The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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Jacob:	Hello everyone, welcome to the Future of Work Podcast. My guest today is Charles Phillips, the CEO of Infor. Charles, thanks for joining me.
Charles:	Hi, Jacob. Glad to be here.
Jacob:	We're gonna talk a lot about the workforce of the future, [00:01:00] and I thought it would probably make sense to start off with a bit of information about the company as a whole. I think last I heard you had 16,000 employees. Now you're over 18,000 employees. So for the few people that are not familiar with the company, what do you guys do?
Charles:	We're a business applications company, a software company, and we automate other companies. Select industries, for instance. So with your hospital, we handle your clinical operations, your financials, [00:01:30] your HR systems, your payroll, and we do that for select industries. We're one of the few companies, there's only a handful that automate most other companies. 90,000 customers. We're now in about 180 countries and growing, so over $3 billion in revenue. It's called ERP sometimes, but it's far beyond that now, because we do a lot of other things. We're a vertically focused company by certain industries and manufacturing, fashion, retail, healthcare, public sector are the main industries we automate.
Jacob:	[00:02:00] What does a typical day look like for the life of Charles Phillips?
Charles:	Well, I think in eight years here, no two days have been the same. It usually revolves around products and customers, either doing product reviews or engaging with customers and resolve any issues. Each conversation and review spawns five other work streams. It's hard to describe a single workday, but I care about products and customers and employees. Usually it's one of [00:02:30] those things, but no two days are the same, as I said.
Jacob:	What do you think the role of a CEO is now? Because I think when a lot of people think of kind of the stereotypical manager, the stereotypical CEO or leader, it's always been so much about command and control and delegating and telling other people what to do. Now there's so much conversation around mentorship and coaching and really just changing the language around how we think of managers and CEOs. As the CEO of a company that has 18,000 people, [00:03:00] what do you view your role as being?

Charles: I think what my employees like the most is when we do kind of an all-hands webcast to talk about the vision of where we're going, why we're doing this, what's important about it. I think people want to be inspired to have a destination of where they're going that they feel is important and means something. Setting that tone and direction is kind of probably job one. Then as Napoleon used to say, the [00:03:30] job of a leader is to inspire people, but also define reality. Also, here are our goals. Here are our new term hurdles. Here's what we have to correct and keep everybody moving forward and to getting the trainings done on time. Outside of that, people surprise you with their ingenuity and innovation. I don't micro manage. I certainly set direction, check, and review, and then give people room to operate and to show me what they can do.

Jacob: [00:04:00] I heard that you made actually quite a few changes when you joined Infor, just the corporate culture, office, relocating the headquarters. I think it was in Atlanta to New York. Maybe you can talk a little bit about what was Infor like before you joined, and then what is it like now?

Charles: Yeah. The company's gone through phases. I'd say it'd gone through a phase of aggregating a lot of IP and making a lot of acquisitions. Then we came in [00:04:30] and decided that it's not just about buying companies, but you have to innovate and become a product centric company and invest. We spent about $4 billion renovating their products and building new products and just delivering on a ton of innovation. That means you have to go a lot faster. It means you have to learn new products, have to learn some of the [inaudible 00:04:50] products. A lot of different things. More product centric as apposed to M&A centric was one of the main changes.

             The company was kind of [00:05:00] headquartered in a lot of different places, because it was so distributed. The CEO was in Atlanta, but the entire board was in San Francisco and with a number of other offices. I decided to consolidate that in one place. I chose New York. I thought all the customers come to New York, because we sell to other businesses, and they all come here for some reason. Secondly, the design talent here, one of the differentiators we have is we have an internal agency we created of all the design talent in New York you can get from fashion and architectural schools that all have tech tracks now. We [00:05:30] created an agency. That's another reason to come here.

             The third is I can hire people a little more easily here, because you're not competing in the Valley with Google and Facebook. There weren't a lot of large technology companies here. We could work with all the local universities and train people. I can hire people from Europe and Israel. They'll move here. For us, given what we were facing that we had to recreate kind of the talent pool, because we're now building new products, we needed new people. I needed a place I can get them fast at scale. That's worked [00:06:00] for us in New York.

