

EP112 Transcript

Elaine Lou Cartas: All right. I'm excited for this session we're gonna do a top on bridging generations, cultivating an inclusive culture and a multi-generational workplace. So we're gonna have a Jackie Dani come up here. So Jackie's the North California Regional Director of Service cultured engagement at Fairmont Hotels and Resorts.

Do you wanna take a seat here? Yeah. And she is a hula champion and. A motorcyclist. So she does both. Yeah. Has anyone met anyone that has that same combination? I'm curious. Just a little tip. Add the fun facts in your LinkedIn. And then I wanted to add a fun fact for myself. I do moi Tie is Tie Kickboxing.

If you don't know what it is, it's the art of Eight Limbs. So punching elbows and knees. I've been doing it for 21 years. Thank you. I'm not going to fight anyone here, I promise. So together we can perform and kick someone's ass at the same time. Jackie, I already introduced a bit about you, but can you share your background?

Jackie Dacanay: Yeah, so I am originally from the Bay Area, born and raised. Anyone else from the Bay Area? I'm curious. Yay. Yeah. I have over 20 years of experience in organizational workplace culture. 20 of which. Have been with Fairmont Hotels. Is anyone familiar with Fairmont? Yes. That's nice. So I'm based out of the San Francisco property and I oversee the people strategy for our Bay Area hotels.

But for those of you who aren't familiar with Fairmont it's a luxury global luxury hotel company. Part of the ACO parent company, which Fairmont is one of the over a hundred brands under the ACO umbrella, but it is the luxury component of the ACO hotels. And it brings in over 60% of revenue to the ACO brands.

really interesting. We were acquired by Accord just fairly recently, a few years ago. But. 90 hotels all over the world and growing and bringing in the most revenue for the brand. Worked mainly in California. So what that means is HR in some of the most complex, large and small because we do have our Heritage place hotels, which are a fraction of our larger Fairmont hotels but mostly hotels of, size, anywhere from 200 to over a thousand rooms.

Which has the same number of employees equivalent to the number of rooms, so complex, diverse workforces and situations. That's my background. And you've been there for 20, 20 years. Yes. 20 years with Fairmont. So I, obviously you work in the hospitality industry where you're always cutting guests first.

What are effective strategies in navigating the cultural transformation? Also maintaining the traditional luxury brand from a general generational to multi-generational workforce. Yes, it's, such a layered response. But what, I will also say is. Specifically using Fairmont San Francisco as a bit of a case study. when I first started at, in San Francisco, the hotel was mainly one generation, and it's almost as though it feels like overnight. But in the last few years we've transitioned to up to five, possibly six, going on six generations in the hotel. And we, needless to say we didn't have any sort of infrastructure or framework to be able to address the needs and the varied expectations for.

Of a multi-generational workforce. So we really had to dig deep and start a process of unpacking that for because it started at the top with senior leadership and unpacking their ideals and their trauma and where their mindset really stems from what their experiences are. Because awareness was so key from the top to be able to start to transition the whole hotel into this different culture of one that was multi-generational.

So it, it really does start with the hearts and the minds of the people to be able to make change. And for those of you who don't know, Fairmont San Francisco is the flagship. It's the original Fairmont. We're celebrating 118 years. tomorrow's Friday. So it's one of the, if not the oldest hotel in the company.

And what that means is literally in the building every single day, you have the walls of this historic building, which most of our hotels are known for. Its rich history and heritage literally pulling back into the past. So it's coming up with analyzing and assessing and coming up with framework to be able to balance.

The past, the present, and the future. We were heavily relying on our past experiences and just only living in that space versus moving forward and having a balance.

Elaine Lou Cartas: In terms of being tactical about it, were you having individual conversations with leaders? Was it focus groups, a survey? I'm just curious.

Jackie Dacanay: All of the above. Again, with the senior leadership team, it's in an operation you wanna do things quick, but deeply and meaningful. So it was doing simple things like a values exercise and scaling that across the hotel and asking people individually, for example, what are your top three values now?

And share what, why those are your top three values with someone else. So it was developing. The ability to also just listen and accept versus sharing and telling people what their values should be. So something as simple as that helped everyone to recognize, okay, if someone doesn't value something, then they're not gonna wanna do it.

If, someone doesn't value if their personal values don't match the organization's values, then there's no loyalty. And so taking this values approach builds a sustainable loyalty to the hotel and to the brand. So that was something simple to be able to scale across the hotel, and it was also having deep and meaningful discussions and unpacking things like failure, what does failure mean to you?

What is, what have been your experiences with failure? And that was a huge topic because it was holding us back from innovating, taking risks, making decisions, making quick, thoughtful decisions when you know, we continue to be in these years of doing more with less under pressure with little resources, but not being able to move the needle very much because you're just stuck in this fear and scarcity mindset.

