

Meghan M. Biro: I have a burning question. How is work working for you? On this week's episode of WorkTrends, we're talking about the modern work experience. How it's evolving and how we can all make work better. This episode is sponsored by Citrix.

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 reimagining work. For more information, be sure to check us out at talentculture.com. And join us live on Twitter every Wednesday at 1:30 PM Eastern using the hashtag #worktrends.

Meghan M. Biro: Thank you for listening to The WorkTrends Podcast. Now we want to hear from you and what you think about the podcast. What you like, what topics you want us to cover in 2019, and where you think the world of work is going. Please take our very brief feedback survey today and tell us what you think. The survey is live and available at talentculture.com/survey. Thanks again for tuning in.

Meghan M. Biro: I'm excited to dig into the idea of the employee experience more with today's guest. Tim Minahan is a Chief Marketing Officer at Citrix, and he knows a thing or two about how work is changing. Welcome to WorkTrends, Tim.

Tim Minahan: Thank you for having me, Meghan.

Meghan M. Biro: So first of all, Tim, tell us where you are right now and where your team members are. Because we are all working globally in real time, and you just never know, right?

Tim Minahan: Indeed. It seems every week is an illustration of that distributed work style. I am here in Tokyo this morning. My team is literally everywhere. While we have our headquarters in Florida, we have major sites in Raleigh, Santa Clara, and then obviously our global team as well. So work really happens wherever you need it to.

Meghan M. Biro: Tokyo. That is so cool. Now, I will say, I've been to Tokyo Airport, but I actually haven't hung out in the city. How's it going so far?

Tim Minahan: Yeah, I would definitely make the time. It is a fantastic place and the people are amazing.

Meghan M. Biro: Well, you sound awfully calm. That must be something about your demeanor that you're telling us, right? 'Cause I mean, all those lights and the time change, good for you. That's awesome stuff.

Meghan M. Biro: So listen, Tim. You clearly are a very busy guy. What does an average work day look like for you?

Tim Minahan: The easy answer to that is there is no average day. And I believe I'm not alone anymore. You know, you think about just how we work today, whether you're officially a remote worker or officially an office worker, those lines are blurring. We all tend to work in multiple locations. You know, for me, getting up in the morning. Going to the gym. Maybe engaging in work on my tablet. Hopping in a car or a train and working on my smartphone. And then getting to work and pulling out my laptop and maybe I'm in my office for 30 minutes before I'm off to a customer meeting, a partner meeting, or meeting with the team.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah, I know. It makes sense. Where are you actually located? Where's HQ for you?

Tim Minahan: HQ for me personally, I pay a mortgage in Atlanta. HQ for the company is in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. So my office tends to be on the plane.

Meghan M. Biro: That's kind of exciting, though. You have a good attitude. That's what matters most, right, Tim?

Tim Minahan: Absolutely.

Meghan M. Biro: So we are hearing a lot these days about the "employee experience". And I'm using air quotes. Why is there such a focus on employee experience right now? Like, what is with all this buzz around it? 'Cause its happening. We know this, we can sense it. We can feel it.

Tim Minahan: Yeah. Well, Meghan, I think know more than ever there is a rising global crisis around talent. And there's a number of different factors affecting that. You know, the first one is just sheer demographics. There just aren't enough people to fill all the jobs that we have. In fact, I was reading a McKinsey study recently that estimates that by 2020, there'll be a shortage of 95 million medium- to high-skilled workers around the globe. And a lot of the traditional work models that we've had where we build a big office or a call center or a manufacturing facility, it's only frustrating this more. Where often times the talent that we need is not located anywhere near where our work hub is.

Tim Minahan: I think a great example that we've seen recently is Amazon and their search for an HQ2. Which soon turned out to be an HQ3. Because they still couldn't find a critical mass of talent at any given place. And that's really just one aspect of it. The other thing is obviously you can't ... We're experiencing it in our personal lives, but also in our work lives. You know, the world of business is changing. Every business is rapidly becoming a digital business. And often times the skills that got us to where we are and organizations to where we are aren't exactly what we need to go forward. So companies are really struggling with, "How do I close that skills gap? How do I develop my employees?"

