putting them in first, but then you fill up, and then the big rocks can't really fit into this vase. And then they reposition the exercise to say those big rocks are things like your family, your children, your job. And if you spend so much time thinking about the little things and not making room for the big things, you run out of space. So the coaching was that you have to make room for all of those big things, and as well as those little things and make sure you're prioritizing the things that are really important. And it helped me to understand and appreciate that work wasn't everything. And this was before I was married and before I had kids, but it gave me

that idea that, as I'm beginning that journey and that phase of my life, I've got to make sure that I'm starting to prioritize those things.

And it was a very hard lesson for me because I began my career in consulting. I was really gritty. I knew how to get work done. I was working 80 hours a week. I could do that. I got married, then I had my first child. And all of a sudden, I had to figure out how to balance. And I realized I wasn't doing a good job at either one and I wasn't happy. That helped me personally appreciate and much better appreciation for people that were before me that had to go through that path and how I undervalued the challenges that they were going through. And as I went through those chapters, I had a much bigger appreciation for the people that were behind me, the women, not just the women, the men, everybody. And the fact that you have to do so much to balance those things. When you think about when you go to work, all we were seeing were what they showed up as at work. But me personally, having gone through the experience of motherhood and having to balance, they didn't talk about it in that chapter of my life.

People didn't bring that to work because that wasn't allowed. It wasn't permitted. But I had much more empathy for people and I understood some of the challenges, and I made space. But yes, you're right. It became all that much more in the focus when we got into the pandemic.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

There's been a couple of studies that say what employees want from a good job or how they define a good job. One of those things is the sense that they're valued by their employer. How is that manifesting itself today in the workplace?

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

There is a lot of work that and energy that has gone into the concept of gratitude. It is super important that every employee understands their connection to the company and their values, and that they are receiving gratitude and recognition, not just from their manager, but from the people that are around them for the work that they do. And when they do that, they understand that what they do matters, and they have a significantly higher likelihood of understanding their connection to the company and wanting to stay with that company, understanding that there is a place for growth for them in that company. So we have so much information and so much data to demonstrate the power of recognition. And yes, that is a human need. From the day that we are born as babies, as we are becoming toddlers, we have this dependency, this codependency on other people, and we're constantly looking for feedback.

Are we doing the things? We are pleasers at heart until we all get ground down. But most people, they want to be pleasers and they want that feedback. So it's a cycle, right? And if I'm given the gratitude and value, I'm more likely to then, in turn, also appreciate the people that are doing things around me, and it is contagious.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You said something, the idea that there is room for them to grow. And that is very important, I would think, showing that to the employee, for the employer who wants to attract and also retain good talent.

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

The numbers are so powerful that we can show that if somebody gets recognition just a few times over the course of a year, their likelihood to stay with that employer is more than doubled. And it's an exponential curve. So the more recognition moments that individual gets, and again not just from their

leader but from their peers, and it may be tied to the global initiatives, it might be tied to a local initiative, it compounds. And I think that the gratitude attitude, and I just came out of another session with one of our folks, is really essential for organizations culture. Your employees are your culture. And so the more that you can pass on that level of gratitude, the more likely that they are going to influence the positive parts of your culture.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Do you think that employers, big companies in particular, because I noticed that you had a few of those here, are embracing that idea.

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

Yes, a lot of positivity are coming from the folks. We have a lot of companies here who are our customers, and a lot of companies that are considering how to develop that culture of recognition. I have been in several sessions. I'm watching people write down furious notes and talking about how they can bring this to their organization. And yeah, it's a really fun time. And this is one of the reasons why I joined Workhuman, was to be able to have that level of impact, to know that I could help other organizations, not just our team here at Workhuman, but to help other organizations, help their people to thrive and to be their best at work is something that I am deeply personally passionate about.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Do you have one or two top ideas on how employers could share that kind of recognition, could give that employee that recognition that they deserve and want?

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

One of the primary things that we would advocate for is to create a peer-to-peer recognition platform system in your organization. Tie it to your corporate values as a start, so that what you're doing is you're reinforcing the positive behavior. So when somebody does something that is innovative, or somebody's doing something that is customer focused or something that's helping to reduce cost in the organization. And when you tie those moments of gratitude to those specific values within your organization, you're reinforcing for that employee how that matters, and rewarding them for the right behavior within that organization. And those little baby steps, it may not seem like a big thing, but it is really universally beneficial for the organization and the culture itself.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Another thing that comes up is employees want a sense of belonging, that they feel like there are people like them in the group and in the workforce, and that they belong.

