

PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP REAL RESULTS

Building a Community of Practice
with Patricia Trudeau, SHRM-SCP
VP & Chief Human Resources Officer
Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)

In the ongoing debate around hybrid and remote work, changing expectations between employees and employers, and how emerging technologies like AI and process automation will reshape jobs and the labor market, all roads seem to lead back to human resources.

While some CEOs once saw HR as a behind-the-scenes administrative function, far more now recognize that HR is shaping the future of work. They are calling upon HR leaders for strategic counsel on deeply complex issues. And while HR has finally earned that coveted “seat at the table,” it rarely comes with adequate staff and resources to accomplish a vastly expanded mission.

With unprecedented changes in the workplace, HR leaders need a way to connect with peers working through the same issues. But that didn’t exist at the outset of the pandemic when the onslaught of challenges hit hardest. It does now because Patricia (PJ) Trudeau built it.

We asked PJ, VP & Chief Human Resources Officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel and founder of HR Roundtable, to share her vision for the community of practice she created from the ground up. What follows are a few highlights from our conversation.

Who Supports the Supporters?

“Where do we start? What do we do? Who is helping HR?”

These are the questions that inspired PJ to start [HR Roundtable](#) during the early (chaotic) days of the pandemic.

As CHRO of a global organization with 80 employees, she was wrestling with the same persistent issues and mounting workload as others in her field. But she saw a need. And she used her already limited time and energy to meet it.

As PJ shared her journey in creating HR Roundtable, her commitment to the profession came through in every word. This phrase from her bio says it all: “What began as a job became a vocation, because regardless of all of the frustrations, long hours, twists and turns (and the occasional shock), I am rewarded by the knowledge that my colleagues and I truly do make a difference.”



“HR was working hours upon hours to figure out how to support their organizations, but there was no one to support them. So that’s where HR Roundtable came from and why I keep trying to do as much as I can to give back to them.”

For Human Resources, By Human Resources

What started as a weekly virtual meet-up has grown into a 200-member national support system for HR professionals representing organizations from a range of industries. It's a space for members to interact in small groups, network, crowd-source strategic solutions, and talk about difficult issues.

PJ's philosophy in developing HR Roundtable echoes her approach as an HR leader of 25 years. She listens to what people need, meets them where they are, and works to connect them with the right resources to move forward.

Based on member requests, PJ brings in experts on AI integration, compensation, recruiting, and more. She created an archive of past meetings and a resource library with member-submitted templates, guides, and policies. She offers one-on-one coaching and manages an active listserv and social media community.

If you need it, HR Roundtable has a pathway for you to get it. And all of this for a nominal fee, making membership incredibly accessible to any HR professional.

“So many people join the conversation with ‘Hey, how did you do that?’ Just hearing what others are doing helps people think through what’s next. It’s just been an amazing opportunity to grow a community. We need to be able to have conversations in a safe environment. Members feel comfortable sharing with each other because they know we all understand.”

Put Your Oxygen Mask On First

In addition to supporting members with professional resources, PJ emphasizes the importance of “putting your oxygen mask on first.” HR is the first to handle staff and leadership problems, but often last to tend to their own professional and personal well-being. PJ is working to change that. HR Roundtable is helping members perform their jobs better and think more strategically while creating more sustainable work lives for themselves.

“Organizations look to HR to support staff development and build community and culture. But the human resources team is just as much a part of that. HR needs the same consideration for everything they do day-to-day. And making sure their lives are balanced, too. To be productive and truly effective, we need to develop our own careers and take time to disengage.”

A Sea Change in How We Relate at Work

We asked PJ to share the primary concerns she hears from HR Roundtable members. These mirror the same issues that have dominated business news for the last four years. But what emerged from our conversation is the dramatic change in how we relate to each other at work. As PJ put it, “We are having more honest conversations.”

Employers and employees are more transparent about what they can and can't offer, will and won't do. Employers are asking for (and using) staff input to develop policies, revamping compensation structures to ensure equity and transparency, and focusing on employee well-being and engagement rather than just productivity. In turn, employees are more willing to share input and have an increased sense of loyalty and satisfaction at work. Job candidates, too, are being clearer about what they want and need earlier in the hiring conversation. And at the intersection of it all is the strategic leadership only HR can provide.

“The last few years have created an opportunity for HR to be recognized for strategic leadership. **It's definitely not easy. Changes in the workplace have only added to the complexities of our work. But there is finally greater focus on our areas of expertise.”**

A New Blueprint for Professional Support

The pandemic sparked a seismic transformation in the nature of work. And the evolution of AI and automation is going to accelerate it. When that happens (for some, it already has), we'll all be flying blind without time-tested frameworks to follow. We are going to need some extra support.

You might find it in an association, you might find it in a social network. Or you might find it in a smaller, unique community like the HR Roundtable. What PJ has created is a blueprint for the future of professional support—interactive, practical, and focused on giving members exactly what they need.

“AI is this new, incredible opportunity for HR to be more efficient in what we do—it may help streamline some of our more administrative work. **But we also have to prioritize supporting our organizations in adapting to the impact of AI, including addressing staff concerns.** It's going to take a lot of communication. But there is exciting potential for growth.”

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