

TalentCulture #WorkTrends Podcast Episode: 11/30/2018

## How to Help People Reach Their Full Potential at Work

Meghan M. Biro: On this week's episode of WorkTrends, we're talking love, relationships, and work, with Jason Lauritsen.

Meghan M. Biro: Welcome to the WorkTrends podcast from TalentCulture. I'm your host, Meghan M. Biro. Every week, I interview interesting people and brands who are re-imagining work. For more information, be sure to check us out at [talentculture.com](http://talentculture.com). Join us live on Twitter every Wednesday at 1:30 pm Eastern, using the #worktrends.

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Meghan M. Biro: I'm joined by my friend and co-host, Kevin W. Grossman.

Kevin Grossman: Hi, Meghan. I'm so excited for a super-duper, happy fun-day, holiday, Christmas time.

Meghan M. Biro: Okay. I gather you like the holidays.

Kevin Grossman: Yes, indeed. Just as much as my children do. In fact, it's not just about the getting. We're also teaching them to give back. The past few years, we've adopted a family traumatized by domestic violence and we buy gifts for them. It's a little something we can do and we've done that for the past few years.

Meghan M. Biro: Ah, that's awesome. What a wonderful lesson for your kids. That's amazing.

Kevin Grossman: Yeah, we want them to be their best selves and life and give back when they can for those who need it.

Meghan M. Biro: Speaking of best selves, in the light of any circumstance, today we're talking about helping employees reach their full potential.

Kevin Grossman: That's right. Now recently, I saw the managing director at Willis Towers Watson speak at a Bay area event, right before Thanksgiving. His latest book published in September is titled, *Reinventing Jobs: A four-step approach to applying automation to work*. So we're going to mix a little bit of HR technology and technology, as well as making ourselves our best selves at work today.

Kevin Grossman: He talked about how we re-think the workforce, while allowing technology to empower it further. This included a case study about the oil and gas industry, which I found fascinating. Traditionally, oil rig workers must be onsite, doing very hands on, laborious work. It's often very dangerous. I can't even imagine.

Kevin Grossman: However, technology today is making it possible to create a completely autonomous rig. I was blown away by this. Meghan, we both know how smart technologies are truly changing the world of work landscape today.

Meghan M. Biro: You don't have to tell me twice. But you still need humans to run the world.

Kevin Grossman: Correct. So instead of fixating on eliminating the human labor all together, this oil and gas company set out to optimize their human talent, shifting employees away from repetitive, physical, isolated and dangerous work, toward more variable, mental, interactive, and less hazardous work. This is what this individual was sharing at the invent I went to.

Kevin Grossman: They reinvented their rig crews to provide many of the services that, before, had been provided by third-parties, offering a complete oilfield management solution. I just was, again, blown away by this example. These newly reinvented jobs required increasing pay levels by between 7 and 15%. It produced a 45% increase in profitability and a significant reduction in performance variance between rigs. All untold, it was all about making their workers, reinventing them, making them their best selves at work, while automating this rig. I just found that fascinating.

Meghan M. Biro: Those are huge wins. Let's talk to our first guest more about how performance management can unlock big wins for employers today. Our first guest is my friend Jason Lauritsen. He has spent his career trying to make work better. First as an entrepreneur, then as a corporate HR pro. Now, he's a famous consultant and speaker. He's the author of the new book, *Unlocking High Performance: How to use performance management to engage and empower employees to reach their full potential.*

Meghan M. Biro: Welcome to WorkTrends, Jason.

Jason Lauritsen: Hey Meghan, thanks for having me.

Meghan M. Biro: You got it. Okay, Jason. Your new book is all about unlocking people's potential at work. What inspired you to write about this topic?

Jason Lauritsen: If I was going to write about anything, it seemed like this is kind of what it had to be. I think everything in my work comes back to this, somehow. Finding a way to actually get the workplace out of the way of our potential is where I think I

spend most of my time. I call that employee engagement. I think other people call it different things.