Tim Minahan: There was a recent Harris poll that I thought was particularly telling where they surveyed about 1500 CEOs around the globe. And the number one barrier to growth that CEOs identified was not just access to talent, but interestingly enough, access to developer talent. Where ... And this was across every industry and you initially say, "Well, gee, that's odd." But then if you think if every business is becoming a digital business, then of course, developer talent is at a premium.

Tim Minahan: And then the third thing that I think is really telling is if you're fortunate enough to secure the talent, if you're fortunate enough to develop the skills you need, the third component that is just alarming is that the latest Gallup poll indicated that 67% of employees are disengaged at work. And so solving this talent crisis requires folks to embrace more flexible work schedules. To allow workers to work where and how they want. To give them the tools and collaboration platforms that they prefer so they can work how they want regardless of whether they're in a physical office, whether they're working from home, or whether they're one of these emerging gig workers that is literally working everywhere.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah. And I mean, let's layer on to this complexity cake the idea that we actually have to keep people engaged. Like, you start thinking about that, and we're on a whole 'nother stratosphere.

Tim Minahan: Oh, absolutely. And you know, that was the other part of that Gallup study that found that those companies that were more effective at keeping employees engaged did indeed allow them these more flexible work schedules. They weren't anchoring them to any given physical work hub. They were allowing them to adopt the tools and technology that they wanted to prefer the way that they wanted to work. And so engagement is absolutely vital. And there's a multitude of ways to do that. Really making sure that you're providing obviously the one we all talk about. It's the right culture. Folks want to work for a company with a purpose.

Tim Minahan: But there's also this blend of technical space and digital space that employees require to be engaged. To work the most productively ... In the most productive ways possible. And companies need to balance those three attributes.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah. I mean, when you start looking at the companies that have the highest level of employee engagement, guess what? They're also likely to be more productive. And the data is in it, right?

Tim Minahan: Yeah, absolutely.

Meghan M. Biro: So it's one [crosstalk 00:07:57] of causation that's happening. And okay, yes we brought up the P word, right? This is another buzzword that everybody's talking about is productivity. And I ... You know, companies are spending a ton on helping their people be more productive. But I'm not sure it's working. So talk to us about what we're missing here. And I know the audience, if you're out there and you're listening, share your thoughts with us. Hashtag #worktrends. Anyone else feeling like productivity is becoming buzzy buzz? Talk to us, Tim. Level with us.

Tim Minahan: Yeah, absolutely. To link it back to our last discussion around employee engagement, those companies that can create that environment that allows employees to work in more flexible ways, gives them the technology they need to work where and how they want, are not only seeing greater retention of employees, but to your point, are seeing really major business impacts on ... You know, the latest McKinsey study indicates that those that are providing that type of environment are witnessing 20% higher productivity, 21% higher profitability, and 20% better customer service satisfaction. Because if your employees are happy and engaged, it carries over to your customers.

Tim Minahan: So to answer your question around productivity and why we're seeing this productivity gap, there is an interesting trend that's occurred over the past decade or so. Which is despite all the choices we have, despite all the investment in technologies ... You know, mobile devices, tablets, applications, SaaS applications, et cetera, this new collaboration in social channels ... Despite all that investment in technology, our productivity on the whole, U.S. productivity has continued to trend down.

Tim Minahan: And it's at some of its lowest productivity gross overall. And we've done a lot of mulling on this and talking with customers and analysts and others. And there's a lot of different conjecture on what's causing this. But at the end of the day, it's actually complexity. There's just too many apps, too many different channels, too much content switching that makes all of us less productive and is contributing to this disengagement we're seeing with the American workforce.

Meghan M. Biro: You know what, Tim? Layer on the fact that Facebook is now struggling. Large social networks are feeling that pull of people actually wanting to go smaller and to be in smaller pods and to really communicate and collaborate in a more genuine fashion. So clearly these are complex times. I just want to say to all you folks who have been betting on Amazon and Facebook and Google and all these other big brands, watch out. Because we are moving I think rapidly towards not only communicating and communicating well, but also communicating in more genuine ways that impact our lives, our whole selves. Because we bring our whole selves now to work, too.

