Meghan: Do do do do do. Wait what? Did you hear that sound? It's the robots, they're coming for us. No but seriously. AI is a real tool that's actually influencing how HR teams recruit, hire, and help their employees. On today's episode of Work Trends we're digging into how HR teams are really using AI, and I mean that, like really using AI with Jeanne Meister.

Meghan: [00:00:30] Welcome to the Work Trends podcast from Talent Culture. I'm your host Meghan M. Biro. Every week we interview interesting people who are re-imagining work. And join us on Twitter every Wednesday 1:30 PM eastern using the hashtag Work Trends. If you're ever scrolling headlines and AI pops up, you know you better hold onto your horses right? I'm being [00:01:00] serious. Sit down if you're listening, put on your seatbelt.

Meghan: I was reading an article on CNBC about how IBM is using AI in its HR processes and two stats blew me away. First IBM says their artificial intelligence can predict which employees will leave a job with 95% accuracy. Wow. First of all is this real? Is my first question. And talk about good intel. All right so get ready [00:01:30] for the second one. IBM has replaced 30% of their HR staff with AI. I'm going to just let that settle for a little bit. A little marinate, let's move in on the marination here.

Meghan: So what do you do as an HR person trying to innovate and keep your job? I think it's all about being open to innovation and change. The CEO of IBM Ginni Rometty says, "We should expect AI to change 100% of jobs [00:02:00] in the next five to 10 years." I think that's pretty good food for thought as we start our conversation about AI for HR. And let's get into it shall we? Jeanne Meister is the founding partner of Future Workplace, an HR advisory and research firm focused on the future of learning and working. She has written four books about the future of work. And today she's [00:02:30] here to talk about one of my favorite topics. AI for HR. Welcome to Work Trends Jeanne.

Jeanne Meister: Thank you for having me Meghan it's a pleasure.

Meghan: Well what's so fun Jeanne is that you and I have known each other in social media circles for, I don't know how many years, countless years. And this is like one of the first times we're actually talking to each other.

Jeanne Meister: Absolutely. And we're hopefully going to meet at SHRM in a few weeks.

Meghan: We are definitely meeting in a couple of weeks in [00:03:00] Vegas. Be there or be a rhombus. Okay?

Jeanne Meister: Right.

Meghan: All right. So I know AI for HR is one of your favorite issues to cover. You even developed a course all about this. Which is kinda fancy. Why this topic, and why now Jeanne?

Jeanne Meister:	So why this topic? We have network of senior HR and talent and learning leaders called the future workplace network. And we routinely survey our member community. [00:03:30] And about a year and a half ago we asked them, "What was the number one topic that they were concerned about when they think about plans for 2020 and beyond?" And it was not really knowing enough about how to leverage the power of AI for HR. The headlines tell a very confusing story.
Jeanne Meister:	On the one hand you read that from peer research 48% of jobs will be eliminated with AI. [00:04:00] Then you see from Gardner that by 2020 AI will create more jobs than it will eliminate. So we wanted to clear up the confusion. And importantly we identified 12 HR pioneers who all have been using AI for HR for at least the last two years. So we wanted to make this be a call to action for HR leaders to go through how HR pioneers [00:04:30] were using AI. What were the fundamentals? And to help them develop an action plan for their own organization.
Meghan:	To the audience listening, I know you might be having a funny face when we say two years. And you are pioneering, and you're futuristic. Right? But that's real Jeanne. Right? It's been only a couple of years when we look at the context of how long it's been. I would love to hear some real examples. So how are people using AI right now [00:05:00] in a way that's meaningful, impactful, you name it.
Jeanne Meister:	Yeah. So a couple of, first of all the earliest one is Hilton Hotels. Right? They went on their AI journey in talent acquisition back in 2015. And so each year they receive about a million applications and they have to manage as many as 45,000 candidates for very high volume roles like customer call [00:05:30] center operators. So they saw using AI and in particularly in their case using AI for screening and sourcing, and interviewing was a way to increase the efficiency and the speed to hire. So they actually were able to lower the speed to hire from six weeks to one week for about 30 to 50 candidates.
Jeanne Meister:	So the key is... what [00:06:00] I've seen and among the practitioners that we've profiled in our course using AI for HR is they have identified talent acquisition as the early function to experiment with AI. And then right after that they're looking at how can AI be used for new hire onboarding? Answering all those frequently asked questions. And then the real opportunity [00:06:30] is how to use AI for internal talent mobility. Moving someone around the organization so that they understand the new job role possibilities for them so they can stay in the company longer rather than just leaving.
Jeanne Meister:	So that's, I think the earliest example. And what we've seen is that using AI for HR isn't just an HR initiative, it's very [00:07:00] much a team sport. So it's really bringing together AI, IT, employee experience, customer experience, communications. And really having a shared vision for how are we going to use this. And in some organizations they have a center of excellence for artificial intelligence. Right? So then the HR team is interacting with that COE to plan

