

Episode 294: Episode 294: HR Tech Insights Featuring Joe Meyer, Harrison Kim and Ed Stevens



Intro: [00:00:00.06] Welcome to the Workology Podcast, a podcast for the disruptive workplace leader. Join host Jessica Miller-Merrell, founder of Workology.com, as she sits down and gets to the bottom of trends, tools and case studies for the business leader, H.R. and recruiting professional who is tired of the status quo. Now, here's Jessica with this episode of Workology.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:00:26.08] Even before the pandemic, it was a challenge to shop and learn about technology and services, covid throws another wrinkle into things. Even with conferences and events opening up in the near future. At Workology, we reached 700,000. Yes, 700K, H.R. and workplace leaders every month with our newsletter, podcasts and online resources at Workology.com. I've been getting requests from many of you asking for ways to connect with different companies that will give you an opportunity to research the organization and learn about them before signing up for a demo, answering your phone or their emails. This interview is part of a new series called H.R. Tech Insights for the Workology podcasts. It's sponsored by Upskill HR and Ace the HR Exam. It's an opportunity for you, the H.R. leader, to learn quickly about different companies, their solutions, the company sizes and verticals they serve, and a quick case study of the problems they solve. Think of it like walking and XPO floor, but without the free swag and cocktail's. The good news is that there's no travel or expense involved. Each episode in the HR Tech Insights series features three 7 to 10 minute interviews with different HR tech and service providers. Let's get started with this episode, shall we?

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:01:42.73] Our first interview for our tech insights and this episode is with Joe Meyer. Joe is the founder and CEO of ExecThreat, a VC-backed crowdsourcing platform and premium job sharing network that enables professionals to access the hidden job market. ExecThreat is the largest global aggregator of unpublished executive level job opportunities. Joe has been a successful startup CEO and operating executive at high growth tech companies, including HopStop, acquired by Apple, Quigo, acquired by AOL, and eBay, with a strong track record of recruiting teams, launching new products, raising venture capital, growing traffic, eliciting engagement, scaling revenue and achieving liquidity. Hi Joe. Welcome to the Workology podcast. Can you tell us a little bit about your company and the problem you solve for human capital leaders?

Joe Meyer: [00:02:38.44] Absolutely. My name is Joe Meyer. I'm the founder and CEO of a company by the name of ExecThread. ExecThread is a community of over 75,000 high calibre professionals, 50 percent of whom are underrepresented, i.e. women and/or people of color. Then we make it very easy for human capital professionals to find hidden talent in the form of exceptionally high calibre underrepresented professionals.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:03:08.29] So what company size or vertical do you guys typically find yourself in terms of customers helping accounts?

Joe Meyer: [00:03:16.72] It really varies from anywhere from on the kind of the smaller end in terms of venture capital, back to piggyback companies all the way up to large private and public companies. Any human capital leader that is looking to increase the talent on their management team and increase the diversity on their management team, our companies that we can help.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:03:38.05] Awesome, well, I love this and I especially love on the DEI side, how you guys can help fill immediate gaps when it comes to DEI for talent in an organization. Maybe they're having a hard time finding a VP of sales or engineering or some other executive role with somebody with a special expertise and background. And you guys can help provide a talent pool that they might not have been able to access elsewhere.

Joe Meyer: [00:04:06.88] Absolutely. And we actually do it in the reverse as well. We help, we help that same talent pool access career opportunities at the executive level and board level that they would otherwise not be able to access. We crowdsource otherwise confidential job information from our members who are the ones that are approached these job opportunities. So by being an executive board member, you gain access to confidential exec level searches that are being worked on by professional executive search firms throughout the world. And therefore, you could tap into that hidden job market which disproportionately benefits women and people of color.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:04:44.59] Can you share with us a recent case example, case study example of how you helped your customers with executive level talent?

Joe Meyer: [00:04:52.69] Yeah, I mean, to be quite honest, the easiest way to answer that question is ExecThread is not a search firm. Yet, in spite of that, hundreds of ExecThread members, many of whom are underrepresented, have found their next career advancing exact level and board level opportunity through ExecThread, numerous case studies. You know, I can point out any one or two in particular, but looking at it holistically, we've helped hundreds of our members find that next career advancing opportunity with many of those members being women or people of color. And to be more specific. You know, there was a recent example of a COO who found his next career advancing opportunity through ExecThread. He's an African-American professional. He came back to us and said he would not have found that opportunity if it were not for him being an ExecThread member and if it were not for him finding that opportunity on ExecThread, which he could not access anywhere else. And that's what ExecThread it's all about, which is creating access, fostering equity, leveling the playing field.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:05:58.57] I feel like this particular conversation with you serves two purposes, obviously people who are or have open executive level roles and they are looking for a different talent pool,

but then also for listeners, senior level H.R. leaders, TA leaders who are like, I'm looking for a new opportunity, but I don't know where to go.