Jacob: It's interesting that you mentioned Silicon Valley, because a couple executives that I've had on the podcast, Silicon Valley always comes up as a topic of conversation. People have different thoughts and perceptions on what it's like to work in Silicon Valley. Some people think it's cool and lots of innovation here. Other people think that it's becoming a little bit like Pinocchio's Island, and it's just becoming a little bit too crazy, as far as the

perks and the benefits and all the madness that's [00:06:30] happening here. When you think of Silicon Valley, what's your general perception? Do you think that over here in the Bay Area, we've lost our marbles a little bit?

Charles: Well, as president of Oracle for eight years, I lived out there for a long time. I value it. I think it's still a cradle of innovation. It's always been a little crazy, but that's part of the magic of it. All that doesn't bother me. I do think now though you're having a lot of innovation pods in many other cities. What's happening in Austin and in [00:07:00] Chicago and Atlanta, there's a lot of other areas of innovation. I think it's spread to many locations that we can take advantage of. Some of them have unique advantages. They're close to certain industries. It's lower cost. It's spreading beyond that now, especially for enterprise technologies.

Jacob: Yeah. Even where you are in New York, that's been a huge hotbed of innovation and startups and all sorts of fun stuff is happening there.

Charles: Oh yeah. The Enterprise Meetup here has something like 40,000 members for Enterprise Tech.

Jacob: [00:07:30] Oh wow. That's massive. That's crazy. Well, we're talking a lot about how to create the workforce of the future. Maybe we can start off with the workforce of today. When you think of the workforce of today, it seems like we're going through a lot of changes. There are a lot of trends that organizations are paying attention to. What are some of the big trends that you are focusing on, as far as how they're going to impact the workforce of the future?

Charles: Well, there are a lot, and everybody always starts with AI. That's for sure that will [00:08:00] impact in some way. We can debate which way. Some of it I think going to be positive and create jobs, but also I think we can extend technology and work to workers who do not participate today using technology. I can talk about that in just a second.

             With the rest beyond AI though, I do think people want a different relationship with their employer. The thesis five years ago was everybody's going to have a job three years and move on. [00:08:30] They're just going to be very transient. I'm not seeing it. I'm seeing just the opposite that people are viewing their employer as part of kind of the reason they get up in the morning and their self-esteem. They want it to represent something meaningful to them.

             My theory is they are out of school. They're probably away from their families. The other institutions that used to do this, whether it was church or political institutions don't do it anymore. They have a close relationship with their employer. If you do it right, they'll stay a long time and be mutually [00:09:00] beneficial for everybody.

             I am seeing they want us to represent certain things socially, values. One of the most popular webcasts I do internally is just talking about corporate values, and people want to hear that over and over and over again. I think it's changing and that people are thinking of work in a different way.

Jacob:	That's actually another big area of conversation that a lot of people always talk about, contingent labor, nobody's going to stay at companies for a long time anymore. It's going to be two, three years, and we're out, [00:09:30] but it sounds at least like at Infor, you're seeing that people do want to be a part of the company. They do want to stay there, and they just kind of expect certain things from Infor.
Charles:	Yeah. If you can provide that environment where they feel some inspiration and culturally attached, that's as important, if not more important than the money. I just think there's a way to encourage people to invest and feel something special about the company. When I see people walking around with Infor t- [00:10:00] shirts on and sweatshirts and hats, that tells me something. It's a brand. They're identifying themselves with a particular company, and it means something to them.
Jacob:	One of the things that I was reading about when you joined Infor is that you really created this culture of camaraderie, of people working together. I think I also read, correct me if I'm wrong, is that even the design of the office, correct me if I'm wrong, is that even the design of the office, a lot of the management team, it's kind of more in an open space, so that kind of feeling of hierarchy is being removed from [00:10:30] the company. Can you talk a little bit about some of those changes that you made for your New York space?
Charles:	Yeah, the space is very important, because it communicates certain values, and people notice it. Not just employees, customers. The fact that we have a lot of open space, clean lines, architecturally attractive, also I don't have an office. None of the senior execs do. We sit around a table. Anybody can walk up to us. We're [00:11:00] accessible. That openness and transparency kind of I think attracted certain types of people and they appreciated that. We're all in this together.

