

Lesley Uren - Global CEO of consulting for Kornferry

The Future of Human Capital Consulting

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:01

Welcome to the Future of the Firm podcast. I'm Emma Carroll, head of content here at Source, and in this episode we're going to talk about the future of human capital consulting. I'm really pleased to welcome our speaker, Lesley Uren, who is global CEO of consulting for Kornferry. Lesley, brilliant to have you here and really looking forward to our conversation today.

Lesley Uren..... 00:00:22

As am I, Emma. I'm really pleased to be here and I'm very excited about this conversation. I think we've got some really interesting things to talk about.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:29

Definitely. So can you kick things off, tell us a bit about yourself and your career so far.

Lesley Uren..... 00:00:36

Sure. So I started my career in industry, actually. So the first half of my career I spent in a mix of large corporate organizations and I did two startups as well, two entrepreneurial ventures, all in human resources. And then I moved into Consulting about 25 years ago, initially for another big consulting firm. And I've, I've again worked in large firms. I had my own business for about eight years. So I'm one of those individuals who's kind of flipped between consulting and industry.

Lesley Uren..... 00:01:13

Big companies, small companies. As you can probably tell from my accent, I didn't start my career here in the UK, so I've worked all over the world. Yeah, this new role for me as head of consulting globally, Korn Ferry, is, is new. I only, only been in the role for a few weeks, so, so I'm again looking forward to, looking forward to our conversation.

Emma Carroll..... 00:01:33

Wonderful. And congratulations on that new role. Tell us a bit about it and tell us what are your main focuses at the moment?

Lesley Uren..... 00:01:40

Yeah, so Korn Ferry's consulting business now is a significant part of our, our company revenue. We are a large, large part of what we deliver globally as a, as an integrated human capital consulting firm. So my, my job now is to look after that consulting business. We have other lines of business, our talent attraction business, the search business and RPO business, digital business. And so I head up globally, our consulting business. And it's, it's, as I say, relatively new. So I'm still, my areas of focus are still really starting to take shape for me, but I, I think it would be, be fair to say that I guess the first thing is really how we are going to provide much more integrated solutions to our clients.

Lesley Uren..... 00:02:29

As I mentioned, we've got a range of different human capital businesses, consulting being one of them. And I think a big, big challenge for us and a big need for our clients is how we provide much more integrated solutions, how we then organize ourselves to do that better than anybody else because I think we can. How we make the most of our incredible human capital experts at Korn Ferry, because we have deep, deep, deep experts in just about every aspect of human capital consulting. And I think, you know, probably lastly, how we make sure that the work we do delivers real business impact. So I think that's the biggest priority for us is how we solve the biggest pressing business problems our clients are facing today.

Emma Carroll..... 00:03:17

Brilliant. I love the fact that you brought up the word impact because I think we're going to come to that at various stages throughout this conversation. Yeah, wonderful. So to really give a bit of context, it'd be great to talk about the market and put some sort of detail to that. If I'm looking at sources, research, we've definitely seen that the sort of people HR change work has really been under pressure for the last couple of years. And maybe the end of 2024, Q4, our data was showing it was resurging a bit, but it has softened in our latest data. So I would love to get your view of whether that's what you see too, but also your view of the market and how it's performing at the moment.

Lesley Uren..... 00:04:01

Yeah, look, I think undeniably there is a big market still for human capital consulting. And I think back to that point I made a little earlier, for me, it's about human capital consulting that solves business problems. And that's what we have to get incredibly focused on as a firm. And I'm sure as a profession, when we talk about human capital consulting, the market is certainly volatile, there's no doubt about it. And, you know, we see that around our global markets and, you know, even if you take country by country, I mean, the UK was looking very strong. And then of course, we had an election which meant that for a human capital consulting, there was a whole ton of outcomes from that election around, you know, employee new employee regulations, new legislation that's caused clients to stop and think about where they invest their money. And of course, the US election has thrown all sorts of things into disarray about where companies spend their money on human capital issues.

