[00:00:03]

[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. [MUSIC] Hello, everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from HLS Human Resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his. Today we're talking to Stacey Emerton from also HR who will tell us about her life, how long she is in this position at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us, Stacey, and please tell me your story.

[00:00:40]

Awesome. Thanks to be here, Edgar. I am Stacey Emerton, Director of HR at HLS. A little bit about me. I've been at HLS now for two-and-a-half years.

[00:00:55]

Two-and-a-half already?

[00:00:56]

Yeah. Started in February of 2020, a month before the pandemic, so my whole career has essentially [LAUGHTER] been remote. I started in the HR Business Partner role supporting all of the clinics and then worked my way into director role.

[00:01:15]

When you started you were a business partner?

[00:01:18]

I was. Yes.

[00:01:19]

So you were typically taking care of a certain department and being the contact person, and all that work that they do?

[00:01:26]

Yeah.

[00:01:27]

Difference between the two aspects of your job; as a business partner, now as a director.

[00:01:32]

I think the difference is I don't have that direct client experience. I'm not in the day-to-day meetings with the clients, but in a sense, I'm still supporting them from the background with the HR business partners. That's probably the one thing that I miss the most is having that interaction.

[00:01:53]

That contact with the folks in departments. One thing that's interesting, and you can talk more, in the business partner aspect of the position, I wonder, and I'm talking about that on my own behalf here because I'm here for almost 20 years, four different departments. Until now that I'm working inside of HR, I rarely went to HR and I think that is a big misconception. I'm saying that not just because I'm there now defending the flag of HR or the banner of HR, I'm saying for having a better approach or better contact with them. The business partner right now, the ones that I know have better contact is Dalila and Rachel.

[00:02:47]

Yeah, and Lauren.

[00:02:50]

Sorry, Lauren. [LAUGHTER]

[00:02:52]

We miss you, Lauren.

[00:02:53]

We miss you so much, Lauren. We love you, but I'm sorry that I completely forgot that you are HR and you can call me later and give me such nice dinner words for me, I deserve it. But I think it's that relationship or that communication between the employee in whatever level and their head of departments to make that translation in terms of depends on the issue or depends on the need, depends on the request. It could be issues between coworkers or could be accessibility related. If the person needs some accommodation that doesn't even know the policies properly or doesn't know if the department will allow that. That's what the business partner is there for; to make that connection. Isn't that more or less?

[00:03:48]

Yeah, absolutely. I think we have a lot of interaction with leaders, but also there to support our employees who have different needs. When you say HR, it covers this wide blanket. When we're meeting new hires for the first time, we usually say if you have any type of question that may be somewhat even remotely close to an HR question, just come to us and if we don't know or if it's not our area we'll guide you where you should be. But just trying to make that connection that you have someone and you know someone who isn't in your department, but who is there for you and who wants to advocate for you.

[00:04:33]

At least try to have that conversation. For example, sometimes you hear people talking about equity or the chance to develop their careers, to grow in their department somehow or even grow in the school. In our only school, in our own community, or maybe the university as a whole. I think people miss a lot of the chances that you have a disconnection, have this conversation. I think comes with the misconception that HR in certain aspects is like the principal's office, that you just go if you are in trouble and you're going to be sitting in front desk and the principal calls in saying, ''Hey, you are in trouble here.'' I think that's the difference. I'm telling you, I never did and I think I should have. Looking back, I think I missed opportunities to go and talk to someone there to see, hey, my plans for the future is this or I would like to go to this route and what should I do? When you say, you need more coaching or you need more advising. I think it is there you just never learned. In my case, honestly, I never had that idea that I could count on HR for that purpose and I see a really nice group there doing that now.

[00:06:00]

I think that's a really big misconception. I think one of my biggest goals in every role that I'm in is if I can impact at least one person and change their perspective on what HR is and who they are and what they do, that is successful to me.

[00:06:23]

I think that's really true. There are people with, again, goes to the interest of what you are trying to do. Some people are comfortable to be doing what they are doing. They are 9-5 job and it's just what they need. They have their personal life that match exactly what they have here. Totally fine. But there are quite a few of them that would like to grow in a different way and invest in their career. So just look for that conversation and try to find and see what the school and university can offer in terms of there is a range of things that I think should be tried, but what before HR? Or how did you get here first and then you go backwards in that sense?

