## The Future of Healthcare Human Capital and Workforce Management Podcast Series: Conversations with Healthcare Leaders About What They See in Their Crystal Ball (Episode 3)

### Transcript

**[00:00:03] Tiffany Nugent:** How do I design HR programming around a virtual work environment? How do I continue to engage employees, build teams, think through benefits that actually support people across the United States across time zones, and across different stages in their life now that we are through this pandemic and people work differently, they think differently?

Work-life balance, in some cases, is almost a thing of the past if you think about integrating the way we work and live because it's the same place. How do you create boundaries and set the stage, and support our employees through this and still get that sense of connectedness that you get on-site?

**[00:00:46] Bianca A. Briola:** Hello and welcome to the *Alvarez and Marsal Healthcare Industry Group Human Capital and Workforce Management* podcast. In this podcast series, we discuss the human capital perspective of the healthcare industry. I'm Bianca Briola, leader of the Healthcare Human Capital and Workforce Management Practice at A&M. I'm joined today by Tiffany Nugent, Vice President of People Operations at Olive.

Make sure you listen to the end so that you can hear an update from Tiffany about what she's up to and what's going on at Olive now.

**[00:01:17] Tiffany:** Hi, Bianca. It's nice to be here today and thanks for the introduction.

**[00:01:22] Bianca:** Tiffany, I've heard so much about Olive. It seems like many of my colleagues are scrambling to work there, just so eager to get a job there, and many have moved over and they have such positive things to say. I would love to learn a little bit about Olive and your role there. Do you mind sharing that?

**[00:01:42] Tiffany:** Sure. Olive is a healthcare technology company helping hospitals and offices in a variety of ways. We've got a few different offerings. My role as the Vice President of People Operations, which simply means I'm focused mostly on policies, process, employee relations, total rewards, which is benefits and compensation, people's experience, right now we're mostly focused on onboarding, and then HR technology and people analytics and insights. It seems broad, but it's relatively focused in those areas.

**[00:02:20] Bianca:** Just based off of your scope, I can tell that you had a busy few months potentially. I want to talk to you a little bit about that just because our workforce environment, our labor market is so rapidly changing. Today, the issue that we have is different than what

will be in a month from now. I'm very curious to hear your in-the-moment perspective of what's going on.

Just a little bit about you. I know you from the provider side at UofL Health known as the University of Louisville health. Can you give us a little primer on your background and where you came from? Because it's different than Olive.

**[00:02:58] Tiffany:** Yes, absolutely. If you go back in time, even before UofL Health, I messed around with some startup's e-commerce field, and then all HR, and then I started at UofL Health eight and a half years ago with the intention that I would slow down a little bit.

I had been in hyper-scale hypergrowth organizations, and my thought was, "Hey, let's just take a pause for a moment." I think that pause lasted for about a year and a half. Then UofL Health-- At the time I started, it was UofL Physicians. It started to grow pretty rapidly as well through mergers, acquisitions, that thing, as well as some organic growth. When I started, we were maybe 800 or so employees. When I left last year, it was right around 11,000 employees.

If you included all of our contractors and everybody else that we worked with, anywhere close to 14,000 or 15,000. It's quite a big organization, and it grew pretty fast over seven and a half years. My last two years there, I was vice president of human resources and I oversaw all of the HR functions from talent acquisition to employee relations, to business partners, to HR technology, learning and development, everything.

It was a nice move to Olive from UofL Health back into the hyper-growth hyper-scale that Olive was at the time that I joined, but with a narrower focus. It was nice to take that experience from UofL Health and translate it into Olive.

**[00:04:40] Bianca:** Yes, that's actually something that I wanted to talk to you a little bit more about. When we worked together at UofL Health, you were the senior HR leader during a time of a very significant transaction where UofL Health was really bringing on many new employees from another organization that was divesting of, I would say, a health system or a series of organizations.