Lesley Uren..... 00:05:04

And as we go through Europe and through the other geographies that we have, the same thing happens. So it's those big macro factors which shake client confidence a little bit or get them to at least pause and stop and think about where they're investing that's causing that volatility. And I think, I think it's those larger macro factors that are probably affecting what we do more than I've seen a lot in my career, obviously, leaving aside things like Covid and the global financial crisis, but that sort of day to day pivoting that seems to be happening through elections and changes in policy is really impacting the way that clients want to invest their money. And I think that volatility is probably going to continue for the foreseeable. I mean, we certainly see it, as I said, day in, day out in the US Market. It's hard to predict there what's coming next and what our clients are going to have to respond to. So all that means, from my perspective is we just have to be so much more agile ourselves.

Lesley Uren..... 00:06:07

We have to be able to pivot really, really quickly back to those big issues that our clients are facing, rather than the things we might necessarily want to talk about. What are their problems, their challenges, how can we respond to those and respond really quickly. So look, continue to be a volatile market. We've just got to get much, much better, much more, much fleeter of foot in responding to that.

Emma Carroll..... 00:06:32

Okay, thank you. And you talked there about pivoting to clients needs. So great to hear what those needs are. What are they reaching out for help with at the moment? What are the big things?

Lesley Uren..... 00:06:42

Yeah, so one of the, you know, if I talk about CEOs, I think one of the biggest challenges they've got at the moment is how do they transform their business, but how do they perform at the same time? So that perform and transform simultaneously is a massive challenge for CEOs and again in my career, probably more amplified than I've ever seen it. And we'll talk, I'm sure about AI at some point. But you know, the impact that's having on business and the need for businesses to sometimes think quite fundamentally about how they respond to that is one of those things that's causing the large transformation agenda. But there are other things, cost pressures being another. So how I perform and transform as my business as a CEO is a fairly significant question that we're helping a lot of businesses with. And what does that mean?

Lesley Uren..... 00:07:31

It means how do I get my leaders? How do I lead that transformation? How do I have a leader led transformation, if you like, and how do I do that at scale? How do I mobilize the organization at scale? So it goes beyond how am I going to get my top 2, 50, 50 aligned to my strategy? How do I get the whole organization behind this need to perform and transform? So that's one of the big challenges that we see. We'll talk more, I'm sure, about AI.

Lesley Uren..... 00:08:02

But the really practical implications of that, what does that mean? Are we going to be an early adopter, a fast follower? And if we then think about our workforce, is our workforce opting in or opting out to a big corporate career? And how are those two things going to shape kind of talent base that I will have, the skills that I'm going to need, where I put those skills. So there's a big sort of skills agenda as well. And that kind of leads to this whole discussion around, well, do I know the people that I have already? How do I find the hidden talent in my organization? How do I make the most of skills that might be lying dormant somewhere in the business to really drive some of this transformation?

Lesley Uren..... 00:08:46

And then on the back of that, how do I drive performance, whether that's targeted against, say, my sales population or more generally? All those things are about how do I take my organization as it is now, get the most from it in its current form and transform it and do all of that at the same time is a really big agenda. And that's what's driving many, many of the conversations that we're having and certainly why I said earlier we're talking about the need for much more integrated solutions. Because all of those things, of course, there's an interplay between all of them.

Emma Carroll..... 00:09:21

That point there about hidden talent, really interesting. I'm wondering, is that something that clients are coming to you and asking about, or is that kind of something you're RA as part of work? Because I'm wondering, with AI, maybe there is the hidden talent and you're getting them to recognize they can find it.

Lesley Uren..... 00:09:37

It's a little bit of both. So we do a lot of work, of course, around helping clients identify the next generation of talent as one of our biggest solution areas. But as we talk more to clients now, what we're also trying to prompt is there's a lot that organizations have done historically around very typical processes for identifying talent. And many times they throw up the people that we might already know about. So we are now starting to prompt the question often about how about we do this slightly differently? So you uncover people you might not know about. And then we're also getting clients coming to us saying, we have this big skills agenda.

Lesley Uren..... 00:10:18

We don't even know what we don't know. We don't know what skills our people have that we're not using. So help us uncover those. So it's coming a bit of both ways. And what's driving it is this need for back to this perform and transform Agenda it's coming from how do I make sure I've got the skills I need to deliver the strategy I have? So let's find the people you already have, and then if you don't have enough of those, let's find more of them for you. So that's what's driving that. But it's a look.