So consistency with these deep and meaningful conversations were also important. I can just talk about fear and then let months go by and not address it. So it was incorporating these discussions, these vulnerable moments and discussions with our leadership team, and then carrying that forward to the.

Hundreds of colleague line mobile employees in the building.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah. I'm sorry, I'm asking it tactical. I'm like, I acknowledge that all of you like love the steps, but I'm sure people are questioning how did you make it comfortable for people to share their failures and these touchy conversations.

Jackie Dacanay: So it's a really great point and I, again, it's, digging deep into that vulnerability and showing people while creating a safe space of just listening. Versus making comments or judging, but sitting there and listening to someone, teaching someone how to listen intently versus listening to respond.

It's all of those key moments and sometimes small moments in those focus groups and discussions that created this self. This safe space to be able to continue discussions about these tough conversations, but also consistently having these tough conversations and, tying them back to ironically service and serving other human beings.

a lot of our, a lot of our colleagues. They haven't experienced luxury because a lot of them are minorities and they come from backgrounds where they haven't had access to luxury. And so as I started to reframe luxury and almost redefine it in the sense of luxury is an emotional connection.

It's being yourself and delivering service in the way that is most comfortable and natural to you. You know when you have things like a language barrier and you have colleagues who fear speaking to someone because they don't have fancy words to use, or they're under this impression that to be able to talk to someone, they need to use fancy words, you get.

People who are paralyzed and aren't able to be themselves, let alone speak to people who are paying tens of thousands of dollars to stay in our hotel. So it was really breaking down that perception of also being on the floor with colleagues to say, what's most comfortable for you to ask for a guest name if you can't pronounce it?

Or what's most comfortable for you to have an engaging, meaningful conversation with someone who. Might feel intimidating because they're dressed fancy or they look super polished. What are some ways that you can still be your own personality and your true self and deliver that service and create that emotional connection, because that is what luxury service is.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I love what you shared that sentence, what's most comfortable asking that question as we were talking about rather than telling your listening by asking it. So that's a very powerful thing that you could start implementing. So we're both millennials up here on stage. During this whole conference, we've been talking about Gen Z, gen Alpha coming into the workplace.

How do you adapt policies and practices to better align with today's diverse multi-generational workforce?

Jackie Dacanay: I, think it is, it starts with gathering data. We have a lot of systems that we work with, but it, I find that there isn't any one particular system that measures everything. So I simply created a very basic spreadsheet for anyone to be able to read and see data and.

That data was unlike data that we've analyzed before. So traditionally we would analyze or look at turnover, but we weren't looking at retention and we weren't breaking down retention into bite-sized pieces in the sense of, we were one of the few areas that has multiple properties within an hour's distance are the recruiting people from our sister properties.

Are we, do we have internal promotions from within our hotel but also to our sister properties just in the area? And so it was creating a spreadsheet a very grassroots spreadsheet to be able to see that data and. And break it down even more. And I'm a very curious person. So from there I start to go down a rabbit hole and, wonder, what departments are training people the fastest to the point where they're being promoted fairly quickly?

Where are we seeing the most promotions? What area are we seeing the most promotions? Is it. One generation versus another. How long is someone in their role before they get promoted or they transfer? So it was taking a different approach to looking at our data and the story that we wanted to tell.

And then from there. Knowing on average, okay, what is the most common generation in the hotel as a data point, for example. And then it was educating ourselves and sharing, broadcasting that information to everyone that we do have multiple generations in the hotel because most of our. Team in the hotel, they just, they didn't receive this information that there are several generations in the hotel.

They didn't know who and what generations as a leader they were leading. They didn't have the education on, what is a millennials expectations in terms of communication style and recognition and ideals when it comes to hierarchy versus a baby boomer. So there was a lot of education and also unpacking for leaders as well.

To help them understand, okay, conceptually or commonly, these are some of the traits that a millennial is stereotypically known for. And using that information to build an awareness of themselves. Also,

Elaine Lou Cartas: did you wanna explain the slide that's up, by the way?

Jackie Dacanay: Oh, yeah, it's, the slide prior was, is just an example of five generations that could be in any type of organization at this point.

Arguably for some of you it's probably potentially six, but these are the most common generations in our hotels at the moment. And it is a quick snapshot or a way that I've used to explain the most common traits to expect from each generation. And, it helps to really quickly educate people on the fact that there are varied expectations for each generation, whether you like it or not, and you can choose to adapt and study them to be the most effective leader or not.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So on top of doing hr, you're also an executive career coach like me, and we've had wonderful conversations and you talked about it earlier, right? It's going from the command control type of leadership to something that's more collaborative. You've done incredible work with the systematic structural changes at Fairmont, so can you share how you implemented a new framework focusing on team dynamics?