	[00:07:30] a change in workflows, and in transforming key roles like the roles that are impacted in talent acquisition.
Meghan:	Did you just say COE?
Jeanne Meister:	Center of Excellence.
Meghan:	Uh huh. See that everyone? Very fancy. I like it. And the more people in play, as you said it's a team sport. So I think we're going to be seeing more of this because it's not just linear. It's [00:08:00] everybody.
Jeanne Meister:	Yes. It's everybody. And I think we're going to be seeing a lot of innovative use cases. In many cases the low hanging fruit is talent acquisition 'cause there's a lot of functions in the TA space that are routine and that are high volume jobs. Right? But I think the excitement in the next months to come is how AI is used to create the equivalent [00:08:30] of the LinkedIn inside a company for internal talent mobility. And how can AI be used for coaching. Right? For not to replace a human coach but to give people nudges about what they could be doing differently. So very exciting times. In fact Future Workplace has a partnership with SHRM that we're announcing on June 24th.
Jeanne Meister:	We have broken up our five week [00:09:00] online course of using AI for HR, and created three mini courses. And in each of our courses we're profiling HR practitioners. So it's not just me talking, it's HR leaders from Hilton, from Intel, from General Electric, from CISCO sharing their journey and some advice. And at the end of the five weeks we take someone through an action plan, "Here's [00:09:30] a way you can frame your recommendation for how to use AI for HR back in your organization." So they really leave with something they can implement and put into action.
Meghan:	So what's your advice for someone who's kind of stuck in the buzzword phase? 'Cause I think there's a lot of people who are still sort of pondering and thinking this through. They keep hearing about AI or maybe their executive team is really hot to use AI, [00:10:00] but they're not really sure where to start.
Jeanne Meister:	Well I think they have to develop a point of view on how it could be used for their organization. And they have to start with the early adopters in their company. Right? So if you're in talent acquisition you have to propose a way and show how other companies are using this and what some of their business results are. We have an interesting use [00:10:30] case from TIAA to use AI to personalize learning, and to create a totally different learning experience for their learners. And they had to really start with a business unit that wanted to pilot this, that saw that there was a new way of achieving a business goal.
Jeanne Meister:	So the way we encourage people to start [00:11:00] is identify the business problem that AI is going to solve, and document that with the data. So is the business problem you're going to increase the speed to hire? Is the business

problem you want to increase the diversity of your talent pool? Or in the case of the application in learning, is the business problem you want to reduce the time it takes to go through [00:11:30] compliance training? So you have to be really clear and really specific about the business problem. So you're not having a conversation about the tool, or the technology, you're having a conversation about how using AI solution can solve a problem in your business.

Meghan: So what should people watch out for if they're rolling out an AI solution? What are some of the pitfalls that you're seeing that can help others avoid some [00:12:00] of these frustrations, disappointments, et cetera?

Jeanne Meister: One is there's... with the buzz there's a lot of venture capital dollars. And we've identified about 100 AI solutions for HR, which we have in a technology landscape as part of a tool for the course. So I think first after you've identified your business problem, and you've gathered your team, [00:12:30] remembering it's a team sport, you're bringing your stakeholders together and you're agreeing on what do you want to pilot? And then you're going to be doing research on these companies.

