

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

As we wrap up this series on Workforce of Tomorrow, we talked with Rachel Evans, our Vice President of Human Resources. We talk about today's current hiring climate, and how to be strategic in planning for your staffing needs. From internship to mentorship, our conversation covers a range of helpful topics around guiding the next generation in their career path. We also hear from our summer interns Andrew Mirau and Mitchell Tosi, about having fresh eyes, and why bringing donuts to work is a good idea!

Speaker 2 00:00:46 All right, my name is Andrew Mirau. I'm going to be attending the University of Central Florida as a freshman, and I'm going to be majoring in civil or mechanical engineering. I chose to do an internship over the summer to get some experience before college, um, mostly, and to kind of dive into the world of mechanical engineering and see what it's really like in the workforce. I'm learning about a lot of different machines and how they function and especially like the whole installation process of new equipment and how all the lines run in the plant. And my favorite part so far has just been getting to learn and getting this whole experience as, just in general and learning how the engineering world works before going into college.

Speaker 1 00:01:31 Good Morning, we are here on the Clear Impact Podcast and we are wrapping up a series called Workforce of the Future. We are here with our VP of Human Resources, Rachel Evans. Hey, Rachel!

Speaker 3 00:01:43 Good morning.

Speaker 1 00:01:44 So glad that you could make it back. Thanks for joining us today.

Speaker 3 00:01:47 I am so glad that you've had me back.

Speaker 1 00:01:50 This has been a really great series. We've heard from a lot of different people who are in the HR space and primarily around how to fill those, those funnels of up and coming employees through partnering with high schools or with trade schools or through an internship program. And so we kind of want to wrap it all up and put a nice bow on it. You've been an HR professional for, I'm presuming your whole career?

Speaker 3 00:02:13 Yeah, we'll just say somewhere above the 25 year mark.

Speaker 1 00:02:18 Okay.

Speaker 3 00:02:19 I don't want to give away my age.

Speaker 1 00:02:20 You started when you were very young.

Speaker 3 00:02:21 Young, very young. Yes.

Speaker 1 00:02:23 As an HR professional, what are some principles that an employer needs to keep in mind when looking into the future for their workforce?

Speaker 3 00:02:31 Sure. I think right now, that's a very good question because of the climate that we're in, you can walk around anywhere and see the help wanted signs. And there's a lot of things that are really driving that, but really before we even get into those specifics, one of the best things to consider, is first, where are you as an organization? What is your business outlook? What are you trying

to solve for, understanding what your strategic initiatives are and understanding what your customers expect from you, will really help you identify what labor pool you need, what specific skill sets you might need, and really just how to bring those, those two pieces together. I think because we are in this war on talent, you know, we're, we're willing to just kind of hire in hopes that we're gonna use them later, but that's almost a waste of everyone's time to be able to do that. And so making sure that you first understand where are you as a business, what do you need? What structure do you need to support it and then find the talent specifically that you need. And there's some creative ways to do that, but you first have to know where you're going to know what you're going to get.

Speaker 1 00:03:45 Yeah, that makes sense. I know there are a lot of HR companies that are basically an outsourcing. Is that something that, um, a smaller dealership might consider working with?

Speaker 3 00:03:57 You mean like outsourcing their recruiting needs, or their HR,

Speaker 1 00:04:01 But yeah, both and, okay,

Speaker 3 00:04:03 So there's two schools of thought on that really. And it really just is based off of the talent that you need and the abundance that you might be hiring for. So there was a period of time in 2021, this year where we realized, wow, we really need a large number of new hires to help support our growth, our high demand. And looking at those that you have on your recruiting team to support that abundance, can really tap them out. And so sometimes it is better to partner with an external agency and in those situations, just to supplement the, the talent that you already have recruiting and mining for the job fairs, getting people onboarded and what, what it takes to support all that. If you're looking for a specific skill set in a professional arena, there are a lot of avenues that we can take to try and fill those positions ourselves, because it's more cost-effective to do that, going out to LinkedIn, having the recruiter license for LinkedIn so that you can actually look through profiles for the specific skillset.

Speaker 3 00:05:10 You may be needing posting jobs on indeed or social media is huge. I know we're, we're exploring the whole social media aspect and we've got some great talent on the team that's able to do that for us. But then if you find it difficult to find the right fit, from a cultural perspective, and that's, that's big, you don't want to give on that. Right. But then also the skill set that you're looking for an external recruiter in that professional arena may be a choice for you. So it really depends on what you need, the skill set that you're looking for and how difficult it is to find.

