

Cindy Lu: Hi, there, this is Cindy Lu with HR Mastermind Groups, and I'm here with John Millea with SAP and he is part of Leadership Development and Coaching for SAP, which is a global software company, 95,000 employees. I'll have John introduce himself in a moment.

Cindy Lu: But today we're going to talk about a couple of really critical skills, so change management as well as consultative skills for senior HR leaders. So, John, give us a quick background on yourself.

John Millea: Great. Thanks for inviting me, Cindy. My name is John Millea, and I've been in the human resources people development space for, I think 25, years now. I spent most of that with American Express and then worked for a software company for six years. I ran my own coaching firm for seven years, and now I've been with SAP for the last year and a half in a leadership development, coaching, organizational development role, supporting managers and leaders across the globe. So, based here in Dallas.

Cindy Lu: Yeah. So, John, why are you particularly passionate about change management and consulting?

John Millea: Well, I think I've always found myself in the midst of big change. When I was with American Express, a lot of the payment changes that were happening and a lot of just how organizations were structured and how global events were affecting large companies, I found myself in the middle of that. And then growing up in kind of the 2000s and all of the changes that were going on in the world and the industry, especially in software and as technology made its way more and more into everyday lives.

John Millea: And even today, the rate and pace of change is relentless. And in the people space or human resources space, change I think is central to everything that we do. And how do we show up as human resources professionals to help drive and enable that change to make it sustainable? So to me, change is something that's ever present, and it's how we drive that and create sustainable change that's really interested me in my role.

Cindy Lu: Yeah. In fact, I just read, I can't remember which publication, but it talked about how large organizations on average reorganized like every two to three years, and then it takes like 18 months to implement it. So, we have to change rapid.

John Millea: Probably a little more rapid than every two to three years, it seems like.

Cindy Lu: Yeah, that's right. That's right. So tell me, when ... If you don't master this skill of change management, what happens in your career down the line?

John Millea: Well, I think for many people who've kind of been in human resources a while, there are a lot of change methodologies and change approaches that have

made their way into the way that we do. So many of you probably read John Kotter or you've been through those types of models.

- John Millea: And I think when we don't master the skill of change management or the mindset of changes, we become reactive and we become transactional as human resources professionals and we follow change plans and change methodologies and we expect that the results will be realized.
- John Millea: And I found in going through financial services and technology and IT and different industries, that change is emergent and it's never "Follow one step. Follow one step and you will get the results."
- John Millea: So how do we step out of that transactional mechanical approach and really broaden the concept of transformational change? Because that's really what we're dealing with. It's not transactional any longer. It's more. It's bigger than that. So we can become, "irrelevant" is maybe a strong word, but we can become less a part of the bigger narrative if we stay focused on the transactional change.
- Cindy Lu: What does it feel like when you get it right and you drive transformational change and really have a consultative approach?
- John Millea: I think when you get it right, you feel part of the strategic direction of a company. So I've been in different scenarios. So when I was with American Express earlier on in my career, you always felt, or I felt, I was just a tactic in an approach. I was not part of the table, if you will.
- John Millea: And as I kind of showed up more in a consultative business results mindset, you begin to earn that seat and you begin to be sought after for your counsel. And now in my role, I'm working with senior leadership teams in the whole region thinking through "Here is our go-to-market for next year. Here is our strategic direction from the board. Here is what we need to do from a customer product solution standpoint. How do we execute that through our people? What is the transformational change? What do we need to do organizationally, people, process all of the things to make this happen?"
- John Millea: And being part of that conversation makes you feel really special as a human resources professional because usually you're brought in at the very end saying, "Now execute."
- Cindy Lu: Right.
- John Millea: Like you're part of the team.
- Cindy Lu: Right, right. So what are three maybe tactical tips, especially if you're not sitting at the C-suite today in your role? It doesn't mean you still can't be consultative

or practice good change management skills. What are maybe three tips that you might have for the folks listening?

John Millea: I think the first thing is, is broaden your perspective around what is change. And, again, depending on how immersed you've been in change or how much you've read or how much that was part of your education is broaden your understanding of what is change.

John Millea: I don't even use the word "change management" any longer. I use "change leadership" because it really is about leading change rather than managing because managing to me invokes transactional.

John Millea: So the first tip I would have is broaden your reading matter and your education around what is change and how does real change become sustainable.

John Millea: The second one is, and again it's kind of connected with one, is look at case-driven examples of where change has become sustainable.

John Millea: So if you look at ... Nokia is a great example. And as you look at how they transformed their entire business model and their industry and how they won repeatedly, you can look to examples. And, again, Nokia has kind of lost some of that and now they're trying to regain that.

John Millea: But how do you look at industries and companies that have made sustainable change? Or even Microsoft, I think, is one of the most impactful stories these days about how they have completely returned how the success is thought about in terms of the change they've been able to drive.