Lesley Uren..... 00:10:48

I fundamentally believe most organizations have talent that's hidden, that they don't know about, and that's the job. Their job is to our job as consultants, and the job of the organization is to kind of find those people.

Emma Carroll..... 00:11:02

And you already talked a little bit about the political impact of government changes, and we mentioned the US and obviously there's been a big impact recently with the new administration ending DEI initiatives. And that's obviously in government, but it is spreading into professional services, into wider corporate America. What's your view on what the impact of that will be on your area? Human capital consulting? Well, the area we're talking about today, human capital consulting, but also the wider consulting sector. Yeah.

Lesley Uren..... 00:11:36

So look, you know, we've always been in the business of improving organization performance. That's what we I. That's what we believe we're here to do and to improve performance through people. And, you know, our own research shows that more equitable, more inclusive, more diverse organizations outperform their peers through harnessing what we like to call kind of the power of all. And if we continue to focus on that, we know we can deliver extraordinary results for our clients. So, for example, we know that more inclusive organizations are 75% more likely to see their ideas come to market quickly, their 70% more likely to capture new markets. They're 36% more likely to outperform their peers on profitability.

Lesley Uren..... 00:12:28

So, you know, there's some. There's some real hard data as to why inclusive and diverse organizations and equitable organizations, we should still focus on that because it is. It is about unlocking human performance and human potential. So we see, we continue to see many of our clients committed to, to really driving inclusive environments so they can unlock some of this performance. Now, of course, if you're a global organization, that's becoming extraordinarily challenging to try and do consistently because of the changes to, you know, some of the administrative change or administration in the US and some of their policy changes, we understand how challenging that is for our clients. And in fact, we're working with a lot of global clients at the moment on how to navigate that, how to still drive the things that are important to them to unlock performance but obviously make sure that they're consistent with whatever the new administration in the US is demanding of them. So there's going to still be, I think, a demand for that work

because I think our clients outside the US and we are a global firm called Ferry and we have global clients, are still, very many of them are still very, very committed to this agenda. I mean, as a firm, inclusion is the first of our values and it was intentionally the first of our values and it will remain the first of our values.

Lesley Uren..... 00:13:54

And we've built inclusion into all our own internal development programs and are really doubling down on talent development. So you know, as a firm we're committed to inclusion and we're committed to helping our clients. We know it drives extraordinary performance and it's, it's so it's one of the things that will be very much still on our, on our agenda.

Emma Carroll..... 00:14:19

Great notes. Great to hear that and also to hear those hard facts because I think that's the thing that's going to win the argument, isn't it? That the hard facts.

Lesley Uren..... 00:14:26

Absolutely. It's, it's. And it's not as I say, not just our own research, but there's plenty of research that, that reinforces how, how critical this is to unlocking human performance. So very, very, very key factor.

Emma Carroll..... 00:14:39

Thank you. And we've looked quite a bit about now and what's happening now. I'm going to invite you to look a little bit further into the future and I'm wondering in terms of how you expect clients needs the client side to really change. Are there any big things there you expect to shift that will change the way you need to do human capital consulting?

Lesley Uren..... 00:14:58

Yeah, look, I think data and the use of data and the use of data to create insights is probably number one for me. And I'm sure again we'll pro talk a bit more about AI in a second. But you know, how do we not only mine the client's data, but you know, Born Fairies has an extraordinary wealth of unique data points that we own around individual and organization performance. So for us, how do we take all that incredible data, align it with our clients data to start to help them see things about their organization that they

may not know? I mean, I think when we can have a conversation with the client that says this is what we see, this is what we see about your organization and your people that you may not know, then we can start to have some real impact again to shift performance that business. So you know, for me, how we use data is going to be absolutely number one and then that sort of speaks to the kind of consultants we'll need for the future, the kind of, kind of investments we're going to continue to need to make as a firm. But that's probably for me, the thing that's going to shape our world a lot over the coming years.

