



**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. First, a little housekeeping. We have some NEHRA events upcoming I wanna tell you about. We at Keystone are very excited to participate in NEHRA's annual conference this fall on September 26th through 28th in Falmouth, Mass. Some exciting speakers, don't miss it. Make sure to register for the conference soon, and there's another NEHRA event I wanna tell you about, which is next week on August 1st, a new group, NEHRA YP, NEHRA Young Professionals, is having a networking event hosted at WinterWyman, in Waltham at 6:00 PM, so look at [nehra.com](http://nehra.com) for both of those events, and register, and if you're looking to find out more about NEHRA YP, there's information there, and also in this podcast today.

In fact, my guest today is a NEHRA board member, and the board liaison to the NEHRA YP group, Scarlett Abraham. She's also Director of Human Resources at Bright Horizons. Early in the podcast, Scarlett shares the story of how she, and her family immigrated to the U.S. when she was nine years old, and not one of them knowing English, and how her early life experience shaped her as a person of great empathy. As you get to know Scarlett in this episode, it'll be no surprise to you why she's so proud of Bright Horizons HEART principles, which are their core values.

Scarlett is a powerful ambassador of the HEART principles at Bright Horizons. Next up on the podcast is the CEO of ezCater, Stefania Mallett, and now I bring you my conversation with Scarlett Abraham.

Well, here we are at Bright Horizons, Watertown headquarters. Well, thank you very much for being a guest on the Hennessy Report.

**Scarlett Abraham:** Thank you for having me.

**Dave:** You and I got to know each other recently as we both joined the Board of NEHRA recently, which is very exciting, but before we get into Bright Horizons and NEHRA, maybe it'd be good for our listeners to get a little bit of your background, and maybe an experience, or an influence, early in your life that kinda pointed you in the direction that you are heading now in HR leadership.

**Scarlett:** First of all, thank you again for having me. I'm really thrilled to be doing this podcast, and have the opportunity to speak not only about myself, but about Bright Horizons, and as you've mentioned a little bit around young professionals later on, but I ... Where do I start? So, I am a daughter of immigrants, and we migrated to the U.S. when I was nine years old, and from a very young age my mom, and my dad, always taught us to be respectful, and to be sensitive, particularly the people that were different and that lived a little bit different than we did, so it was something that was ingrained in me, but thankfully it was also something that came very naturally.

From a very young age, when I attended school in the Dominican Republic, I often gravitated to helping, if you will, those children in school that were in fact just a little bit different, and children that were typically picked on, and I found myself advocating, and really coming to their defense, and thankfully I've



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always been able to sort of interact with everyone at every level, so that tends to help me be a little bit of an influencer if you will, for these children that were not being so nice, so it's something that I took upon myself to do, and, it's interesting because my mother would say, "Oh you were helping such and such again." Or, "You got in trouble because you were helping such and such again." And, she would say, "You have to balance that, you know, you have to do it in a way that you're not getting yourself in trouble as well."

But, it was hard, It was hard for me not to do that, and, it's interesting because when we came to the United States, I sort of found myself almost on the other side of that, so being nine years old, not speaking the language, not really understanding the culture very well, so I became one of those children that could easily be picked on because I was different.

**Dave:** You didn't speak English?

**Scarlett:** No.

**Dave:** Before you moved here?

**Scarlett:** No.

**Dave:** Okay.

**Scarlett:** No English whatsoever, so you know, and we came in the States in February, so it was sort of the ... We were in the middle of the school year, so I sort of joined late as well, so didn't have an opportunity to acclimate myself with a lot of the fifth graders that was there, and just being different. You could ... I could tell at that point, and it was probably the first time in my life where I felt different than the other children around, and I think unfortunately, for me I didn't necessarily have somebody advocating for me as I did for those other children, but I think that what it helped me do was to build a lot of resilience, and to recognize sort of what my differences were, so it's almost like someone holding a mirror to my face.