[00:07:14]

How did I get here? When I applied for this role, I was not happy in my former role. I was completely bored, needed a challenge. My whole career I've been going back and forth between higher ed and the corporate world and I just finally realized that higher ed is a place where I want it to be. It's where I feel the most driven and the most fulfilled.

[00:07:44]

If you can say, what's the difference in your point of view, not that we have to give a description what both are, but what would be something that attracts you to the higher ed versus what the corporate would be that you feel like I love this because of that?

[00:08:02]

I think for me I've always loved education in some way, shape, or form. I wanted to be a teacher when I was younger.

[00:08:11]

You did?

[00:08:12]

I did. My mom was a special ed teacher and had to give it some thought as to what path I wanted to take, but that's always been part of my history. Then going to undergraduate, going to mark hat, and being in that environment really just made me, I can't really explain it, but I love the college environment. There's an energy about it that you just don't get in the corporate world. You may get other things, a lot more perks and benefits, and things like that, but there's something about it that draws me.

[00:08:57]

I wonder if it is, and I don't want to mean in a disrespectful way or, but feels like one because of personality wise is a little cold versus the one that you have a better energy, more connection with people in a wide range, like higher education, regardless what position you use or you have in administration, you get involved with the broader range of folks that you have to deal with.

[00:09:28]

I think corporate world make money, meet your goals, and in higher ed the goal is to teach and to learn. You still have some of those other goals there, but it's just a different endgame.

[00:09:51]

Yeah, I agree with that. It's interesting because when I was in Brazil and we're talking here high school, and I don't want to go all the way to the '80s, [LAUGHTER] when I was in high school, but I have to. In my town, there was a small town in Brazil. At that time, it was a different kind of education for high school in preparation for college if you want to pursue. The high school could be chosen as one that was preparing your path towards education, teaching. Another one that would be accountant, more related to math. There was a third one that was not in my town that was scientific that everything related to research and scientific.

[00:10:37]

Preparing you for college at that time. In my town was just accountant or teaching. I didn't like either. But teaching school was closer to my home, accountant was across the town I had to walk farther. I say, I'm going to finish high school with this one and later I will figure out my life, what I'm going to do. I did everything, was fun. When the internship style came for you to teach stuff and you have to teach young kids and I said, no, I would never do this in my life. I just hate it. No way I'm going to be singing and clapping and, hey do this children. But every step in my life brought me towards education in one way or the other. I tried many different ways, salesperson, administration. Here I am again. I know work in administration, but it still connect with education. I think that is general sometimes you feel like okay, I think your personality more than anything, more than, a destiny is bringing you to that connection. There is nothing that you can do. When you came here, it was an option between the corporate world and the higher ed world. Before that, where you come from, are you a Boston person?

[00:12:01]

No, I am from Green Bay, Wisconsin.

[00:12:04]

Lord. [LAUGHTER] Here we go. We had talked about Green. [LAUGHTER]

[00:12:09]

Here we go.

[00:12:11]

Tell us about Green Bay. How was life there, you were born there?

[00:12:16]

I was born in Rockford, Illinois, it's three hours south.

[00:12:21]

Really?

[00:12:22]

Yeah. I was born there. We moved to Green Bay when I was about 10. I will always say that I'm from Wisconsin because I love it there, a lot more. Lived there, went to undergrad, like I said, in Milwaukee and then never went home. I just stayed in the city.

[00:12:47]

You're comparing your childhood was more rural area where you lived?

[00:12:51]

Yeah, definitely.

[00:12:53]

Farms?

[00:12:54]

Some farms. It was still the suburbs, the typical.

[00:13:03]

Early education and then high school was all same, easy-peasy going through and everything was fine?

[00:13:10]

Yeah.

[00:13:10]

But you like the city more than you like the -?

[00:13:13]

I liked being on my own, and being independent.

[00:13:18]

Okay.

[00:13:19]

When I left for college, most kids go home for the summers. I had a job. I had apartment.

