

Announcer:

Welcome to PayTalk, the podcast for payroll professionals with your host, Nina Talley. In the podcast, we explore the human side of payroll by speaking with global industry leaders who provide their unique insights to help listeners better understand the issues important to them and their careers.

Nina Talley:

Hey everyone. Thanks for joining us for PayTalk, the podcast that brings you payroll's human side. We're doing something a little different this month. During PayrollOrg's annual Congress, Nick Day of the Payroll Podcast, was onsite interviewing PayrollOrg members about their experiences. Nick was gracious enough to share these incredible interviews with us, which gave me plenty of time to really take in the Congress experience and spend some quality time with our listeners, including the lovely Elvira, who made my Congress experience by sharing her love of PayTalk with me. If we had a chance to chat at Congress, make sure to drop us a line about it at podcasts@payroll.org. We would love to stay connected.

Now, without further ado, here is Nick Day.

Nick Day:

Hello and welcome back to the payroll podcast. My name is Nick Day. I'm CEO of JGA recruitment group. We are specialist global payroll recruiters and I'm very excited because I am currently in Denver for a couple of days for the annual PayrollOrg conference. For those that may be familiar with the American Payroll Association, or the GPPI, they've rebranded to PayrollOrg. And I'm very, very privileged to be sat here in a wonderful, wonderful venue to meet with some of the payroll industry leaders who are shaping the industry of tomorrow. I'm welcoming people to my lovely sofa here. I've been set up in a beautiful area in the PayrollOrg congress center and exhibition hall. And I'm going to be meeting with the people to talk about technology, talk about innovation, talk about global payroll, what the future holds for the industry, and of course, to find out how people are getting on at the Congress, what they're learning, what they're discovering, and what they're enjoying.

So sit back, relax, enjoy the interviews. I'm also recording these for the PayrollOrg podcast, which is known as PayTalk. So please do remember to subscribe to not just the Payroll Podcast on your favorite podcast channel, but also click subscribe and follow to the PayTalk Podcast as well. Please, please share this content with all of your payroll colleagues and friends and let's raise the profile of payroll for everyone. Sit back, relax, enjoy, and let's bring these interviews to life. Here we go.

I'm joined already by Allison Strong, who is at Booster Fuels, my first guest of the day. Alison, how are you finding the conference so far?

Allison Strong:

Oh, I am loving it. I love the energy that everybody's bringing, and it's so exciting just to be back with my people.

Nick Day:

One thing I can say for sure is this is a niche industry, right? Or niche I think you'd say in America. Everyone's getting together. The energy is buzzing in the room. We've just finished, I think two different seminar sessions. Which sessions have you just been involved in?

Allison Strong:

Yes, I just did two different ones on leadership and now I feel embarrassed. I don't remember their names, of the actual classes, but just very motivational.

Nick Day:

Excellent. Any particular takeaways? Anything that you're going to implement when you get back to your payroll office?

Allison Strong:

I think my favorite one is when they're speaking about remote versus back in the office. And I'm currently completely 100% remote. I work in Colorado, my company's out in California.

Nick Day:

Nice.

Allison Strong:

So I will be remote. But the thing that I really took away was culture doesn't happen in the office. Culture happens with the people. And I thought that was so powerful. Especially when so many companies are saying everyone has to come back to the office. And we all got used to this. Right? Working from home and being really productive with our time, you can still have a culture and have people work remote.

Nick Day:

Absolutely right. And you know what, the payroll industry has proven that we can work from home very successfully. It's a great example of the future of payroll now, because you're working remotely. This is a new thing in the world of payroll. So tell me, what are you excited about in terms of the future? We're sat here surrounded by global payroll providers. We spoke slightly before we started recording today about the fact that you've dipped in a little bit with global. What are your views on the future of global payroll?

Allison Strong:

I think it is just up and coming. I think what companies have realized is, hey, we can't have employees remote. You know what? We can have them anywhere. We had one employee that was living in California and wanted to move overseas and we let them. We had to do some setup. But it was something that is great for companies because it just widens the talent pool that much more.

Nick Day:

Couldn't agree more. Do you think that's something that payroll professionals now really need to start considering the idea that if they're just domestic at the moment, they could find themselves 12 months, 24 months from now actually with many more employees on a global basis?

Allison Strong:

Yes, 100%. You really have to just kind of, I would say dip your feet in. There's free classes on global payroll. Just listen and start to understand some of the pieces of what that means and what that can mean for your career.

Nick Day:

Absolutely. Fantastic. And last but not least, what are you most excited about coming up? We've been to some seminars one day, two. What other thing you've got on your list you're most looking forward to?

