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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. Today's episode is with Tiffany Mosher, the Chief People Officer at dataxu. I've known Tiffany a long time and she's got a great sense of humor which really comes through. She's built a great team, she's so proud of them. She also created a women's networking group inside dataxu. Tiffany takes her work seriously but doesn't take herself too seriously and I think you'll really enjoy this episode.

Next up on the podcast is Patty McCord of Netflix fame. And now, I bring you my discussion with Tiffany Mosher.

Tiffany, welcome to the podcast.

Tiffany Mosher: Thanks Dave, good to see you.

Dave: Good seeing you too. We met towards the end of Akamai career way back then.

Tiffany: That was a long time ago.

Dave: It was, and I've always enjoyed working with you because you take your work so seriously but you don't take yourself too seriously. You like to laugh, mix laughter with work. And we've done that and I know that you do that with your team here at dataxu.

Tiffany: Have to, keeps everyone sane.

Dave: Exactly.

Tiffany: Got to take the work extremely seriously, but don't take yourself seriously. And I think, I don't know, I think my years doing this, that's probably the biggest lesson learned is don't take yourself too seriously. We're doing great things here at dataxu but we're not curing cancer, so keep it in perspective.

Dave: Is there an early life experience that you can share that kind of set you on this path?

Tiffany: Gosh, there's been so many. I don't think one necessarily stands out over the others. I've been blessed in my career, I've been doing this, gosh, I don't know if I want to say this on this podcast, but let's just put it 20 plus years.

Dave: That's what we do on the resume business of course.

Tiffany: Don't put the actual numbers. I've been really fortunate to have many great opportunities in the people business with various companies, going through various types of either growth or downsizing, and just trying to be a sponge for all the various lessons that come out of that. I was fortunate in the mid



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to late 90s to work out in Silicon Valley among some of the tech giants and watch just the robustness of what went into the recruiting warfare for talent back then.

Dave: And that's really when it was starting to explore it. So you really were right there at the front lines.

Tiffany: Yes, exactly. The front lines of a limousine pulling up to the company I was with at the time and our CTO walking out the front door and never walking back in. So, working in Silicon Valley I think was really what helped me when I came back to the east coast and began my time at Akamai.

Dave: Which was also connected to what was going on in Silicon Valley obviously.

Tiffany: And the internet boom really set me up for success, seeing some of the things that I saw out there because I don't think that kind of tech savviness, for lack of a better word, was truly happening on the East Coast or in Boston at that time...yet. It certainly was coming and it did come. But it helped, I think for me it, it catapulted me a little bit in regards to some of the things that I was able to see, good, bad or otherwise.

Dave: Right. And you know, we've talked a little, maybe you could share with our guests a little bit about the Akamai story when you were there because you saw the explosion of growth but you also saw it come back down, the bottom. And then of course, right around that same time, Danny Lewin, one of the founders died in the September, I think he was the first victim...

Tiffany: First victim, on record as the first victim of the 9/11 attacks.

Dave: But what was it like just experiencing all that? What do you remember about it?

Tiffany: Honestly, until dataxu, I would've said that my Akamai experience was my best experience, both from favorite place to work to what I was exposed to in my career and pushed beyond my comfort zone, and sometimes felt like I didn't really know what the heck I was doing. Baptism by fire.

Dave: Can you give an example? What do you mean, what was happening? I'm doing this, I'm not sure I can, but I did it anyway. What was going on?

Tiffany: I'll give you the very, very high level. So I was with Akamai from mid 2000 until early 2006. When I started with them in mid 2000, we were rapidly growing, hiring 30 people a week, not a month, but a week. Really exploding from a growth revenue as well as a head count perspective. So it was just taking off. And that's mid 2000. So then fast forward just slightly to 2001, in the summertime, we were like, okay, we need to pump the brakes a little bit.

Dave: But it was still good.

Tiffany: It was still good, but then 9/11 happened. And we knew within 20 minutes of the plane, the first plane hitting the World Trade Center that our CTO was gone and our co-founder was gone. Danny Lewin. Oh my gosh, this guy was the, he was the life of Akamai. He was the passion and half the brains.



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You know, Tom Leighton, who's the current CEO and co-founder of Akamai was the other half of the brains. Together, they were just the dynamic duo. But Danny brought so much energy and passion. He was young, he was only 31 at the time of his death.