Lesley Uren..... 00:16:12

And then that sort of leads into the being able to sell more integrated solutions. Because if we have more insight about the business and its problems and our clients business and their problems, then how do we pull the things that we have together in our kick bag together in a unique way to solve that problem, clients problems. So you know, it starts with data and insights and then how do we integrate our various solutions, move away from selling point solutions into things that are going to solve the problems that we've just identified through our amazing data and insights. I think they're the things that we're going to have to focus on for the next few years for sure.

Emma Carroll..... 00:16:51

I'm really interested in some of the sort of terms and words you've used there. So you've talked a lot about integration and you've also talked about sort of combining your data and the client data. And I'm wondering if you're seeing a kind of shift in the relationship between clients and firms. Whether you see it as being a sort of a longer, closer relationship, anything there in terms of the way that the relationships will work?

Lesley Uren..... 00:17:14

Yeah, look, certainly if I look at our own business, the trend is absolutely towards longer, deeper relationships. Unequivocally, you know, we have some clients that we've got very deep, very long lasting relationships with and that number is increasing and we are, you know, serving more of their needs through, through our range of solutions, becoming much more a partner in helping to solve their human capital challenges, not just through the consulting solutions that we provide, but through some of our digital platforms as well. So, you know, I think that, that, that deeper relationship and longer term relationship is absolutely where our business is heading for sure. You know, and I think, I think again, that speaks to a need for different kinds of conversations, that sort of more integrated conversation.

Emma Carroll..... 00:18:09

Okay, thank you. And we touched on AI quite a bit, but we, it would be great to go into it in a little bit more detail, a little bit more depth there. What do you see the, the big areas of where clients are looking for help from you in terms of AI and the impact on human capital consulting?

Lesley Uren..... 00:18:27

Yeah, so look, just about, if you, if you scratch any part of an organization and, and ask the question of how will your AI impact this, there's going. There's, there's a, there's. We have to, we have to keep scratching. We have to look because there is, there is an impact. So, you know, it starts with how do we design the organization? Will jobs be different? How will work be different through into what kind of skills are we going to need?

Lesley Uren..... 00:18:55

How do we take people that we have back to the hidden talent question? How do we take the people that we have and imbue them with the new skills? How do we find people that have those skills that we don't currently possess inside the organization? How do we do that at scale? How do we galvanize the organization behind the change that's going to come? All those things require, you know, human capital, expertise and input. And you know, that's, that's before you even start to get to the, that point around, well, you know, if I do tweak this lever over here, if I pull that lever and change what we're doing through AI, how is it going to connect to this thing over in the organization and really having the insight to understand how all those dots connect inside a business, the dynamics of an organization, if you like. Because it isn't just about all the hard stuff as we know.

Lesley Uren..... 00:19:47

It's the soft human stuff. It's the network of how people get work done. So we need to understand not just all the hard stuff around design, the organization skills, the jobs, the people, the talent. We need to understand how the organization actually works from the softer side of things as well. Because if we don't understand those two things together, we could, we could, you know, really negatively impact an organization. So that's, that's, you know, we're getting asked, asked questions around all those sorts of things and it's a very exciting time to think about, you know, the impact we can have on, on our clients.

And of course it's all, it's impacting us as well as a firm. So, you know, how do we answer those questions for ourselves?

Lesley Uren..... 00:20:30

Is, is almost, almost taking up as much time in our debates internally as how we, how we serve our clients.

Emma Carroll..... 00:20:39

I know you've been asked much about managing the sort of interaction in, well, in your infant, but also in the clients, businesses, between people and AI and the sort of challenges there are there. I know in our quarterly survey at the end of last year, one of the big barriers that clients said they had to AI was like putting pushback from the workforce. So I'm just wondering what there is in terms of like managing that integration, that relationship.

Lesley Uren..... 00:21:04

Yeah. So we, if I think about, I'll start with our own organization and then our clients. But, you know, we have had, we have a saying which is talent trumps tech, which we've been saying for several years about, you know, the rise of AI and technology. And we do fundamentally believe that, you know, AI is very good at synthesizing data and going beyond it to provide a view. But what it can't yet do, and I'll say yet, because I'm sure someone's going to figure this out at some point, is go into the white space. You know, what's it not telling us? What are the things that it can't see?