Joe Meyer: [00:06:17.71] That's exactly right. ExecThread at the end of the day is a two sided marketplace of supply and demand. And as with any marketplace, the more members and the more supply you have, the more users and the more supply you have, the more vibrant and healthy that marketplace is. And right now we have over 2500 confidential career opportunities at the executive level and board level on ExecThread, the vast majority of which you won't find on any other platform. Hence the opportunity to create that access for professionals that would otherwise need to wait for executive recruiters to approach them. I think we all know that executive recruiters tend to approach those candidates that are more well networked or more well referred, and that disproportionately benefits overrepresented executives and disproportionately works against underrepresented talent.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:07:12.07] Tell me about more specific ways that ExecThread has impacted the businesses that you've been helping, whether their employers or those candidates?

Joe Meyer: [00:07:22.07] Yeah, I'll be really specific. The reality is, is that we're not in an executive recruiting firm. If you were an executive recruiting firm, you would be on a multi month assignment working with that employer to find talent. With the ExecThread, once you identify a role that you want to hire for, you come to ExecThread, you post that opportunity knowing it's a curated, vetted, high-caliber, highly diverse community and we'll start filling the top of your candidate pipeline literally the same day, and you'll start interviewing candidates the next day and you'll do it for a fraction of the cost that an executive search firm would otherwise charge.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:08:00.22] I love that. And I just love that you're able to instantaneously provide them with a diverse variety of candidates that they wouldn't otherwise have access to. And for those those individuals access to new job opportunities and just new kinds of companies that they otherwise wouldn't also have access to.

Joe Meyer: [00:08:20.71] Absolutely. And at the end of the day, we're a community and we're a platform. And that community is filled with highly engaged, high caliber talent that comes back to our user experience day in and day out to gain access to those opportunities at scale that they wouldn't otherwise be able to gain. And, you know, again, if you're an executive search firm, you don't necessarily you haven't built up a community of candidates. You're very transactional, a per candidates on a per search basis, whereas ExecThread's all about keeping our members engaged and fulfilled day in and day out, week in and week out.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:00.29] Well, I know that I, as well as our listeners, would love to learn more about you and the work you're doing at ExecThread. Where can people go to connect with you?

Joe Meyer: [00:09:09.53] Yeah, the best way is either go right directly to ExecThread, which is ExecThread.com, ExecThread.com. And my email address is Joe@ExecThread.com.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:23.18] Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us, Joe.

Joe Meyer: [00:09:25.70] Yeah, sure thing.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:27.50] Our next interview is with Harrison Kim. He is the CEO of Pavestep and Employee Feedback and Performance Management Solution. He founded Pavestep to help leaders develop and retain their biggest asset, their talents. He is obsessed with feedback, performance and organizational culture. He is a former McKinsey consultant and a former private equity investor specializing in the human capital management sector. Hi Harrison, and welcome to the Work podcast.

Harrison Kim: [00:09:55.37] Hi, how are you?

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:09:56.51] I'm great. I wanted to talk to you about Pavestep and the problem you solve for human capital leaders.

Harrison Kim: [00:10:04.28] Absolutely. Absolutely. So Pavestep is an employee performance and employee feedback solution. So we simplify performance management and create the best feedback experience for employees. If you think about traditional performance management or annual performance reviews, you know they're not effective. We all know that. It's ineffective at developing people. It's super time consuming and it doesn't provide accurate data about our people's performance. With our solution, employees share meaningful feedback with each other in real time, manage goals and run performance check-ins or reviews all in one place. And managers have all of this data in one place to make better and more informed decisions when it comes to things like promotions, training and even compensation. So that's what we do.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:10:52.01] I love it. I think it's very timely and relevant when we consider how many of us are dispersed or hybrid or working virtual. So having a place to be able to get feedback and and think about performance for managers and employees is really important. Absolutely. What company, size or vertical do you guys find yourselves helping customers in the most?

Harrison Kim: [00:11:12.63] Yes. So we work with a variety of clients, but we typically work with clients with employees between one hundred to two to even three thousand employees typically. There are small, there are some that are smaller, there are some that are bigger. But that's kind of our good, you know, sweet spot. And from an industry perspective, we work with professional services, financial services and technology firms very often. And even aside from kind of the size as well as the industry, we work really well and especially well with clients that have a remote workforce or some kind of a hybrid workforce that's really looking to create or sustain a culture of feedback.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:11:49.37] And we need feedback now more than ever, for sure.