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

Inclusivity is essential, again, for that human wellbeing at work. And yes, so creating that recognition moment. So in our best practice it's not just about that person recognizing that person, but doing it in a public space so that other people can weigh in. We found that there's several factors that make recognition super successful for an individual, or for an organization, I should say. It's the reach, it's the frequency, and it's the level of companionship that happens in that moment, right? So as a manager, when somebody on my team or somebody across the organization is recognizing somebody on my team, I have that opportunity to actually weigh in, and also congratulate that employee for that thing

that they did. That helps for that individual to be seen, not just by their peers who nominated them for that recognition moment, but for me as a leader. And the more that we have that social aspect, more people crowdsourcing in on that recognition moment, the far more impactful and inclusive that individual feels in the organization,

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

What is it that we don't know about the workplace and the way employees and employers interact that we should know?

Zoe Peterson-Ward, Workhuman Chief Customer Officer:

The giver gets just as much out of recognition as the recipient. And I think that that often gets overlooked, that when more people feel empowered to give recognition, because it can also be an uncomfortable thing for... I had to learn this when I came to Workhuman. Yes, of course I have had a habit of recognizing and celebrating things for my own team, but to do it in a public space can be a little intimidating. But when it happens, that moment that you have given thanks to somebody, and when that person comes back and says, "Wow, I had no idea that that moment, that thing that I did was so important to you," and that two-way dialogue and that interaction is just as important to the person that's giving the celebration. And I think that that often gets overlooked.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

That was my interview with Zoe Peterson-Ward, chief customer officer at Workhuman. In addition to the employer providing an environment where workers can thrive, workers themselves have ways to contribute to their own fulfillment on the job. That's the thesis behind the book, *Find Your Happy at Work*. The author is career coach, Beverly Jones. And I spoke with her about the book at about how to find meaning and purpose on the job. She started out explaining the importance of your relationship to your job, your boss, your coworkers, and your career.

Beverly Jones, *Find Your Happy at Work* author:

You have your relationships that are part of your career, and that includes your boss, your current boss, but it also includes all the people you deal with, whether they're your customers, or they're your colleagues, or they're industry friends or... You have a quite a broad network, and those relationships are critical, but you also have your own relationship with your career, which is something that's bigger than your job. And the way I look at my career, and of course, now I work independently and I have different clients and things like that, but my career includes the jobs, the paid jobs, they include the nonprofit stuff that I do. It includes classes I take, it includes things I read, and the discipline I try to have about getting up in the morning and doing things, and the choices I make about what I'm going to be interested in, and how I take care of my fitness because it takes a lot of energy to keep working for a long time, which I intend to do.

So all of those things are part of my career and the way I manage my life to support my career. That's my relationship with my career. If you have a job, your relationship with your job is bigger than your relationship with your boss, and it includes what you're doing to learn new things, how you're building your expertise, how you're organizing your time when nobody's looking. All kinds of things are part of your relationship with your job.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

That brings up the idea of a work-life balance. So you are not your job, your job is not you, but they intertwine and you have to find a way to balance both of those.

Beverly Jones, Find Your Happy at Work author:

That's right. And I think that the idea of work-life balance is... Somehow, it feels old-fashioned to people because it used to be that you do X hours for work and X hours for life, and you wanted to have balance meant you'd have more hours for life. I think now, we recognize that your life goes on even when you're working. And some of the things that you can do to stay healthy and energetic and in a good learning mode are things that involve staying in touch with your life, like taking a break and going outside. Breaks are a huge part of being a productive, successful person, but that means that you're always managing them often in the context of your work.

I try to get outside every day, even on a work day. And so it's much more intertwined. And I think that's a healthier place to be because you're thinking about things like, oh, I've got to stand up. It's not healthy to sit here all day, and I've got to talk to these people. And all of the things that you do to stay in touch with your own life, those are things that make your work life more successful too.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I do want to get to this idea of the importance of finding purpose, which can also bring happiness. What is your advice to someone if they're trying to find that purpose? Or is it you have a purpose and you just bring it out in your job?

Beverly Jones, Find Your Happy at Work author:

Work is more enjoyable, it's more successful if it's tied to your goals and also your values, and those are a couple of different things. But I think everybody does better if they have an idea of their mission in the context of work. And that might include the values, the way they treat people, the way they treat themselves, those kind of things, but it can also be the mission of the organization. If you are doing very repetitive difficult work, like in an emergency room or any kind of public service, it can be difficult but tedious work sometimes. But if you know you're serving the public good, if every day you're making difference in somebody's life, it can be that kind of mission. But there are also people who are doing work, maybe they're doing a second job because they're putting their kids through college or they're working on their own grad school plan. Work that isn't what you want to do forever and doesn't have a big mission for you can be meaningful if it is enabling you to do something else.