Jeanne Meister: And really doing research on the financial health of the company and importantly the assumptions behind the algorithms, because some organizations tout that AI can really address unconscious bias, [00:13:00] but we have to be clear in HR about, "Well what's behind those algorithms? How is it that they say they can do this?" And that, really understanding and testing it and experimenting because that's a big pitfall. Right? The possible opportunity of increasing bias rather than decreasing bias in the recruiting process.

Meghan: And we don't need anymore of that do we? [00:13:30] We want to avoid increasing any kind of bias because I feel like there's already a plethora of this. Right?

Jeanne Meister: Yeah. And that's what we have to be really careful of in HR. And so how do we present our business case in HR showing the ways that AI can address this business problem and really understand the impact on areas like bias and security. So I think that's really key [00:14:00] moving forward.

Meghan: What's also key for me and I think a lot of people Jeanne is keeping it human. How are we going to do this? Like for instance when we're rolling out all this information how do we talk about it to our people without scaring them that somehow the robots are going to takeover? Which I know sounds ridiculous. If you're out there and you're utilizing Work Trends as your hashtag, tweet us up would you please? We want to hear from you. I don't think we have to be scared about robots taking [00:14:30] over, but it's a viable question, how do we keep this more human?

Jeanne Meister: One of the key ways we keep this more human is by companies making a commitment to upscale key roles that are going to be impacted by AI. So

McKinsey had an interesting prediction that said that 30% of all the activities and about 60% of all occupations could be automated. So think of this, if 30% of the role [00:15:00] of recruiting specialists or coordinator could be automated, that individual should be up scaled so that they can deliver more value to the organization. They're the ones that are going to really close the deal with the potential new candidate. We have to remember that AI is a tool to help source potential new candidates, but the actual offer of [00:15:30] working in a new company comes from a human. Right? So how do we make this job deliver greater value to the organization so that this job they can share the culture, and the values of the organization. And do a better job with building the employer brand proposition for the candidate.

Jeanne Meister: I think the second thing is companies have to do a much better job communicating their AI strategy [00:16:00] to their employees. Because Meghan there is fear. There's fear in the headlines. Right? You're going to be asking yourself, "What does it mean for my job and the other jobs on my team?" Right? And one of the interesting pieces of research we use in our course is a Gardner one that says by 2022 one in five knowledge workers will have a check bot on their team. Well are we prepared to work alongside [00:16:30] a digital assistant? Do we know how to train that digital assistant and orient that digital assistant. Right? So I think that we have to do a better job with change management and communicating what we're going to do. And what I'm seeing is a trend of companies creating a corporate code of conduct just for how they're going to use AI.

Meghan: Yeah I love that.

Jeanne Meister: Yeah. And be really clear about it and communicate it [00:17:00] with employees.

Meghan: So I saw this really interesting article you wrote Jeanne in Forbes the other day. What happens when workers automate themselves? Let's dig into that just a little bit.

Jeanne Meister: Yeah. That, I had a lot of fun writing that article. The top line of that article is that everything you read about AI assumes it's a top down mandate. Right? And that the employer is going to decide when to pull the switch, [00:17:30] and which jobs to automate. And I think what we're starting to see, especially in the IT space and specifically with programmers is the spread of self automation. Starting with programmers but expanding beyond that to customer service operators and others. And what this means is somebody will, that has a job, will really figure out a better way to do their job. And they'll automate parts [00:18:00] of their job.

Jeanne Meister: I found this out by looking at some of the comments in a couple of the forums for programmers. When one programmer wrote a post that was entitled Is It Unethical For Me To Automate My Job But Not Tell My Employer? And the

question was viewed about 500,000 times and caused a lot of discussion. And so my call to action is that we [00:18:30] have to, as employers, if an employee is self automating their job we have to reward their agility and their curiosity for hacking how their job gets done. Not for instilling fear that's what they're going to be doing. What do you think Meghan?

Meghan: I think that's a great point. It shows a level of enthusiasm right?

Jeanne Meister: Yeah absolutely. And we have to make [00:19:00] sure that we reward this, and we communicate it. And then I guess my final question in that Forbes article is, is this a new skill for the future? Should we all be charged with figuring out how to self automate our job?