Jason Lauritsen: Yeah, this particular book, I actually didn't set out, interestingly, to write a book about performance. This ended up being a book about performance. That wasn't where I started. I started thinking about engagement and some other things. As we surveyed what was happening in the workplace and in the marketplace and what people seemed to be struggling with, it seemed to me that in this point in time, or in this time in history, that we've got this narrative going on around performance appraisals, and how much they suck and all that big [crosstalk 00:05:19].

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah.

Jason Lauritsen: There's sort of a void of ... Most of the conversation ends up being about technology or process and not really about human performance. In my mind, there's not a difference between what I have been doing. I call it employee engagement, but employee engagement, the purpose of employee engagement is to fuel better performance, or to unlock better performance. It seemed like the right place to be, and the right language to be using. Frankly, framing employee experience and employee-engagement in context of performance is really critical. Let's be honest, executives don't really care about engagement. They care about performance.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah. That's a really good point, by the way.

Jason Lauritsen: That's why it ended up being packaged the way it is. At the time, I don't know that I really understood how powerful and important that was, until I got into the book and started writing it. Then it really made sense as it came together.

Meghan M. Biro: Now CEOs might actually read your book, let's be honest.

Jason Lauritsen: Well, that's what I'm hoping. CEOs, managers, anybody that can affect the work-experience of others, and has a vested interest in seeing higher performance. That's who I'm hoping will pick it up.

Meghan M. Biro: I love the fact that you're like, "I'm still going to call it employee-engagement. For all you people out there who want to call it all these other words, the bottom line is, if you're not performing, you're not going to have a job.

Jason Lauritsen: Right. The other part of that is that the performance is the organizational imperative. You don't need an organization of any sort, whether it's for profit, non-for-profit, without the performance imperative, you don't need to exist. We have to produce a product, or a service that is of value to someone else. Without that performance, you don't need to be around and you'll go away.

That's the life blood, right? That's the oxygen, the blood, the whatever that keeps the organization alive. Everything is about performance.

Jason Lauritsen: We lose that, sometimes. I mean, I think that's where engagement has gotten such a bad rap over the years is the way we talk about it in HR and in other places. It feels like a kumbaya, touchy-feely kind of thing. Yes, it's about human emotion, and all of those things. When all the smoke clears from all the confusion we create, it still has to be about performance. Otherwise, it doesn't matter.

Meghan M. Biro: You're all about making work better. You and I have been both in the trenches, as well as in the world of digital media, talking about these topics for about a decade now. Early in the book, you say, "Work is a relationship, not a contract." This is something that's always stood out to me in some your writing and how you are living out what your inspired by. Tell us what you mean by this.

Jason Lauritsen: It's more so, something that kind of emerged, I guess, for me. I don't believe that it's a matter of opinion. I think it's a matter of actual fact that work is a relationship for the employee. The employee experiences work as a relationship.

Jason Lauritsen: Let me back up a little bit. What I started to realize is I was doing research for best places to work, when I was in one of my prior lives. We were looking at all this data. When you look at macro-level data for employee engagement, no matter where you are, whether it's the stuff I was looking at, or Gallup, or anybody else, the same kinds of things are always bubbling to the surface, in terms of what drives employee engagement. What drives employees to higher performance, higher contribution?

Jason Lauritsen: It's things like feeling valued, and trust, and knowing someone at work cares about me, and feeling appreciated, and all those things. Those are relational constructs. When you look at that through the lens of the employee, the employee is looking for work to feel like a relationship. When it feels like a healthy relationship, then I am motivated to higher performance.

Jason Lauritsen: The problem is, the way our workplaces are oriented is around we think about work as a contract with the employee. We treat it as a contract with the employee. If you need any evidence of that, just look at our HR processes. You know, job descriptions, policy manuals, performance appraisals, performance improvement plans. It's all about making sure your organization is getting their money's worth out of what the employee owes them.