Initially, we did it in New York. We didn't force it at the other offices, because people weren't used to working like that, but when they saw the senior management team being that open and transparent and accessible, one by one the offices started converting over, requesting the change, because their own employees started asking, "Why aren't we doing that? I like that." It wouldn't have happened if we tried to force it too quickly. We [00:11:30] just had to let the culture permeate over time. Now virtually everyone around the company, that's the setup. |
| Jacob: | I love that anybody can come up and just walk up to you. Do people do that? Because I would imagine that traditionally inside of a company, very rarely would you see maybe a mid or entry-level employee walk up to a CEO and say, "Hey, how's it going? I just wanted to ask you something." Do you find at Infor are people actually doing that? Are they walking up to your executive team and just starting conversations, asking for, I don't know, feedback or [00:12:00] advice on things? |
| Charles: | Yeah, so we do it more than you would think. Obviously not thousands of people, but it's more than you would think. I had to go out of my way to make people feel comfortable. I'll randomly pick someone who's a new employee, been here six months, and say, "Get five of your buddies, and we can get together. Let's go out to dinner next Tuesday." I'm not even sure who's coming. When you do things like that, people just |

feel a little more comfortable doing it. A lot of the times you [00:12:30] don't need a long meeting. They're happy if you're walking by in the hallway or they see me, that nothing's going on, they can walk in. They just need a question they wanted to ask for five minutes, and they're fine with that. You can have an efficient use of your time, touch a lot of employees. They get a lot out of it. You learn something, and it kind of works for us.

Jacob: Yeah, I love that, because I know a lot of companies that have tried doing that, but they don't have that kind of corporate cultures where employees actually feel comfortable walking up to those executives. The management team is [00:13:00] left wondering. We created this open space, but nobody comes talk to us. Why isn't anybody talking to us? It's because they're scared, right? They have that persona that they've created of command and control and delegation. How did you create that environment? I'm assuming you also have managers and executives that you brought on that have that similar mentality of being open and collaborative, but that's kind of a new thing. How did you foster that?

Charles: [00:13:30] Yeah, well I spent, before I got into business, many years in the military as a captain of the Marine Corps. You learn early on kind of how to manage people. If you don't have money as a tool to motivate them, which you didn't, you have to find ways to create camaraderie and get people to follow you. That back then, that's the way I did it, it's create small teams, openness, transparency. I just replicated that and essentially a fast-forward so people feel part of something, and checking on people, and randomly taking people out [00:14:00] to dinner or calling people up and say, "Hey, what are you working on? I heard you had a new product out. Do you have time to show me a demo?" People love that. A developer loves that, that someone was interested in his product randomly and asked him to do a demo.

That word, and the word gets around as well. Then we have MBT awards where people who normally don't get recognized, they're not the head of sales, they didn't close the big deal this quarter, but they did something special. You can get nominated, and on the all-hands call, we pick about 10 people who may be working in finance, [00:14:30] or they maybe working in support in India. We give them award, fly them to New York for the next meeting that we do. We do this once a quarter, and just people who don't expect to be recognized like that, that gets around as well. You just have to do a lot of little things like that that people start to appreciate.

Jacob: I love that it's actually random whether you just people out for dinner. I'm assuming some people are probably a little shocked that you kind of walk up to them and just say, "Hey, how's it going? What are you working on? You want to go out to dinner?"

Charles: [00:15:00] Yeah. Yeah.

Jacob: Pretty shocking for some.