And, this was the early '90s. The world was a little bit different around that time as well, but, after learning the language, and after sort of being in the school system a little bit longer, there's definitely that confidence that comes back to you, so I quickly bounced from that, and quickly became again yet an advocate for the children that were different here, and I bring that story up because I think that it was the first time, even though I was defending, and advocating for people that were different back in the DR, I didn't know that, that's what I was doing, so it took me sort of being on the other side of that, being treated slightly different to understand that, that's in fact what I was doing.

As a young child, I was quickly tasked to learn the language as fast as I possibly could, because being a daughter of immigrants, and being the oldest, I really had to be responsible for now translating for my parents, so when you think about coming to the States, and the different things that you have to navigate, doctors, immigration, schools, here's this nine year old that was now sort of the translator. I put up a really good front, but you know, I was, I tend to say I grew up a little bit quicker than I probably,



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or we would probably want, you know, now being a mom myself, and having children, but you know, it certainly was those experience that I think shaped a lot of who I am today.

As I said, I didn't know necessarily what was happening as far as being treated differently, or being an advocate for people that were treated differently, but I gravitated to those types of jobs as I started working in the field, so working in the early childhood education, working with children with behavioral and cognitive issues and, really doing that all through college quite frankly, and you know, I also went to college for a degree in psychology, and thought to myself, "I'm going to be a developmental psychologist, I'm gonna have my own practice." And, I found that working in this industry, it was really challenging, and certainly it takes an emotional toll on you, and I was passionate about it, nevertheless, because I was advocating in a different way, right?

So, I was supporting these individuals, I was working with insurance offices, I was working with different pathways, or different organizations that were eventually gonna help these children land jobs, and help them live a normal life, but I was also working with staff, and really had an input on growth and development for the staff as well. When I became a little bit emotionally drained, working directly with the children, I thought, "Holy smokes, what am I going to do now with this developmental psychology degree because, I don't think that I want to stay in this field forever." And I remember sitting with my advisor, and talking this through, as I was getting ready to graduate, like, do I just Google? What do I do with a developmental psychology degree, and were sort of brainstorming, and simultaneously to that conversation with my advisor, I had been ... Or, actually I wish I had been more part of a situation that had been happening with one employee at that time.

And, specifically it was an employee that, I felt had a lot of potential. It was an employee that I had helped onboard, and helped coach in a lot of ways, but I wasn't directly supervising, so my influence was slightly limited because of that, and long story short, I felt like they had a lot of potential, but weren't necessarily given the right tools, or we didn't invest enough in that individual before we called it quits, and felt like we needed to part ways, and I remember feeling so helpless at that point, and like I didn't have any control over that individual's fate, and feeling like we could have done some things differently, so having the conversation with my advisor, reflecting back on that idea, the topic of HR comes into my life.

**Dave:** It sounds like a natural. It sounds like your whole life has been pointing you right in this role, in early childhood development, you're working in human resources.

**Scarlett:** Exactly.

**Dave:** That's great.

**Scarlett:** Exactly, so you know, I started to think, okay, so this is now 2005, the economy's not doing so well, HR is a super, super hard field to get into, and I'm sending gazillions of resumes every single day, and if you're not a great recruiter, sometimes the skills, or transferable skills, or experiences don't necessarily jump out, out of a resume. So unless I had HR somewhere in my resume, the likelihood of me landing an HR job were going to be pretty hard, and boy were they pretty hard, so I remember I



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ended up having to make a tough decision. I came across a unpaid internship, and it was for an HR assistant for a nonprofit in the Boston area, and I sent in my resume, I didn't hear back from him, so I gently pushed myself a little bit more until I finally was able to talk to someone there, and the first question they asked, "Why would you leave your paying job to come and work for HR?"

So, it was the first time that I had to actually articulate why HR? And, I remember I had to pause for a second and say, "Okay." But, then it came out naturally, "Listen, I think HR is a field of people, and customers are the people, and I wanna have an opportunity, and I don't know exactly what in HR I wanna do, but I just wanna have an opportunity to influence someone, or some things or, an organization in the way that I think things need to happen, and I'd like an opportunity, and I'm living with my parents, so don't worry about me leaving my paying job rather for an unpaid internship. I just wanna get my foot through the door." So, sure enough, I was hired, and I did that for a few months before I transitioned to work for a staffing agency.