Jason Lauritsen: You have that break where I'm an employee, showing up to work, wanting to be in relationship with my organization and my work. I get treated like I'm in a contractual relationship. All I hear is compliance-driven messaging, and have

compliance-driven interactions. It's like, no wonder, engagement sucks. No wonder it feels gross.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah, right. A good word, by the way.

Jason Lauritsen: Yeah, yeah, well you know. I use good complicated words.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah, I love it. It's like gross. #gross. How's that for today? Right? Why not?

Jason Lauritsen: I love it.

Meghan M. Biro: It's all about creating healthy relationships.

Jason Lauritsen: It is.

Meghan M. Biro: I think that scares, frankly, a lot of people.

Jason Lauritsen: No doubt.

Meghan M. Biro: I don't know why, but we're still having this conversation, Jason.

Jason Lauritsen: I think it's because, as a general rule, we aren't great at relationships. Go look at divorce rates. Go look at how people are interacting with each other in social media. Look at the national discourse and the decline of trust and all this. We're not doing a good job of helping people learn how to be in relationship with one another. You come into the workplace, the stakes are higher. There's money involved, now. It just amplifies how much we suck at relationships at time.

Jason Lauritsen: I think one of the things that I'm hoping will happen as a result of the book as people read it is they really think about relationship and start investing in their skills related to relationship and how to be in relationship with other human beings more effectively and in a more healthy way. That'll not only improve work, but it'll improve your whole life.

Meghan M. Biro: A lot of our listeners, I think it's safe to say, are in the middle of major transformations right. In the HR tech space, we focus a lot on how technology is transforming. You point out that we need to think about behavior transformation, too. What are the old-school HR practices that we have to let die, or that we have to change?

Jason Lauritsen: Is it flippant to say all of them? That's probably-

Meghan M. Biro: Well, it's truthful.

Jason Lauritsen: Yeah, I think that's probably a little too critical. So much of, going back to what I just said, so many of these systems and processes are oriented in or built on work-as-a-contract as a model. The way that we approach it is very much that way. If you think about the fundamentals of even performance management, since that's the book and what the book focuses on, performance. The traditional performance appraisal, I'm not going to belabor that, but clearly that's a broken process. I think people have started thinking about what they should do differently.

Jason Lauritsen: Within that, is fundamentally, things like feedback. When you are in, if you think about work-as-a-contract, when you're in a feedback situation. If I've hired you to come work on me ... I'm paying a contractor to come and do work in my house and it's not up to my satisfaction or whatever, I'm just going to tell you what I don't like and what needs to be different or whatever. I'm not worried about your feelings because of the contract. You're contracted to do the work at a certain spec and I'm your customer. That's how a contractual relationship-

Meghan M. Biro: Well, I mean, wait. Hold on. In an ideal world, a lot of people have trouble confronting stuff like this.

Jason Lauritsen: Agreed. I'm saying if you are going to get feedback. A lot of times, you're right. People just [crosstalk 00:13:05]-

Meghan M. Biro: They just avoid it.

Jason Lauritsen: They just don't and take the work that isn't up to their satisfaction and everybody ends up unhappy. If you're going to give feedback in a contractual situation like that, you're not thinking about the feelings of the contractor. It's a contractual relationship. I hired you to do this. You're not doing it the way that I expect. You need to fix that. That's how a contractor work.

Jason Lauritsen: The problem is, that's how we often treat it, if we're doing feedback. In work, that's how it's been treated historically. A manager's like, "Listen, you're supposed to be doing your job at my expectation. You're not. Fix it, or you won't get to work here anymore."

Jason Lauritsen: The problem is, if you care about relationship, like I would never go to my wife and say, "Hey, listen. When we got married, I expected this. I expected you to be ... " whatever. Pick whatever. You know, "I expected back rubs every Thursday evening. You're not doing that and if you don't fix that, this marriage is over." If I want to stay married, that is not how I'd approach feedback.