Charles: Yeah, but they've gotten used to it now. Then I obviously visit a lot of the offices as well. When I go there, I always try to build in time when I'm traveling to take the group of 10

	people out to dinner, whoever is available. You learn a ton that way, just hearing it directly on the ground and letting people give you feedback.
Jacob:	Oh, I'm sure. Do you have a particular way that you start the day? A lot of the executives that I've interviewed tend to start their day different [00:15:30] ways. I'm not even talking about just when you show up to work. Even before you get to work, are you an early riser? Are you at the gym first thing in the morning? What does your morning routine look like before you even get in the office?
Charles:	Yeah, I am an early riser. I'm usually up and probably engaged on telephones and emails, usually email, by 5:15, 5:30.
Jacob:	Wow.
Charles:	That's when I catch up on the news and get organized for the day and look at the things I didn't get done the day [00:16:00] before, and just try to make sure that I get them on the list for the day. Then because we're so distributed around the world, that's a good time to make calls to Europe and Asia and check in when I need to. I usually do all that for the first couple of hours before I even get to the office.
Jacob:	Then when you get to the office, are you straight to the desk? Are you walking around saying hi to people, or just straight into meetings for the whole day?
Charles:	I'm usually at the table. I don't have a desk of my own. So table, and [00:16:30] I see the other execs catch up on anything that they need to tell me as well. Then right after that we're doing meetings, but we're usually meetings together. That's one of the reasons we set it up like that is instead of being in a conference room together doing a product review, if we're going to do that all day, why have separate rooms?

We'll do some joint product reviews, customer reviews, projects that are underway. Basically also try to give as many divisions air time throughout the month as you can. [00:17:00] Even if they're short updates, a 20-minute call, what's going on in support, or what's going on here, you always learn something, and they certainly love preparing for it as well. |
| Jacob: | Seems to me that a big part of the future workforce starts even before employees or prospective employees get to the company. It probably starts with educational institutions, with the things that they're studying, the things that they're learning. I think there's a lot of frustration just in general from a lot of people that I talk to, that educational institutions are very much [00:17:30] behind preparing people for the workforce. I'm curious what you think about that and what role you think these educational institutions need to play to help prepare people.

For example, when you hire people for Infor straight out of college, are you finding that they're already very prepared and well versed in a lot of the things that you need them to know, or are they kind of behind where you guys are? |

Charles: [00:18:00] Well, we've taken this on as a special area of interest and made investments here to try to figure that out. If we just hired them directly out of college, usually not. They wouldn't be prepared. What we decided to do was partner with about 25 different universities around the world. We started with KUNY here in New York, and we basically donated our software and cloud space to use the software, developed a two-semester course and a certification program. We will teach [00:18:30] the students while they're in school, train the professors to teach going forward, train the trainer, and then they get certified after the end of those two semesters when they graduate. We'll hire them or our customers will hire them or one of our partners.

We're trying to push it back earlier. When we first tried this with KUNY, it was over subscribed by, I don't know, 30% or so. I had to convince the professors to do it. Universities are [00:19:00] somewhat different. The decisions get made down by professors on the campuses, not even the administration. I had to find the professors who would actually take this on. We incented them to do that. Then once it started working and saw the student reaction to it, they got on board.

We've created our own pipeline by working with these specific universities. The problem is the Pell grant and other scholarship money can't be used for skills training. These students are taking this at their own expense. [00:19:30] Then secondly, they get no course credit. But despite those drawbacks, they still take the course, because they want a job. We could fix those problems.

Jacob: Wow, that's crazy.

Charles: Yeah, so there's legislation printing now trying to fix the Pell grant problem. The universities have to fix the for credit problem for the ... It was not easy getting that started. We had to kind of convince people to come on board.

Jacob: Yeah, I can't imagine. Not only do they need to pay for it themselves, but they don't get any course credit for it, which that's just shocking. [00:20:00] What is the it that they're doing? Are they signing up for specific courses that Infor is teaching at these universities? Or what is the actual program?

Charles: Yes, exactly. There are specific programs around certain product areas. For instance, we have a cloud operations course so you can learn how to work in a data center. We have a course around financial applications. That's one of our products, so you can learn how to structure a general ledger and implement it. Have a customer manufacturing supply chain [00:20:30] course. The stuff we actually do when you're working in a company at an IT job, that's exactly what we're teaching.