Lesley Uren..... 00:21:40

And there's even a piece of. I don't know whether you've seen the HBR article about this, but it's actually wonderful article looking at the impact of AI on professional services with some research backing that says it still can't quite get to that white space. So what we're saying to our people is, look, your job is unlikely to be taken by someone by AI at this point. It might be taken by someone who knows how to use AI to drive their productivity, to provide better insights for their client to use AI. So that's really the direction we're heading. And we've been running lots of clinics with our colleagues to drive their AI literacy. And we're seeing some amazing effects of what, of what they're starting to do and how they're increasing their productivity. And look, it will probably change the shape of our organization.

Lesley Uren..... 00:22:32

I'm old enough to remember Charles Handy's Shamrock organization. And I think we're going to be one of those organizations for sure. Most organizations, I think, will be probably a very different shape as a result of AI. But you know, that probably means a much more connected organization with very different types of workforce, both payroll and non payroll. So I think, you know, we're really encouraging our people to embrace it. We're certainly seeing it inside the firm that it's being embraced. And I think, you know, where we've seen clients achieve really good results, they're having the same conversations. They're saying, look, get on board.

Lesley Uren..... 00:23:13

You know, the more you can get on board, the more, the more that you are making an investment in your own employability and your own future career. So, and we're here to help. And we've done some incredible work with clients, you know, from defense through into banking about this very agenda about, you know, AI adoption and had some really fantastic feeling, fantastic results. So yeah, conversation is important, dialogue is important. We've Got to keep talking with our people about it. That's not scary.

Emma Carroll..... 00:23:44

Yeah. And picking up the, the topic of talking and you also talked about connections. There, there was something when we were prepping for this session I thought was really interested. You talked about how connected conversations were going to be even more important. Can, can you share a little bit about that?

Lesley Uren..... 00:23:59

Yeah, I think, you know, it's about. And I, this is one of the things again, I think that AI is yet unable to do. I'm sure, you know, I'm sure if I look back in a few years time, it will be able to do it. But I think, you know, if I use an example, you know, we can, we can say to a client, great, you should absolutely buy and use this new sales tool that's going to drive your conversion rates in your organization for your sales population. But let's just think about that for a moment. Let's think about, you know, what is that going to, how are you going to really drive adoption? How are you going to make sure people are using it?

Lesley Uren..... 00:24:40

That's a change discussion. That's not a tech discussion. And that's, you know, so that's a big part of the debate. How do we drive adoption? How do we get people using this thing that you think is really going to drive conversion rates? How do we, what's that going to mean for reward? You know, are you going to reward different kinds of behaviors now? And if so, how do you change your reward mechanism to recognize that, to reward it?

Lesley Uren..... 00:25:05

How do you describe the new skills that you're going to need in order to use this new piece of technology that's going to absolutely have a great business outcome for you? And how do you then keep those skills alive? Because it can't just do it once. It's got to be long term. How do you then, oh, new skills, does that have an impact on career paths? So it's all that sort of conversation. It's not making it more complicated for the client. It's saying as we map out this thing that your investment, that you're making a big investment, a new piece of sales technology.

Lesley Uren..... 00:25:38

Let's just think about how we help you get the best from that investment. Because ultimately humans have got to use it. And I think as you and I talked about, humans have an infinite ability to surprise. So let's think about all the ways in which people could surprise you around this investment and how we might help you make the most of it. So that's what I mean about connected conversations with clients. It's joining all those dots up through a human capital lens to help business investments, you know, really deliver impact, deliver real impact. So, yeah, that's, that's the thing I was talking about when we were chatting before the, before the podcast.

Emma Carroll..... 00:26:15

Yeah, thank you. And we've talked about some of the benefits of AI, the opportunities of AI, and we've also talked about the challenges. But do you think that any kind of services within human capital consulting that are set to disappear now, that AI potentially might take their place?

Lesley Uren..... 00:26:32

Yeah, I'm not sure it's unique to human capital consulting. I mean, obviously, you know, talk about synthesizing of data. A lot of firms have built early consulting careers around the gathering and synthesis and analysis of data, you know, and we know that can be done now through AI a lot more effectively. Not more effectively, but faster perhaps. You know, it's going to increase productivity. So I think there is a question about how do we grow the next generation of consultants. Back to my point around really understanding data and getting insight from data, we need people now at that junior level who can look beyond the lines on a spreadsheet into the white space between the spreadsheets.