Jason Lauritsen: You think about it, relational context, that's broken. There's a whole bunch of stuff that's broken like that. Honestly, that's one of the things that I write about

in the book. If you want to figure out what needs to be fixed, what is broken, try it through the lens of a personal relationship, like I just did. Think about, "How would that go? If I used that approach with someone I really cared about in my personal life, would that approach work?" If it doesn't, if it would hurt the relationship, then you probably should stop doing that to employees, too. Figure out how to do it in a way that builds relationship.

- Meghan M. Biro: Everybody listening out there? #worktrends. Share your thoughts. How are you mirroring what you want to be and how you wanted to be treated? Very important stuff here.
- Meghan M. Biro: Let's talk about the upside for organizations that do this, that do transform and create a great place to work. Yes, I just said that. Forgive me. I just also feel like a great place to work, that's a whole nother conversation, by the way.
- Meghan M. Biro: You used to work closely with Quantum's Best Places to Work Awards. What did you learn from these award-winning companies. I know you and I can get snarky on all of this. But really, what did you learn? That's important.
- Jason Lauritsen: What I learned is what's actually going on inside of those companies is not what gets written about most often. So much of the focus is on these perks and all of the fancy bells and whistles. It's interesting to read about so that get written about and it gets advertised. "We've got a big slide and ping pong tables, and bring your dog to work, and all of this."
- Jason Lauritsen: What's actually going on, I have a presentation or a key note that I do about this very topic. I boil it down to three things that the research suggests are going on in these organizations. They're really good at creating clarity for their employees, which is about communication and reducing the level of uncertainty that exists in the work relationship. They're good at fostering connection, a feeling of connection between employees with their colleagues and with their leaders.
- Jason Lauritsen: They're showing the love. They're creating an environment where people feel cared for and appreciated and valued. At work, those are the words we use. In our personal life, we would call that feeling love.
- Jason Lauritsen: Those are the three things that happen. They happen differently across different workplaces. Those are what are really at the basis. There's some organizations that are doing some exceptional things around that with their employees.
- Meghan M. Biro: Do you have any examples for us, Jason? Especially, I'm particularly interested about the love part. Who's doing love right, out there, as a company? What does that look like or feel like?

Jason Lauritsen: It comes back to being in relationship with your people. I know that when you think love, everybody goes to, "How would that even look in the workplace?" It's really about deeply caring for people. Just like a healthy marriage looks very different depending on the people that are involved in the marriage, organizations look differently as well.

Jason Lauritsen: One of the companies that I've talked about a lot that blew my mind when I had an opportunity to study them and do a case study on them is the Motley Fool. Most people know for the financial advice. They're an exceptional company from the product that they put out. But they're a more exceptional company, in my opinion, based on the culture that they've created internally.

Jason Lauritsen: It boils down to certain things about like just how they think about people and how they care for people. It starts all the way down to in their company values, they have a company value that is a stated value around ... Now I'm drawing a blank about how they actually state it. It's a value that says like, "Release your Motley," or "Use your Motley."

Jason Lauritsen: The whole idea, the Motley is something that in your very first day at work, you figure out what that thing is. It's like your own core value. They put that in their organization core values to say, "What you care about, we also care about." So there's that.

Jason Lauritsen: They also think about, like I talk about, I talked with Lee, who's their head of HR there. He said, "They believe that when you come to work there, that it should be the last time you ever have to look for a job." They believe they're investing in a relationship with you that should be able to ebb and flow and change throughout and over the course of your career. That you can partner together in a way to create a career experience that works for both parties.

Meghan M. Biro: Interesting.

Jason Lauritsen: That kind of commitment, that's what love looks like. That's what love looks like in a committed, two-person human relationship, too. It's exceptional.

Meghan M. Biro: Well, and I think it's also realistic. I mean, people aren't staying careers for a decade plus anymore. I think it's smart, as well, quite frankly.

Jason Lauritsen: Well, yeah, and they actually mean it.