Allison Strong:

Oh my God, it's still always the people. I love connecting with people here because when you're in payroll, there's a certain type of pain you have to go through. And when I'm here, I realize everybody understands that pain because we want to get people paid right and on time and it's challenging.

Nick Day:

It is. Absolutely. Well Allison, it's been a pleasure. Thank you for being my first guest for the day. You bring great energy. It's been pleasure having a chat with you.

Allison Strong:

Thank you so much.

Nick Day:

My pleasure. Thank you.

So I'm now joined by Laurel Serra, who is director of payroll training at PayrollOrg. Now, I had to invite Laurel over to a chat with me on the podcast because last night at the Workday party we got into a pretty passionate conversation about the future of payroll. So I'm going to let you take the floor, tell our listeners what we need to do to help raise the profile of payroll. I appreciate it's a big question. Where do we start?

Laurel Serra:

The fun thing is that we have to really take a look at, like you were saying last night, the perspective that payroll professionals have right now. You had made that comment about how we often say that we fell into payroll. And right now in business as a whole, you see everybody retraining their brain and the perspective they have and how you should be working in the workforce, how we should be treated as employees and what we should really value.

And we need to take that a step further and really do that with the payroll professional as well. And stop saying, we fell into payroll and saying, "I love the profession I know. This is why I chose it. I get to help problem solve and I get to help take it further." So now taking that part, retraining your brain and really saying, "Okay, how do we get this conversation started? Do we talk to people in the C-suite who have no idea about payroll, who maybe don't have a strong value of payroll and ask them their opinions and their thoughts so that we can try to educate them and get them on our side so that they really understand that there is truly value here?" And then how do we take it forward from there?

Nick Day:

Love that. So we need to be talking to C-suite, right? And I love the idea of owning the choice. We only say we fell into payroll if there's a little bit of, I don't know, shame or embarrassment. But payroll is one of the best professions, well, we're here, right? We're celebrating the profession. I love that. What about the future of payroll in relation to a global context? Lots of people here commonly processing domestic payrolls suddenly find themselves now in a borderless world as everyone's working remote,

overnight, having a global payroll also to be handling. So how can we help the profession prepare for what's coming next?

Laurel Serra:

Well, I think first and foremost, being here at a conference like this and educating yourself on all of the new technologies, the new thoughts that are coming down the pipeline, the new ways we need to be thinking. Getting yourself ahead of the curve and being kind of like the champion of the change and accepting of the change, you're going to be 10 steps ahead of everybody. So if you take a look, a lot of times maybe you're doing an implementation and someone's going, "Oh my gosh, we have to do this." You've got to be the one who says, "This is going to be good." Stop being afraid of the change because when you start resisting things, it's a thing that you're resisting that's usually going to help you the most.

So as we take a look at global payroll, the first thing that I tell anyone who's coming from a US based payroll is that US based payroll is global. Because if you're in the UK and you're expanding to have somebody work in the United States, that's global for you, but it isn't for me. So we have to stop thinking that we're the center of it all. And it's hard at times, but we are part of that global community. We need to start talking and understanding. And as an American based or US based payroll person, we have to start educating ourselves on the world abroad because we're not going to stop people from moving. We're not going to stop them from getting in their vans and traveling across the coast to see and work remotely. We have to really start embracing this. There's a certain point where you have to accept defeat, so to speak and say, "Okay, this is where we're going. We are here and now we just need to embrace it and figure out how we make it work."

They were talking about in the general session how we have to look for that unique idea, the yellow dot, and we need to start asking different questions. And I think when we start asking those different questions, even as it comes to our professions, we can really have these growth brainstorming conversations with the C-suite about how we can become an employer of choice. And that can start by having a great cohesive relationship with your payroll department, your HR department, to say these are what people are looking for. So how do we adapt to what we're doing in payroll to accommodate our organization so that they can just keep expanding and growing because it's going to be better for everyone as employee.

Nick Day:

Absolutely. Love that. We were talking about this in some detail last night as well. Having that growth mindset, which I think is really important. I work in global payroll recruitment. The other thing about global payroll is it tends to pay better as well. So for those in payroll, maybe not quite sure where to take their career or where they can grow their career, actually moving into global can be a really good and quite lucrative opportunity as well, which is great. Because the profile of payroll now is increasing.

One thing I wanted to mention as well, because we talked about this a little bit last night in the party, which was how we look at payroll from a perception piece. We often think that payroll's very expensive. We know it is. Often, the wage cost is the most expensive part of any business. But actually, if we change our mindset, use that growth mindset you just mentioned and think about payroll in terms of how we can save costs and actually add to the profits of a business, talking to our stakeholders in HR, in finance, and IT saying, "Look, how can I help you? Because together we can save you money." And actually, every penny you save is profit added to the bottom line. Tell me a little bit more about thinking about payroll as a profit making center rather than potentially a cost exercise, as other people perceive it.