[00:13:28]

Was that on purpose?

[00:13:29]

No, I've always just been one to be independent beyond my own. Here I am living in New Hampshire, home is Wisconsin, but it's a place to visit, not where I want to live.

[00:13:52]

I know exactly what you mean. I think is great that you knew early and you went for it and you found your way to be independent and work for that. But I feel like I can't stop thinking about being in Wisconsin or when you go visit. Is that few home good feeling of being there or is that going for Thanksgiving with your family?

[00:14:20]

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] It is. I still have a few good high school friend there, my family is there, so I love going to visit.

[00:14:29]

To visit. Yes.

[00:14:30]

But I'm so happy to come home. Back to the East Coast.

[00:14:35]

Back to East Coast?

[00:14:35]

Yeah.

[00:14:36]

How do you feel in terms of when to say I have to be back to East Coast?

[00:14:43]

That's a great question. I feel like climate wise, it's pretty similar in a sense. Again, I think I've just built a life out here that I love. I think, everything that I had growing up was great. But a lot of people that I went to high school with they go to school, they get married, they stay in town and I was not one of them.

[00:15:16]

Is almost a very common thing, I would say, even worldwide. Even when changing cultures, some people tend to stay in that local community, so a lot of the folks that you knew growing up, are still there?

[00:15:34]

Yeah. They're still there.

[00:15:35]

You were doing let's say that's not for me. Thank you very much.

[00:15:38]

Not for me. No. Actually, right after I graduated, I moved out to Colorado and lived there for five years before moving here.

[00:15:47]

How long? Five-years?

[00:15:48]

Yeah.

[00:15:49]

Where in Colorado?

[00:15:50]

In Denver, a small suburb.

[00:15:54]

Funny thing, Denver. We have been there twice already. But every time that you go anywhere, you see everything around. But Denver is the place that I had to take the flight back home. I know now you're going to see Denver this time so you get there in the last day, few hours before you have to take the flight. I can tell you, I have been there twice, but never got to know Denver anything. I spent more time in Boulder recently than Denver, [inaudible 00:16:25] twice that I was there. But I love everything around Colorado as well. I have been in many different place. I just think that the landscape and different aspects out there, sorry, this is my ignorance in terms of geography in US, Wisconsin is a flat or more mountainous as well?

[00:16:46]

Definitely flat.

[00:16:46]

Flat.

[00:16:47]

Yeah.

[00:16:49]

That's the area of US that I should know and I'm dying to see. Everybody tells me, onne student that I thought that was so funny. She is from Ohio. Then I said I want to go to Ohio, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and this and that and then straight in my face that why would you go to Ohio? [LAUGHTER] There is nothing to see there. Is just the normal all those plain fields. That's what I want you to see. I have seen so many movies. I don't know why attracts me in a way. The whole driving through that. I don't know.

[00:17:26]

It's a different change of pace.

[00:17:27]

Right?

[00:17:28]

Yeah.

[00:17:29]

Very slow, very calm?

[00:17:32]

It seems to be a little bit slower.

[00:17:35]

What about people?

[00:17:37]

People are very nice.

[00:17:39]

Yeah. [LAUGHTER]

[00:17:41]

Look who you're talking to. It's so easy to make friends in the Midwest, everyone is so welcoming.

[00:17:52]

Here, we're just guessing games. You're not trying to solve or resolve the physiological aspects of this. But would do you think that because life is slow and people have a different pace, they tend to be nice in combination of that lack of stress in a way, would it be that?

[00:18:11]

Yeah, I think so. It just feels like the culture in the Midwest is just.

[00:18:19]

People in general tend to be nicer in a way. Because I know what it mean and I know the pace of life here, Boston, even New Hampshire going all the way down. If you go through Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York, the pace is different, is faster, the stress is everywhere. Driving can be a nightmare. But I like a lot. I always joke the same way that I joked about, I am an introvert person who likes to be on my own in general. Someone was talking about the COVID time and the isolation saying this was built for me. That was my thing. All you have to be at home inside of your apartment for hours, for days. Not just watching TV, that's me. I will be there. But I also like the pace. But how come being born there and liking and knowing everything the way that it is in you, you had that feeling of no, I want something else?