The good thing about business applications, it's a convergence of both understanding business and understanding technology. They get to learn a little bit of both, because to put in a general ledger, you have to know what a general ledger a little bit and then what accounting is. We can take business majors and train them, and they learn technology. We can take technology majors and they learn a little bit about business.

[00:21:00] It's good for them either way. Whatever their career aspirations are, it's a good thing for them to understand that.

Jacob: What if some people are saying, "Hey, you know what? That's great that you're doing this, but there's no guarantee that these people will be Infor employees. Maybe they'll take all the information that they learn and go work for a competitor or go work for somebody else. Is that a concern for you guys at all?"

Charles: That happens, but I view it as our job to create an environment where they want to take advantage of the [00:21:30] skills they have and come to Infor and build a relationship. We do internships as well. By the time they graduate, we already know them, they already know us. If a certain percentage of them decide to do something else, that's fine. We created someone who's going to be a more valuable contributor somewhere in society. That's fine.

Jacob: Yeah. I love that you guys are building your own pipeline. Are you doing that because you found a lot of challenges in basically hiring people that are qualified to work for Infor?

Charles: Again, yeah. We moved [00:22:00] the headquarters, remember, to New York. We had to create that ecosystem. It's not the same as Silicon Valley where you have a lot of people who already know how to do this, but they're expensive, and everybody's competing for them. We did the opposite. We said we need to grow our own. Then we do this in other countries as well. We have a lot of universities in India we do this with, in Manila. We have 2,000 people in Manila. We just took the model and replicated it in other countries as well.

Jacob: Wow, so you have [00:22:30] many pipelines with these universities all over the world it sounds like.

Charles: And they're eager to do it, at least the ones outside of the US. It's a little more complicated in the US, since we're so focused on keeping the academic experience separate from any commercial influence. That's not the same thinking when you get outside of the US, but we're making progress in the US as well.

Jacob: Are a lot of these things that you're teaching these employees, is it all centered ... I'm sorry. Prospective employees, hopefully. Is it all around STEM, [00:23:00] kind of technical stuff, products, or is there also a little bit of an emphasis on some of these human components too, like I don't know, self-awareness or empathy or leadership for example?

Charles: Yeah, good question. We are working with a third party where that's needed. Van Jones, a CNN commentator, had a startup, a non-profit with Prince. When Prince passed away, he took it over. We partner with him on some of those wraparound services [00:23:30] that we'll call them, because some people need more help than others, if they're not ready for some of that. We're launching that I think next week. There's third parties who

do that better than we do it. We're pretty good at teaching the technology, but for these other things, we realize let's partner with some non-profits who are good at this.

Jacob: Yeah, it makes sense. There are a lot of great third-party solutions out there. I think you actually mentioned that people even have the opportunity to get a mentor at Infor, and the mentor [00:24:00] could be even from another company. How does that work?

Charles: Yeah, so we found the startup that we liked that was interesting. The startup had an HR product that could integrate with ours. That product allows you to designate mentors who could be inside the company but outside the company. A lot of people had signed up to be mentors, and some fairly senior executives. It started with women mentoring women, so that virtual network of women around the country. We got [00:24:30] it as part of our program called WIN, Women Infor Network and liked it so much we built it out to all employees.

           That sort of thing where you can give the employee a good career experience and a career pathway and development beyond the confines of your own organization and let them have an [effendy 00:24:48] network of whoever you think they should be connected with I think is a value that has surfaced to employees, and they love it. Plus they're meeting people who maybe look like them or people from the same region, whatever it is that they connect with. We wanted [00:25:00] a broader pool of people to give our employees a better experience and to train them and develop them.

Jacob: Yeah. That sounds like a pretty interesting program. Well, kind of building on that, maybe we can talk about some of the interesting programs that you guys have going on at Infor. We talked a little bit about some of the coaching and mentoring that you can get externally, partnering with educational institutions. But what about what it's actually like to work at Infor as an employee? For example, is it like [00:25:30] free food and happy hours all the time? Is it a bunch of millennials running around there just causing problems and breaking things? What's the overall kind of environment, and what sort of things do you guys have for the people who work there?