John Millea: And then the third one is connect with as many leaders in your organization. They don't have to be C-suite. But the more that you understand success and how they think about the business and think about what they need to get done as a leader is then broadening your conversations and your understanding of where do you intersect with that? Because, again, sometimes in, I'll speak for myself, in my roles as human resources, sometimes I can box myself into thinking about my role. And by opening up my conversations with a broad array of leaders, I then look for opportunity for me to intersect with them in terms of how can I help them be successful by driving the change through the things that I do.

Cindy Lu: Do you have an example of that that might be?

John Millea: Yeah, I think the ... When I joined the software company for the first time, I had not worked in IT before. I'd worked in financial services. And by spending time with heads of engineering or even frontline engineers or support organization, what does success look like within that context? And then where is the intersection with the work that I do?

- John Millea: So, I spent six years in an IT firm, and by the end of it was helping to drive a fundamental transformation of the entire cloud business, which again, earlier on I never would have thought that I could play in that space.
- John Millea: So, yes, broaden the conversations that you have and then look for where there might be a role for you.
- Cindy Lu: Right. Because they really want to just dive right into the HR stuff sometimes when they meet with you, and so trying to get them just take a step back and say, "Let's just talk about the business for a minute."
- John Millea: Yeah. And the more that you can frame it within an overall talent strategy, because then you're looking at business strategy connected with talent strategy. And, again, sometimes we can box ourselves in where if we show up talking about HR stuff, that's really all that they want to talk to us about. If we can come up talking about market share and business models and product strategy and customers and revenue, and then you're in a different place with that person. So-
- Cindy Lu: Right. Got to come from the perspective of what's in it for them, right?
- John Millea: Well, yeah. And that's the root of influence. How do you gain influence in an organization? And the more that you understand the landscape and the reality for your business partners, the more you can add value to that.
- Cindy Lu: I want to go back to number one, where you talked about broadening the perspective on change leadership. And what are some books or some recommended reading, whether it's websites or whatever, publications?
- John Millea: Yeah. Yeah, there is ... Transformational change for me is very linked with culture change. And, again, I think a lot of leaders are asking, or they may talk to HR about culture. So there's this thread of research around emergent change, and I'm blanking on the author's name. It'll come to me in a moment.
- Cindy Lu: We'll list it in the show notes later.
- John Millea: Yeah, exactly. But she's written three books around this notion of how do you drive culture change and how do you foster this emergent view rather than this mechanistic view of what I talked about. Probably everybody that's watching this have read John Kotter, the Leading Change and the Eight Stages of Change. Or if you go back, you look at Daryl Conner about Business at The Speed of Change or you may have read Our Iceberg Is Melting or Who Moved My Cheese?
- John Millea: These are all the key change books out, but they are very mechanistic in their approach. And they're accessible. They're very readable, but they don't answer the question about how do you truly drive change.

- John Millea: So, again, I think about the CliffsNotes, but broaden the education around true change and how do you bring that into the way that you frame the world, because we know that things are not always mechanistic.
- Cindy Lu: So I'm going to jump down to three again, where you talked about connecting with as many leaders and really understanding their success, because a lot of folks watching this might say, "You know what? Number one, that's just so high level and I'm in a position in HR where I just don't have access to the C-suite." So I liked your advice about how you want to connect with leaders even if they aren't in the C-suite.
- Cindy Lu: But there are things you can do in those conversations that make you a change leader and more consultative, that you can do tomorrow, that you don't have to be sort of at that seat at this point. What are some tips that you might have when you're sitting down with a leader like that to really understand what they're going through and how you can solve that problem for them?
- John Millea: Yeah. One of my favorite books on consulting is called Flawless Consulting by Peter Block. I read this back in the 90s when I was with American Express when we were trying to change our organization. This was the Learning and Development and OD group, in terms of how we showed up with leaders. So that book gives you great questions to ask.
- John Millea: So to me, the quality of an HR professional is the questions that they ask that show their understanding of the business reality of the leader that they're interfacing with.
- John Millea: One of my favorite new books is called A More Beautiful Question by Warren Berger, which talks about asking better questions in life usually leads to better understanding. So what are the questions that you need to ask of your leader that you're interfacing with that shows that you are interested in that business and what does success look like?
- John Millea: So once, one of the questions I always ask is, what does success look like for you in your organization? What expectations does the board have of your group? You personally as a leader, what are you trying to accomplish? What would be an audacious goal for you and your group this year? What are the implications of that strategy? What are you not considering? Is this a people, is this a skill issue? Is this a mindset? So asking better questions, which typically, again, a lot of HR people show up and listen rather than asking questions.
- Cindy Lu: Or talk HR, right?
- John Millea: Or talk HR, which ... HR is important, but it's ... But to me it's where you start. Start with business strategy. Get to HR talent strategy. If you lead with HR talent strategy, it becomes disconnected.