Jackie Dacanay: one of the biggest conceptual shifts, cultural shifts in the hotel is making it widely known that every single person, every human being in the building is there to grow their career. And for a traditionalist or a baby boomer, for example, they define growing their career by earning a paycheck and putting food on the table for their family, or building generational wealth so that their family can have what they always wanted but never had.

And for other generations it is literally a promotion. And so also looking at the data, now that we had, the data, we were seeing that generations were wanting to grow much faster than someone like me. I've been in each of my roles in my career for at least a year and a half to two years. newer or younger generations want to and expect to grow in some shape or form within six to eight months, commonly, generally.

And so we didn't have, our policies didn't reflect that type of career growth. At a minimum, you were expected to be in your leadership role for 12 months, but culturally it wasn't even talked about what you wanted to do or you weren't asked. There were no discussions around what you wanted to do next until you were in your role for a year was this.

Cultural secrecy around growth and development that was swept under the rug because we were so fearful of losing people or talking to people about their growth and development and what's next meant that we were gonna lose them. So we didn't have a proactive approach. And the culture around growth and development was very traditional and, old school.

So it was setting the tone that everyone in the building is there to grow their career, and that's one of the number one values that is a common theme across the board. And then it was creating the systematic, frequent, consistent discussions throughout the entire building at every single level to talk about what's next, what's working, and what's not working.

I also found that everything was so formal. So it was breaking down this formality of having these conversations and normalizing them with these systematic approaches, but making them quick, 30 minute discussions, open discussions about these simple questions of what's happening, and making those discussions a lot more approachable.

We also created a systematic action planning system for growth and development. So you, didn't necessarily come up with an action plan and look at it for development more than once a year and. So we incorporated that into leadership goals, retention goals, things of that nature into annual goals.

But we had these frequent, consistent discussions around them quarterly. And then it was also incorporating small bite-size fun activities throughout the year with our leadership team, just about, what's one goal that you want to achieve in 2025? Turn to someone next to you and share it.

And it's that element of critical thinking and then sharing it with someone and them just listening to you. There's something psychological that happens when you write it down on a piece of paper and then you put it out into the ether. That can be really powerful and vulnerable in, in all the best ways.

It, there were a lot of modifications and new framework that we, that I created and that I tested and was able to measure. And I can say that we've improved our retention. we had a goal of 50% retention, and now we're at 80%. And it was also a goal of, filling our internal positions.

50% of our internal positions, and we're now at 80, 80% of filling internal positions within in with internals, sorry, open positions with internals. So it was the way that we were looking at the data and also introducing these new methods of measuring them.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah. I'm hearing a common theme with writing the top three values.

What do you want next of, okay, what do you want? And then go have a conversation with other people and then it allows the employee to. Gather more information and feedback from other people so that it does happen, and then there's a buy-in. 'cause it's not just from the top. Everyone's having the conversation

Jackie Dacanay: and it's a key method or methodology or mechanism to creating that safe space.

So you listen to me. I listen to you. There's no judgment. If anything, I ask curious questions. So it was also leaning into people's curiosity about people and, finding ways to support them. it, it often sparks this inspiration between two people of, oh, how can I support you to achieve that goal?

'cause now I wanna help you to achieve that goal. It's also a heavy emphasis on positive psychology. I found that a lot of our discussions throughout the year were. They were not about self, but because we're in the service industry, they were about serving others. And so people were getting used to talking about themselves and what they needed and, what help they needed, and getting into the mindset of, the meaning of self-importance.

And that you can ask for help to, better serve other people, if you will.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I know we've been talking a lot about employees and the team with guest services. How have you adapted the evolving guest profiles and experiences across. All generations.

Jackie Dacanay: Ugh, this is a great question. So like our colleagues, our employees, our guests have also evolved.

So by no surprise, we have a multi-generational guest base. And so the way that we taught service, trained service and delivery service was no longer relevant. And, being an executive coach, it was also a key component to changing the way that we trained. It was very traditional in the sense that you have a list of over 85 standards or specific steps for each position in the building, and you would hand that to an employee and say, okay, read it, sign off on it, and then go execute.

And it was a method of, or a style of telling people what to do. It was very surface level. It was not a very humanistic approach, but I created a coaching framework around training the standards, and it's an

individualized approach where I walked through the standards with each of the employees on the floor and talk through what.

Felt comfortable for them to deliver that standard and in which order throughout a conversation that might vary with hundreds of guests per day. So it was building that humanist a critical thinking approach on an individualized basis and chipping away at, okay. So what felt challenging for you in that moment to be able to execute this specific standard?

And also what do you enjoy the most? That was also a huge shift, is starting with, what part of service do you enjoy the most in leveraging that natural talent and scaling it for that person across these other 85. Other standards and, finding a way that they enjoy delivering all these other standards that maybe they didn't enjoy initially.