So, I said, okay, let's see recruiting, maybe that's the piece of HR that I like to do, and I loved it, and who knew I could sell? I was selling, I was placing people, I was really, really successful, but there was a gap. There was something missing about that type of HR, and while it gave me such an amazing window into the different organizations, different industries, really working with people on aligning skill sets to the job side, I was hiring for, It was also really hard to get a call from a client and say, "You know what? I don't want you to send me John anymore. Can you just send me someone else?" And I would be like, "Effective when?" "Well, tomorrow." "Okay, well help me understand what's happening with John?" "But, they're just not working out, so please send me someone else."

Ultimately, the client can do that, right? But, for me it was so hard because although, yes, there was a big sales component into my job, I had to make the call for John, and say, "John, they no longer want you to come back to this organization." And, basically have no reasons to give him. The personal and professional side of me just felt like that was wrong. I was there for a little bit over a year before I came across a different role for another nonprofit as a generalist, and it was also, going back to the early care, the early childhood education field where they were supporting centers, different childcare centers, and I felt like, "Okay, I am home now." Because I had an opportunity to really heavy on employee relations, but also an opportunity to work proactively with the staff.

I wasn't there very long actually before I came to work for Bright Horizons, and I often feel bad for that organization because I didn't stay too long, but one of my co-workers at that time had really outgrown her role, and was very openly looking for a job, and she came across this role at Bright Horizons, and said, "You have to go work there. They sound really warm and fuzzy, It's all about you." And at first I was slightly offended because I was like, "Well, wait a minute, what's wrong with warm and fuzzy?" And, I also, "I just got here, why do you want me to go?" But, I got curious, and I hadn't actually heard of the organization before, and I think especially back then in the early 2000s, we were mainly known for childcare, so, unless you were a parent, or unless you were a client that we were serving, the likelihood of you knowing who Bright Horizons was could be small.

But, I started to read a little bit about the organization, and to my surprise just found how big of an organization it was, and everything that they had done in the early care field, and the other thing that



struck me that was really something that resonated with me was the work that was done around the diversity, and inclusion space, and I remember it caught my attention because at the nonprofit where I was currently, we had just started this “program” for diversity and inclusion, and I remember chuckling that we called it a program, and reading how Bright Horizons had woven that language into just their everyday talk.

**Dave:** It wasn’t just box-checking...

**Scarlett:** No, it certainly didn't seem that way as I read it, and so I was intrigued, you know, the role called for someone who spoke Spanish fluently, who will be willing to travel. We have a center, one center in Puerto Rico, so it was exciting. Very early in my 20s I thought, “Oh my gosh, absolutely I can do this, and I'll be there for a year, and see what happens, why not?” You know, 11 years later.

**Dave:** Yeah, exactly.

**Scarlett:** And, I remember after we always chuckled at our interview process after the 10<sup>th</sup> person that I met, which was, I'm exaggerating,

**Dave:** A lot of people yeah.

**Scarlett:** The fifth person that I met, which was Dan Henry, who was the current CHRO at that time. I remember sitting across from him and saying, “Listen, whatever you're selling sounds really, really good. I have been through five interviews. I think I'm ready to have this job.” And, I remember leaving them thinking, “Oh my God, I should not have said that to them.” But it was so true. I mean at that point I was sold. I wanted to be part of this organization that clearly was just not talking the talk, but they're were also walking the walk.

**Dave:** That's great.

**Scarlett:** And, I've had a lot of successes while I've been here, but ...

**Dave:** That's a great career story, how you got here. It's awesome.

**Scarlett:** Thank you.

**Dave:** Why don't you tell us a little bit about the organization?

**Scarlett:** So, we were founded in the late '80s by Roger Brown and Linda Mason, and they were individuals, or are individuals I should say, that were so passionate around what early childhood education should really mean, so not just a daycare, and not just a place where the children can come and hang out, but where we would really provide thoughtful curriculum, that way we would help the children develop and thrive, and they started very small. Our first center was in Kendall Square, in Cambridge, the foundation of the company really relies on providing childcare that's quality, top quality. And, they not only are worrying or were worried about what we were outputting in terms of our



childcare centers, but they were also certainly aware of what needs to happen internally for our employees as well.