Lesley Uren..... 00:27:20

So how do we grow those people and how do we then develop their careers? So I think that that early career thing is a question for me. I'm not sure we've got a 100% answer for that yet, but, you know, that's one we're certainly grappling with. So that I think consulting in general, professional services in general will have to respond to that. And that then goes to the. So how do we demonstrate that we're adding value for the client? Because it used to be that. Give us all that stuff and we will process it, synthesize it, come back with some insights from you and the clients.

Lesley Uren..... 00:27:54

And I go, well, I can kind of do that and I can probably do it cheaper than you can. So, you know, how do we move beyond that into demonstrating impact is really probably the challenge. So, yeah, I'm not sure about. I think the shape of the organization will change. I think the challenge is going to be that junior entry level consultant, how do we grow the consultants that we, we really need for the future when the shape of that role is going to be different than it has been in the past?

Emma Carroll..... 00:28:21

I know this is a really demanding one, but have you got any ideas around that yet? Because my understanding is with the Korn Ferry business model, you kind of got that expertise in having very senior expert people. So maybe it's even bigger challenge in terms of bringing up those new junior people.

Lesley Uren..... 00:28:37

Yeah, I mean we have, as I think I said up front, we've just got so many deep subject matter experts at a senior level. And I think, you know, where we probably have a slightly

different model than many other. Many say the Big four. We aren't as we don't have such a strong leverage model as the Big four. So we're kind of already partway there. And I think, you know, what we've learned, I think is the sort of almost apprenticeship model works really well for us where we make sure that our up and coming consultants have a really strong alignment to a particular solution, an industry, a geography, often all three. We are far less rigid about aligning our juniors to one area.

Lesley Uren..... 00:29:28

So we often have them. We say, well, which geography are you going to be part of? Which solution, which industry? And we encourage them to connect with all those three different parts of our matrix and then make sure that they are strongly apprenticed, if you like, to a couple of senior people who can make sure that they bring them into meetings in a way that perhaps doesn't happen in other firms. We push them to the front a lot earlier, I would say, in order to give them exposure up front. It varies globally. It's easier where we have people still coming into the office, I'll be honest. And yet some of our global offices, we don't have that as to the same extent.

Lesley Uren..... 00:30:12

And that gets harder. It's harder to learn alongside someone if you're just doing that over zoom. So, you know, we've got to work, we've got to work even harder in those situations to give the exposure that people need. So, you know, the old exposure, experience and education, the three E's, you know, we've got to just get better at all of those three. So I think we're partway there, but it is being really, really intentional about how we apprentice. Our up and coming next generation of consultants, I think is key for us.

Emma Carroll..... 00:30:47

And you brought up the topic of impact, which I really, we highlighted at the beginning. I really wanted to come back to. In our research, we often find that clients are really happy with the quality of the work delivered, but when they talk about value, their ratings are a lot lower. And so I'm thinking there it's sort of in terms of value creation, it's kind of the value created over the price paid. And we think that probably one of the reasons is that firms just, just aren't very good at talking about it, aren't very good at explaining that value. Does that resonate with you?

Lesley Uren..... 00:31:19

Absolutely. I mean, I think it starts with even how we describe what we're going to do for the client. You know, and I think sometimes, I have to say sometimes clients RFPs aren't particularly helpful either because they talk about here are the things we want you to do. So often the RFPs are described in sense of activities, not always described in deliverables, and certainly not always described in impact or outcomes. So you know, we have to work harder at that front end to make sure that we interrogate, well, what is it that, what's, what's the impact you're trying to have here? What are the one or two or three business metrics that you would like to see improved by this work? So I think, you know, clients have to get better articulating that.

