



Recorded Message: The Hennessy Report from Keystone Partners. A free flowing conversation with leaders in the HR community talking about themselves, the industry and their work. Brought to you in cooperation with NEHRA, the Northeast Human Resources Association.

Dave Hennessy: Welcome to the Hennessy Report. I'm Dave Hennessy. Quite a coincidence here, our last episode was with the Chair of the Board of NEHRA, and this episode is with the President of HRLF, the Human Resources Leadership Forum, Stephanie Franklin. In fact, Stephanie and HRLF, are hosting their second annual Bob Gatti HR Leadership Award on December 13th, so sign up to register for that event.

Stephanie's also the head of HR at Vertex Pharmaceuticals, one of the most successful biotechs in the world. Much of their success has been in therapies to treat cystic fibrosis, CF. In our discussion, Stephanie shares the incredible mission that Vertex has. One part of that mission is that they're so patient-focused, and she talks about how tangible the connection to the patient is for Vertex and their employees.

Vertex has also been a leader in creating very successful employer resource groups. One notable one is their long-running ERG for Women and Women Leadership. And giving back is another big part of their mission. They created a program with the Boston Public Schools, and they have a learning lab inside to help train future scientists.

Next up on the podcast and just before the holidays, we will have the founder of Cummings Properties, Bill Cummings. Bill lives the holiday spirit year round through the Cummings Foundation. He and his wife also signed the Giving Pledge with Bill and Melinda Gates.

And now I bring you my discussion with Stephanie Franklin.

Stephanie welcome to the podcast.

Stephanie Franklin: Thanks Dave, great to have you here today.

Dave: It's great being here in this awesome space at Vertex. Believe it or not, I've never been here, and I'm so impressed. I didn't even know there was two buildings, and they're both beautiful, and probably one of the first movers in this Seaport area of putting your name on the building and really building out a campus.

Stephanie: So we have about 1600 employees here now in the Seaport.

Dave: Amazing. And how many around the world?

Stephanie: Around 2500.

Dave: Yeah, you're in San Diego I saw and some other places.



Stephanie: San Diego...

Dave: Any other big populations?

Stephanie: Oxford, Paddington, and also Australia, Latin America.

Dave: A lot of the big hubs of biotech work. Is that where you focus your talent populations?

Stephanie: Absolutely.

Dave: Yeah. Great. Well let's talk a little bit about you and then we'll talk about Vertex and what you're doing here. Any early life experiences that you're willing to share or something about your background that you think would be interesting to our audience, and maybe even informed the direction of your career, or who you became as a professional, as an HR leader?

Stephanie: So it's interesting. I'm from Kentucky, and I kind of grew up tobacco farm, grandfather was a dairy farmer. So, come from very humble roots, which really I think transitioned well in as I grew in my career and kind of grew up in manufacturing, and spent a lot of time on the CPG side of the world. And in manufacturing I think, manufacturing HR particularly, you really develop that pragmatic approach to problem-solving. And I think that's probably helped more than anything in terms of shaping who I am, which takes me back to my days in Kentucky.

Dave: So, you can always tap into those resources. What industries have you worked in besides manufacturing? I know you worked in software and...

Stephanie: Software, healthcare...

Dave: ...biotech, healthcare, yeah.

Stephanie: ...consumer products. The bulk of my career I would say consumer products.

Dave: Right.

Stephanie: Duracell, Gillette, Proctor and Gamble.

Dave: Interesting. So, speaking of industries, we're here at Vertex, which is a very successful biotech pharmaceuticals company. I think you just had success with your third launch of a successful CF therapy. And that's just this year.

Stephanie: It is. And we've brought three transformative medicines to people with CF just in the last six years alone. And it's really about transformative medicines here. So it's, we go all in for the cure, and we're very, very focused on really ensuring that we can treat every patient that we can.

Dave: And, are you working on things in addition to CF or is it focused exclusively...



Stephanie: We are.

Dave: ...on CF.

Stephanie: We are. So, if we think about really our broader strategy, we have been focused on CF and we are now moving beyond CF into areas like pain, sickle cell, beta thalassemia, alpha-1 antitrypsin.

Dave: Based on the work you do here, which is so important to the health of so many people in the world, how does that inform the culture of Vertex?

Stephanie: We are an incredibly patient-focused organization. It really grounds us. Everything that we do is about the patient. Every decision that we make is with the patient in mind. And so, that's really at the core of our values, and our values are really around innovation, collaboration, and "we wins," fearless pursuit of excellence, but then that commitment to patients is really what grounds us.