So, they really founded this culture where people should come and be their whole selves, and it's a phrase that you hear from the minute that you are in the recruiting process, all the way up to when you become an employee here. We really want employees to be who they are outside of work, and be a little bit more polished when they get here, but certainly the same person nonetheless. There's no such thing as leave your problems at home, and come in and ready to work. We really want you to come in, and be your whole self, and allow managers to be supportive to our employees as well.

We've grown immensely. I started back in '07, so again our main bread and butter was childcare, but we've grown to provide really an array of family solutions to really support families at every critical stage of their lives, not only when they have small children like myself right now, so I've come full circle, started as an employee...

**Dave:** So an employee, and a client, customer...

**Scarlett:** Exactly.

**Dave:** Of the services.

**Scarlett:** Exactly we're totally double dipping, so yes, but also people who are dealing with elder parents that are not doing so well, so providing care in home care for those individuals, you know, essentially what we're wanting to do for our clients, we have both client-based centers, but we also have community-based centers, and for our client centers, we want to have a benefit that they can offer their employees, that essentially enables them to be at work, to be present, and to have solutions in these areas that could otherwise prevent them from being at work, and really being as effective, and as successful as they possibly can be.

**Dave:** You also mentioned something Bright Spaces? I think it's a foundation work that you have here?

**Scarlett:** Yes.

**Dave:** Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Scarlett:** Absolutely, so, Bright Horizons Foundation for Children is the nonprofit branch of the organization that we work really closely with, and it's an organization that really relies on donors, and relies on employees that wanna help out to essentially create these childcare spaces in areas where otherwise there wouldn't be the resources, so whether it's a women's prison, you know, so you think about children visiting their moms in prison, and having a bright space, hence the name, that really doesn't seem like a jail, so you think about the moms, or the dads for that matter, being able to visit with their children in a space like that, so not having to feel so sad, and so gray, and so cold.



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Same thing we will do for a homeless shelter. We will put these up there so the children can have a place to interact, and not be bogged down by the reality of why they're there, but rather continue to be children, and continue to learn through some of the things that we offer.

**Dave:** Wow, your foundation is so connected to what you do every day here, right?

**Scarlett:** Yes.

**Dave:** And, it's all funded by you, your organization and donors? You said so?

**Scarlett:** And donors, that's correct.

**Dave:** Scarlett, maybe we now we could shift and talk a little bit about your role here in HR, and what you're focused on?

**Scarlett:** Absolutely. I started supporting operations teams, so the operation staff I should say so, that's out in the centers, we have our teachers, and our directors, and then about six years or so I transitioned to support just the corporate team, and although we have the same policies of the same practices across the board for the organization, there was certainly a shift in my style that I had to make. I think that, I also had to start building partnerships from scratch, and really earning the trust of those business leaders, and that took some time. I think that for a while we didn't have the structure that I am proud to say we have today.

We certainly didn't have the structure that, in comparison to the field, so it's taken myself, and my counterpart to really educate, and really earn the trust of the business leaders to understand why HR is a good business partner and thinking about the employee experience, and how we're onboarding employees, thinking about how we're retaining really, really good talent, thinking about how intentional we are, in the diversity and inclusion space from a sourcing perspective, but also from how we're successioning, and creating an internal pipeline as well.

So, my job is to keep us honest. My job is to make sure that we are keeping all of these different pieces in mind, understanding that the business is first. We have to meet the business needs, we have business objectives, but helping understand how these pieces that I've just mentioned ultimately are all gonna help us meet those goals, and do that in a way that's effective, and do that in a way that is long term and sustainable.

**Dave:** What is it Scarlett about your culture that sets you apart from other organizations?

**Scarlett:** I think it was an easy transition for me to come to Bright Horizons because the culture, and the values that we've implemented as an organization really resonate with how I choose to live my personal life. What I think is unique about our work environment is that a few years ago in the early 2000s, you know, we have our mission, and everybody was clear about what our mission was, but our senior leaders at that time thought, "Okay, great, we have this great mission, but how are we expecting our



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employees to meet that mission? We feel like there's something missing. We need to sort of come together and create some guiding principles." If you will.