Speaker 1 00:05:45 Right. And maybe just how much bandwidth you have. Like maybe you just don't have time because your phones are ringing off the hook. And you're trying to keep up with orders and you're trying to keep up with the installation schedule and you're trying to just keep up and so, Hey, need to hire somebody, but I don't have time to screen. I don't have time to interview. I don't have time. I mean, I do between midnight and two, but I don't have time Monday through Friday. So maybe hiring an outside agency is a good path to help with that space.

Speaker 3 00:06:11 Yeah. It definitely could be the answer for, you know, a lot of, a lot of companies. I would also say even the spend on one external recruiter fee may pay for one internal dedicated resource to help with all of your hiring needs as well.

Speaker 1 00:06:28 Right. Depending on your size. Right. That makes sense. Yeah, because recruiting isn't free.

Speaker 3 00:06:32 It is not free.

Speaker 1 00:06:34 Okay. Well, thank you for that. That was great. What other things would be helpful for a dealer to keep in mind when we're dealing in the climate that we're in, regarding labor pool in general?

Speaker 3 00:06:45 Sure. And I mentioned earlier, you can look around and see all the help wanted signs. And because of that, it's really driving that war on talent when it comes to wages. So there's a lot of competition out there right now, for the right job at the right wage. And that means the pool of labor that's out there. They're looking for, what's going to pay them the most. Sure. They're looking for what company is going to give me the best benefits. And this is really driving up costs for organizations, because if we can't compete with what other organizations are paying, we're not going to be able to get the level of quality employees that we want, or we need, that's a big piece. And this is changing very rapidly. It's, it's changing probably the quickest I have seen throughout my entire career. Um, from month to month, quarter to quarter, we're running market analysis because it is changing that frequently. In addition to that, when you think about the future of the labor pool, those that are joining the workforce right now, they are looking for flexibility. They don't want to be tied to a desk or tied to an operation. They want flexibility. They want the work-life balance. And so determining how you can serve the needs of the business while also allowing for that flexibility is going to be very critical, especially as we move into the next one to five years.

Speaker 1 00:08:12 Right. And do you think that that's partially because of COVID? Like a lot of people figured out they could work from home and now they don't want to come back to the office.

Speaker 3 00:08:20 That has been a big realization across the board and having that opportunity to be able to work efficiently from home in not all cases, because it doesn't work in all cases, but in those cases where it does, offering that flexibility might be the difference in maintaining and retaining a strong employee, versus losing them to another company. That's going to give it to them,

Speaker 1 00:08:41 Right? Because if you can work remotely, then you can live wherever you want. Which explains why Florida is insane.

Speaker 3 00:08:48 Exactly. I think that's why we're seeing such an influx of people coming this way because their companies have realized through the COVID era that can work from home and they can work from home successfully. I know a lot of businesses, especially those that have had corporate offices have decided we're not going back to the way that we did things before. We're going to stay in a remote setting because it's actually cost-effective

Speaker 1 00:09:08 Right. Well, and then you don't have all the commuting. You don't have all the pollution, you don't have all the gas consumption. You don't have to have fancy work clothes. You don't even have to wear makeup if you don't want to.

Speaker 3 00:09:17 That's right.

Speaker 1 00:09:18 Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:09:19 And in some situations, which we probably seen on social media, you may not even have to change out of your, your pajama pants.

Speaker 1 00:09:26 Right? Oh man, I got to go talk to Jim. Now I'm too much of a people person and my home environment would not be conducive for working. I like having big, giant monitors and a nice quiet space and I don't have that at my house. So I'm going to come in.

Speaker 3 00:09:41 And the social interaction,

Speaker 1 00:09:42 Right? Oh yeah, no, I would go crazy if I were at home all day by myself. So anyway, those are good points though. I don't know how many of our dealers would be able to shift what they're doing to accommodate a remote worker, but definitely the flexibility,

Speaker 3 00:09:55 The work schedules.

Speaker 1 00:09:56 I mean, wherever possible, you know, and if that means, you know, I don't want to miss my daughter's ballet performance. That's at 10 in the morning on a Thursday. Okay. Well, if you're on a construction site, you might not be able to accommodate that, but if you're in the office, maybe, maybe, you know, relax a little bit on those things.