Dave: Wow.

Tiffany: I know that because I share the same exact birthday, same year of birth.

Dave: Same birth day.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Dave: Exact year.

Tiffany: Exact year. It paralyzed us in a way but enabled us in a way his passing because none of us wanted to give up on his vision and his dream. But the organization at that time with the bubble bursting and a lot of the dotcoms going out of business, we went from about 1500 employees to 495 employees.

Dave: So, you lost 70%.

Tiffany: So, over a period of nine to 12 months if I'm remembering correctly, and several phased reductions in force. I was tasked with being a senior leader at that time within the people organization to help organize all of that. I had never organized something of that size and that volume of reductions. I'd only been on companies that have been going kind of a rocket ship in the opposite direction. So it was sobering. It was gut-wrenching to tell really awesomely smart, wonderful human beings that they no longer have a job with your organization. It toughened me up in a way, but not from a heart and empathy perspective. I would only say with my years since then, it only gets harder to lay people off, which is different than terminating someone for performance. It's a different emotion that's involved.

Akamai, what's great about Akamai is, 2001 was obviously tragic. The whole thing with Danny continues to be tragic. But in 2002, was the downsizing. But by 2003, the company achieved free cashflow. And then in 2004, turned a profit. 2005, we turned back on hiring belt.

Dave: So, you got to see the full recovery, the full cycle?

Tiffany: It was really truly the roller coaster. The ups, the downs. So it was an amazing experience and I got to work with really wonderful, talented people and for one of the best leaders I think of our time, Paul Sagan.

Dave: Why don't we talk a little bit about dataxu. I've talked to you about the business a little bit. I know you're into media, digital media advertising. Can you describe where...

Tiffany: Not really.



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Dave: We don't have to get too technical. Where does the normal person see the dataxu stuff come out from? Can you tell us where we see dataxu in our daily life?

Tiffany: Without one of our wonderful data scientists in the room, I will do my best. But we're an advertising technology firm. So we basically make marketing easier for our customers by programmatically putting out content with a lot of data and insights.

Dave: Who buys your services, who's the customer?

Tiffany: A lot of folks are our customers. We transcend through many industries, many size companies. But Lexus as an example is a big customer of dataxu. So, Lexus likes to serve a lot of car ads. If you're in the high end luxury vehicle market, Lexus would look at dataxu to say, okay, help me target that market even better so that I know that my advertising dollars are 100% transparent and know exactly what they're doing for my business. Which is a lot different than the olden days when you would put up an ad on a billboard or in a newspaper and not know what that was really driving from a return on investment standpoint. So the customers that we have, really what we provide for them is a much more robust ability to specifically target the audiences that they want to target.

So, from a geo standpoint, a gender standpoint, an age standpoint, an economic standpoint, so it really gets into very targeted ways of digitally advertising your brands.

Dave: So, they know they're reaching their customer base...

Tiffany: Correct.

Dave: ...that's what it's all about.

Tiffany: Yup. And we're very white glove from a transparency standpoint, from a fraud free guarantee standpoint. It's pretty cool. We're helping organizations transcend from just understanding how to put advertisements through traditional television vehicles to that of the connected TV vehicles like these over the top subscriptions. You probably already know without even having to be in this business this notion of cord cutters. A lot of what we will call the Millennial generation are becoming much more cord cutters than Generation X or the Baby Boomers. But the cord cutters don't want to or don't feel that they have to even because of the bevy of availability in streaming media, feel like they have to pay a service for like a Comcast.

Dave: They just want Wi-Fi and a cell phone and that's it, right?

Tiffany: And a couple of subscriptions. Like what does Netflix cost? \$9.99 a month and Hulu, \$4.99 a month, depending upon what package you have. So you put a couple of those together, they're getting the content, the media content that they need to feel like they're fulfilled and they have the entertainment value that they want from a connected device standpoint.

Dave: That's cool. I think I got it. You talked about Netflix. We have Patty McCord who is the Chief Culture Officer, CPO of Netflix during their huge growth coming up on the podcast-



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Tiffany: Wow. Talk about a lot of experience there, what she's seen.

Dave: We'll tease that one right now.

Tiffany: Yeah, right. I like it.

Dave: Can you tell us a little bit about your HR team, the team you've built here...

Tiffany: My awesome...

Dave: ...your awesome team.

Tiffany: ...people strategy team?