And, what I love about the way that we went about that is that we literally had a diverse cross functional group from folks in operations to folks that worked in our corporate group create what we learned to call the HEART Principles, and the HEART Principles certainly allow us to work with HEART, if you will, but it's an acronym that holds a lot of values and stands for honesty, excellence, accountability, respect and teamwork. And, it allows us to have common language for how we're each expected to interact with one another.

It is embedded not only in our culture, but it's something that we hold ourselves accountable with from a job performance perspective where we have it as a competency in our job performance appraisal process that happens on an annual basis, and it just allows everybody to sort of be on the same page. You will often hear people refer to the HEART Principles as part of their conversations, you know, "In the spirit of the HEART Principles, I wanna just let you know how that made me feel." I love how creative some of our employees can get in using the "HEART Principles." So that's, but all jokes aside for the most part, it just really allows us just again, we're on the same page. This is how we all need to be interacting, not just internally, but outwardly facing which is huge. We serve a lot of clients, we serve a lot of families, so we wanna make sure again that we're walking the walk.

**Dave:** You're in the business of serving people, and you're doing that internally.

**Scarlett:** We're in the business of people.

**Dave:** In business of people.

**Scarlett:** The business of people. Yeah, Steven Kramer has said this before, and it really resonated with me, as a company, we're in the business of people. When you think about everything that we do, and everything that we provide, we do it for individuals, we do it for families, and we do it for them at times that they are in the most need.

**Dave:** That's great. In fact, maybe we should shift and talk a little bit about NEHRA now, because you started an initiative, you're the lead at something new called, NEHRA YP, or NEHRA Young Professionals. Maybe you could just talk a little bit about what that is?

**Scarlett:** Absolutely. It was really a mission for NEHRA to attract more young talent into the field, but also into the NEHRA to really understand how they can leverage NEHRA for their professional needs, but I've had the pleasure to be on the board with such distinguished people, and to really hear the why. Why was this important to have young professionals be more of a part of NEHRA? And, I have the pleasure of working with a great sub-group, as advisory board that really has dedicated their time, and resources to understanding...

If I'm a young professional, what is going to attract me to come to NEHRA? What's in it for me? What does NEHRA have to offer that is essentially going to help me do this, and we've brainstormed on the



mission, and we really want to attract individuals, we wanna provide a sense of community for young professionals, there's a lot of...

**Dave:** And you've already had a couple of events.

**Scarlett:** We've had a couple of very successful events, and some of the feedback that we've heard is that people, particularly young professionals in the HR field, have been wanting a platform like this for a really long time, because although there's definitely different networking groups out there, there hasn't been one specifically for young professionals in the HR field, so we had a more lighthearted social, which was our first one, and then we had one that was specific to networking, and both times the feedback has been really great, so we're hoping that we're providing this sense of community for these individuals, but also an opportunity for some education, and some reframing if you will, with some of the curriculum that's offered through NEHRA, to really have that young professional voice in mind, and that's what I'm hoping I'm helping do while being a member of the Board.

**Dave:** For people listening that might be wondering, "Am I in the right demographic for YP?" How would you describe what the strike zone is? I'm sure there's some gray area, but what would... Who's right for YP, for people that are listening?

**Scarlett:** Definitely someone that, early in their career, maybe eight years in the career, after, so eight years out of college, eight years of experience within their career.

**Dave:** Plus or minus? Whatever, yeah.

**Scarlett:** Plus or minus, exactly. I mean, we look at your typical millennials, so someone anywhere between '81, and what have you, so that will be the population. We haven't turned anybody away, you will be happy to know nobody's been turned away, but I think if people hear what our target audience is, and therefore curriculum, if you will, or the sessions that we offer really gear towards those people at that stage in their career, then it tends to flush out people that are much more further within their career, and have great experience, I mean, I think that what this platform is going to also allow us to do is to provide much needed education.

When you think about what the workforce is going to look like in a few years, well the millennials are hitting strong, and they will certainly compose most of the work population, so it's on us as employers, and as organizations to really understand the things that drive us, to really understand what's myths, and what's truth about the millennials because ultimately I think that, that goes right into the type of support that we give to them as employees as well. I think again, going back to the D&I space, we really have to look at the different generations and understand how each of us learn.

