Katrina Hutchinson-O'Neill Transcript

Alan Walker: Hi, Katrina. Thanks for taking part in the ClickIQ Academy.

Katrina Hutchinson-O'Neill: You're very welcome. Thanks for having me.

Alan: TA teams are constantly being told at the moment transformation, transformation, transformation. How do you actually build the plane while it's still flying?

Katrina: That's the perennial challenge, the HRD still typically come to us and say, "We want to change everything, here's the transformation team to go with it." I think that the biggest challenge that you've got when you're trying to build and fly at the same time is that balance between delivering on the BAU and doing the transformation, progressing the BAU without dropping any balls at the same time. One of the things that I find really important is wherever possible to try within your team to separate out your roles.

If you've got somebody who's trying to be in the thick of it in terms of BAU delivery, whilst also doing a big transformation role, in my experience, one suffers and that typically is to a significant detriment one way or the other. Either you will have hiring managers complaining to you that you're so busy doing transformation that they're not getting the service that they're used to or you're going to have a transformation project where you're starting to miss milestones.

Trying to separate that out that is really important but I think also being realistic. If you've managed to build a business case, whether that's a hard or soft business case, it's no bad idea to make sure that you're asking for the resources that you need to support the work, particularly if it sits above BAU. That could be in the shape of extra resources coming into your team because you can get funding for that or it could be if that's completely impossible, negotiating a reduction in service catalog for a short period of time.

Having a really open and honest conversation with your HR leadership team, or with your senior business stakeholders about certain ancillary activities that you might be able to give a bit of a hiatus to once you deliver on this piece of work. It's a bit of a delicate negotiation, you really need to have a story that sells your stakeholders on the importance of the input that you're going to deliver and how that outweighs any minor inconvenience that they might have for not delivering that piece of work.

A great example might be graduate recruitment. We're going to take a pause for three months and we're not going to progress our pipelines. It's going to create more work later on. However, by creating that pause and freeing up 3 FTE, you're going to be able to deliver the embedding of the assessments, which will make that process more effective later on, would be a good example of that.

Alan: It's an investment in results rather than cash?

Katrina: Potentially. Obviously, if you've got the cash, then that's great. That makes it much easier. Also, if you've got the cash, I think one thing that's really important is there are very few consultancy firms who have TA people in their consultancy stack who have actually been practitioners. Now, that can be a good or bad thing. People would say, a project manager is a project manager but depending on the piece of work you're doing, that's something you need to consider really carefully.

A practitioner sometimes can fall too much in love with the problem and get a little bit too close to it but at the same time, somebody who's never been a practitioner only ever been a consultant can miss some of the really important nuances that make TA really different from an operational process, which is how many of them see that. So really think long and hard to bide what are the appropriate mix of skills that you want in your program. If you're hiring somebody who doesn't have TA experience, think about how you're going to face off to them or have someone face off to them to give them that nuance knowledge that they're going to need.

Alan: I think if you can afford to have best of both, then you have subject matter expertise and a TA leader who's been there, done that, got that, teach that multiple times and you've got somebody else who's maybe got those core project management, program management type skills and they can work together then it would be nirvana.

Katrina: 100%. When I've been running big, big, big transformation projects, that's exactly how I did it. I typically have my project management office staffed with effectively career consultants or career projects people but in terms of those program lead roles or those workstream lead roles, those are people with real depth of knowledge in whatever their area of TA is to lead on that work.

Alan: Excellent. Thanks a lot, Katrina.

Katrina: Thank you very much.

Alan: Fabulous. [00:04:39] [END OF AUDIO]