[00:19:23]

I all of a sudden decided, I want to go live in Denver. I've never been there.

[00:19:29]

Wow.

[00:19:31]

I happened to be talking to one of my classmates and she connected me with her cousin who was a VP of HR out in Denver. I didn't really think anything of it. Then two weeks before graduation, they called me and said, "Hey, do you want an internship? We will pay for your housing, come out for the summer. Lets go."

[00:19:52]

That's nice.

[00:19:54]

I said yes and packed everything up and didn't know one person out there and drove out there.

[00:20:01]

Just went for it?

[00:20:01]

Just went for it.

[00:20:03]

How was your family and friends reacting to the whole idea? I know they could be supportive but-

[00:20:07]

Yeah, very supportive. They would have thought that something was wrong if I stayed.

[00:20:15]

That's amazing.

[00:20:17]

Yeah.

[00:20:18]

Then you went to Denver enjoying whatever was there for five years or seven?

[00:20:25]

Five years, yeah.

[00:20:26]

Then what is the next, I don't know how to put that, but what clicked in your mind and say, now I'm going to East Coast?

[00:20:40]

When I was out there, I was with my boyfriend at the time. We actually got married and so he got into PT school at Plymouth State in New Hampshire. That's what brought me here.

[00:20:56]

Fantastic. That's the change of base. But did you see as, here we go, I have to be supportive. He has a good job and I'm going there or it was a surprising change?

[00:21:16]

It was good. I was ready for a little bit of change. Obviously, I was going to miss Colorado quite a bit. But I think it became a pattern in me that I was always following his career not really finding what I loved in a job and a career.

[00:21:42]

This is a good point that you're making there. Some people can interpret that as, I'm just following him. You made a good point there, you were following him because at the point you were not finding anything in your mind like, I'm not sure right now what I want you to do. The best option right now is to go together for this new place because at least he has something that's promising in a different place that would be okay to try. But that's because you were not thinking about a better choice for yourself, right?

[00:22:14]

Yeah and we were married, so I didn't really have a choice. [LAUGHTER]

[00:22:20]

Well, we did.

[00:22:22]

We did. [LAUGHTER] Now we're in the same boat.

[00:22:25]

Now, that's great because I think that's a perfect way to see it. Someone has a chance so it cannot just be, no, but I don't want to move away from Denver, I want you to stay here. I think you balanced with the choices and said that's a good opportunity and in the end worked well for you. Right now can we say that you are in a better place?

[00:22:52]

Yes, much better place.

[00:22:57]

What would it be from now? Right now you are here, you are at Harvard, Director of the HR department.

[00:23:07]

Is there any ideas for future dreams? Roxanne's job for example [LAUGHTER]?

[00:23:15]

Oh goodness. It's so interesting because as I've gone through my career, I'm always looking up to people and saying, wow, I wonder if I could do that one day? That would be so cool if I could do that one day. I've done it now multiple times and I'm here where I'm currently at and, I wouldn't say never thinking I would get here but never really knowing how and when in if. Yeah, I think her job is something that I strive for, but then again, I'm very happy and still needing to grow where I am.

[00:24:02]

Develop even more in everything. I remembered that you had a exercise in our department when you said, if you could have someone's job and I swear to go God, I was very apt to this. Now [LAUGHTER] if I don't have those skills to do what she does, but that's a tough job. I admire what she does and she does well, but that's the job that would not be for me. I think I'm more a people’s person in terms of a relationship or communicating somehow, that one demands certain moments of a decision that you have to make and what you need to do in certain circumstances. That has to be someone with the proper personality to do that. What else do you enjoy living here in New England?

[00:25:03]

Well, we bought a house last year.

[00:25:07]

That's nice. Congratulations. That's really good.

[00:25:10]

I love my house.

[00:25:11]

You said, New Hampshire?

[00:25:12]

Yeah.

[00:25:13]

New Hampshire is adorable truth be told. The whole area there is really good too because then you don't have to deal with the craziness in terms of a traffic here in Boston, you just have to come here. [LAUGHTER]

[00:25:23]

Yeah, I just have to come here. [LAUGHTER]

[00:25:26]

Is it Commute 93?

