

A Conversation with Judy Bender Assistant Vice President of Human Resources

Facilitated by Luke Auburn

Luke Auburn: You're listening to the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. I'm your host, Luke Auburn. Today I'm speaking with Judy Bender who joined RIT as an Assistant Vice President for Human Resources in 2011. She came to RIT from Eastman Kodak, where she served as Human Resources Director for the Pre Press Solutions business. And a number of other human resource leadership positions. She's also graduated from RIT's E. Philip Saunders College of Business. With a degree in business administration. And her master's degree in hospitality administration from Cornell University. We'll discuss human resources trends she sees emerging in higher education. And her advice for RIT faculty and staff. Judy, thank you for having us.

Judy Bender: Oh it's my pleasure Luke. Thank you for asking.

Luke Auburn: It seems like shifts in technology in society are changing the type of work we do. What trends do you see emerging in human resources globally?

Judy Bender: So excellent question. And there are a few trends that I'd like to talk about. One of them is the demographic shifts that we're seeing in the workforce. So baby boomers are going to start to leave the workforce. And millennials are going to start coming in. And they really have -- that group of individuals have different expectations regarding work, than we have with the traditional baby boomers. You're going to see an increase in the number of women. Military veterans. And people with disabilities in the workforce. A more global workforce. As RIT continues to look for opportunities to expand our global reach, we certainly will see that. And all of these factors are going to influence our policies and programs in terms of our ability to provide greater flexibility. To customize benefits. And to put greater emphasis on understanding a variety of cultures, issues, etcetera that affect employee engagement.

Another big trend is going to be the increased use of big data. There's much greater influence on data analytics. And the use of data to help informed decision makers. So I think we'll see that. And we're going to see more mobile technology coming out. And from an employment standpoint, again, this talks to the flexibility of where work can be done now. So it's just going to be a whole new world [laughter].

Luke Auburn: What competencies do you see becoming more important to higher education professionals as the field changes?

Judy Bender: I think, as I said with the trends, cultural and global literacy is going to be key competency. I think that with that inclusive behavior is the cultural awareness. The ability to create an environment where everyone can work to their full potential. It's going to be key -- changed leadership is going to be another key competency. The ability to engage people in change, because the pace of change is always moving at a faster speed than we're prepared for it. And the ability to recognize needs, and to respond quickly to them. I think that digital literacy and the ability to identify and utilize emerging technologies will be a key competency. Systems, critical thinking, and complex decision making is going to be a key competency. Our abilities to prioritize and focus on initiatives that support the university's strategy. Included with that would be strong analytical skills. And risk taking skills. And the ability to evaluate risk. And what the potential impact could be of taking an action or not taking an action.

Luke Auburn: What suggestion do you have for RIT faculty and staff who are interested in advancing their careers?

Judy Bender: I would suggest people to look for opportunities to work on projects that support the strategy. They can increase their knowledge on what's happening in other areas across the campus. They could volunteer for cross organizational teams. I would encourage them to demonstrate personal leadership. Don't wait to be asked to take on an initiative. Look for areas that interest you, and identify opportunities for improvements. And then be part of the solution. Don't just identify the opportunity. You know, I can't say enough about RIT's fantastic benefit of free education. Employers are pulling back in the industry on that benefit. So the fact that we continue to have that as a current benefit for employees is fantastic. And I would encourage people to take advantage of that.

Following that, we have a great CPD program -- Center for Professional Development. There's a specific course that might help people in this area called Managing Your Careers at RIT. And that's a two-part series course that may help people to give them some ideas about what to do in terms of advancing their careers. Other things to think about are looking for opportunities outside of work. Volunteering in the community. Serving on non-profit boards. Those are all great ways to increase your skill sets. And then I suggest to people to network. If an area interests you, reach out to individuals that work out

there, and look for opportunities to potentially job shadow. That's another great way to learn about other areas, and to think about different career paths.

Luke Auburn: You touched on the strategic plan a number of times. And it discusses establishing career lattices and ladders for employees. A career ladder is a pretty straight forward concept, and we see them in place for many faculty positions. But what is a lattice, and how can employees apply this concept to advancing themselves professionally?

Judy Bender: So a lattice, as opposed to a ladder, implies that you're sometimes working laterally versus vertically to get development. Which isn't a new concept. It's just a new term for a concept that's been around for a long time. So I think that that goes along with the suggestions for advancing careers, in terms of volunteering for participation in committees, cross functional teams. Really look outside of your comfort zone to areas that you'd like to learn about. And where you think you have some abilities to contribute. And gain skills in that way. If you don't want to change the current job that you're in, seeking out project assignments is another great within your own organization, to try to get experience across a number of disciplines.

Luke Auburn: And the strategic plan also states that RIT will become a model of inclusive excellence for all faculty and staff in the areas of professional development and promotion. How can RIT accomplish this? And how can managers foster an environment like that?

Judy Bender: So when I think about an inclusive environment, to me, that's an environment that allows individuals to contribute to their full potential. So the actions that we can take that support that goal is really what we want to focus on. So some of those actions could be things like allowing for some more risk taking. To allow somebody to try something that maybe hasn't been tried before. To provide those exposure opportunities for people. Seek out other work that might be available to them. Or experiences that might be available to them. When you talk with employees, present your feedback to them in a way that will be heard. And when I say that, there's a lot of ways to communicate a point. And if you think about positioning your message in a way that you would like to hear it if someone was to give you the same message. I think that's a good technique to think about how to position something so that someone can hear it, and not stop listening once you say something, that may be constructive.

Listen more. If you're not doing this today as a manager, I recommend what I refer to as skip level meetings. And a skip level meeting means that I have meetings with individuals who report to my direct reports. So in an organizational structure, I'm reaching into the organization and not just only interfacing with the people who report directly with me. I would say be flexible in exploring career development opportunities for those people in your group. And encourage open dialog to increase understanding. In this area too, we have a couple of great CPD classes that I'd like to recommend. The two are Get Fit for Coaching- which helps managers to coach their employees and to develop skills in coaching. And then the second one is called Coaching for Success. And that actually helps you to develop employee development plans. And goes to the career path questions, and how to help people to work to their full potential.

Luke Auburn: Judy thank you very much for your time. That concludes another addition of the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. For more information on how you can develop your career, visit RIT.edu/cpd.