Speaker 3 00:10:15 Yeah. And even when you think about the benefits that you offer, your PTO plans, vacation time off, um, even unpaid time off, how could you accommodate something like that? Can it be planned? And that way you can accommodate those periods of time where you have parent teacher conference or, you know, a play at 10:00 AM, how can, how can you accommodate that? Right?

Speaker 1 00:10:38 Because people have lives outside of their job and the happier that they are at home, the happier they probably will be at work.

Speaker 3 00:10:44 And more productive...

Speaker 1 00:10:46 And more productive, right. Because they don't have to be stressed about what they're missing out on. Right. Makes sense.

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So what would you say to an employer that is maybe considering starting an internship program? What would you say to them?

Speaker 4 00:11:17 I would recommend for the employer to have the intern work across a variety of departments. And, um, I would say sit down with your intern and kind of figure out what their goals are. And, if you determine that from the first day, you can kind of tailor the experience to the intern. Cause that's kind of what happened with me. I was able to sit down with my supervisor, ask what I wanted to get out of the experience. And then from there I was able to, you know, get a great experience out of it. And, uh, I think I was able to help the company a lot, because oftentimes some of the busy work that an accountant doesn't want to do every day is new to me. And I was excited to do it. I have the enthusiasm that I'm bringing to the workplace. So, um, I think it's a win-win situation for both the employer and the intern.

Speaker 1 00:11:53 That's awesome. Do you think that you'll go on to become a CPA?

Speaker 4 00:11:56 I think so. I think so. And that's another thing. I was able to talk to a lot of the, uh, accountants who have already been down this path and they were able to almost give me a game plan for my future. You know, they're saying, so join this accounting fraternity, join this business school and apply to these firms, do all this. And this is all knowledge I doubt I would've gotten it if I didn't do the internship.

Speaker 1 00:12:15 And you know, that's Jeff Jackson's background.

Speaker 4 00:12:17 Yes, it is. It is. It's kind of funny because, um, the day I met him, I remember it was a Friday where I came in. I just brought donuts. It was the first Friday that I had as an intern. I just want to make a good impression. So I got donuts for everybody and, um, I ended up running into Jeff Jackson. I wasn't sure, I didn't know he was the CEO at the time. So I just like happily offered him a donut and everything. And he asked for my background, was my major. And I said, um, finance and accounting. And he immediately, he was like "nerd". And I was kinda like, I was like, oh man. And then some was like, oh, he's, he has the background as well. So it was just like fun and games, but it was a pretty hilarious first impression.

Speaker 1 00:12:54 Rachel, because this series has really been focusing around younger people in terms of age and experience, what advice would you have for a younger person who maybe isn't sure what they want to be when they grow up, air quotes?

Speaker 3 00:13:08 Sure. That's a great question. Even for some adults that I spend time with, um, still haven't really pinpointed what they want to be when they grow up and that's completely fine. I think it's almost crazy for us to think that, you know, some of these, you know, kids that are in high school, that they know and they stick to that field, because they really haven't been exposed to a lot of things. And the advice that I would give and I mean, I've done this with my own kids, because it's so important to have some experience, get involved with internships, understand what it is that you like to do. And you can, you can take some risks when you're younger, because I mean, what responsibilities do you have? So get involved. There's a lot of resources out there to help you decide what you might want to be, or what field even you might want to go into use those resources, your guidance counselors in schools.

Speaker 3 00:14:01 There's a lot of colleges locally that have programs that can help you decide what you want to do. There's career coaches, but definitely take advantage of internships while you can, because you're going to learn a lot more on the job and you're going to be able to look around and to other areas that maybe you didn't know existed before and maybe try it. For myself, you know, I think back when I was at that age, I hadn't a clue - human resources? What is that? Yeah. I know it takes, you know, different people to hire and, you know, pay you and, and whatnot. But I had no idea the full scope of what human resources was. I fell into it and it was probably one of the best things I could have ever done. I was connected with a mentor that saw something in me when I was younger, that I didn't see in myself, and really helped shape my whole career from there, having that dialogue and those conversations around what I like to do, where I have some skills that maybe I didn't even know existed. So having that partnership, that mentorship with someone, is by far the most valuable thing that you can do when you're younger.

Speaker 1 00:15:14 I completely agree with that. And I love what Brene Brown had to say to her own daughter was, if you already know what you're going to do, I'm not paying for your college, because she

really embraced the idea of you're here to explore. You're here to learn. You're here to be curious, you're here not to be locked into a path. And I think schools are sometimes responsible for that mindset of, you have to pick a major, you have to pick a school, you have to pick...