Laurel Serra:

Well, the great thing about it is that I think we often hear the words data analytics all the time now. And if you haven't dipped your toe into that pond so to speak, that term can be very overwhelming and you may try to shy away from it. But data analytics can start with something as simple as comparing one payroll register to the previous payroll register. So when we start evaluating the data that we're getting from payroll and reviewing things like time usage, time off usage, how much time we abandoned for paid time off for our employees or how much are they not taking? Are they burning themselves out and now using a tremendous amount of sick pay and now we have this higher cost from our benefit usage? It kind of just snowballs out of control.

So if we start to look at these little numbers and these little trends that we can kind of pick up on them, we can start working with the company. What can we offer as a better EAP program? How can we encourage our staff to start utilizing time off so they don't get burned out? Or let's evaluate our unemployment costs. Can we perhaps make a voluntary contribution to help reduce our rate, maybe? Can we look at the deposits for taxes? What is it that we can do to kind of save money?

Now, also you can look at anywhere where your company may have already been dinged for compliance issues. How can we improve those processes so that we're not having those hits? That's a cost savings and technically, an earning at a certain point because some companies automatically establish a budget, "This is how much we're going to have in losses, this is how much we're going to have in fees." And they go, "Ah, you know what? The cost of that penalty, we'll take it. It's fine." But when you start adding those things up over time, when you start addressing those issues, not only are we going to save the money of the cost of the fee or the penalty or less benefit usage, when you have your burned out staff, you're going to find a team who's starting to work leaner, working with the data and having it really work for the company. And it can really help bring that bottom line up and saving money for the company and understanding it.

We mentioned last night that sometimes the C-suite doesn't understand the financial impact that we have.

Nick Day:

The value. For sure.

Laurel Serra:

We are usually the largest financial expenditure in an organization. We touch every single worker in the world, period. No other job can say that. Even HR, they onboard them and walk away.

Nick Day:

And the most data as well, right?

Laurel Serra:

Correct. So we have this data at our fingertips that often is not even being tapped into. We don't tap into it until our entire team's working 20 hours of overtime every week and we're like, "We got to get another person." But do we need another person? Can we look at other things here to see maybe there's something we're doing wrong in our process or something we can do better where we can save time for us internally? Maybe we can automate some responses, some workflow, some time sheet reminders to staff instead of hunting people down. When you really start to dig into these little nuances of what we do, they start to add up. They say the little nickel you find on the ground, pick it up.

Nick Day:

It's the theory of marginal gains, right? But actually a small saving, if you've only got one employee, okay, it can be forgotten. If you've got a workforce with 10,000 employees, those savings are significant. Suddenly now, payroll's having a massive impact on the bottom line of the performance of an organization. Laurel, your passion's amazing. And for those, we can't see it on video, you're animated, really glad you came to talk to me today. Last question. What are you taking so far from the confidence and what are you most looking forward to?

Laurel Serra:

The thing I look forward to the most, having a position here at PayrollOrg where I get to teach everyone and I get to help share our profession. When I have anyone who has gone through my class and they come in and they say, "You helped me understand this. You helped me improve this process at my company. You helped me get my CBB or FCC certification, you encouraged me to go global it," I've got goosebumps.

Nick Day:

I can see them. She's holding her arms with goosebumps. Well look, hopefully people listening to this will be equally as inspired. So thanks for joining me on today's little short interview, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference.

Laurel Serra:

Yes. You as well. Thank you so much.

Nick Day:

Okay, so I am super excited because Mary Holland, someone who I love in the world of payroll, global payroll, Mary made me feel very, very welcome. And we went to Long Island for the Congress couple of years ago and she joins me again today to talk about global payroll. Mary Holland, how are you feeling? How are enjoying the conference?

Mary Holland:

I'm having a great time and I'm so glad that you're able to be here Nick, with us again, because in 2019 right before COVID you came and it was wonderful having you here, especially coming from the UK and bringing the global experience and meeting all of the people here. So it's wonderful to be here. It's wonderful to see the international and all the energy that's around the PayrollOrg, having a name change between APA and GPMI. So a lot of energy rebranding. We're seeing the world kind of change and I think it's very exciting.

Nick Day:

We are. And I'm actually doing this interview sat on the PayrollOrg sofa where as you said the rebrand has happened. And it's a really good awakening for people that want to understand more about the world of payroll and that's what this congress is all about. There's a question that a lot of people are asking and I've been networking in the different congress sessions and seminars. And that question is, if I work in domestic US payroll in particular, how do I make that transition from domestic into global when I don't have any global experience? What advice would you give?