Dave: Yes. I know Lisa McAuliffe very well, you can talk about her and the other roles that you have here.

Tiffany: dataxu is the smallest place I've ever worked from an overall revenue and headcount standpoint. Yet, I organize it much like I've organized my departments in other bigger organizations that I've worked. The pillars that I find to be really important foundationally that allow you to scale and grow and repeat are: recruit, retain, develop. So I've organized my team around those pillars. So we have a talent acquisition organization headed up by Michael Clinton, who is one of the best folks I've ever had the privilege of working with. He's the touch point, he's the seller to everyone that we would want to engage.

Dave: The ambassador for talent.

Tiffany: He's the ambassador for talent for dataxu. He's a wonderful guy, very approachable, very likable, very engaging, a very articulate, well-spoken guy who knows the industry well. And he's fun and he takes his job seriously and doesn't take himself too seriously.

Dave: That's the kind of people you hire I'm sure.

Tiffany: We get along just great. But recruiting is all, from my standpoint, we want to make the best candidate experience happen for everyone that we reach out to. So even if you don't get the job, hopefully, you'll walk away from dataxu saying, "I'm bummed that I didn't get the job but that was a really cool process. They didn't keep me hanging, the communication was crisp, it was timely, it was proactive. What a cool company, what a cool product they have. The people I met with were engaging and high energy and smart."

Dave: And then they share that with other people they might run into. Or they might come back and work here in the future.

Tiffany: Absolutely.



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Dave: So that's great.

Tiffany: Don't close the door. And then we have a retain pillar. So Lisa McAuliffe who you know well, who was one of my very first hires when I joined dataxu, she joined I think five weeks later. Hadn't worked together before but thanks to another common person, Mimi Miller, who we have in common. Mimi and I had worked five years together at Akamai. She and Lisa had worked I think the same amount of time together at Omgeo. And Mimi's like, oh, these two would work well together, Lisa and Tiff. So brought her in. She's been promoted twice since being here. But she is what we call the people strategy business partner and she runs that function. What that is, trying to be as efficient as possible with employees who may have questions, doesn't really matter what it's about. It could be about comp, it could be about performance, it could be about an employee relation issue. First person you would reach out to. So your kind of key point of contact, because there's several of us.

Dave: For both managers and employees.

Tiffany: And employees. Absolutely. Absolutely. It's the business partner's job really to understand the pulse of the organizations that they support and to provide really insightful, proactive advice to managers and employees alike. Help them in decision making processes, help them out of sticky situations that they may be in. Give them advice in regards to compensation matters. Really everything. What I kind of love the most out of those three pillars is the retain. I feel like my best kind of attributes as a people professional are my employee relation and business partnering skills. And it really is all about the business first. If you don't know how the business operates or what's going well in the business, what's not going well in the business, it really doesn't matter what your people experience is.

So, Lisa's great at that. Understanding what's going well, and proactively, that's the key, not being reactive. I don't like reactive organizations, proactive to say, "Hey, I'm seeing this happening within the sales East region. What's going on there and do we need to peel that onion back a little bit more and understand if there's a potential issue?"

Dave: Reach out to the leadership in that group.

Tiffany: Exactly. Start the engagement, etc. And the retain is also where our benefits and compensation lies. So always having cutting edge or industry competitive offerings. Lisa's in charge of, you know, from a benefits offering, we introduced a 401(k) match after we joined, things like that. So, what are our employees liking to see other than we do free lunches, stuff like that, everyone does that now though. The perks. And then having awesome compensation structure that aligns to market so that we know, you know what we should be paying people and having a philosophy around compensation that, that, that we stick to that works for us to help retain and incent the right folks.

And then last but certainly not least is our develop pillar. So who we have heading up our develop is Kim Remley who's our senior director of talent management and learning development who is awesome. I'm a little of a non-traditionalist as far as when I joined because I definitely needed someone to head up talent acquisition. But my next kind of big hire was someone to come in and run talent management, learning and development. As you get the people in, you want to try and retain them. If you don't develop them, they're going to go right out the back door. So, how do we make people who come to be



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employees at dataxu feel that they're, the trajectory of their career is better off as a result of coming to dataxu versus going somewhere else.

And that's really what I wake up and inspires me every day to come in here, develop and progress folks.

Dave: How do you do it? How do you help them develop?