And so, so as we think about culture and how do we continue to evolve, we've been around for almost 30 years. We'll be celebrating our 30th anniversary next year. And so, if we think about what's made us who we are, what's made us unique, it really is for us about protecting that, as we continue to evolve and scale beyond CF, and as we continue to grow and expand globally. So, for us it's about what's made us great and then what will it be for us to focus as we continue to grow.

Dave: So, what kinds of things are you doing to make sure that happens from an HR perspective?

Stephanie: So, I would say one of our core tenets has really been around diversity and inclusion, and it's one of the reasons that I'm here. I'm so passionate about this work, and it really is meaningful for me personally. And so, we've made great strides over the last few years in the diversity and inclusion space. And when I talk about D&I, it's really about how do we ensure that our employees can bring their best selves to work, to do their best work? And how do we create a culture and a work environment where that is enabled in every moment, every experience that an employee has at Vertex.

And some of the ways that we've really begun to think about that, were informed by our employee resource networks. And I couldn't be prouder of the work that those networks have done over the last few years. We currently have four employee resource networks. Our first was I Will, which is our Women's Leadership Network. We also have VIBE, Vertex Includes Boundless Ethnicity. Our third is PRIDE, which is an affinity group for our LGBTQ employees and their allies. And we most recently launched BRAVE, which is in support of veterans and first responders.

And we've really...

Dave: Appropriately named.

Stephanie: ...appropriately named. And we've really found that our employees and ERNs are volunteering, in addition to their day job. But we found their passion, their enthusiasm, their creativity, and their ideas, really give us the insights to be able to help drive the culture that we want to become.



Dave: What are some of the things that have come out? Can you point to any specifics that...

Stephanie: Yeah, so...

Dave: ...that really had an impact on the culture?

Stephanie: So, as you think about what's really had an impact, we host an annual diversity week, where we really focus on how do we spotlight some of the great work that's happening internally.

Dave: Stephanie, it sounds diversity and inclusion is alive and well in every part of what you're doing here. How do you use that lens as you start thinking about what you provide to your employees as far as benefits and other things?

Stephanie: Yeah, it's a great question. I'll give you a couple of examples. As we've built out our leadership development curriculum, we ensure that we are embedding inclusive leadership practices in every module, every piece of our development, as one example.

Another one on the benefits side is we've recently completed an audit of all of our benefits to ensure that we're really thinking holistically, and that we're addressing the needs of non-traditional families or employees, and we've made a number of changes that we'll be implementing in 2019 in support of that.

Dave: What other things are you doing with regard to diversity and inclusion that are unique, that we might not be seeing from other organizations that are focused on this?

Stephanie: We've established what we call an external diversity advisory council or EDAC, which is made up of cross industry professionals here in Boston, focused on sharing best practices, and really around innovative strategies to advance our D&I efforts. It's become really a sounding board for us, as we build out our strategy and as we continue to evolve.

Dave: Anything you can point to that came out of that, that's really making an impact for you?

Stephanie: Well, one of the things we just recently hosted was our D&I Symposium, as suggestion from our ERNs, was to really think about how we could share learnings in this space, in the broader Boston ecosystem. And so, we invited DI professionals from other organizations here locally, to join us and to hear guest speakers, to participate in panels, to really share what's working. But also some of our learnings and some of the things that haven't worked, and those have been a couple of really unique ways that we've tried to address this here.

Dave: That's great. I think the last time I saw you was at the New Boston Chapter of the National Association of African Americans in Human Resources. Quite an acronym. I was over at Blue Cross Blue Shield, and I think you had some of your team there.

Stephanie: Yes, we attended.



Dave: Yes.

Stephanie: Yes, the launch. And it was really exciting to get to meet the team there.

Dave: I know, they really got a lot of big ideas.

Stephanie: And to understand, yeah, to understand how they're thinking about forming their network, and for us to be a part of that and play a role in that, and to support those efforts.

Dave: And the first keynote was fantastic, Emerson Foster, from Sodexo...

Stephanie: Wonderful...

Dave: ...he did a nice job.

Stephanie: ...it was wonderful to hear Emerson.

Dave: And he's inspiring that group and happy to support them as we are all, so it's great, wish them a lot of success.

Other things going on, you mentioned employee experience. How do you think about employee experience? I had Paul Davies on from General Electric, your neighbor here on the Seaport-

Stephanie: Yes, yes, Paul's just down the street.

Dave: And, his total focus is employee experience. So we talked a lot about that. Talk a little bit about what it means to Vertex and what you're trying to do with employee experience. You touched on it already, but maybe there's more you can share.