Mary Holland:

The first advice I would give is look at the webinars that the PayrollOrg offerer. They offer a lot of webinars for free. And if you are certified in US payroll as a CPP, you'll get re-certification credits. So look at that particular item that's out there. The other thing I always encourage people to look out on Twitter and LinkedIn because there's a lot of great global articles and start to explore what's actually out there. I would also look at where have you been in your existence, in your travel footprint and what interests you? Is it the culture piece? Is it the payroll piece? Is it the HR piece? What experience do you have yourself and where do you want to go to the next step?

And of course, there are courses through the PayrollOrg to take on global certification and to move forward. And then I would look for a mentor, or somebody that would mentor you and you can talk to them so that no question is a dumb question. But find somebody that you really connect with and talk about it. And I think that's a great way to get your first start on that.

Nick Day:

That's fantastic advice. And also of course, I'm joined by yourself who is a bit of a trendsetter, a bit of a game changer in the world of payroll. You're someone who hasn't been afraid to take a risky step to make change. You're right at the beginning of the GPML journey, I remember having that conversation. For those that really want to have an impact in the world of global payroll, how can they start? What advice would you give to those people that have got that itch inside them, but just don't know what to do to take that next step.

Mary Holland:

So one of the things I'd look in your organization, what's actually going in the organization that you're working for? Are you global and what areas can you support? Is it something in HR, is it something in payroll? Maybe it's global mobility. And share that information with who you report to and other stakeholders so that you can actually make a difference.

So actually, I'll share with you Nick, when I actually started out, I was working for a company and I was responsible for US and Canada payroll and expats. And that was the area of responsibility I had. And so a VP that was in our organization recognized that I really love payroll and the pieces on that. And so he decided that he needed to make trips international to find out exactly what was happening in locations. And on one afternoon on a Thursday he said to me, "Would you like to go on these two trips I have? I have one to Taiwan and India and then the second we're going to go into China, Hong Kong and then go to Russia."

And so he goes, "Do you want to go?" And then I wasn't half sure if it was really true because of the fly by Thursday afternoon high meeting. And when I went home that evening I told my husband and he says, "That's a great opportunity for you." So the next day I actually ran into him again and he goes, "I'm sending you the itinerary and all these pieces." And I said, "Well I guess I should tell you the only places I've been outside the US is Canada and Mexico." He looked at me and he goes, "Do you have passport?" And I said, "I do have a passport." And so he is thinking... And then did all the pieces, went to the clinic to get all the shots again because I was going into some countries that were kind of from the US perspective, you needed to make sure you were safe.

And so when we went there, I think he thought it was going to be like the anchor that he was pulling forward and changed my life. He said to me, "This is going to change your life." And I said, "Nothing's going to change my life." But a week and a half trip to India and Taiwan did change my life. And that manager said at one point said, "I made a person that really... I changed her life and she became a global

person that wants to take advantage." And I look at it as any place you go global, you have to be a warrior out there and go and visit something because that helps you understand the culture, the people's experience. So just think about that if that's where you're going to go out is where have you been and what do you like to do? And the area's vast. Because you can work for service provider, you can work at a company, but don't be afraid. Because I think that we all don't know everything but you have to learn to take those first steps.

Nick Day:

Don't be afraid. Fantastic advice. Let's be honest, you're a bit of a pioneer in world of global payroll. I know that also, part of your travels has taken you to the UK. I know you love the royal family. I saw your nails yesterday with the Union Jack on there, which was wonderful and you were there for the coronation. But also, you're here now as part of the expo as well, as part of Payslip. Tell us a little bit about what Payslip do when you and your role at Payslip now.

Mary Holland:

Okay, so today in Payslip, I'm the global payroll evangelist. Three and a half years ago I was the chief client officer and I had that role, working on implementations in the client journey. And now I'm working kind of across the organizations in sales, product, the clients, and then being able to help marketing using my global skills across the organization gives me some more time to meet with people and have webinars through that piece and share my knowledge.

So Payslip is a global payroll technology platform. They're actually headquartered in Westport, Ireland. And the unique thing is the CEO was in one of my classes in 2017 to learn about global payroll. She started her company, was planning to start up her company, she knew what she wanted. But she decided before she launched her company, she wanted to talk to global professionals. So she flew into San Francisco and took the three-day class and that's where I met her and then kind of stayed in touch and I was on the board. And then eventually, when I left GPMI ended up being with her almost four years now.

So the piece I love about it is, first of all you're working with people from other countries, it's global and you have global clients. The other thing is you can add value by helping people from either sales or product or things like what's happening and why is it important to people in the organization. Because each country has different nuances and it's hard if you're not in the weeds to kind of know what it's like. Why would one country do it this way versus something else, and why do you have 10 social taxes or no tax in some countries? And so that's the piece that I really like about Payslip.