Charles: Yeah, well we're a large company at a lot of locations. It's difficult to do all of that in one location, to say everything's the same. That's not what it's all about. It's more about creating the culture, a common alignment on what we're trying to do and why this is important. When [00:26:00] you tell people that we're focused on changing the way commerce works, the way companies build and ship things, and how a lot of employees will work going forward that we can have an impact on global commerce. Those are the things mostly that bring us together. The things, whether it's free food or this free that, free that, those are incidentals. We'll do whatever makes sense there, but what gets people inspired is not that. It is can we change the world, and what's our mission? That's what we spend the time on.

           [00:26:30] The other thing I think we do that's different is we use talent science to help evaluate not only prospective employees, but existing employees so they can develop their career going forward. What talent science is it's basically Moneyball for business where you can take a 30 minute test. We have a whole science division who've designed this, and we've tested something like 25% of the working population of the US and test

for things lik empathy, the resistance to authority, are you ambitious? You compare your profile to the [00:27:00] best people who have done well in the job that you're in. That's going to give you a roadmap to things that you need to work on or how to get there. Everybody in the company we hire takes that test. Obviously a lot of other companies use it around the world, because like I said, we're the largest in the industry that does this. But that helps us understand people better, be able to coach them and tell them where they need to work or develop a career pathway with them.

Jacob: What did you say the name of it was again?

Charles: [00:27:30] It's called talent science. We bought a company called People Answers several years back. Talent science or behavioral science is something we were one of the pioneers in creating. In fact, President Obama issued a directive for the federal government to start using it as well, but it's essentially, like I said, Moneyball for business where you can use data and science, as opposed to just judgment and soft skills. Can you assess people by asking them how they feel about certain topics? About a 25- [00:28:00] minute test. At the end of that test, you have a pretty good sense of what that person values and kind of what they're like. We've done this for millions of people, like I said, over the years. Same exact test, so you have a profile. You can match certain people with certain jobs.

Jacob: Wow, that's ... You don't have to be an employee of Infor to do this? This is, I'm assuming, your customers can do this as well for their employees?

Charles: Yeah, we started as something for customers, but since we're the largest in the industry, I obviously want to use it for ourselves. It can [00:28:30] identify people who can work together well, teams that might work together, supervisors who might work together with certain other employees. The chemistry aspect, the personality matches, all the behavioral science aspects of what makes a person good at their job, they're a good match for this.

                The data that we have is that 40% of new hires don't work out, and 90% of the reasons they don't work out is that skillset, it's just a cultural mismatch, or they didn't like the job that they had, they should have never taken the job to begin with. That's the problem we're trying to solve with data.

Jacob: [00:29:00] Wow. That's fascinating that employees are doing that. So if I was looking to apply for a job at Infor, for example, this would be one of the things that I would do, and then you would determine if I'm a good fit for the company based on the output or the outcome of this 25-minute assessment?

Charles: Exactly. It's not the only thing we're looking at, but it's certainly a major thing we're looking at. Then the system also based on your answers will spit out some questions that the hiring manager [00:29:30] should ask you.

Jacob: Oh wow.

Charles: Yeah, it helps guide the interview as well, the interview process as well, but it does a pretty good job of saying based on what this person values and likes to do, they would not or would be a good fit for this job. Of the 30 best people who have ever done this job, this person has a similar profile.

Jacob: Are you worried at all that ... Because I've heard very mixed things on [00:30:00] this where some organizations are all in for this kind of technology, and they believe it's largely what the future is going to be about and using these types of assessments, and other executives still believe very much, "You know what? I just want to talk to the person, look in their eye, give them a handshake, and then I'll know if they're a good fit." How do you balance kind of the human side of this, of knowing if somebody is a good fit with maybe relying too much on the technology stuff.

Charles: [00:30:30] It should be a blend, like I said. That's why it generates questions for you to ask during the interview, areas of potential opportunity or concern, but it's a mix, but most people aren't that good at interviewing and not that great at hiring and don't like doing it. This helps people get a more accurate picture of a person. It's not the only thing they use, but we found also that the companies that use this have 60% more diversity than companies that don't, because you get a profile of a person that shows a good match before you see them. I think there are [00:31:00] some good reasons to actually use data, not just I want to hire someone that looks like me.