You had a tall order there really onboarding and welcoming folks. It sounds like you've had some rapid growth at Olive, just naturally what's going on in your organization. What are some of the learnings that you had from UofL Health that you brought to Olive during a rapid growth period?

**[00:05:33] Tiffany:** Yes. When I left UofL Health, I took a lot with me. I just really learned a lot of lessons over that time. I learned some of the things not to do, and I learned some of the things to do, and how to do certain things well. One of the things that I know is important as you're growing an organization, whether it's fast or slow. If you're growing an organization, you need to have a solid foundation of human resource practices. That's your HR data, it's really important, and sometimes it can be very neglected because it's not an exciting thing for many HR practitioners.

Having a good system in place to house employee data, to report on employee data, and then take that information and translate it into analytics and insights. You can make very data-informed decisions about human resources and human capital. One of the things that I would say we learned at UofL Health over the years was how to implement good data systems. I'm going to say, I'm going to throw it out there, we didn't get it perfect 100% of the time.

As you know, Bianca, we were moving very quickly to do a lot of those things. For me, coming to Olive, it's looking around the corner and it's looking ahead to say, "All right. This is where we are now, but if this is where we're going, then these are the building blocks to get us there, so when we get there, we're not scrambling." We're in the process now of implementing a new HR system. We actually go live in like two weeks, which is really exciting.

I think that's going to set a great foundation, but also help us get some really great insights and data from our employees to drive better programming, and benefits, and offering, and performance management and all of those tools that in hypergrowth sometimes, you don't always get to until it's a little too late and it's harder to do when you're bigger.

**[00:07:42] Bianca:** It sounds like that is the name of the game, and so few organizations have access to workforce data that can help support their operations. It's very encouraging that that's something that you prioritize and that you're leveraging for your day-to-day now. Doesn't surprise me though, just because you came from a very sophisticated organization, now you're in an organization that really values that. That's the name of the game for your business.

I'd love to learn a little bit more about your day-to-day, and how you spend your time. You joined Olive during the pandemic.

**[00:08:22] Tiffany:** Yes. I joined a little less than a year ago. We were the majority of the way through the-- I'm going to air quote this for a second, the roughest part of the pandemic, and we were right hitting where we were having that really bad second wave. It's about the time that I started last year.

**[00:08:41] Bianca:** Very unusual time to start a new job but so many of us did that. A lot of transitions occurred during this time of uncertainty. I think that we were all questioning what our new challenges were going to be and what we wanted to do with our careers.

I'd love to know, since you joined Olive, how have you been spending your time? What are the things that you are really focusing on? What are some of the challenges or opportunities that you're working through?

**[00:09:09] Tiffany:** Yes, I got to say the world, and this can be said always, the world is always changing. I think that's the one thing that's constant. For me as an HR practitioner, I think about, "All right, what are the things that are working now, but is that-- are those going to work as the world starts to open back up and people think about work differently?" One of the things that I think about coming out of the pandemic is this remote work, and Olive has been an early adopter. They've done a great job. They call it working on the grid. For me, thinking through, how do I design HR programming around a virtual work environment? How do I continue to engage employees, build teams, think through benefits that actually support people across the United States, across time zones, and across different stages in their life, now that we are through this pandemic and people work differently, they think differently?

Work-life balance, in some cases, is almost a thing of the past if you think about integrating the way we work and live because it's the same place. How do you create boundaries and set the stage, and support our employees through this and still get that sense of connectedness that you get on-site?

Thinking through leaving UofL Health, which was provider-based, you can't be remote when you have to take care of a patient in most cases, although the move to telehealth it's been really tremendous in supporting some of that remote work. For me, in my space and in what

I do, it's the thing that keeps me up most at night is how do you change eons of HR practice to mold to what the future is going to look like?

The reality is, I think, that the organizations who are able to be remote and the ones that are going to continue to be remote will be better off and better suited from a strategic standpoint than those who are forcing folks back in the office. That creates that challenge of, "All right, how do we do that well?" We did it in the pandemic, but how do we do that well?