Stephanie: Yes. So I think D&I is a part of it, but we're really trying to take a holistic approach to employee experience. So, how do we think about the entire employee lifecycle, from the time that you are a candidate for employment here, through the entire lifecycle. And, taking a look at all of our processes, particularly our people processes, from the lens of the candidate and then employee. And so, we are building out employee services as part of our broader HR operating model work, with real focus on that employee experience and designing from the user perspective.

Dave: How do you do that? How do you...

Stephanie: Leveraging technology.

Dave: Okay, yeah.

Stephanie: So, really thinking about ... One of the tools that we're using is human based design thinking, and creating personas. So, which we did a lot of in CPG, in marketing. But, as we think about from a



Keystone Partners

human resource perspective, how do we design to that employee experience, and how do we look at the diverse experiences across our employee population. So, perhaps we create a persona for a people manager, for a scientist, for a remote worker, for a millennial, for a Gen Xer, so we really start to think about what are the differences and expectations and needs, and design from that perspective out.

Dave: So, you adjust how you recruit based on the personas?

Stephanie: We will, that's exactly how we're thinking about it.

Dave: Okay.

Dave: Really interesting. You said your first ERN I think was the Women's Leadership ERN.

Stephanie: Correct.

Dave: And I have heard about that, I think I've heard of you bringing in outside speakers to present to that group.

Stephanie: We do, we do.

Dave: And, I'm wondering what kinds of things are coming out of the work from that group that you might be able to share, or maybe a best practice about process, so that they're really effective. Can you talk a little bit about that group in specific?

Stephanie: Yeah. So, I think in my experience, and I've had experience with women's leadership groups throughout the organizations where I've had the honor of working. And this one I would say probably been the best led, best organized, it's our largest ERN. It is really about focusing on the development of women in science and leadership. One of the things that's worked really well are mentoring circles, that we've had really great feedback and again, this is all grassroots efforts, so this is not something driven from top down or HR programmatic solution, it's really about the women in this network identifying what their needs are, and then putting together some solutions that they have found to be really powerful.

Dave: Is the mentoring structured or is it ... How structured is it I guess? How do you structure the mentoring?

Stephanie: I think it varies.

Dave: Yeah.

Stephanie: And I think in the mentoring circles it depends on the group, and what the needs are. But it can be as simple as one-on-one or broader circles where they're learning from each other.



Keystone Partners

Dave: I know the ERNs are so important to your culture. When you get so big like you are now, with 2500, how do you manage these ERNs? Are there sub groups that meet...

Stephanie: There are.

Dave: ...'cause how do you, you can't put all in the same room every time.

Stephanie: Yeah. I know. And we're expanding globally, so...

Dave: Right.

Stephanie: And, of course because we're not all based here in Boston, so it is how do you create virtual opportunities?

Dave: Right.

Stephanie: And how do you ensure that we're connecting whether it's through our V-NET web pages, so that we can have conversations online, through virtual meetings, through face-to-face. It really is about, and just ensuring that we're staying connected, and that we have the pulse of the employees who are participating in these networks.

Dave: It makes me think about the broader question, as you grow so fast and all across the country, how do you make sure the culture stays with what you want and what your vision is? This is one way. What are the other things you do to make sure the culture is consistent in different markets, in different parts of the country and world?

Stephanie: It's really about embedding our values in everything that we do, and ensuring that we have consistent messaging across the organization. Every site, every location is going to have their unique culture, which is so critical. But it's grounded in what makes us who we are as Vertexians. We call ourselves Vertexians. And so, so what are the common things we share, which are around our values, it's around our pace, the sense of urgency to really get to our patients.

Dave: That's one of the values, urgency, yup for the patient.

Stephanie: It's really how we operate. So this is a very roll up your sleeves, and a still entrepreneurial mindset organization, that we wanna ensure doesn't become bureaucratic as we grow. So it is about how do we keep things pragmatic and ensure that we are continuing to communicate our story to not only the inside world but the outside world, and to our diverse set of employees.

Dave: That's great. That's a really good answer.

Stephanie, you're a real leader in the HR community 'cause you're so public and your President of HRLF role, so you get a lot of exposure to great HR practitioners, what do you look for when you're bringing HR people into your group?



Keystone Partners

Stephanie: It's a wonderful question because I've spent the last year really building on some great work here at Vertex and the HR team, and thinking about how we grow that team and what are the skills and capabilities that we need to really build world class HR as we scale this organization. And so, I would tell you in building out both my leadership team and more broadly in the HR team, for me it's about the highest integrity and credibility. It's about collaboration, creativity, really thinking about the future of work, and how do we bring that to life in pragmatic ways. And we're addressing that in both our employee services build out, in our workforce strategy and analytics efforts, in our talent management processes, and really building in, as I spoke about earlier, that employee experience lens in everything that we do.