And then the area is just exciting. I always wanted to work outside the US so it's an opportunity. You learn a lot because you learn outside the US. We, in US, do certain things, other ways they do things. But it's kind of the blending and kind of the culture piece of putting that together. And also makes you kind of global and the world's global. It's all about, it's a connection thing.

Nick Day:

I went to a fantastic seminar yesterday called, All About Cross-Cultural Differences deliver by Kira Rubiano, which is exactly that. We do things differently in the UK to how you do things in the US, you do differently to Brazil or Germany. It's a complex but exciting world out there. I think the one thing that's really exciting for anyone listening to this right now, perhaps they're at the congress and they are in domestic payroll or global payroll and sometimes we feel like there's a ceiling, a glass ceiling, we can't break. We think the end of the payroll road is head of global payroll.

But actually, I'm sat here with Mary Holland who's now chief payroll evangelist. Now this is a title that many people would never even knew existed. You were chief client officer before that. And also chief, that's an important word. It shows that payroll people can get to the top of the C-suite, can have a really central role in really exciting, fast growing businesses, in tech, whatever it might be. So for those that maybe feel like they're being a little bit restricted by their profession, maybe they feel like they don't know where they can take their next step, I think you're a walking example of someone that's broken through that glass ceiling with some force. What advice would you give them?

Mary Holland:

Well, I mentioned the mentor, I would also take the risk and volunteer to present a webinar, write an article, do some research as you mentioned on that culture map, the book, The Culture Map by Erin Meyer is with the session that was yesterday that Kira Rubiano presented. I actually had that as a book club for my team and they read the book and then we had discussions about international and talking about that. So even if it's a book club with different people in your organization.

But I would say don't be afraid because everybody takes that first step and you have to take that first step. And there's a lot of people in PayrollOrg or anywhere you are in the world that really likes payroll. We have a lot of great associations around the world. It's not just PayrollOrg. You have a great one in the UK and there's one in Ireland and there there's one over in Australia. So look at those pieces and look at the articles that are out there. Be inquisitive. Even if it's just setting aside an hour a week to look at what that is and then where do you really want to go, thinking about what you like to do and then mapping that out and put your goals for the year. And maybe it's just small, you have to take those first steps. But look at that and make sure that you achieve those goals.

Nick Day:

Fantastic advice. Actually, I was very lucky because we recently co-authored an article, on global payroll, which you can find out if you go to the PayrollOrg site and sort of navigate through to global payroll, your fine my article which I wrote with Mary.

Last question then. For people that listen to this show, and actually I think this is going out live on both the Payroll Podcast and the PayTalk podcast. Not everyone is going to be in attendance today, but they working in global payroll or they're working in payroll, and then perhaps they're thinking about coming here in the future. How would you sell it to them? How would you say what, next year, wherever it's going to be held, what can they get from coming to a congress like this?

Mary Holland:

Okay, so first of all, plan for next year. Start today. It's in Nashville next year. And then I would start building or talking to your upper management to make sure that you have funding in the budget first of all. And then make sure as soon as you go out in really actually next week the PayrollOrg will start having information about that. Take a look at what was offered this year, look at what would be valuable in the courses for your organization and show them to your management. Make sure you have buy-in. And put that as a task or it's something that you really want to do. And once again, that does take courage because there's not always a lot of money sometimes in payroll. So you have to sell the product to them. And don't be afraid, just because they're at a senior level, don't be afraid not to ask. And if you don't ask, you never know. And you need to build the case.

There is education grants that are available through PayrollOrg. So take advantage of those and then reach out to your local chapters and other fellow people. How do they position it in their organization to

ask to be able to come to a conference for the very first time. The very first conference that I got to go to and it was amazing because I was in finance and decided to get certified and I think my organization, because I had payroll reporting to me. I think the CFO and the VP I was working for, thought I was half crazy. Got the certification when I was doing many hours of work, and I said, "Can I go to this local conference for California?" And they said, "Really? You want to go?" And I said, "Sure." And they said, "You may as well go."

And that's when I first met Dan Maddox and the organization. And that also changed our life. So really coming to the organization, meeting payroll professionals and people with the energy, it energizes you. And everybody needs that energizing and feeling of a group. And so that might definitely would encourage people to do it. Start today.

Nick Day:

It's great advice. There's a lot of burnout in the payroll industry, but actually the energy of this congress is phenomenal. Lot of people coming together, those we call them congress virgins, lots of them here at the moment. Really connecting, really enjoying themselves. So if you haven't come before, Nashville, what a great location. I'll be there. So Mary, it's always a pleasure chatting to you. I can chat to you all day. You've got such great energy, passion for the industry. Thank you for joining me today for a short chat.

