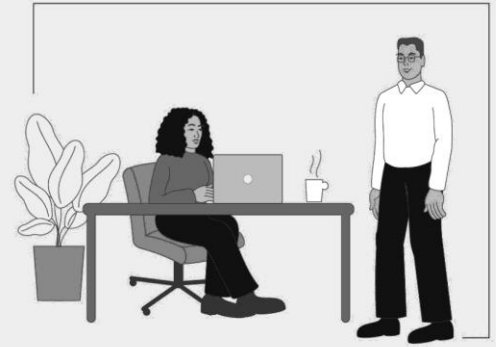


CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST



As the host of the event, my role was to keep the conversation flowing and keep everyone engaged. In reality, this wasn't an issue whatsoever. In fact, the only issue on the day, was stopping the flow of engaged dialogue and getting everyone away at the promised time of 9:30am (90 minutes after we started) we were five minutes late. For me, this was an indication of a successful event.

It's hard to imagine what the average Chief People Officer has gone through during COVID – from furloughing most of their staff, through to downsizing, complete organisational restructuring, to health and safety concerns and everything in between. Everyone said they all had peers and colleagues who were stepping out of their full-time role and taking a break as burn out seemed widespread. But the time to rest, reflect and recuperate was pretty consistent amongst this group.

Battling the stigma that working from home isn't necessarily better or more efficient became our next topic. Most of the CPOs have the majority of their employees not based in a central / corporate office, but out in the field, in the stores, on the dining room floor, in the hotels cleaning the rooms. The concept of working from home for this workforce does not exist – so why should the corporate (head office) employees be able to? And is working from home better anyways?

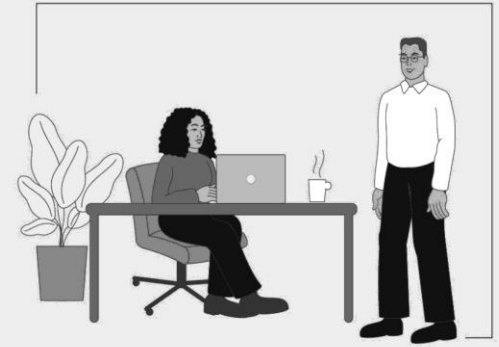


THE IMPORTANCE ON THE EMPLOYEE VOICE IS TODAY MORE CRUCIAL AND MORE IMPORTANT THAN IT'S EVER BEEN BEFORE.

It clearly felt like employers must listen to what their employees are saying in a way not previously known before. How will you attract, recruit, and retain the best talent without providing them with the kind of experience that they want, how they want it and when they want it? They will go somewhere else and work for someone else that listens to them and makes them feel special.

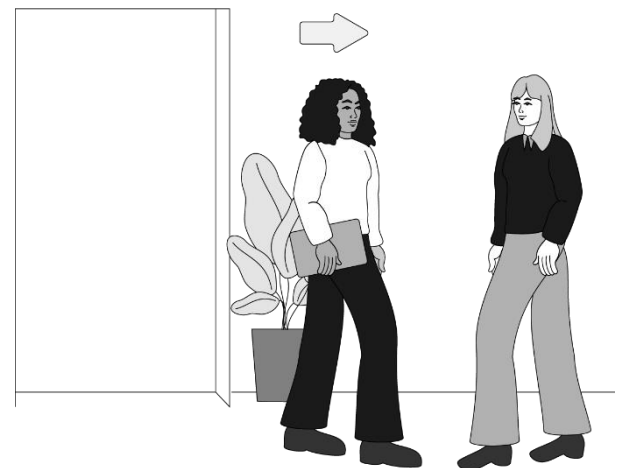
I think many companies, who are stuck in the past, will struggle moving forward with this new reality. It starts, like with so many of these things, at the top and permeates its way down and throughout the company culture. If your CEO, Founder or Board feel that you MUST be in the office all day, every day, as before – you are going to struggle to stay relevant moving forward. But frankly it was, generally speaking, these kinds of companies who COVID hit the hardest anyways – as all COVID really did was expose operational and cultural weaknesses that were present before the pandemic. These weaknesses were simply accelerated as COVID and its impact on business increased.

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST



Agility and HR was next discussed and one of the guests commented she had just completed a four-week course on Agile HR. This was fascinating actually – as it entails implementing a start-up, almost digital first, approach to HR processes and focusing in on those things that truly matter. Start with the top two things to focus on and concentrate on these. Create scrum groups, create focus groups, and ensure the priorities are focused on first. The rest will be the rest and can be dealt with later.

Next, we moved into the emerging reality of talent and skills gaps that most companies are facing today and will certainly be facing tomorrow. Clearly, if you have **‘digital’** and **‘technology’** in your title you are spoilt for choice on the market today as an employee looking for something new. But it’s the employers who seemed confused about what they want and why? And, as a result, interviewing processes are taking longer than ever before. Creating internal alignment feels harder than ever and potential recruits (at all levels) are starting to ask more and more questions of the potential employer. If you cannot answers these questions - you won’t be able to hire the best talent any longer.



It really was a truly engaging and inspiring conversation that was only missing one thing: more time. I enjoyed it immensely and think I probably should host another similar event in September. There was no shortage of interest that’s for sure.