**[00:11:26] Bianca:** What does well look like? What are you designing to best support workers that are spread across the nation, that are largely remote, that have increasingly evolving requirements and needs in terms of their own workplace? What are some of the things that you're doing to address that?

**[00:11:49] Tiffany:** It's like you got inside my brain and asked the same question I've been asking for months. One of the things, and I'll use this as a great example, this is benefit planning season for most people who are oversold rewards. One of the things that we did is we sent out a survey to our employees and just ask them essentially, "What does well look like for you? What does remote work with the benefits space look like for you? How do you recreate some of those really cool things that we got when we were in office in really cool startups like comradery, like ping pong and free food and all of those fun things? How do we recreate that in the virtual world?"

We just ask the employees. I can't give away too much there, but I am taking that information and I'm using it to inform the way we design our benefits. Trying to think outside of the box and think about new ways that we do benefit offerings outside of just your health, medical, dental, vision. What do we do differently to support folks all across what we call the grid at Olive, and just think a little bit more progressively around our benefits as a means of an engagement tool and strategy. That's one of the areas. There's multiple areas, but I think that's the one I'm looking at mostly right now.

**[00:13:10] Bianca:** I love that that's your concentration, this seems to be a topic that keeps on popping up in my own conversations. Others are exploring loan forgiveness programs, even new puppy benefits. You have any little one in your house so it's learning how to potty train and you need some support there. It's amazing how creative organizations are getting. They may not be utilized by many, but they're trying very hard to see what matches the demographic, the requirements of their staff.

Very interesting. I'm curious to see what you come up with and certainly, this is a topic that we'll be exploring more on the podcast for sure.

**[00:13:51] Tiffany:** Some of the things that I thought our folks would want did not necessarily align with what they said. I was actually surprised at some of the suggestions that people threw out there, which is why you collect data when you make decisions. What better data to collect and ask the people that you're trying to support? It was really neat just to see some of the really cool ideas that some folks came up with.

**[00:14:15] Bianca:** Absolutely I love hearing the creative ideas. Sometimes they're very achievable and they're not as expensive as you would think and others really appreciate them and they can serve as recruitment tools or retention tools. Now that it's benefit season, we'll be having more and more conversations about this. I'm really excited that that's top of mind for you as well.

You mentioned, a little bit ago, that you've learned from mistakes, and I'm not one to give others the opportunity to air their mistakes, but if you're willing to share, of course, I'll take it. Knowing what you know now, what do you think you would've done differently during the

pandemic or in your approach to, for example, benefits? I know you're still relatively a new leader at Olive, so there's not a lot of opportunity to learn from those mistakes yet, but certainly, you've had a very long career as a human capital leader.

**[00:15:12] Tiffany:** I spend a lot of time reflecting. In fact, I set aside time every week to just reflect on the week prior and just say, "What did I do well? What could have done better? Et cetera." The pandemic was an interesting time. Not only was I an HR leader through a pandemic, which was hard enough on any HR leader during the pandemic at a provider organization.

It added just a different level of complexity. Leading up to the pandemic, I think about some of the things that healthcare organizations had been facing for a long time, which the nursing shortage was one of those, and that just had been hitting the healthcare organizations for years, and then you throw the pandemic in there, and it was even harder.

As an HR leader, I think about what would I have done differently. I think a lot, but then in hindsight, we were all making it up as we went along. There was no one that was working that had ever lived through anything similar to what we were going through. We had to think very much in terms of being agile, thinking through things in very different ways, creating some autonomy and spaces where we didn't have all the answers to try to get answers from others, and really cross collaborate with others in the space to see what they were doing and what was working well.

If I could say, for certain, one thing that I would have done differently, I think I would have given myself a little bit more grace. It's one of the reasons I decided to leave UofL Health, it's just because I just wore some of the weight of the pandemic on my shoulders, as many HR leaders said. I think if I were to go through hindsight, I probably would have leaned more heavily on those that were my peers. I think I would have leaned more heavily on experience in other companies and other industries, and not carried so much of that burden myself.