[00:25:29]

It can't be. Normally, I was happy last week it was 55 minutes on Friday [LAUGHTER] compared to two hours and 15 minutes on Tuesday. It can be variable, but honestly, I love it. It's totally worth it. When you love your job, I feel like your commute is just your commute and you find ways to enjoy it.

[00:25:53]

You brought me back now with the question that I wanted to ask and flew away with our conversation about Roxanne. What about the department, how you feel the department and everybody working there, do you think that's a good vibe?

[00:26:08]

I do. I will say the best team that I've ever worked on and that's also what I was craving between this role and previous roles is that I was on my own as an HR person and so I was creating that team atmosphere. I feel like our team now is just taking it to a whole new level.

[00:26:34]

Yes, I agree.

[00:26:36]

It's amazing. I have fun with it. We get each other. We understand what each other goes through. We're there for each other and it really just makes that complete.

[00:26:50]

It is a good connection. I think it is a good example as well. The relationships that you have, the communication that you have, and I will tell you that and people listening to me, probably some are going to agree, but some are going to be surprised as well. I was not very fond of ideas of chats like here it is, how cute it is, those [LAUGHTER] conversations. When I started in HR, you had do the teams and then you have the chat and then you have the more serious notes or tweets, whatever you call into teams. The first impression, oh Lord, here you go. We're going to be having these things and we're going to be chatting here everything. [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:40]

Look at you now. [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:43]

Exactly, [LAUGHTER] and now I kept waiting for someone to just put something there and then I am saying sometimes nice things. Now it's never awful, but always teasing someone or mess with them and poor Wendy, she has to deal with me [LAUGHTER] all the time or Laurie or, let's not even talk about Carolyn anyways. [LAUGHTER] We good way to communicate and to joke around with each other and when you are in the office as well. Like our preparation for Halloween, I think that was awesome.

[00:28:19]

It was so fun. [LAUGHTER] Look at this cut. [LAUGHTER] I'm telling you I have a cut on my finger.

[00:28:26]

We made a little balloon tree archway and I was assigned to tie all of the ballons [LAUGHTER]. Now I have a cut on my finger because my nails dug in.

[00:28:40]

Difficult job there, those balloons are really, really difficult. Nobody ever prepare us for that. Then having Rachel and Wendy with those visions. [LAUGHTER] Oh, no, let's do this and let's do that. Oh, my Lord.

[00:28:55]

It was so fun to watch.

[00:28:56]

Yeah. The day before we were with Gloria, Carolyn, and Wendy and that we [LAUGHTER] were laughing. That's why I don't know if you're signed some of my texts, I mentioned tape.

[00:29:09]

Oh, yeah.

[00:29:09]

That's what me, and Wendy, and Carolyn because we were doing outside your office, the Emerald City, when you're putting those pieces of paper, different green color there. Then we started and then we talk and there is someone who's a slower pace. Then [LAUGHTER] I'm saying now you have to go fast than that otherwise we're not going to leave. I start gluing stuff with my vision about what the Emerald. Wendy was the one with the tape but she was helping me talking to Carolyn [LAUGHTER]. The only thing that would tell them was tape and they say. Oh my God, you're starting then it. We went on and on and draw it in terms of the tape. Then the day after when you are there helping us with Rachel it and Wendy again, doing all the things. I think it was awesome.

[00:29:59]

It was so fun.

[00:30:00]

It was such a great time. What do you think is looking back not looking down, looking back at the young Stacey in Wisconsin and doing what you're doing now. Is that everything planned or you can look back and say, I can't believe that I did this or came this way.

[00:30:22]

Yeah. Actually, very ironically. Do you know who Enya is?

[00:30:28]

The singer?

[00:30:29]

Yeah.

[00:30:29]

Yeah. The Irish singer?

[00:30:31]

Yeah, huge idol in Brazil [LAUGHTER].

[00:30:34]

Huge fan. She can put me to sleep on any plane. There's one song in particular, I don't know which one it is, but I would always listen to it. I would always envision myself walking in front of the Harvard Yard like the gate.