Speaker 3 00:15:42 So much pressure,

Speaker 1 00:15:43 Right? So much pressure. And a lot of it is the financial part because I'm going to spend two years and \$20,000 on tuition only to find out. I don't really love that. And now I'm going to start over in a different path and now have to retake a bunch of classes that I didn't take when I could have. And it's a lot of pressure on kids. And so I think embracing that mindset of you don't have to know exactly what you want to do. You just have to know what makes your heart sing and then just develop some skills around that.

Speaker 3 00:16:13 Exactly. That's exactly right. You know, with my, my kids, my daughter, you know, she's like, there's no way I'm going to work in human resources. Right. And really go through that period. Even though she kind of grew up around it. She was at that age where she didn't have everything figured out and that's fine. That's okay. We have to give them that, that space and that time to do that, she took the assessments at school. They all said, Hey, you would be good in human resources. But that, wasn't what she wanted to do. She was dead set in her mind at that time that she wanted to be a lawyer.

Speaker 1 00:16:45 Okay.

Speaker 3 00:16:46 So she enrolled in college. She took her first two years. I still remember the time she came to me. She said, yeah, I think I might want to go into human resources. And so, and, and now she's an HR manager at a very successful organization. So it happens that way. She needed that time to explore and figure things out and we need to let them know that that's okay. And to your point about, you know, the schools and the pressure, it's there, and most likely because of the financial impact, but you can look at the enrollments in colleges and you can see the dropout rate is high. You can see the change in majors, it's high and it's okay. It happens, right?

Speaker 1 00:17:28 Yeah. Well, and permission from parents to say, you know, okay, I'm not going to force you down something I think would be good for you. I'll let you wander a little bit and figure it out and then, good for you. You didn't say, I told you so. Right. Right.

Speaker 3 00:17:43 And even take advantage of a lot of companies have job shadowing. You don't know what you want to be when you grow up. Go explore, pick a couple of fields, contact an organization and see if they would allow you to come and job shadow. A lot of them will. And, and that's a really good start to just get your feelers out there and know what is going to make you happy. Right.

Speaker 1 00:18:08 And even just talking to your parents' friends, you know, maybe they're in a different career sect and they can shed some light on, you know, just ask the questions. What do you do all day? What does it look like? How are you contributing to the betterment of society or the betterment of the planet or the betterment of the people that you work with? Like how are you making an impact in what you're doing? So I think those are great things for sure, for kids,

Speaker 3 00:18:31 Right? And you bring up a good point that, you know, the networking, use your resources, ask the questions, explore, take the time to do that. And I think that you'll, you'll find your path. We all usually do, at one point or another.

Speaker 1 00:18:43 And the path and the path isn't necessarily a straight and narrow one. It can twist and turn and circle back and loop around. And, but every experience is valuable. No matter what space you find yourself in. One skillset or level of experience builds to another one. And actually, in a podcast that I did with Jeff Jackson, he talked about cognitive bandwidth, and he talked about the base of a business being a pyramid. And that the more of those different sections that you understand, the higher up you can go because you have a better comprehensive view of the entire organization. So it's okay to experiment.

Speaker 3 00:19:21 It is. And it brings everything together.

Speaker 1 00:19:23 Right. Do you think that a four-year degree is a solid choice given the cost of higher education these days?

Speaker 3 00:19:29 So this is something that's pretty near and dear to my heart, actually, because over the last decade or so, there has been a huge push from parents, from the schools, on that four-year degree, you have to go to college right after high school. And as such, we are now in a complete shortage of skilled labor, maintenance, engineering, automation, technicians, tool and die, welding. So that four-year degree is great for, for some, but it is not for everyone. And I think that we need to do more educating at the high school level, which is something that we've just launched, um, in our Pathway to PGTI process, getting into the high schools, getting them familiar with vocational programs, uh, to explore and build a career off of a skilled trade, because those positions are paying quite heavily. And especially because of the shortage in that skillset today, it's so important that they know that the four-year degree doesn't always have to be the option for them. Right. There's other options that's going to lead to a very successful life, very successful career.

Speaker 1 00:20:42 Yeah. We talked with STC and they're doing it. They're building tiny houses and thankfully they're using our doors and windows. And so we get to help out with that, which has been an amazing experience. And you can tell the high school students from the adult students, the adult students get it. They're like, okay, I'm going to have to pay rent soon. I'm going to have to be responsible for my own health insurance. I'm going to have to feed myself. You know, mom and dad are only going to do this for so long. And so I need to take what I'm learning seriously. And I'm not just here because the state is making me, I am here because I want to be here and I want to learn.