And working with colleagues one-on-one to build that muscle memory so that they, can deliver that consistently, but in their own way tailored to how they read each of their guests.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So when working with leaders, I know we've talked a lot about unlearning, relearning what successful frameworks and tools you've used to coach your leaders.

Jackie Dacanay: Yes. literally I created a coaching program, so different from a mentor program which we also have, but our coaching program, it's first of all not limited to anyone in the building. So it's line level colleagues, but also leadership. And this is going back to the traditional thinking of, development plans and talents.

There was this focus on high potentials. What the hell is a high potential? And it was leaning into people's curiosity of what coaching is, or, yes, a combination of someone that is a high performer and might benefit from a coaching program. It was also previously limited, or opportunities were, previously limited to people who had been with the company for a certain amount of, time.

And so widening up the option for this coaching program to literally anyone and everyone helped to create this. This culture of an open dialogue with anyone in the building that was curious about coaching, and a huge element to that coaching program is a 360 degree feedback tool that is used to build that self-awareness because I find that's a key component for everyone in the building.

Whether you officially call yourself a leader or not to serve others and to lead others officially or unofficially. Whether it's a guest or a peer or another colleague. I also repositioned our mentor program similarly, it was a very traditional program where you think of a mentor and it's a senior leader who has more experience and is typically a lot older than you, that can teach you what to do and teach you what to say.

And, recognizing that our guests have evolved to multi-generational and our colleagues, our, workforce has evolved to multi-generational repositioned our mentor program to reverse mentoring and how it's, almost a free service to some people, particularly senior leaders, to learn about how to provide service, how to act, how to communicate.

To multiple generations. And it was essentially a coaching and mentoring tool for senior leaders, but it also empowered and created this in sense of inclusiveness with other generations to share their thoughts, their feelings, and be an influence and make an impact.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Thank you. we are gonna take questions from the audience, so if you haven't yet, put your questions in the QR code.

But the first one we have is, Ooh, I'm excited for this one. How do you manage the expectations of Gen Z? Wanting promotions and higher compensation without having a clear role? Available.

Jackie Dacanay: Such a great question. I think for us, again, it was this secrecy around growth and development and there weren't frequent conversations.

It wasn't an open dialogue about growth. And one of the biggest things that changed was literally putting up a growth path or examples of someone started as a front desk agent and then they moved to an assistant manager, and then they moved to a manager, and then they moved to a director. And it was putting that up on a poster and displaying what that path looked like.

But it was also widening what the definition was of growth and development. So it doesn't necessarily have to be a promotion or compensation, but it was educating on, what is total compensation? total compensation in a hotel company could be. Tuition reimbursement, it's traveling. It's speaking to a senior leader at the corporate level because we can all talk virtually, you can virtually talk to the tens of thousands of people that work in the company at any one of our other 90 hotels or a corporate office or to someone else outside of the brand.

So it, it's talking about all of these different options, but it's also holding the conversation proactively. we were getting to people way too late and, it's also beneficial because surprise, people change. So when you talk to someone about what they want initially it changes every single day.

E every month. And so checking in with them to see, okay, you know what? You asked for what you wanted initially. is that still the same? And in my experience, a hundred percent of the time, it always changes.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Okay. We have 30 seconds to do it. Okay. This question I have for myself too, how to mitigate bias and stereotype amongst managers that younger generations are entitled.

Jackie Dacanay: Ooh, that's a really great question. I. So generally speaking, again, it goes back to that education piece and building that awareness that every generation does have stereotypes and helping everyone to understand that there are challenges. And benefits to every single generation so that you have that understanding of, okay, I might be pissed about this and I'm stereotyping you about that, but there is background behind it based on like where I'm raised and what, my culture is and what my generation is.

So it's building that awareness and understanding so that you can collaborate and work together on solutions is my 32nd response.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah, so it's the educating and having the awareness. Jackie, are you gonna be here during lunch if anyone has questions?

Jackie Dacanay: Yes, I will be around. But also my QR code. Please scan my QR code and I would love to continue the conversation.

And I just love meeting people and and networking with people. So please reach out to me however you like, email or LinkedIn. And I also have the YouTube channel.

Elaine Lou Cartas: All right. Thank you, Jackie. Thank you everyone. Thank you guys.

So I have sad news. This is our last moment together in this big room. Because after this we're gonna be breaking off into two sessions. So this session we're gonna have Leveraging Your People Data with Chloe Polanco from Hot Topic. So it's a workshop that will be here, and then next door to your left, it's gonna be defining the HR business partner role with Javier Ario again.

So if you wanna stay here, go there. And then at 1240 we're gonna have lunch. But first I need to think our speakers, our sponsors. You're gonna get emails for slides if it's available, and access to the Sherman HRCI accreditation. But thank you so much for allowing me to be here to be your mc

and DJ. Dad, please play closing time.