[00:30:51]

Oh my.

[00:30:52]

When I was, I don't know, 11 or 12.

[00:30:54]

Really?

[00:30:54]

When i was listening to this. That moment hit full circle when I got the job here, went to Harvard Yard and just came rushing back. I don't know where it came from.

[00:31:08]

That's interesting.

[00:31:10]

But it was just one of those obvious things that I had pictured myself there.

[00:31:17]

Wow.

[00:31:18]

No contexts but.

[00:31:19]

[OVERLAPPING] For no reason we had no.

[00:31:20]

For no reason. Just the specific song just spoke to the.

[00:31:28]

That's really, really interesting.

[00:31:29]

Yeah.

[00:31:29]

I have something similar. Some people as why Boston, for example. I'm fascinated with Boston and I really can’t explain much. I'm from Brazil in a place most of my life, from my 20s all the way. When I came here, I would be on my 35, 36. Where my family leaves is 105 or 110 all year long. You just have two seasons, dry and wet season. It's not like a four season like here. When I came here and people are talking about winter, it's so harsh or this or that. I agree with all of that. But there is something about Boston and I would tell you is more or less the same topic that you are describing. Because I was walking when I just got here, I still have brought some money with me, I was comfortable. I took some days and I was walking, I don't remember the area but do you know where the governor. Not the government center but the governors policy is there in Pike Street. Behind they have that very old area with a very narrow streets with cobblestones they are not very close together. Walking there just gave me this weird vibe that oh, how life. Then I traveled back thinking how life would be there in the 1600 or something like that. I couldn't get out of that. Do you know that feeling in my mind is interesting to say and it feels weird in a sense. But it's same level you listened to Enya and being front of John Harvard's Gate or the Harvard gate. It's interesting that there is some a connection. Yes

[00:33:19]

Yeah, there's something there.

[00:33:21]

For all the places that I have been in US. Do you West Coast? A wonderful place that I have been, Florida for example I love everything, Utah and it doesn't matter.

[00:33:33]

Yeah.

[00:33:33]

I come back and it has to be here. I can think about living somewhere else. Interesting?

[00:33:38]

Yeah, very.

[00:33:41]

But it is nice just to imagine in a retrospective that the girl in Wisconsin and we're thinking about, listen to Anya and thinking about Harvard Gates and end up coming through. It's really, really cool.

[00:33:58]

Yeah.

[00:33:59]

Anyways, I think our time is up. Stacey, thank you very, very much.

[00:34:06]

Thank you.

[00:34:07]

For accepting to participate in this recording. I really enjoy working with you, I love your sense of humor. I always I'm afraid of in terms of relationships, people that you meet in your life and your career. You're always have to read first and say, can I say something that's going to be [LAUGHTER] okay. I shouldn't be not saying this to this person or that. I love what we have there, it's so easy to communicate. We know that the timing that you have in terms of talking to each other and with the folks around us. I think you help to make that place a really, really amazing place to work with.

[00:34:50]

Thank you.

[00:34:50]

I'm very happy and you all are making me very happy there.

[00:34:54]

Yeah.

[00:34:54]

Thank you very much for participating and join us in this conversation. I hope you enjoy a little bit as well.

[00:35:00]

I did thank you so much.

[00:35:03]

Now for a brief outtake, here is how it always started.

This thing here. I thought that was gross but the only thing that I would think of [LAUGHTER].

[00:35:15]

Yeah. You doesn't speed up the microphone like other people, I always see singer singing. Then they put the microphone right in their mouth and I feel like that's gross that thing. [LAUGHTER]. It's not, it's for people who's [OVERLAPPING].

[00:35:31]

So I can't do that today? [LAUGHTER]

[00:35:34]

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] You don't go then, “hello, it's me”. People are saying that it's true. These things blocks the B and B sounds when I say, Oh, that's not fun, I prefer the speeding catcher. That was much more interesting.That's fine. Otherwise, if they see that record is not going to be doing. [LAUGHTER] should we do that first part that you are messing around with this, spitting catcher. [MUSIC] [LAUGHTER].

For everybody there, listening to our stories here until next time. See you then. Bye bye. [MUSIC]