Meghan M. Biro: So clearly complex, clearly things are changing. Companies who are transforming in a digital way or have already done so, kudos to you. I think it's good stuff. It makes sense to me that since the work experience is changing, people need new tools, too, to do that work well wherever and whenever they're working. Talk to us about some of the key tools people need to work. And are we going less is more? Is more less? Like, what are your thoughts on this?

Tim Minahan: Yeah. Interestingly enough, having been in the technology space now for more decades than I care to admit here ...

Meghan M. Biro: No, it's okay. You're in a [crosstalk 00:11:49]-

Tim Minahan: What we are-

Meghan M. Biro: Tim? Tim, you're in a safe, trusted place. It's okay.

Tim Minahan: I appreciate that. But what we're seeing now, we're on the cusp to the point you were making about Google and Amazon, et cetera. We're on the cusp of an employee revolution that all of this choice, all of these devices, all of these apps, all of these collaboration channels are now beginning to negatively impact the employee experience. Negatively impact overall productivity. And if you think about that, think about enterprise applications. Whether it's a travel expense tool like Concur or a HR tool like Workday or a sales force automation tool like Salesforce, you know, most of us weren't hired nor did we desire to spend our days engaged in those applications. We really want to have quick access to the tasks and the insights that we need to be productive and to get our jobs done.

Tim Minahan: And right now, we're seeing the bulk of our time being tied up in all these applications. You think about a typical employee. Not only do they work in multiple different locations throughout the day, they engage in different apps. In fact, often times an employee needs to navigate as many as four or five different applications to get a single business process done. And because we're collaborating across all these channels, information is being hidden in these applications and collaboration channels like Slack and Teams and traditional emails and files and documents. And we spend a good part of our work week, about 20% of it, actually just searching for the information we need to-

Meghan M. Biro: Isn't that scary?

Tim Minahan: You know, to make decisions.

Meghan M. Biro: Yeah, and I mean [crosstalk 00:13:35]-

Tim Minahan: It's terrifying [crosstalk 00:13:36]-

Meghan M. Biro: I just want to say something, Tim, too. To add to this, now we have AI. We have artificial intelligence at our fingertips that will tell managers and employees alike how productive we are by our keystrokes. By how ... What emoticons we're using in email. So if you start layering on more and more and more and more, you're never gonna get to the heart of people's behaviors. That's the other scary part to me, right? And that's what you're saying, too. It's-

Tim Minahan: No, no-

Meghan M. Biro: Where does it end?

Tim Minahan: Right. And then to make matters worse on a most simple level, just think about a typical employee in their day and they need to navigate multiple different applications. And right now, that means they need to navigate multiple different interfaces, right? They're doing work in a different way in each one of these channels or apps, and they need to remember a different log in and password for each app. Which is why the number one question to the help desk at any company is, "Hey, what's my password?"

Meghan M. Biro: There you go.

Tim Minahan: And it just all creates a level of disengagement and frustration at work.

Meghan M. Biro: We just talked about your own team. You're in Tokyo. The rest of the team is spread all over the world. We're working with people we never would have known a few decades ago. How do you think technology is helping companies across new talent pools?

Tim Minahan: Yeah, Meghan, that's a question that I think about quite often. And, you know, to get back to your earlier comment around the shift from traditional organizational structure, whether it's large orgs like Google or Amazon or the like, to much more agile teams that are brought together very quickly to solve given problems, in fact the leading companies are beginning to blur the lines between full-time employees, gig workers, and contractors. They're moving toward these pools of talent, right? Where they understand the individual skills. Who has the best skills or knowledge base or experience on a given problem.

Tim Minahan: And they can rapidly bring them together to solve particular business issues. And give them a digital workspace environment which they can engage with one another regardless of where they are around the world, where those team members are located. And then once the solution or resolution is implemented, they can dissolve those teams quite quickly and reassemble them later. That's the level of agility that we're beginning to see in forward-thinking companies.

Meghan M. Biro: It's so cool. And I will also say that there's employees who love that, too. They love change. There's so many of us that are becoming gig workers just for that reason.

Tim Minahan: Well, Meghan, one of the things that's most intriguing to me is how companies are now trying to leverage technology from things like AI and machine learning and other automation capabilities to not create more complexity, but to simplify the experience for the employee and to rethink their traditional work models. A good example recently is eBay, one of the largest online marketplaces on the planet. They recognized a while ago that they couldn't hire a critical mass of skilled employees around any given call center.