Mary Holland:

Thanks, Nick.

Nina Talley:

Whether you attended payroll congress in person a few weeks ago or registered exclusively for PayrollOrg's 2023 virtual Congress and Expo. On June 21st and 22nd, you'll get another two days of premier professional development and networking. Virtual Congress and Expo is an online experience that comes complete with educational workshops, a full service expo, and plenty of engaging virtual interaction with industry expert service providers. This year's event includes 12 educational workshops offered live and on demand. The opportunity to earn up to 14 recertification credit hours. An expo to visit with exclusive payroll vendors and learn about the latest products and service solutions available. A resource center to gather important event materials and news and much, much more. This is an online experience you don't want to miss. But act today because this additional educational event is only available through September 20th. Bolster your career with this industry conference by going to payroll.org, choosing the conferences tab along the navigation bar and then clicking on virtual congress to register. Continue your payroll education today.

Nick Day:

So now I'm joined by Michael Francis from SBA and I met Michael yesterday at the Congress. We had a brief chat about global payroll. But before we get into that, tell me a little bit about your experience with the Congress so far.

Michael Francis:

The Congress has been great so far. I think the change that the APA and GPMI have put in place, changing their name to PayrollOrg is appropriate. And they're doing a wonderful job of driving that

brand. And so I am all for it. I am a payroll professional through and through. It's not what I do, it's what I live and I breathe. And so it's been great.

Nick Day:

Fantastic. One thing that came through yesterday was your passion for payroll.

Michael Francis:

Yes sir.

Nick Day:

We talked a little bit about the fact that you used to be domestic, you kind of got a little bit of a global presence coming in. Tell us a little bit about the future of payroll and do you think going global is something a lot of people are going to have to start adjusting to?

Michael Francis:

Well, as companies grow, they can only grow so much domestically. And so they have to start looking for different markets. So I think globalization is going to be the path for the future. My concern, however, with the payroll population is that we're an aging population. I am proud to be 59 on my next birthday. I don't intend to be in payroll for more than another five, 10 years. So I'm very concerned about what the payroll's going to look like in the future if we don't start attracting younger people. But from a global payroll perspective, I think this opens up other opportunities to start attracting a younger audience to this career, and this profession.

Nick Day:

Absolutely agree. I think it opens up more opportunities for growth, progression. We talked as well, you've been involved in not just payroll processing, you're involved in implementation and project. Tell us a little bit about the varied role an experienced payroll professional like yourself can be exposed to. Perhaps the youngsters that aren't quite sure what payroll is and whether they should get involved. Sell it to us.

Michael Francis:

So I started out as a payroll processor, pretty much just processing payroll, data entry. I moved on to start doing payroll accounting. I dabbled in payroll management. And one of the highlights of my career was working at Johnson & Johnson where I learned so much about payroll tax and payroll compliance. It's the backbone of what makes payroll work. Yes, it's very important to pay people, but it's also moving that money that you take from people's paychecks to the different agencies and also to the vendors. If you don't do that then you open up your company to interests and penalties and so on. So there's a huge compliance risk if you do not make those payments.

But after Johnson & Johnson, I thought I knew everything about payroll and then I moved into the consulting world. I worked for EY for three years. And what EY did for me, it took me all over the country where I got to work with different companies to help them with their payroll issues. So this is something that's available to a youngster that comes in and learns all of the ins and outs of payroll that you'll have companies that will actually pay to come tell them how to do their payroll. So there's a vast majority of things that's going to happen.

Where I am going to focus my energies over the next five years is really starting to try to attract younger people to this payroll profession. And I do know one of the things, two things that the younger generation looks for is a sense of belonging and also a sense of purpose. And I can't tell you that payroll is a purpose driven career. If you're not paying people, then the economy doesn't work. And so there is purpose behind payroll. And so how we package that and start appealing to younger people, because I tell you, I say all the time that it's difficult managing millennials. But I admire the hell out of them because they will not stay somewhere where they don't feel as if they belong.

Nick Day:

Couldn't agree more. And actually, the one thing that you really get a feel for when you're at the Congress here is it's a really supportive industry.

Michael Francis:

Yes it is.

Nick Day:

Full of people who give up their own time to mentor, to train, to support, to develop people like yourself. Really keen to get new people into the industry. And actually, when you're here, it's like a family feel. I know there's 2,000 people here, but actually people are really supportive and everyone's networking, everyone's connecting. You kind of have to be here to believe it. But you're talking about attracting new people in. I think one thing you get from this conference as well is you get exposed to not just compliance, not just power, but you get exposed to tech, exposed implementation, exposed to sales. So there's a lot to offer someone coming into the world of payroll. From your perspective at this congress, what have been the talks that have most inspired you or what have been the learnings you've taken away so far?