**Dave:** Well, we have a NEHRA question of the podcast, but we're changing that now, Scarlett and I right here, you're hearing. We have decided to change it, so that members of the NEHRA YP group will be now submitting the questions that we ask our guests, so we actually have one...

**Scarlett:** Excellent.



**Dave:** From one of our new members of NEHRA YP, In fact, I think he helps lead, he's one of the subcommittees, that's Mark Assante from Medtronic.

**Scarlett:** That's correct. Director of HR at Medtronic, but he is actually the co-chair of the YP Advisory Group, so he does that in conjunction with, or in partnership I should say, with Farrell Murphy.

**Dave:** Okay, great, so we'll be hearing questions from Mark and his YP colleagues as the podcast rolls on, and here's the question for you.

**Scarlett:** All right.

**Dave:** What was your breakthrough moment in your HR career?

**Scarlett:** Obviously, I've talked about a lot of my experiences even as young as nine years old, that sort of pointed me to HR being the career that I wanted to be, and thinking about that question now, Dave, I think about a breakthrough experience that has led me into playing a bigger role in D&I space, If I could share that with you, and I've been very lucky, very fortunate throughout my whole life to feel like I am appreciated, and valued for the things that I bring to the table, and, I'd never felt like my skin tone, or where I was from, or the occasional accent that you might here because of my Hispanic heritage has ever been a problem, so knock on wood, I think that, that can be different for some folks.

But, in my early 30s, I certainly had an experience that certainly shaped the way that I saw things even further, and I remember being at Target with my nieces, I didn't have children at that time, and my nieces are biracial, so they're actually much darker than I am, and I don't know if, you know Target, so you know they have that bargain section where...

**Dave:** Oh, yeah.

**Scarlett:** When you first walk in, so it was the middle of winter, and the two of them said, "Oh, we wanna get some gloves and hats." And I said, "Oh, okay, let's go match them up." And, of course, it's the bargains section, so it's a mess, there's gloves everywhere, there's hats everywhere, so the onus was on us to match these things as much as we possibly can, and my youngest niece then was three, so she was sitting in the cart, and then my other niece was 13 at that time, I'm not sure, she might've been a little bit younger, so we had been spending a lot of time there, and I remember we were matching them up, and then my younger niece would then throw them off the car, so we will be like, "Oh my gosh." So, we would get up, and try to match them again.

And we were having a blast, and I was wearing a sweater. I wasn't dressed the way that I'm dressed right now. I was wearing a sweater. I was wearing UGGs... I was just very casual, and I remember this lady walk up to me, this Caucasian lady, and she was with her, I wanna say he was 14 years old, so it's interesting because I actually haven't shared this story with a lot of people, but she looked at me, and said, "I know what you're doing, and it's so inappropriate." And, I had same reaction to the face that you're giving me now Dave right there.



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I was actually still smiling, and I said, “Oh, I’m so sorry. What?” Because we’re like laughing. “Well, we know what you’re doing, you’re stealing.” And, I thought, “Oh ma’am, no, absolutely not, that’s definitely not what I’m doing.” And, her son looking at me with this disgust look on his face, and in fact said, “You are disgusting. How dare you, and you’re with your daughters, and you’re disgusting.” And I could still transport myself back to that moment, because I remember thinking, “Oh my gosh, my nieces are they’re so careful Scarlett, but how do I manage this In a way that is appropriate, and I hope they’re not really listening to what’s happening.

And, all I limit myself to say was, “No ma’am, I think you have it all wrong. This is not what’s happening here. My nieces, and I are having a great time matching gloves.” And they walked away, but I remember the feeling that it gave me where I felt the need to find the closest security guard at Target, and say, “Oh my gosh, this woman just accused me of X, Y, and Z. I promise you that’s not what’s happening here.” I go in to him with my nieces, and you know what? He was young...