Meghan M. Biro: We're all hopping around, now. But hey, wouldn't it be great if we have a boomerang situation in there, somewhere, to [crosstalk 00:19:01]-



Jason Lauritsen: Well, and I mean, they legitimate think people can stay there forever. They've built an organization that can ebb and flow with you, as you move through the different stages in your life. That's what happens, for most people, you know, "This relationship works for me right now. Then my needs to change, or my desires change, or my motivations change."

Jason Lauritsen: They've created this whole environment; they honestly believe that you should be able to find what you need. I'm sure there are times where that doesn't play out and that people leave. That happens everywhere. They believe that they can do that and they're building a workplace around that. Like I said, it's extraordinary.

Meghan M. Biro: Well, shout outs to them. If you're listening in, call us, tweet with us, write us. We want to hear from you, because that is cool stuff. I love that whole idea of, "We're treating you as a person. We know that you're going to change. It's inevitable. We all are going to change." If you're not changing, let's talk about.

Jason Lauritsen: Sure, and as you change, let's talk about it.

Meghan M. Biro: Exactly, exactly.

Jason Lauritsen: Be in relationship.

Meghan M. Biro: Okay, so talk to me about what the most controversial idea is in your book.

Jason Lauritsen: Well, the thing that I think most people will think is the most controversial is that I go after the 360 degree feedback, or the 360 degree survey or assessment, in the way that it's been historically done, and the way that it's still done in most places today. I call it the most harmful HR practice ever invented. Mainly because in the way that it's been traditionally done, here I am plowing along. Then HR or a management consultant shows up with this survey. They're going to go around to everybody that works closest with me, on a day-to-day basis, ask them to confidentially provide a pile of feedback about me, that then gets dropped on me.

Jason Lauritsen: All it does is ... Yes, it maybe provides some interesting development feedback or input, but it kills a whole pile of relationships. If one person in there decides to take a shot at you or unload some grievance that they've had with you from six months ago, you don't know where it came from. Now everybody that's closest to you is suspect. It's like the mole, you know? You've got to sort out who the mole is. It's just a terrible, awful, trust-killing exercise that I think needs to be rethought and redone.

Meghan M. Biro: I'm actually completely in agreement with you on that. It's old school. I'm sorry, but it's not going to work as a strategy moving forward when we talk about retaining talent. It's a trust deal-breaker, and a culture breaker. Even worse, you know? One leads to the other.

Jason Lauritsen: Yep. There's ways to do peer-to-peer feedback that builds relationship and is productive and valuable. It's harder. It requires a little more courage. That way of doing, the confidential 360 is just awful and really should be stopped.

Meghan M. Biro: What are the big ideas you want people to walk away with when they read your book?

Jason Lauritsen: What we've been talking about most of the day today is the biggest thing that I hope people will get. Is that work is a relationship for employees. If we are going to create an environment and an experience of work that will truly unlock people's potential, that work experience, the employee experience, needs to be designed to feel like a healthy relationship. That's the foundational idea that the book is built on.

Jason Lauritsen: I don't know if this is radical or not, but I think as we're reinventing performance management, that we can create a system for managing performance that sustainably creates that experience for employees on an ongoing basis. We can take what we think of performance appraisal, the performance management system today, which is a relationship killer, and I think we can actually flip it over and recreate it and reinvent it in a way that actually fuels and sustains an employee experience that feels like a healthy relationship. Thus, unlocks people's best at work over the long-haul.

Meghan M. Biro: Makes sense to me. All right. It is crystal ball time, Jason. When you look into the future, what do you hope we're going to see at work in the next 5 to 10 years?

Jason Lauritsen: I love that you asked me what I hope versus what do I think will happen. Those are two different questions. What I hope that I'll see in the next 5 to 10 years is a lot more love in the workplace. A lot more caring, a lot more appreciation, a lot more communication, a lot more support, a lot more commitment. That we start to really embrace and get back to understanding that we're humans. If we assume the best in people and we care for them where they are and we see the best, they'll often give that to us. That's what my hope is.

