

CHRO Conversation

International Paper – Thomas Plath

Video Length: 31:11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWrHNd1Lqhl&t=7s>

Topic	Time
<p>Where can HR help drive business success the most going forward over the next 5 years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – HR people must first understand the strategy, what is the plan, where are we going – Then determine what the human capital strategy looks like to drive that – Last, what can HR do to support those 	<p>1:17</p>
<p>Can you say a little bit more about what it means, from an HR perspective, to have a human capital strategy and how the HR strategy can support that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – First part of IP’s human capital strategy is to ‘know the plan’ – Understanding the business strategy allows HR to develop their own plan of how to support that – There is a significant overlap of communication between HR and communications, difficult to attract and retain employees without it 	<p>4:14</p>
<p>How has your experience in HR helped you in your role as a business strategist? Then, how has your time as a strategist helped you come back to lead the HR function?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working as a strategist helped identify the factors that are truly important – A principle part of most roles is leading – having an understanding about the impact of your actions on the people that you lead, HR is in the center of that – Working in HR prior to going into other roles provided an understanding of what leading meant – “The non-HR experience was the most significant HR development that I’ve had in my career.” – As a general manager, you get to see (from the HR people that support you), how important the work they do truly is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Right team in place o Engagement o Retention o Culture o Anticipate issues for tomorrow to work on today – The more varied your experiences are, the better your perspective – The better your perspective, the better your ability to lead 	<p>7:17</p>
<p>What experience in HR helped you be a better leader?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Take the time to know your employees – Go on to the plant floor, get to know your employees, what motivates them so if/when you get into a crisis you have the ability to get right to the answer – “Take advantage of [employees] heads, as much as you do their hands” – Go into a leadership role with the mentality that even if you don’t know the answer, somebody else does – Utilize the power of a team 	<p>11:16</p>

<p>Tell me about your leadership style, your way of receiving feedback, and why that's effective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “I want to talk to the people that don't know what not to tell me” – Set the expectation that you want real feedback, not just nice feedback – Restraint and objectivity are crucial leadership competencies to receiving the feedback you are asking for 	<p>13:29</p>
<p>Why was it advantageous for you to come in from inside the company to take the CHRO role? What are your thoughts on why it is rare for a CHRO to be promoted internally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The CHRO role is often recruited externally because company leaders recognize that it is a truly impactful position, change is an element of what CHROs do, and we need the best person to do that. – “I don't know if there is a better way to lead HR and to prepare to be a leader of HR than to understand who the people of the company are, what the business is, and how it functions.” Having these experiences and being promoted from within the company gives a significant advantage to success in the role. – Need to have substitute experiences that can enable you to have an external perspective 	<p>16:39</p>
<p>Is an Executive Leadership Team actually a team or more a collection of high performers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is a high degree of difficulty with having a high-functioning team in the C-Suite – Figuring out how to coalesce the varying viewpoints of successful performers in the company is a challenge – “One of the most characteristics of a high performing executive team is that we trust each other's intentions.” – Trusting one another allows you to not worry about whether someone is acting in self interest or in the interest of the enterprise – Trust is sometimes hard to come by because executive leaders don't often spend a lot of time together 	<p>19:58</p>
<p>Do you see the CHRO role as being responsible for helping improve the functioning of the executive team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Absolutely, the CHRO should spend a tremendous amount of time in other executive leaders' offices building relationships and fostering cohesion – Work to ensure that each executive leader is focused on supporting the strategy of the overall business, not only on their respective function 	<p>23:20</p>
<p>Part of your title is Head of Global Citizenship, what does that mean at IP and to you personally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Functionally, responsible for internal and external communications, sustainability, philanthropy, community engagement – Sustainability for companies today is central to what investors and customers are interested in – For IP specifically, an industrial manufacturing company, lots of work go in to ensure that we are operating today the way we should for the future – Diversity is part of sustainability – “If we're going to be successful with investors, with customers, with our own employees, with the communities where we live and work, we have to take a bigger view than just profitability.” 	<p>26:56</p>

Helpful Quotes:

“What are we doing today, that creates readiness for tomorrow?”

[9:20](#)

“In order to listen well, you have to be restrained. You have to stop thinking about what you want to think about and process what you’re hearing.”

[14:38](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. Think about a time when someone would not listen to you. How did it make you feel? How could the interaction have been better?
2. What does sustainability mean to you/your organization?

Company	CHRO	Topics
International Paper	Thomas Plath	Driving Business Success, Leadership, Sustainability