So it's the whole thing. I use mind maps a lot where you kind of chart things out because I think it's great to see things visually. One way you might get at if you're looking at this issue of purpose is what are your standards? If your leader, what's your leadership philosophy? What's the goal of this organization? Who in the organization are you helping, and how does your work fit in the bigger mission? How is your work folding into your life? And what's it serving? So all of those things, you can think about, but lots of times, it's just one big thing. I love this job because I love to teach and I love to be with kids. Some people have very complicated mission statements. Some people don't think they have a mission statement, and yet they have a very clear vision. There are a lot of ways to do it, but it really does matter that there's meaning associated with your work, I think.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

A couple of other chapters that I, as I was going through your book, the idea of networking and making sure that you are networking, that will help you find your happiness, find your happy at work. How does that work? How does networking help you?

Beverly Jones, Find Your Happy at Work author:

Well, first when I'm talking, in my head, I'm putting networking in quotes because I know a lot of people don't like it. They don't like to do it, and they have this old-fashioned idea of when my generation was young and we'd go to meetings as cards in our pocket and try to force them on other people. It's really not so much about networking. Maybe what it is conscious relationship building. We were talking earlier about mission. Part of your mission is always the people who are affected by your work. So that's one set of relationships. But relationships are part of the human experience. We are hardwired to need to have other people in order to succeed. So one of the reasons why being aware of relationships, building new ones is because it's a human need, even if you don't feel like you like it.

But beyond that, no job is permanent. We're all in temporary jobs, wherever we are. And one of the ways you stay in touch with trends and you start getting ideas of what to do next, and you are able to have a learning path that's really enjoyable is that you keep talking with other people, and you keep finding new people. And that's the networking part. And sometimes it's if you're shy and you don't want to be with a bunch of strangers, networking can be nurturing the casual relationships you already have so you have a stronger connection with people you're acquainted with.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And then another chapter, you talk about managing your money for career flexibility. If you are not happy in the job, you can't find your sense of purpose, it's not serving a goal for you now, that networking, and then managing your money should be a way, I want to say an escape route.

Beverly Jones, Find Your Happy at Work author:

Most of us always have two jobs to be aware of, to be taken care of, at least two jobs, aside from side gigs, which I think can be very exciting. But we have the job we have now, the main job we have now, and we have the job that we're going to have in the future, and that's just realistic and that very few of us will not have a different job in the future. When you're thinking about a future job, say we're talking earlier about older workers, so I think lots of people that I know are not retiring in the old fashioned way. They're going to a job which might be quite different, and they don't want to work as many hours and they're going to be maybe volunteering a lot. They're going to need more money. You don't have the flexibility for that kind of wonderful combination if you aren't saving. So constantly being aware of your resources in today's world is part of enabling a more interesting time in your next phase.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Have you always been happy in your own work?

Beverly Jones, Find Your Happy at Work author:

No. I had an early career, which I loved as a pre-Title IX even, working to open opportunities for women at a time when women were not going to graduate school. I was the first woman in an MBA program. I did a lot of stuff. That was wonderful. Then I went off to law school and I was a young lawyer, and that was a difficult time. But I'll tell you one thing that happened to me. I was thinking, oh... I was working just as a clerk night and day, putting myself at the law school, and I didn't think anybody would hire a

woman and I felt miserable. I hated this, but I felt like I had to do it. And my brother was found to have a spot on his spine they thought was cancer and that he might have a short time to live, and he was rushed into surgery.

And they discovered was benign. He was fine. It was no problem. And I went, in that minute that I heard the news, from thinking my work is horrible, this is drudgery, I don't know if I can stand it, to feeling happy and think I can figure it out. And about the next day, I was still happy. Work felt fine. And I thought, oh my gosh, my whole attitude to work has changed and I'm optimistic, and not a single thing has happened in my life. What is the difference? And I realized that instead of telling myself in my head all the time, you're never going to get a job, they're never going to hire a woman, you're never going to be able to get this done if you don't stay up all night, instead of talking to myself like that, I realized I've got a lot of control about how much I'm going to enjoy this work.

So it's been a long path with lots of stops and starts, but I went from being a worrying pessimist to being pretty much an optimist. And I know that you can find your happiness at work, even if you start out like I did.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

That's Beverly Jones, author of Find Your Happy at Work, and earlier, Zoe Peterson-Ward, Chief Customer Officer at Workhuman. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Thank you for listening.