Tim Minahan: So they're beginning to rethink that model in which they're using a digital workspace to arm more of a gig worker environment ... That stay-at-home parent in Montana, that retiree in Florida, that gig worker, you know, here in Tokyo ... With that knowledge base and the tools that they need to be productive and answer our questions. And giving them the latitude ... Just like you've seen in models like Uber and Lyft and others ... To work how and where they want. If they want to work three hours and take calls, that's great. If they want to work a full day in order to respond to customer support calls, they can do that, too.

Tim Minahan: But they've realized that they need to simplify the experience for the employee and then rethink the work model so it isn't organized around a given facility or hub. That it's more distributed and you're arming employees with the knowledge base to be effective wherever they are.

Meghan M. Biro: You know, Tim, speaking of distributed or flexible work, I know that some security people out there are kind of ... They're getting a little nervous. You know who you are, my friends out there that are specializing in that. I could see it in your eyes on Twitter. How do we control all the data and keep everything secure? What's your response to the whole data security conversation?

Tim Minahan: Yeah. Obviously, security is top of mind. In fact, when we talk with our customers, the three chief business outcomes they're trying to balance are experience ... Which we've been talking about now, how to combine a superior customer and employee experience ... Choice, right? How do I continue to allow them to have the choice to use the technology or tools or devices that they want to be productive. And then certainly right smack dab in the middle is security. How do I enable this level of freedom while ensuring that our company's applications and information and infrastructure are secure?

Tim Minahan: And I think again the response has been to all of this complexity is merely to add more complexity. So a lot of companies have gone off and invested in a host of

different security product that address a certain component of that story. Whether it's, "Are we gonna secure the device?" Or whether we're gonna secure the data or the like? And we at Citrix have taken a different approach. We believe that the future of computing, the only device that matters is going to be the human. And so we've organized all of our experience models and security models around the individual worker. And so we deliver this through what we call a digital workspace that gives them single sign-on access to everything they need to be productive.

Tim Minahan: But when work happens within that workspace, we can contextually apply security policies based on that individual's behavior. So if they normally work in an office and log onto customer information from there, great. But as soon as they're on some foreign device or some strange Wi-Fi or some new location, we might apply a second layer of authentication. It doesn't get in the way of the employee experience, but keeps IT and the Chief Security Officer happy because we're detecting and addressing potential security threats before they happen.

Meghan M. Biro: Okay. So here's the fun part with Tim, right? What do you think will change about the employee experience in the next five years? And just, you know, be honest with us, Tim. 'Cause I think a lot's gonna change. And I think it's all happening at the same time.

Tim Minahan: I fully agree, Meghan. We at Citrix believe that work will change more dramatically in the next five years than it has in the previous 75. This convergence of technology and now simplification of the access to that technology is enabling companies to begin to engage in entirely new work models. Whether it's helping close that skills gap by having something like a digital workspace guide a user through their day, giving them the insights and presenting them with the tasks that they need to be productive without them needing to navigate multiple different applications ... Whether it's examining new distributive work models where increasingly you don't have a physical location to bring people into.

Tim Minahan: And instead are organizing around a digital workspace that allows them to work wherever and however they need to and come together in a collaborative environment. You begin to look at new models in which the technology is literally helping companies or helping employees perform better in their jobs by arming with real time insights and presenting them with real time activities that need to get done. So that they don't need most of their day searching for information or drilling through multiple different applications to get a single process done. So we've gotten to a point where we're gonna organize work. Now guiding employees through work. And then ultimately, to begin to automate certain portions of work in the future.

Meghan M. Biro: Good stuff, Tim. I want to thank you for stopping by from Tokyo.

Tim Minahan: It's great to be here, Meghan. Thanks for making the time.

Meghan M. Biro: Thanks again to this week's sponsor, Citrix.

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. And help us spread the word. Subscribe to WorkTrends wherever you listen to podcasts. Leave us a rating, review at iTunes. Share WorkTrends with your co-workers, your friends.

Meghan M. Biro: Look forward to it. See you next time.