And so, we've built just a phenomenal team here. I couldn't be more proud of the team that's here, of the work that was done before I arrived, and of the work that we've done since I have joined.

Dave: As you look at HR and wherer things are going, how do you see the function of evolving even further, if you have to look five or 10 years out ... I've had guests on the podcast that talk a lot about the technology having a big impact and AI as well. What are some the things you are thinking about as you're seeing how's HR evolving?

Stephanie: It's a fun thing to think about. It's a lot of the work that we're doing as a team here with my HR leadership team, because it's really about the intersection of humans and technology, and how do we think about that intersect in a way that we can do our best work, be our best selves, and really enable the organization to achieve what it might not otherwise had been able to achieve, without enabling processes, systems, technology, and yet maintaining that human side of HR.

And I think that's probably going to be our most interesting challenge, as you see multiple generations in the workforce, as organizations begin to scale, as technology just continues to advance, how we balance all of this in a way that work is meaningful, that we're meeting the needs of employees, and that we as an organization are able to accomplish objectives that we might not have otherwise been able to achieve.

Dave: We talked about how technology is so important in HR. How are you using technology now in your department?

Stephanie: It's a great question. So, we actually initiated a partnership this year with our data sciences team here at Vertex, to really help us better understand the plethora of data that we have available, and to help us identify opportunities whether it's with candidate pipeline, we've developed a partnership with LinkedIn to better mine for talent. To understand where we have opportunities for improvement in the employee lifecycle. And so, if we can utilize data, to tell a story in a way that we haven't had the capability to do before, it's a really interesting opportunity for us in partnership with our data sciences team.

Dave: We do this podcast in cooperation with NEHRA, the North East Human Resources Association, your buddy and obviously you're in HRLF and running that organization, but it's a friendly...



Stephanie: Of course.

Dave: ...relationship between...

Stephanie: Of course.

Dave: NERHA and HRLF. And we have the NEHRA YP, they have a Young Professionals group, we have the NEHRA YP Question of the podcast, and this time it comes from Marissa Cammarano, she's actually works at NEHRA full-time, and she's a Project Coordinator, but she also runs a part of the NEHRA YP group, she's on the committee that runs it. Marissa's question is: when faced with two equally qualified candidates, it could be anywhere in your organization, how do you and your team determine who to hire?

Stephanie: So, when I'm faced with two equally qualified candidates for me, it's all about the values, and what I see in terms of what an individual is going to bring to this team. And so, it's about consistency with our values of innovation, of fearless pursuit of excellence, "we wins," which is collaboration.

Dave: Instead of "I wins," yeah.

Stephanie: And our, most importantly our focus on the patient. We are an incredibly mission-driven organization, and so, you can tell in an individual when they connect to that mission, and when they're going to be successful here, it's almost immediate that you can see that connection.

Dave: What does your recruitment team do to help find those things out? I mean there's all sort of interviewing techniques out there, but is there anything that you can point to that you do, I mean maybe you don't want to give out those secrets 'cause candidates might be listening. But, is there anything...

Stephanie: Top secret!

Dave: Yeah.

Stephanie: No, it's really about ensuring that we're engaging with candidates in a way that we can get to know what really motivates and drives them, and so that we can assess if that's something that's gonna be a fit for us here at Vertex.

Dave: So you really try to get to those motivators.

Stephanie, mission is so important to you, and it seems very tangible, you can feel it here, and you speak so passionately about it. Why is that?

Stephanie: Well Dave, I think our employees give us feedback, they tell us how connected they are to the mission, we rank higher on connection to the mission, in feedback surveys, then our peer group across the board. And so, I think one is the connection to the patient, and how tangible that connection



Keystone Partners

to the patient is, but in addition to that, we're very focused on giving back. And our employees have told us that that's something that's really important to them as well. So we give back in a number of ways.

One is with our learning lab, we have an onsite learning lab where we bring in Boston Public School students to teach them about science, and our employees can volunteer in our onsite lab. We have a number of partnerships around STEAM education. We most recently created a foundation...

Dave: Is STEAM similar to STEM?

Stephanie: So STEM plus the arts. And so, we just recently launched our foundation and a matching gift program for our employees. And we achieved one million dollars in matching gifts in our first year.

Dave: Wow.

Stephanie: We offer an annual day of service, which we just hosted a week before last, and over a thousand employees around the globe volunteered that day, on behalf of Vertex, to give back to our community.