Michael Francis:

Wow, I just actually did a class. It's managing up, down, and across. And you'd say, well that's not a payroll class. But if you are in the payroll industry and you're not at the management level yet, this is a class that can help to open up your mindset, help drive you to that higher place that you may want to get to. So that was a great class. I think the keynote last night by Bill Stallion was excellent in terms of giving you perspectives on having conversations, not being afraid. I'm an introvert at heart. I can walk into a room, stay in a corner and just watch people. But then I miss out on opportunities to make connections. And actually, as he said, he has us walking around with this yellow dot. So I'm about to put it on because I think somebody has given me an inspiration to do something.

And then keynote this morning around the future of work was actually very good. The technical classes that you come to will give you knowledge on how to block and tackle in the payroll industry. But the keynote and these other breakout sessions give you opportunities to grow yourselves in a very holistic way. So that way if payroll is your passion and you do it for a while and you want to move on to something else, you have these tools. So this conference, as you said, it's not only about payroll, it's not only about gross to net and compliance, it's really about growing you as a holistic person in your career.

Nick Day:

I couldn't agree more. It's about that growth mindset, learning about the concepts of leadership, concepts of coaching, concepts of just being an all around good individual and whatever it is you want to

do in whatever career journey you want to take, which is fantastic. So we've got a couple of days left for the Congress. What are you most looking forward to before we finish?

Michael Francis:

Well, I'm a party guy. I'm originally from Jamaica, so I'm looking forward to, and I know it's a pet peeve for me. They have been pronouncing the party fete. Now, if you were from Jamaica, from Trinidad, it's a fete. So I'm looking forward to a fete tonight. So I'm looking forward to that. And then I have some other classes around global payroll that I'm also looking forward to as well.

Nick Day:

Fantastic. He said he's an introvert. I'm not so convinced. I'm not so convinced. Well listen, I hope you have a great time at the fete. I hope I said it correctly. Michael, it's been a pleasure meeting you yesterday. Pleasure having you on a short chat today and enjoy the rest of the show.

Michael Francis:

Yeah, thank you, thank you so much for this opportunity. It's one of the things that I'm passionate about, so that's why the inner introvert in me can come out because this is a passion of mine. If I have a passion or if I trust an individual, this side of me comes out. So thank you for trusting me to be on your program and give me an opportunity to have this chat.

Nick Day:

It's my pleasure. But you know what? We only have passion for someone if we love it. So you want to get the youngsters into this profession, listening to people passionate about what they do is probably the best way to entice new people to come in. You love it, everyone here seems to love it. It's given so much to so many. Continue to raise the profile, Michael. It's great to have someone like you standing up and helping those and encouraging others to come and see this industry. Thanks for joining me.

Michael Francis:

All right, thank you. Take care.

Nick Day:

Okay, so now I'm joined by Congress virgin, I have to say because I can see the red dot on your badge.

Emily Castles:

New member flag.

Nick Day:

New member flag. Emily Castles is from Boundless Technologies. Emily, what brings you to the payroll Congress?

Emily Castles:

So at Boundless, we're a global employment platform. So we're employing people globally apart on behalf of our customers. So we have employees in 25 different countries. And by virtue of doing that, we obviously have to run payroll globally as well. So for me, being at this event, it means that I'm

completely immersed in the payroll world. I get to see what the cutting edge things are, what people talking about that's upcoming and new, what the expectations are for employees, et cetera. Because we want to keep up essentially. So it's really important for me to be here.

Nick Day:

Super. So what are the seminars you've been to so far? What have you taken away so far, halfway through day two.

Emily Castles:

Halfway through day two. So yesterday I went to a really interesting one on earned wage access, which is something that I've kind of been looking at a little bit in the last while. Really eye-opening. Kind of challenged my thinking around it actually a little bit. I think I went in with the preconceptions about who it's for and what it means, et cetera. And yeah, it's really good. It was by Rapid and FlexWage, those guys.

Yeah, that was really eye-opening and learned a lot about how we might be able to roll that out. Regulations are obviously really tricky with that one on a global scale. And then today I'm looking forward to our RPA one, robotic process automation one later. So I'm a tech person, I'm building software around all of this area. So yeah, looking forward to that, that's in an hour, just to see how that can help us with operational excellence, making sure that we're accurate and that we're doing everything the way that it should be in order to pay people on time. And then there's one later on global mobility. So obviously, that's my kind of subject. We're all about remote working. I'm a person who's working for a company that's based in a different country. It's something that I feel really passionate about. So PACE are doing a talk on that later. So I'm looking forward to that.

Nick Day:

Super. Because we met yesterday at the party, right?