It was very fast-paced, it was rapidly changing. I know, at least for us, we would come in one day with a plan, and then by two o'clock, that plan was completely changed just because the internal landscape had changed. It was difficult to do that. Instead of reaching out and saying, "All right, how are you all handling it?" I just holed up in my office with some of the other executive leaders, and we're like, "All right, let's figure this out together."

In hindsight, I think, "Maybe I should have leveraged some other folks. They were trying to figure this out, too, and they might have had some better ideas."

**[00:17:54] Bianca:** We were still swinging from the curtains. It's madness, absolute madness. It makes it really hard to stop and say, "You know what, what are my friends during right now?" It's very difficult to talk to your colleagues when you have a very clear issue that you all have to strike in on and address immediately with your leadership team. I do like your takeaway, stepping away, and I don't know if this is relatable, but really starting the healing process that so many leaders, staff members, experienced the trauma during this time. Then of course, collectively, humanity experienced the trauma.

There are so many mental health implications of what we all went through. Now is the time for us to heal, and to whatever extent you can, for example, reinvigorate your career by trying a different industry or segment of the industry, give yourself a mental break in some way, challenge yourself with a new team, new concept, can be very helpful. I appreciate that, the grace component is so critical.

Let's talk about the future. We're in a new phase of the pandemic. I think we're not even in a pandemic anymore. I think Dr. Fauci has said we're no longer in a pandemic, this is going to

be an endemic disease for us. What are the things that are keeping you up at night right now?

**[00:19:25] Tiffany:** Oh, my goodness, the things that keep me up are thinking through what I mentioned earlier, this new way of working, because the reality is, remote work doesn't work for everyone, and in-office work doesn't work for everyone. What we learned during the pandemic is so much work can be done outside of an office. Some work can be done well and even better, and people can be more productive when they work in places that work best for them. A great example of this. I do well in office and I do well remote. One of the things that I found, going fully remote, which I'm going to raise my hand and say for a moment, I was a little skeptical and I was like, you know what? I'm going to go all in and see how it goes. I love it. I do work from my front porch with my coffee in the morning, and I am so much more productive in those morning hours not having to fight the traffic and not having to fight going into the office and talking to everyone and getting distracted.

Thinking through from an HR lens, how do we incorporate all of those great things of remote work in those organizations and the roles that can be remote? Also, we can't forget that engagement and team building comes along with that, and so much of that is done well in person. For many people, you can't replace that in-person connection virtually, and it's so much easier to collaborate and brainstorm in some scenarios when you're side by side with someone and you have some of those shared experiences.

For me, as an HR person, thinking, "All right, how do I design the future of performance management, talent management, engagement, employee experience?" There's the dark side of employee experience when you come with remote work which is, "Okay, where do I find things? I can't just walk down the hallway and ask. I can't catch someone at the copier."

How do you recreate some of those water cooler moments, if you will, or the hallway conversations, how do you recreate that feeling in this brand new world that none of us have really lived in before? I spend a lot of time on this. I think about this a lot. I write about it a lot. Every single thing I put in place, I think about, "Okay we're implementing this new system."

I think about, "Okay, if I'm sitting at home by myself and I don't have anyone to ask, what is the experience when I log in to enroll in benefits or change my address or look at an org chart? What does that experience lens look like?"

We can automate those things that maybe used to be the way we got information and ask questions, and then design programming that allows people to get together when it's cost-effective as we get out of the pandemic and where it makes sense, so we can then recreate some of those team building things that we used to do on-site. I don't have all the answers yet but I can definitely say, talking with my peers is a lesson I've learned. Now, I talk to my peers a lot about what they're thinking.

I know that this is something that a lot of senior HR professionals are thinking about as well. Just how do we redesign HR to fit into the world and in the way it's changing post-pandemic?