- Cindy Lu: Right. And if you don't know their context, it's sort of like those salespeople who, external sales people who come in your office and they show up and throw up.
- John Millea: Yeah.
- Cindy Lu: Right? And you see the client's, the prospect's face just sort of blanking over. And so it's not any different. Just because you're internal doesn't mean you have a captive audience. To get engagement and get people interested in that conversation is a true skill.
- Cindy Lu: I remember when I was in executive search, so often some of the more junior folks might ask questions like, "Well, what's your checklist on the requirements? What are the skills that you want from this role?" instead of saying, "What does success look like in a year from now? If we found the right candidate, what does success look like?" And then that gives you such a crystal clear picture of what they're actually looking for versus the bullet points on the job description.
- John Millea: Yeah. For example, it just ... We were talking with an engineering leader a couple of years ago about finding new talent. It was a new product strategy. It was a new product line, and we were talking about pipeline of talent. And some of the questions were, "Well, which universities in the world are producing the type of graduates that have the skillsets that would be a success in this type of product area?"
- John Millea: "I don't know."
- John Millea: "Okay, well that's probably something that we should find out. Which companies are doing this really well today? Where did they hire the people from? Where are they getting the pipeline from?"
- John Millea: So you begin to ask questions, and maybe you don't know the answer. But that will inform your recruiting strategy to fix the problem where this leader's saying, "I can't find the right people." What do you do as an HR person? Do you just go out and find people? But where do you find them? What skills are you looking for? And what's the profile? And what would success look like?
- Cindy Lu: And even taking it a step farther, for example, in our survey, which will be coming out soon, we sort of defined consultative skills as foreseeing needs even before your business partners know that they need them, and so it's being able to ask those questions and be able to take your knowledge of the industry and the marketplace and then be able to provide solutions that they may not even thought of. So-
- John Millea: Yeah, absolutely.

- Cindy Lu: ... that's a ... Yeah, I think that's a great point. And I love this Peter Block book. I'm pretty sure it was a book written more for our external consultants, right?
- John Millea: Yeah, I had ... There's a chapter on it called "A Pair of Hands." And at the time, it really resonated with me because in many cases HR professionals do become pair of hands, where you just get given something to do. So that was really illuminating for me because I didn't want to just be a pair of hands. I wanted a seat at the table. I wanted to be seen as consultative.
- John Millea: So, yeah, I think in the beginning, and there's been multiple revisions of it since then, but it started out as "If you're a consultant by any other name, how do you show up in a spirit of consultation?"
- Cindy Lu: That's great. That's great. Well, it's one of the top skills ranked by non-HR executives in the C-suite. So I thought that was really interesting that that sort of skill of consultation is critical. And in your mind, consultation and change management, all sorts of goes hand in hand.
- John Millea: Yeah, they do. And I think sometimes not just a job. But some people say, "I want a seat at the table" or "the proverbial table." And then CEOs or the people at the table are saying, "I would invite them to the table if they were more consultative or ... " So it's kind of on both sides is they both want it. It's just a question of what's going to get you and keep you at the table.
- John Millea: And central, I think, to any business strategy today, there is a change in the transformation component to it. And that always intersects with me with people and organizations. So to me it's the sweet spot for HR right now is strategy and people and organizations that are probably more so than any time in history coming together. And the more that HR people show up knowledgeable and can call on experience of others and ask the right questions, I think makes them more valuable to the organization than ever before.
- Cindy Lu: Right, right. Well, on that topic, I'm curious. How important has having a network of peers been for your career and helping your organizations that you've worked for as well as you personally?
- John Millea: Yeah. I think even when I was with American Express is we had a very connected group of networks that we worked with, both in financial services and other. And then as people splinter off into other organizations, me personally is connecting with people who may be working in completely different fields.
- John Millea: However, I'm staying connected by "What are you doing in telecommunications?" or "What are you doing from an HR standpoint?" So I try to go to as many conferences and network groups as I can. I was just in Barcelona for several days, networking. And then that was in the UK at another HR director meeting there. So trying to take off my US hat and broaden my perspective to peer networks outside.

- John Millea: And then even here in Dallas is going to your network breakfast or network events where I can hear somebody talk about something that they've ran or how they approached a particular problem, because I think sometimes we get into our own heads about "This is the way it needs to be solved." And how much do we give ourselves the permission to learn from others? So to me it's been invaluable.
- John Millea: I even ... Just my network today, it's very broad, not only from an industry standpoint but from a geo standpoint as well.
- Cindy Lu: As far as events, and if you're in town the second week of September, of course, the big HR event we're hosting at Cisco in Richardson, Texas.
- Cindy Lu: So, in any case, well, John, this has been a pleasure. And thank you for sharing your knowledge and your wisdom with our community. I'm sure they'll appreciate it. And we'll make sure we connect to some of the books that John referred to in the show notes. All right.
- John Millea: Actually, on my LinkedIn, Cindy, I'm just remembering that there is an article about the top 10 culture change books and the top 10 leadership development books. So I'll send you the links for both of those.
- Cindy Lu: All right, sounds good. Thanks a lot, John.
- John Millea: You're welcome. Thanks for having me. Bye.
- Cindy Lu: Bye.