Dave: That's great. Sounds like you're doing some incredible things here. This next question comes from somebody you know. Beth Grous gave me this question, and I asked it to her on the podcast. And the question is: if you could write a letter of advice to your 30 year old self, career advice, professional advice, what would write to Stephanie Franklin at 30?

Stephanie: I would write, keep doing what you're doing, because this is your passion. Never give up on your passion, I think is probably the most important advice. The other piece though that I would add is be patient. Everything doesn't have to come together at once. And so, be thoughtful about your areas of focus and what you can accomplish. When I tend to be a little bit hard charging and try to accomplish a lot, and so, I think that would be good advice for my younger self.

Dave: Just a little patience. Any other general advice to the HR community? We have a lot of HR people that are listening to this podcast, that might be aspired to your role someday, what advice in general would you give to them? I mean you talked about who you hire, integrity's so important, but what other things would you give to advice to up and coming HR people that wanna have a job in HR.

Stephanie: The other piece that I think is important is continue to invest in your own development. And that's something that's always been important to me, and in HR, I think we're always so focused on others' development, that we don't often focus on our own. So that's something that's been a priority for me with my own HR team, and ensuring that we're building the skills and capabilities of the future.

This field, HR, is advancing rapidly. And so, for us I think the ability to stay current and to continue to challenge our own thinking is what will really drive us into the future.

Dave: I think you're absolutely right. I'm noticing, I've been 18 years in this field, and it seems like in the last few years, it's just been moving so quickly, with technology, with the focus on culture like you have



here at Vertex. I mean we heard those words a lot from organizations over the years, but it seems like more organizations like yours are, really believe it, and make it part of everything that you do with talent. And so, I think it's exciting time to be in this field.

Stephanie: It's the whole idea of the workforce of the future, but it's now.

Dave: Right. It is. Lot of exciting things. And by the way, I'll give you a little plug, even though I'm on the NEHRA board. You have a big event, this podcast is being released just a couple of weeks before your Gatti Award event. You wanna just give a little plug to your...

Stephanie: Absolutely.

Dave: ...HRLF event?

Stephanie: Absolutely. So, on December 13th, we are hosting our second annual HRLF Bob Gatti Leadership Excellence Award Recognition. And so, this is really about Gatti and Associates, and HRLF came together a couple of years ago and decided we wanted to do, it's almost a lifetime achievement award. So it's really about peer recognition for phenomenal HR leaders in the Boston/New England community.

And last year our first winner was Russ Campanello, who needs no introduction.

Dave: No. He was episode three of the podcast, by the way.

Stephanie: Of course he was. Of course he was. And so, we're really excited about this year as well.

Dave: All right. We'll go to the fun part of the podcast now Stephanie, these questions are a little lighter. Do you have any hidden talents you're willing to share with the listeners?

Stephanie: I don't think I have a lot of hidden talents. But one that comes to mind is I tend to be a connector, which probably goes back to ensuring that people are developing themselves. And so, I love to bring people together to share ideas and to learn from each other.

Dave: Connecting. That's good. If you could go to dinner with any living person, who would it and why?

Stephanie: Michelle Obama. Hands down.

Dave: We've heard about that before on the podcast, yeah.

Stephanie: She is just one of the most inspiring women in our culture today, and I would just love to learn from her.

Dave: Michelle Obama. All right. And, what's the best performance you have ever seen? What sporting event, musical artist, play, show, what comes to mind?



Keystone Partners

Stephanie: I think my favorite performance was probably U2 here in Boston a couple of years ago. But I have to say I saw Hamilton here in Boston recently, and it was just outstanding. And my daughter sang the songs for weeks on end.

Dave: Oh yes, my son's been singing them for two years now. Stephanie, it's been so great having you as a guest to the podcast.

Stephanie: Oh, thanks so much Dave. It's been great to do it.

Recorded Message: Thank you for listening to The Hennessy Report from Keystone Partners. Be sure to subscribe to listen to all of our conversations with leaders in HR. Go to keystonepartners.com and click on the podcast button.

The information, opinions, and content presented in this podcast are for general information only. Views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the podcast belong solely to the speaker, and not necessarily

to the speaker's employer, organization, committee or other group or individual.

Keystone Partners assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this transcription. The information contained herein is provided on an "as is" basis with no guarantees of completeness, accuracy, usefulness or timeliness.

© Keystone Partners and The Hennessy Report. 2018. All Rights Reserved.

All other trade names or company names referenced herein are used for identification purposes only and are the property of their respective owners.