Tiffany: A lot of different ways, you know, because everyone's wired differently, everyone's a little bit different. You can never manage two people the exact same way. So it's all about understanding what motivates them and what drives them.

Dave: What else are you proud of that you're doing here at dataxu?

Tiffany: Proud of a lot. I think that the thing that I'm most proud of recently is this women's network that I kicked off, geez, last October. So only five months ago.

Dave: It's like an employee resource group that you started? Use that term?

Tiffany: Yeah, it kind of came about maybe you would think in a corny kind of way. And what I mean by that is I stumbled upon a quote that really, really resonated with me. It's from an unknown person, but the quote was, "When you see something that you admire or like in a woman, tell her and get in the spirit of lifting each other up." So, I was like, "Yes, there needs to be more of that." There needs to be more gender equality. We have a holistically here at dataxu a 60-40 male to female ratio of employees. Is that terrible? No, it's not terrible. Would I love that to be 50-50, sure I would. But then as you look at the different ranks within our population, we could have more senior women leaders as an example.

So, I wanted to do something that got out to all of our female employees, and the mantra is the quote that I just told you.

Dave: That's the vision, that's the mission of this group.

Tiffany: That's the vision, just lifting each other up and really supporting one another, and knowing that, guess what, there's room for all of us at the top. There truly, truly is. And pick a topic every single month that either inspires or motivates or trains, educates, something to lift each other up. So, I went out in October and put on the first event, was the facilitator of the first event.

Dave: You were the content person that day.

Tiffany: I was the content person. I put out the kind of the Rah Rah call to arms to say, hey, would anyone be interested in this? I was a little fearful, like what are people gonna say? They were, the population here in our Boston office, which is our corporate headquarters was...

Dave: And a beautiful new office.

Tiffany: It's so nice up here on the 25th floor, isn't it?



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Dave: It really is nice. Beautiful view.

Tiffany: Yeah, beautiful views. So, we kicked off the first women's event in October with watching a 15 minute TED Talk from Sheryl Sandberg. Something everyone could relate to. I love this particular TED Talk. She talks about don't leave before you leave. And women I think struggle with, well, if I'm going to get married and if I'm going to have kids, can my career continue to go on this trajectory? And her don't leave before you leave really resonated with a lot of...our average age employee here is 32, so really resonated and inspired. And then after the TED Talk, what I thought would be important is, hey, what did you get from that TED Talk? And let's talk about how you interpreted that and ...

Dave: What does it mean to you.

Tiffany: Yeah, what does it mean to you? What could we do differently here at dataxu that would make you feel even better in that regard to support having kind of a work life balance if kids are what you want outside of dataxu? Either you have them now or want them in the future, things like that. And then what I do is ask for any female employee to be a facilitator for the next event. And I just kind of stay behind the scenes. What I do is kind of shepherd the process. So, I'll set up the monthly women's events, and then work with the folks who are brave enough to facilitate to come up with a topic that they're really comfortable getting up in front of the group and speaking about. Again, in the background or behind the scenes, encouraging them and providing them with the right content. We open every meeting with our mantra. And if it's after work, we might also have wine and cheese or we'll offer lunch if it's over the lunchtime hour. But it is, it's a real cool kind of inspirational thing that we've done.

Dave: I can see it just in your face you love this.

Tiffany: I love it.

Dave: You love this, that's great.

Tiffany: Yes. Yes.

Dave: It's making a big impact already.

Tiffany: It's motivating. And here's what it does too that that people might not know just hearing about this women's network on the surface. It brings together obviously all women in the organization, but people you might not communicate with or interact with on a daily basis.

Dave: Because the parts of the business, you're not connected.

Tiffany: So, it opens doors everywhere. And I really feel that the root of all evil, whether it be in your personal life or your professional life is lack of alignment, lack of communication.

Dave: Right. That's always the problem.

Tiffany: Get people together, get people to communicate in any way that you can.



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Dave: That's great.

Tiffany: So yeah, that's been fun.

Dave: We do this podcast, Keystone does in cooperation with NEHRA, Northeast Human Resources Association.

Tiffany: Great association.

Dave: It is, it's fantastic. And NEHRA has a young professionals group within it, so we have the NEHRA YP question of the podcast. So Sarah Dumont, who's right here recording, the producer of The Hennessy Report is also on the NEHRA YP committee. So she is going to ask you this question.