Harrison Kim: [00:11:52.25] Absolutely.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:11:53.33] Can you share a recent case study or example of how you've helped customers in the past with kind of this feedback and conversations focused on performance?

Harrison Kim: [00:12:03.20] Yeah, for sure. So to take maybe a quick step back, you know, most of our clients come to us with a few common problems. I'll talk about two. One people are not getting enough feedback and leaving because they want more development and transparency. And typically they'll hear this often in their engagement surveys and/or two, their review processes are very, very time consuming. Most people are literally using Google Sheets, Google Docs or Excel to run their performance management processes, which can be very, very burdensome. So to focus in on the first problem, the lack of feedback with a case study. So one of our clients saw that the biggest finding from their engagement survey was that people wanted more feedback and more coaching. They were, the employees were receiving effectively no feedback throughout the year, maybe once or twice at their semiannual or annual reviews. And on top of that, when they did receive the feedback, it wasn't very meaningful. Maybe you've you're familiar with this where, you know, some people do their performance reviews at the end of the year and it's kind of like two or three sentences being like, oh, hey, Harrison, you did a great job. Keep keep doing what you're doing, which isn't really, really helpful. So we worked with this one particular client to implement our solution, set up the right processes in place and provide education to everyone on how to share feedback most effectively. Now with us, their employees are receiving feedback anywhere between one to three, even four times per month, and they're celebrating successes and and course correcting all in real time. And all of this stuff is documented. Right? So not only are you able to develop people in real time, you're also able to have a data backup that you can use later in order to make better decisions. So that's kind of a quick, quick case study of one of our clients.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:13:49.85] I love that and I was just talking to somebody about PIP's the other day and how we shouldn't have when you get on a pip, it shouldn't be a surprise, shouldn't be the first conversation. So having that documentation and history of those performance conversations is critical and you guys help solve that problem.

Harrison Kim: [00:14:08.36] Mm hmm.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:14:09.38] Can you maybe talk about any other specific ways that you guys have impacted the business?

Harrison Kim: [00:14:14.69] Yes. So when you think about kind of a metric based statistics, there's a lot of research statistics on the impact of regular feedback and continuous performance management on employee engagement, productivity and retention. The last figure that I can think of at the top of my head is around 15 percent of reduction in employee turnover. Right? That's a lot of value for organizations when you think about how costly it is to lose your employees, especially when they're high performers. And on top of that, as I mentioned earlier, by having this more accurate feedback and information about people's strengths, their development, how they're progressing, you can really start to make data driven and informed decisions. Right? And PIP is kind of one extreme version of data or documentation of performance. But you want to do that as often and as continuously as possible. And this really affects people, right? People's quality of life, future earning potential and engagement. So we need to get this as accurately as possible. So that's kind of how we think about it from a statistics and metrics perspective as well as impact.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:15:21.02] I love it. Well, Harrison, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today. And I know our listeners would love to hear more about where they can go to connect with you. Where should they be going?

Harrison Kim: [00:15:33.29] Yeah, so they can connect with me on LinkedIn, Harrison Kim at Pavestep. And they can also check out our podcast as well as our website on Pavestep.com.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:15:43.25] Perfect.

Break: [00:15:44.54] You were listening to the work of podcast sponsored by ACE The HR Exam and Upskill HR. This episode is part of our HR Tech Insights series, where we connect you with three different tech and or service providers in a single episode.

Break: [00:15:58.64] Personal and professional development is essential for successful H.R. leaders. Join Upskill H.R. to access life training, community and over one hundred on-demand courses for that dynamic leader. H.R. recert credits available. Visit UpskillHR.com for more.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:16:14.42] Our next interview is with Ed Stevens. He's the founder and CEO of Preciate, a social presence meeting platform. Previously ad founded and led Shopatron, an enterprise e-commerce platform acquired by Vista Equity Partners. Ed is a board member of Johnson Outdoors and an avid sportsman.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:16:32.12] Ed, welcome to the WorkologyPodcast. Can you tell us a little bit about Preciate and the problem you solve for human capital leaders?

Ed Stevens: [00:16:40.94] Absolutely, Jessica. Preciate is an enterprise platform for virtual communicating and it's geared towards dynamic experiences and relationship building. You know, we've all had Zoome fatigue, and yet it's a good tool. We use it for formal meetings, small meetings, getting tasks done. But it's not good at what people do best in person, which is building culture and building relationships. So our product, Preciate Social delivers a dynamic virtual meeting experience that allows the users to move around and socialize, which creates a relationship building layer on top of the remote work that we're all doing these days.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:17:26.51] It sounds really interesting because, on Zoom, it's just head, right? And I can see the room that you're in, but there's not any substance, anything more to that.