Lesley Uren..... 00:32:04

We need to get better at interrogating that up front. So we know what we're trying to drive going into, into any project. And then when we're describing that and we're putting that down on paper, we start with impact. We don't start with, well, it's a five step process and we're going to gather data and then provide insights and run a few workshops. I mean we have to talk about how we're going to drive impact through our pitch decks, if you like, through our conversations. So it starts right up front because unless you get that clear up front, it's impossible to come in three, six months later and go, ta da. Here's the impact that we've had because we might be measuring something that's complet, completely unimportant to the client. So that's, I think where we're trying to start is just let's keep drilling into if we do this for the client, what will they like to see has improved?

Lesley Uren..... 00:32:53

And it's got to be a combination. We always measure both qualitative and quantitative. So it's got to be a combination of, you know, we will expect to have seen these indicators shift and then we will expect to have, be able to receive this kind of feedback about, you know, the way we've worked and the impact we've had. So, you know, but it's a, it's a, it's going to be a, you know, it's a, it's a journey as they say, for us and I'm sure it will be for everybody, but we can, yeah. So that's, that's really what I would, I would say is probably start from the very, very get go. What do we, what do we want us to do? Not the activities or the deliverables, but the impact. It's a different kind of conversation up front.

Emma Carroll..... 00:33:35

Yeah. And it can be a challenging conversation as well. You're really challenging what they want from you right at the initial stages.

Lesley Uren..... 00:33:42

Yeah, it certainly can. And you know, you'll get different answers from different stakeholders as well. You know, different answers from the human capital experts than you'd get from a, you know, CEO, cfo, chief commercial officer. You'll get different. Different answers. But yeah, so we've got to start there and it's worth investing the time. And we're doing a piece of work at the moment which is a big, actually sales effectiveness piece.

Lesley Uren..... 00:34:07

And we've got six very hard metrics about when we do this work, what it will change, both in terms of significant contribution to things like conversion rates for this business, but also some of the, some qualitative measures around the skills and effectiveness of, of the, of the people doing the work as well. So, you know, so that's. We are getting better at it, but we got to get a lot better at it. And it sounds like from your research, we all need to get a lot better at it as well.

Emma Carroll..... 00:34:39

Exactly. And I think you put your finger on one of the big challenges there that you were talking about. The different stakeholders, you talked about the CEO, cfo, the people working within human capital in their own businesses, they potentially want different things, don't they? It's very hard to please everyone.

Lesley Uren..... 00:34:55

Yeah, it is, it is. But that's the job, you know, it is making sure that you can play back what you've heard at that. Right at that front end and go, okay, if we work with you, we shake hands, that this is what we're going to drive towards, this is the impact we're going to jointly drive towards. Are we all aligned and we can't do everything. So let's just make sure we pick the things that are most important to the business and to your strategy.

Emma Carroll..... 00:35:20

Thank you, Lesley. And we always like to end on a really practical takeaway, something that our listeners can go away and think about or re. Implement straight away. And I love our conversation about impact. So I'm wondering if we could do one on metrics. It's a

tricky one because we've just talked about how it has to be really specific to the client and specific to the project. But are there one or two metrics that you think are, are really crucial in terms of work that human capital consulting work?

Lesley Uren..... 00:35:48

Yeah, look, it is a tricky one because I do fundamentally believe that you start with what's the business impact that you're trying to have? So my first tip would be absolutely start with that question. Let's get it back to the business impact. Is this about faster time to market? If you're looking to increase, for example, or more people who could be more innovative? Okay. Are you trying to drive increased time to market here for your ideas?

Lesley Uren..... 00:36:16

So get right. So my tip would be get right to the heart of what it is the business is trying to do. What's the impact that they want to have through this work? That's where you start with your one or two metrics. And you don't need a tonne, you really only need a handful to really be able to measure and then top and tail it with something nicely qualitative as well. So it's about measuring what many would describe as the softer side of the organisation, which is often the hardest stuff to do. But things like have a measure around leadership effectiveness, it can be measured. You can look at the from to very easily, but that allows you to see the impact that whatever you're doing is having on the people as well.

Emma Carroll..... 00:37:01

Brilliant. Two really different measures. Really interesting. Lesley, thank you so much for your time today.

Lesley Uren..... 00:37:06

You're most welcome. Thank you for such an interesting conversation.

Emma Carroll..... 00:37:09

Emma, thank you. Bye. Bye.

Lesley Uren..... 00:37:11

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