Meghan: Wow. That is a great question. We want to hear from you, the audience, weigh in on Work Trends. And I think that's a whole other topic Jeanne. Don't you think?

Jeanne Meister: I totally [00:19:30] do. We have to come back and discuss it. I think it's a really big one. And we're not really talking about it because we're thinking of automation as top down. I happen to believe it's going to be both top down, but it'll be a lot more bottom up than we ever anticipated. And let's just step back and think about the days of bring your own device to work. Right? That totally disrupted [00:20:00] the tools we use on our jobs today. And now everybody has an iPad right? And everyone decides on their phone and their computer so we don't give our employees enough credit for figuring this out. And we now should encourage them to do it and maybe even help them along the way.

Meghan: Okay. So let's try something a little fun here. AI's awesome but let's even go a little [00:20:30] bit further and talk bigger picture, HR, technology. I want to do a little rapid fire Q&A with you. What's your favorite HR related conference?

Jeanne Meister: HR Tech.

Meghan: All right. The one and only, the original because now we have 18 flavors by the way.

Jeanne Meister: I know. And everyone's in the space. But it... I've been going there for a long time.

Meghan: Yeah.

Jeanne Meister: And I think everyone should just walk that exhibit hall. [00:21:00] And really get a sense of what's out there. Who are those small companies that are playing around in the space and can be the next really big ones in the future?

Meghan: What's your favorite book about work?

Jeanne Meister: I'm reading a fabulous one. And it's not about work it's about AI, it's called Machines Like Me. It's a novel by Ian McEwan. If you've read Atonement or some of his other works and it [00:21:30] talks about what happens when a robot enters an intact relationship between a man and woman.

Meghan: Oh interesting. Oh I like that. That's so cool. And you know what? If we really want to take this into the realm of work and life are becoming one, it is work. Right? We're becoming seamless human beings. So I'd argue that it is work related. You know?

Jeanne Meister: Yeah. And I think we have to always challenge ourselves not to, [00:22:00] in our downtime not to read the same old. Right? And go out there and not only go to some new conferences but read some new material.

Meghan: And what's your favorite emoji?

Jeanne Meister: Oh my favorite emoji?

Meghan: You can take time with this. I know. We're friends on Instagram and other channels so you can show me.

Jeanne Meister: Yeah.

Meghan: You can show me. You don't have to tell me. How's that?

Jeanne Meister: Yeah exactly. I'll show you. I'll send it [00:22:30] to you through Instagram.

Meghan: There you go. And what's one tool you couldn't do without at work?

Jeanne Meister: Well it's obviously my phone. Right? We not only become mobile first in our companies, but we're mobile first in our lives. Right? And now that we're using Apple Pay we really don't have to have anything but our phones.

Meghan: Totally true. And I would vote that same answer [00:23:00] by the way. Count me in.

Jeanne Meister: Yeah.

Meghan: So it's time. We're going to wrap it up in just a minute. We have our final question for you. How do you predict HR will change in the next five to 10 years. We're taking out our crystal ball.

Jeanne Meister: HR will change let's say, I think we're going to see a commercialization of many innovative HR solutions coming from HR departments in big companies. We will [00:23:30] see them enter this space as well as the HR vendors that we see in the exhibit hall. So I'm seeing some really innovative solutions and I have... I'm

looking at a number of examples right now where companies were early on in developing AI for HR. And they tried it in their own company, they saw awesome results, and now guess what? CHRO's and [00:24:00] now the CEO of a spinoff and they're going to market in looking for seed capital. We're going to see the commercialization of the innovative forward looking HR pioneers.

Meghan: Love it. Jeanne thank you so much for stopping by. It's been a pleasure.

Jeanne Meister: Thank you Meghan.

Meghan: Let's keep this conversation moving. I [00:24:30] know it's work but somebody's got to do it right? Join us for our Work Trends Twitter chat. We are going to be on the Twitter's with Jeanne Meister on Wednesday June 19th 1:30 PM eastern, 10:30 AM pacific. Join us to talk about using AI in automation for HR. And if you'd like to get our Twitter chat questions in advance, you know what to do. Come on over here to TalentCulture.com, we got a little signup button. Try it.

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