Ed Stevens: [00:17:38.63] Yeah, it's all about unpacking. You know, how do people create social agency and, and sort of appear and be themselves in a large group. And when we're all in a bar or in a cafeteria, we know how to move around and spend time with the people that we need to do. But in the static video experiences that we have today, like Zoom and so on, it's not possible to do that. So we invented an entirely new category of software and we we also blend that with our peer to peer recognition platform.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:18:15.19] What company size and vertical do you guys find yourself helping customers in the most?

Ed Stevens: [00:18:22.42] Well, it's it's just everywhere. But I would really say 250 to 25,000 people are probably if there was a sweet spot where we've really seen a lot of activity. And this is spanning professional services, manufacturing, health care, pharma, and IT and tech, probably the biggest categories.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:18:46.91] Oh, not not surprising, but it's interesting that you guys go up to that 25,000 person size. So, I mean, really, you know, people are working remote, whether it's a five person company or hundred thousand person company. So what would make sense that your technology can serve a broad range of organizations.

Ed Stevens: [00:19:07.99] Yeah, you know, the small companies during covid, even if you had a 25-person company, you were separated, but probably might be in one office if you're a small company, but a 25,000-person company has offices and people already spread out all over the world. And so for them, building relationships virtually is something that was a problem for them before covid, during covid and certainly after.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:19:34.05] Can you share with us a recent case study or example of how you've helped customers maybe build those connections virtually beyond virtual those real solid connections and relationships?

Ed Stevens: [00:19:46.92] Yes. So we have a client that's a global manufacturing company with a little bit more than 25,000 employees, and they were doing Zoom happy hours and holiday parties, awkward conversations, no sidebar, no water cooler, abrupt starts and ends. And their typical happy hour holiday party would last about 45 minutes and it would feel very scripted. In April, we hosted a virtual social for 85 of their most senior executives, including their entire Csuite, and you can imagine in a dynamic environment where individuals can move around and enter and leave conversations as they want. It was just a fantastically successful event. Lots of smiles. Instead of 45 minutes, it lasted a hundred and forty five minutes and we couldn't have been more thrilled about it. It was the best type of social activity they'd had since the beginning of covid, which was, had been a year at that point.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:20:49.56] That's awesome. And they didn't want the meeting to end.

Ed Stevens: [00:20:52.23] Yeah, they kept going and going.

[00:20:54.66] Can you tell me some more, maybe different or specific ways that your organization, what you do has impacted the customers in the businesses that you serve?

Ed Stevens: [00:21:05.40] So, you know, when you have factories or staff around the world, if you're a software company, you might have staff in India or you might have manufacturing in China. You're doing traveling. But traveling has been so reduced and certainly international, you're hiring. You're trying to retain staff here. You know, imagine how does a national professional services firm now onboard a class of 100 associates around the country and get them to know each other. So we help them save on travel costs and the time associated with that. It's millions of dollars that are saved when you can activate some relationship building without flying people around the country. I will say that that the, you know, in-person interactions are the gold standard. And of course, there are the best. But when you're a global company or a national

company, you're not going to be able to do that as much as you'd like. And so that's where these new virtual relationship building platforms are really taking root.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:22:11.72] I and I know our listeners would love to learn more about the work that you're doing at Preciate. Where can people go to connect with you and learn more about the company and the technology and services you provide?

Ed Stevens: [00:22:25.25] Well, the best place to go just to get a general sense of everything we do is at our corporate website, which is Join.Preciate.com and that's spelled Preciate. Join.Preciate.com. And if you just want to connect with me directly, you can go to my Twitter. It's [@eastevens](https://twitter.com/eastevens).

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:22:43.59] Awesome. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to introduce Preciate to us and learn a little bit more about the, the problems that you're solving in this ever changing workplace.

Ed Stevens: [00:22:54.81] Thank so much, Jessica. It's been great.

Closing: [00:22:57.27] Are you loving the Workology Podcasts? Our Workology community reaches over 600,000 H.R. leaders every single month. Want to be a sponsor? Reach out to us at Workology.com/advertising.

Closing: [00:23:11.19] I'm all about arming H.R. and workplace leaders with resources and information to empower them to help support and grow their organizations. This includes finding great H.R. tech and service providers. You can visit the show notes of this episode at Workology.com where I'm including information about each guest we've talked to in this episode, including their LinkedIn profile and their company information. Feel free to reach out to them directly and let them know that you heard about them on the Workology Podcast. This episode is part of our H.R. Tech Insights series and is sponsored by Upskill H.R. and ACE The HR Exam. I'm Jessica Miller-Merrell and I'll see you next time.