**[00:22:54] Bianca:** Yes, absolutely. At the beginning of our conversation, I had mentioned that the workforce, our labor market is so rapidly evolving, an issue today is very different than the issue a month from now even, or how we're spending our time today is very different than how we'll spend our time a month from now. I would say, maybe about a year ago, everyone was over-talking about remote work. It's like, "Yes, we've really provisioned and enabled everybody with technology. Hopefully, we can get back to the office soon," and we stopped talking about it.

Really, you're bringing to our attention what is our long-term strategy related to remote work. If we're going to do this and make it part of our DNA, how do we do it well? Like you said, how do we do it well? Let's take out your crystal ball for a moment and think more broadly, not just in remote work but certainly that as well. My last question for you, what does the next few years look like for you in our industry healthcare?

**[00:23:55] Tiffany:** Oh, I think that we can't forget. You mentioned the word trauma earlier, so I'm going to just bring it up again. We can't forget that those who have worked in healthcare over the last few years have really gone through a lot. If you're on the provider side, you have had to deal with short staff, you've lost friends, patients, colleagues. You have been through this ever-changing world and you don't have all the answers, and it's somewhat traumatic for people who are used to a little bit more normalcy. We have to have grace, if we think about the next couple of years and what does it mean for the healthcare industry. You don't recover from that. Okay, great, Fauci said that we're in an endemic stage, but you can't just flip the switch and go back to the way things were. Leading with grace and compassion over the next few years and in really pushing ourselves to say, "All right. The world is different still."

I know we want to get back to the way things were before the pandemic, but maybe that wasn't great because we learned that we weren't set up to handle crazy flexibility and swings in the environment. How do we set ourselves up to where we're more agile, we're more flexible, we're able to get our work done without interruption, and just truly think through how to move forward, but do so with grace and understanding, and compassion at the fact that we're still recovering emotionally and mentally from everything we all just went through the last two years.

I think it's going to be easier to say that than do that in some cases, especially in organizations like Olive and many other tech startups, and even UofL health was this way. This bias for action, let's get things done quickly. The reality is, if we can take a pause for a moment and think through everything and say, "How is this going to scale? How is this going to work if we get thrown a curve ball? How is the experience on the other end, and culturally, how are people going to take this?"

Are we putting too much on them when they're already burned out? Just in general, not necessarily from work, but just from life the last few years, how is this going to land? If we can take a pause for a minute and just think through those things before we move forward, I think we're going to be better off in the long run. For me, that's what my next few years looks like. It's just taking a pause, looking at things through those lens.

**[00:26:38] Bianca:** Take a pause. I love it. I need to do that too. I think that all the listeners can take a moment, at least, and pause and give ourselves some grace. I love that piece of advice as well. We have been very hard on ourselves. Life has been very hard on us. Thank you so much, Tiffany. I appreciate your perspective. You really bring the human side to this.

**[00:27:04] Bianca:** Tiffany, it's so good to hear from you. The last time we spoke was a few months ago, I think it was late spring, early summer, and we had an opportunity to chat about what was going on over at Olive. It sounds like there's been some changes at Olive. Do you mind bringing us up to speed on what's happening?

**[00:27:24] Tiffany:** Yes. Since we last spoke, my role in scope has changed just slightly. I'm still the Vice president of People Operations, but since that time, I've also taken on the learning and development, leadership development function under my umbrella. We look forward to using some of these virtual strategies that we talked about last time that we spoke, and applying those to learning and development and leadership development.

It's a pretty exciting time to move just beyond the things that we spoke about previously. I know Olive's gone through some strategic direction and changes, and we really look forward to continuing to provide an impact on healthcare going forward as we align our strategic vision in the direction that we're headed. It's a very exciting time.

**[00:28:18] Bianca:** Great. Thank you so much for bringing us up to speed. I hope that we can stay in contact and learn about what's going on with you and with Olive in the future. Thank you again for your time.