Meghan M. Biro: I love it. Thank you for stopping by today.

Jason Lauritsen: Thanks Meghan. Thanks for having me.

Kevin Grossman: Meghan, that's just so much good insight from Jason. Jason's a really good guy. We've known him for years. Him talking about helping people perform and reach their full potential, that's great.

Kevin Grossman: Now, your conversation with Jason, it made we think about how we're preparing the next generation to succeed for the future of work. I had a great conversation with Dr. Pamela Howze, she works at the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Her organization is all about expanding apprenticeships and work-based learning, so we had a really good conversation about that.

Kevin Grossman: Dr. Howze, you shared with me that about 60% of the American workforce doesn't have a college degree. How are you helping employers today create alternate paths to good jobs?

Dr. Pamela Howze: We're doing that in a variety of ways at the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. One of my work focuses are apprenticeship. We're really seeing apprenticeship becoming a very popular alternative in more non-traditional sectors, such as healthcare, IT, cyber security, and of course in advanced manufacturing. It continues to be very popular in the construction trades. We're finding that employers are really using this as a viable solution to really grow their own.

Dr. Pamela Howze: We're also doing a variety of projects with on-the-job training. So trying to attract people who are underemployed or unemployed into advance manufacturing jobs, by putting them on the job with a seasoned mentor or trainer and helping them get up to speed rather quickly. We know that these jobs pay very, very well. They don't necessarily require a four-year degree. One of the things we're really focusing on as well is industry-recognized credentials in all of those sectors.

Kevin Grossman: That's one of the under-reported things when we talk about the unemployment, right? We always lose the fact of the issue of the underemployed. I think that's really important, that you're really helping to address that with the work that you do.

Kevin Grossman: Dr. Howze, let's clear up some of the misconceptions about apprenticeship programs and some of the differences. Can you talk about what exactly an apprenticeship program is? The difference between that and an internship program? And how employers are actually focusing and leveraging apprenticeship programs today?

Dr. Pamela Howze: There are required components of an apprenticeship program. One of those components is the apprentice is actually employed by the employer. An apprentice is always paid for their time spent on the job learning. Actually, they

have to have a component that is comprised of related instruction. Most often, we see related instruction take place at the local community colleges.

Dr. Pamela Howze: They have to be paid a progressive wage scale. What that means is as they progress throughout the apprenticeship and as they progress, their wages increase. We see apprentices who finish their apprenticeship are at a very sustainable living wage at the end of their apprenticeship program.

Dr. Pamela Howze: The last component is they must have a mentor, which is a seasoned person who's been working in that job for a long time, to really teach them all the things that they need to know about that particular occupation or skill.

Kevin Grossman: Why do you think, and this is kind of a little segue to what you were just saying but I've always been curious about it and have my own theories as well, but why do think that in America have been so resistant to very, highly valuable trade-skill types of work and jobs? I'm not trying to go down any rabbit holes here, between either of us. I'm just curious, right. These are really, really important jobs for the very kind of infrastructure fabric of our nation and other industrialized nations. Why is it that there's been this stigma attached to that?

Dr. Pamela Howze: When you're talking with parents of young people, they always want their children to do better than they did. There's this misconception that the only way to be successful in the workforce is to [inaudible 00:28:27] a four-year degree. What we're seeing is that most jobs in America don't require a four-year degree. Only about 33% of those jobs require a four-year degree.

Dr. Pamela Howze: We're really pushing all of these young people down that educational pathway. We're seeing that they're not able to be successful in the workforce, because of the kinds of degrees that they're obtaining. There just aren't jobs out there in those fields.

Dr. Pamela Howze: A lot of these kids are acquiring monumental student loan debt to go get that four-year degree. Then they're not able to get a sustainable wage when they graduate, so they can't pay their student loans. They end up defaulting. It ruins their credit. It's really become quite a cycle here in the US.