Emily Castles:

Yes.

Nick Day:

So you live in France, in Chamonix, but your business is based in Ireland. You're here for global payroll. One thing we know that rebrand of PayrollOrg is really about pushing how the industry is moving towards more of a global footprint when it comes to payroll, processing, compliance and so on. And you've obviously spot a bit of a niche in this industry as well with the work that you're doing. So tell us about how you're seeing the future of the industry and why there's really the need for what you do now, why that need is growing.

Emily Castles:

So when we founded Boundless four years ago, we were sitting there convincing people that remote working was a trend, global remote working was a trend and really telling people that within the next 10 years, really high percentage of people are going to be working from home, working from other countries, et cetera. And then obviously, pandemic just accelerated that overnight. We don't need to convince people of that anymore. It's here now, it's here to stay. I don't believe we're going back to anywhere near what we were like four years ago.

And I think that if you want to retain talent, attract talent, if you want access to the best talent, the way forward is employing remotely and employing internationally. And we found that ourselves for our own company. We're founded in Ireland and we have people in eight different countries, and there's no way we would have the quality of people if we were looking at the smaller pool. If you're just looking in your local area, we have these excellent world-class people working in our company. And because we can employ them in where they are, it means that we get to access those people. So I just don't see any going back.

Nick Day:

Just making this clear for those listening, maybe you're processing a domestic US payroll at the minute and you've got your first global potential employee. This is where you guys can come in, you can help set those people up and then take away some of the strain or pressures. Tell us a little bit about what you guys do.

Emily Castles:

So it's a real pain point. You're looking at a new country. So say you've found somebody in another country that you really want to employ or somebody wants to move back to their own country, something like that. And you look, say, "Okay, we want to facilitate this, we want to employ them there." It's just a real nightmare trying to navigate how to do that.

So first of all, you have to open up a new entity. In some countries, that can take up to 18 months to do. And then just really complying with local laws and knowing how to employ in that country is really, really complex. And it's just not poor business for people. It's not where people should be focusing. So we can come in, we do all of the employment contracts. I personally sign the employment agreements for everybody. We make sure, we hold your hand through it. We make sure that you're compliant in that new country, that you know what are the holiday allowances there versus where you're from, knowing the differences there. And we really hold your hand and make sure that you're doing everything for that employee in their home country. And then obviously, we're paying them, we're paying the local taxes, we're doing all of the social charges, et cetera, everything like that. It's all taken care of so that you don't have to worry about it. So yeah, we can really take away that pain point for people.

Nick Day:

Fantastic. For those interested, that's Boundless Technologies Emily is coming from. Now for those that are listening to this that maybe haven't made it to the Congress this year, maybe they've wanted to go but didn't want to go on their own. You've come out by yourself. I can see the red sticker. So how's that been? Tell us about how welcoming it's been for you and how have you found coming out on your own and how have you navigated it. How would you sell it to someone else, perhaps is listening to this and thinks maybe I'll go to Nashville next year?

Emily Castles:

Yeah. I don't know. I've been to many conferences I guess over the years. And I have to say this is one of the most welcoming places, welcoming groups of people that I've ever stepped into. I think everybody just wants you to succeed. The whole theme of the first day just felt like helping people to come out of their comfort zone, to really speak to the person beside them, find out about the strangers that you've never met before, and really just encouraging people to kind of get to know new people that they haven't met before. And I loved that. I think that it's very egoless room. I think people just really are

interested in what they do and they want to share what they do and they want to find out if there's anything that you have interesting to share as well.

So coming on my own, not a problem at all. You sit down, you just talk to the person next to you every time. There's no fear there whatsoever. So from that perspective, that's amazing. And then you're among all of the top players in this space. So it's just super educational. And for me, trying to unpick all of those players and where they cross over and where they don't cross over, et cetera, that's really, really useful for me to find out that information.

Nick Day:

Fantastic. And there's a lot of parties here as well, so that always helps. Emily, it's been great. Thanks for stopping by having a quick chat with me today and hope you enjoy the rest of the Congress.

Emily Castles:

Yeah, thanks Rick. Thanks very much.

Nina Talley:

Wow. Thank you so much to Nick Day for sharing. Just a slice of what makes PayrollOrg Congress so amazing. Conversations with payrollers just like you. Make sure you register for PayrollOrgs virtual congress and expo to immerse yourself in even more powerful workshops and conversations. Thank you again to Nick Day of the Payroll Podcast and to all of our amazing listeners. Want to support PayTalk? Make sure you rate, review and subscribe to PayTalk on your preferred podcast streaming service. That is the best way to support this podcast and make sure we can continue to bring you the stories that make payroll so personal. Until next time, folks, this has been Nina Talley, with PayTalk.

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