Speaker 3 00:21:14 Right. And, you know, Sherri, we have looked globally at where can we find the skillset because there's a lot of the baby boomers that have that skill set today. And then there's a gap, and they're going to be retiring and leaving the workforce. And so we have not been successful looking for that skillset across the globe. We were interested even, where can we find them? We'll relocate them and, and continue their, their path here with, with our organization, but that's not working. So we realized we're going to have to start to build a program to grow and develop them right here in our backyard. And we've been so fortunate to be partnered up with the Sarasota High Schools and STC to help us on that journey. Then this program right now at the high school level, they come to our facility every single day for just over an hour, and they're assigned a mentor and they help them learn and grow. And you know, what, what does it take to be a great employee? What does it take to build your specific skillset in these skilled trades area? And so we're really excited to continue to grow that.

Speaker 1 00:22:22 That's awesome. Okay. So I have a final question and I've asked this of everyone who's been on this series, because I love having some continuity between the episodes, and I love

stories. So is there a memorable moment or a story that you'd like to share about a newly hired employee who's reached success?

Speaker 3 00:22:41 So, because I've worked in human resources for a great number of years, um, it was hard for me to really think about this question and pinpoint just one single story. I have had multiple interns over the course of my years, that came in really not knowing, is human resources, really something I want to do? Maybe I want to do something else? And at the end of their internship, they have come to me and said, this is my path. And say, you know, thank you for giving me this opportunity. And they still continue to reach out to me today. And we're talking, you know, five, ten years later and, you know, are, are thanking me for, you know, the guidance and the coaching along the way to, to help them grow a professional career. There was a time period, specifically though, when I lived in Oklahoma and I had noticed one of the new hires, very quiet, somewhat reserved, she would sit there.

Speaker 3 00:23:41 She would take in all the information she possibly could, but she hadn't really found her voice yet. And so I saw that and it piqued my interest. And so any opportunity I could get to ask her opinion, what do you think, what would you do in this situation? And when she spoke up, she had the best ideas. And she really was, like I said, taking everything in and formulating her thought process. And you know, her plan of action, if given the opportunity and over the course of, you know, the next couple of years, she moved into a career in, in the quality department and she enjoyed that, but she was like, you know, I think I really want to get into leadership. And so she got involved with any, and every training opportunity that was available through the company, she took classes in the evenings through a local college.

Speaker 3 00:24:32 And over the course of the next couple of years, she found her way into a leadership position and is now very, very successful. And so I often wonder, had I not asked her, hey, what do you think, or how would you approach this? Would she have eventually found her voice, or was that the turning moment for her? And I think that that's just something as leaders that we have to be aware of. We are talent scouts all the time, or we should be, whether we're on the job or we're at the grocery store, how can we make sure that we're providing that opportunity? It's, it's a pay it forward kind of thing.

Speaker 1 00:25:09 Wonderful. That's great. I love it when we're inspired to take a specific conversation or a specific course of action, and then we see the fruits of that. That's awesome. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:25:19 It's very rewarding.

Speaker 1 00:25:20 Yeah. Well, it shows that you love what you do.

Speaker 3 00:25:23 I do, most days I do,

Speaker 1 00:25:27 Especially on Fridays.

Speaker 3 00:25:28 Fridays are great.

Speaker 1 00:25:29 Fridays are good for everyone. Awesome. Well, this has been a great series and a great conversation. Thank you for helping me kind of outline this. I had some ideas about what I wanted to do, and it stemmed from having interns around, over the summer when I was recording. And I could tell that they were really curious about what we were doing. And so all nine of them wanted to be on the podcast, which was fun and challenging at the same time. So I needed to wrap it into something that

would actually benefit the dealers. And so, I really appreciate your helping me with hopefully that the series has done that. Anyway, have an awesome day and awesome weekend.

Speaker 3 00:26:05 Thank you. You as well,

Speaker 1 00:26:06 PGTI University is the Customer Education Team for an entire family of brands. We began with the original EZBreeze porch enclosure line, then became PGT, America's leading brand of impact resistant windows and doors. We then added CGI, CGIC, WinDoor, Western Windows, New South Windows, Eco Windows and Doors, and our latest acquisition, Anlin Windows and Doors.

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