**Dave:** The security guard, yeah.

**Scarlett:** He was probably a young professional himself, and clearly I’m upset about all this, but he just limited himself to jokingly say, “Well, then just make sure you’re not really stealing something.” And, I thought, “Well, thanks, that’s definitely not what I was looking for but I will take that.” I remember leaving there, and thinking, I just felt, it’s hard to describe what I felt, and I remember thinking I have to call a Caucasian person, and I remember calling my co-worker at that point. I felt like I needed to talk to someone that knew me, someone that knew what I did for a living, someone that knew the integrity of a person. To say, “Hey, this just happened to me.” And, I was really, really upset, and I remember her saying, “You have nothing to worry about, you can’t let this moment define you.”

And, I remember talking to my mom about it. I remember talking to Dan Henry about it, I remember talking to my boss at that time, Melissa Sposato about it because it really impacted me, because I had never been in a situation where I felt treated differently because of how I looked. But I had to make a decision, so you know, you sort of find yourself in these crossroads at times, and you have to make a decision. You can either do something positive with it, or you could continue to be really angry, and maybe not be so positive, and I thought, “Okay, you know what, I’m in the business of HR, I’m in the business of the diversity and inclusion space, how can I turn this around?”

So, it was being aware, but it was really being intentional about how I was going to let that effect sort of how I moved forward, and my thought was, “You know, what I am going to do more in this space?” And that’s my goal. I intend to do a lot more in the D&I space because I now have even more empathy for people who perhaps have been treated differently for whatever reason because of any differences that they show, and I put the responsibility on myself to now help those individuals turn that into something positive, and help others sort of navigate through something like that which could be a really tough experience.

**Dave:** That’s a powerful story, thanks for sharing that.



All right, shifting to another question I ask on the podcast, if you could write a letter of career advice to your 22 year old self, what would you write?

**Scarlett:** When you're in your early 20s, and you're just starting your career, whatever that might be, or starting in the workforce, or your first corporate job, because you haven't had those experiences, you lack confidence, and I think that with that lack of confidence, you can almost not let your voice be heard. I think if I look back, and when I think about young professionals now, we have quite a few in our department, so I take it upon myself to share this as well as I would say, "Let your voice be heard."

I think that, particularly in these times people wanna hear what young professionals have to say. People wanna hear your thoughts, and perspective because we're bringing in a fresh perspective into whatever the conversation might be, and find the confidence that we're not gonna have all the answers, but unless we ask the questions, we're not gonna have all the answers.

**Dave:** That's right.

**Scarlett:** So, certainly letting your voice be heard will be...

**Dave:** Chime in.

**Scarlett:** Will be a big one. Chime in.

**Dave:** That's good.

**Scarlett:** Exactly.

**Dave:** A little couple of lighter questions here.

**Scarlett:** Yeah.

**Dave:** What kind of music does Scarlett listen to?

**Scarlett:** I have a diverse taste in music as well, so, I listen culturally from Merengue to Bachata but, I'm a little bit of a geek so I gravitate to songs that actually have a lot of meaning, so these days I love Journey so much so that I almost named my daughter Milan, Journey but, my husband could not allow that, but I love Journey, so *Don't Stop Believing*, it's a huge one, I mean the words resonate, it gets me pumped up. I run on the treadmill to it, I sing to it in the car, and in fact if you go to my office, I just say, there's a little post-it on it that says, "Don't stop believing." Along with other things, like, "recharge, reenergize." Things that I like to sort of say to myself, so, yeah Journey is a big one and I love Bon Jovi too actually.

**Dave:** Speaking of energy and recharging what gives you energy besides Bon Jovi and Journey?



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**Scarlett:** I know a lot of people wouldn't say this, but I'm really energized by change, whether that is in my personal life, but definitely in my professional life. So when I think about where we're heading now in the HR field, and how involved I plan to get more on the D&I Space, I'm energized by that, something different, something new, so a new opportunity to do something better, that definitely drives me, and of course in my personal life is my family, my children, my husband.

**Dave:** Right, well, It's been great having you as a guest on the podcast.

**Scarlett:** Thank you, this has been a lot of fun.

**Dave:** It's been fun.

**Scarlett:** Thank you so much.

**Dave:** Thanks for all your stories.

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