Sarah Dumont: The NEHRA YP question today is, a lot of people are going back to school to get their MBA, study talent or organizational development, different forms of HR. But how can someone best leverage that formal education to transition quickly that education effectively into an organization?

Tiffany: So, I have a bachelors and a masters in communications. They didn't offer, University of Maine at the time did not offer a specific degree program within human resources. But I had done enough internships with Putnam Investments way back in the day when I was a college student to know that I wanted a career in the people business. And so, what I did is I chose the degree that I thought best aligned with that. And we had organizational communication type courses, women in communication courses if I remember correctly on some of the coursework that I took. And it was just, again, I think I would give anyone the same advice whether you're going for your bachelors degree, advanced degree, and then transcending into corporate America once you graduate, you try to be such a sponge on the application of what you took away from academics to the workforce and asking as many questions as you possibly can.

And what I mean by that is if you took a course on say, organizational communication, one of the courses I had, take away some of your learnings from that. Talk to your boss about, "Okay, here's what I learned in that course. How would you -- someone my manager -- who's been here for a while at this organization help me leverage what I learned?"

Sarah: Thanks Tiffany. So interesting. So what advice would you give to someone up and coming in HR?

Tiffany: I've got some younger folks on my team and it's, I have what's called skip one on ones with them -- they are my indirect reports -- but on a monthly basis, I don't want to overtax them with me. But, you know, asking them like what's going well again, what's not going so well and how can I be helpful? They always ask me, what advice do you have? How can I be successful here at dataxu and specifically within people strategy. And it's coming, it's showing up every day ready. That doesn't mean you have to know the answer. I love folks that know what they don't know, and what I mean by that is someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, just say, hey, that's a great question, let me get right back to you. Let me talk to some folks and get right back to you.



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It's showing up with a drive and a determination that shows the people around you that you're ready for action. You don't come and slump in your chair or, you make your presence known. If you're in a conference room meeting, pull your seat up to the table and listen and nod and then interject with a question or a comment or an exclamation point on something somebody said. That way you will be noticed. If you slouch in your chair, you don't engage because maybe you're intimidated and I get that, you're not going to get noticed that way though. So I know it could be uncomfortable certainly to start but you need to push yourself. You need to get out of your comfort zone a little bit and nobody at that table, I don't care if it's the CEO, is perfect or knows everything about everything. So, you know, show up, ask questions, take some chances, be a sponge.

Dave: All right, now we're gonna talk about you Tiffany, some lighter questions. Well the first one is, I told you I was going to ask you this question and I ask every guest this question is, if you could write a letter of advice to Tiffany when she was 25 or 30 about professional advice, what would you write in that letter?

Tiffany: If I could write a letter to my 25-year-old self, I think the advice I would give is your passion, your energy, your drive, that's all great. You do however have two ears and one mouth. Use them more proportionate, in more proportion than I think I did when I was 25. Listen, listen, listen.

Dave: What's an interesting thing about you we wouldn't find on your LinkedIn profile?

Tiffany: For me, I'm very much into sports. I played sports in college. But what I found in later years is my Zen. If I've had a bad day, which I do from time to time, I love to go to the barn and see my horse and go on a nice ride. So I have a dressage horse that I ride on, do shows. You would never know that looking at my LinkedIn profile that I know have equestrian.

Dave: No. We see some pictures here in your office though of your horse right there.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Dave: Maybe we'll post that when we broadcast the podcast, a picture of the horse as well. We'll take a picture of that Sarah before we leave.

Tiffany: Something to be said for horse therapy.

Dave: What's a book that changed your life?

Tiffany: Katie Couric is someone I've always admired. So I don't want to get political or anything like that, but I've always admired her energy and her ability to ask really tough questions of those that she's interviewing. There's some parallel there with what I try to do and try to get at when I talk with candidates. So she wrote a book several years ago entitled, *The Best Advice I Ever Got*. She interviews a lot of famous folks and tells a lot of her own tales of lessons learned. And I think every single person out there, if they haven't read the book, should read the book. If you've read it, dust it off, read it again. It's just really sound advice on how to live life, whether you're talking about professionally or personally.



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Dave: Great. Tiffany, it's been great having you as a guest on the podcast.

Tiffany: Thanks for having me. This has been really fun.

Dave: It's been a lot of fun. Thank you.

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