Dr. Pamela Howze: Honestly, traditional educational systems have gotten away from really training people for work, but really training people more for an academic degree. Students don't really understand what the world of work looks like. They don't understand the opportunities they have. Parents or students don't understand the kind of wages that these positions pay, which can be a very sustainable wage right out of high school.

Kevin Grossman: Completely agreed. It's a very much needed realignment of the American dream and the fact that it is still there when you look at it through that lens. You really

brought up an important point of the sheer, painful kaboom that's coming with the student loan debt, that's just really weighing on not only the shoulders of those students who have the debt, but just even from an economic perspective. We don't know what kind of repercussions we're going to see from that, when those start defaulting even more. It is a big, big issue, economically.

Kevin Grossman: So then, you've already touched on some of this, obviously in our discussion. Why is it again important for parents and young people today, for these kinds of apprenticeship training programs? What is it that you would say to them, first, to encourage them to look at this as a potential path for their children?

Dr. Pamela Howze: I think really trying to figure out what the student wants to be when they grow up. We know a lot of kids are not very academic in high school, that learning is painful for them. We've got a lot of success stories of young high school students who go into an apprenticeship training program. They had no idea what an apprenticeship was. They didn't know what that looked like. They certainly didn't know what kind of jobs were out there for them.

Dr. Pamela Howze: Honestly, teachers go to college to be teachers, and sometimes teachers don't really understand what the labor market looks like. Really trying to educate and take a systems approach to educate our educators, to educate our parents, to educate our students, that there are real, viable opportunities out there.

Dr. Pamela Howze: The other thing we have to think about is the unemployment rate is the lowest that it's been in 20 years. That creates a very tight labor market, in that employers have openings but they can't find people that can take their skilled positions. Knowing that these skilled positions can pay anywhere from \$50 to \$75 thousand a year, which is a great way for a young person, in their early 20s when they finish their apprenticeship program.

Kevin Grossman: That's a great wage for even older workers that have been underemployed for a long time, as well.

Dr. Pamela Howze: That's correct.

Kevin Grossman: It's all across the board there. Then lastly, based on that advice that you'd give to parents of students today, what's advice that you would give to employers who are struggling to find these people at the end of the day?

Dr. Pamela Howze: What I often tell employers is that this is an excellent opportunity to grow your own talent. You can recruit a young person into an apprenticeship program. You can teach them the way of work in your organization. They can get the related instruction outside of the job. They can work with a seasoned mentor. Really, it's a customizable training program, while the apprentices can earn money while they learn what they need to learn to be successful on the job.

Dr. Pamela Howze: The other thing I always tell employers is, "Look at your existing workforce." Who are your workers who can pass a drug test? Who come to work every day? Who are loyal and dedicated? Why can't we put those people in an apprenticeship program for a job at the next higher level, and then back-fill more entry-level jobs with people who maybe are unemployed or underemployed?

Dr. Pamela Howze: It's really become very difficult for employers to find the talent they need. An apprenticeship is really an excellent way to have a customized earn and learn program.

Kevin Grossman: Thank you so much, again, Dr. Howze. It's really exciting the important work you're doing at the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Thanks again for being on WorkTrends.

Dr. Pamela Howze: It's my pleasure.

Meghan M. Biro: Thanks, Kevin. It's really encouraging to see apprenticeship programs helping to skill up so many people. Let's keep that unemployment rate low, shall we.

Meghan M. Biro: Thanks for listening to WorkTrends from TalentCulture. Join us every Wednesday at 1:30 PM Eastern for a live Twitter Chat with our podcast guests. To learn more about guests featured on today's show, visit the show notes for this episode at [talentculture.com](http://talentculture.com), and help us spread the word. Subscribe to WorkTrends wherever you listen to podcasts. Leave us a rating, review in iTunes. Share WorkTrends with your coworkers, your friends. Look forward to it. See you next time.