Jacob: Yeah, that's for sure. Diversity, so many studies have been done that show that diverse teams outperform non-diverse teams, cognitive diversity, physical diversity, just diversity all around. It's amazing that you're seeing so many results around that. You think about the workforce of the future, and we talked a little bit about what you're starting to see there. But what if you were to look outwards, maybe five to ten [00:31:30] years. A lot of the trends that we're seeing now, a lot of the changes that we're seeing now, if you were to look forward maybe five to ten years, what do you think work is going to look like? Or maybe we can even be more specific. What will work look like, and what do you think Infor as a company would look like if you kind of build out five, ten years?

Charles: Yeah, I'll obviously be more AI assisted. I think it'll be a lot more assisting than replacing, but a lot more [00:32:00] jobs would be effected by it. I think it'll free up a lot of mundane work so people can focus on value added activities and judgements. We'll see how that evolves. The second thing is I'm interested in ... I'm not sure how fast it happens, but I am seeing some workspaces that are also live spaces. You see these WeWork type environments where there are WeWork buildings being built that's meant to have apartment living, at the same time have workspace down in the bottom. I've been [00:32:30] kind of curious about that. I saw several of them over in London.

            The people I've talked to who are doing that seem to love it, because it's efficient for them, they meet new friends. Usually with multiple companies that are in the building, but it's an interesting kind of work live space, kind of a planned community almost. I am interested in how that works. It's early days. I'm not sure how far it goes, but I'm watching it.

Jacob: You seem like you're optimistic about the future with AI. Some people share that [00:33:00] optimism, and some people are very much scared. I'm sure you've seen many of the results of various studies that have been out there talking about massive unemployment, massive job loss. When you see all that sort of stuff, do you think that they're wrong? Do you think we're going to see so much chaos and doom and gloom in the future?

Charles: Well, I think it'll be better managed than that over time. We've had the capacity [00:33:30] to have planes without pilots for 15 years. We don't do that for a reason. I think society would only let it happen at a certain pace. In addition, it'll bring jobs to people who can't access them in other ways. For instance, you look at people who are unemployed or underemployed, especially unemployed. One of the top three reasons they give is lack of transportation. They can't afford a car. We're not investing in mass transportation, only where the jobs are. Well, driverless cars could [00:34:00] help solve that problem, right?

            There's good and bad about everything, I guess. I do think it'll create jobs and give people access to technology and work and wages and wealth that they didn't have before. It's a combination. It's hard to say what the exact mix will be, but I think we have a lot of smart people thinking about it, and we all want the right thing to happen for society. I think we'll just manage it as it evolves.

Jacob: Yeah. I think that seems to be the general consensus. Since we're [00:34:30] talking about the workforce of the future, if you had the power to do anything to help make sure that we as a country or as a world were prepared for the workforce of the future and that we had employees that were ready for it, what are some things that you would put in place maybe for educational institutions, which I think I have a sense of what you would say there, but even for companies and individuals, what would you put into action to make sure that we are prepared for the workforce of the future?

Charles: [00:35:00] If I can do one thing, I would create a job voucher. Think of a school voucher where you can go to any school you want to, and some of your tuition is paid for kind of for private school. A job voucher would allow you to go to an employer and go, "I'm paid for for the first year. Can you train me?" Let the marketplace figure out where the openings are. It lowers the marginal cost of hiring and training for an employer, and it gives value to those [00:35:30] people who are looking who want to upgrade to something, a better job and get a different skillset, or if you're out of work and trying to get started, and you're stuck in a minimum wage job, if you had some way to pay for your training, and employers had some motivation to invest in you and take a risk, I think the market would work a lot of that out.

            Rather than a bunch of spending, a lot of different programs, and a lot of it's inefficient overlapping and confusing for the citizen [00:36:00] to find it, simplify it. Just say, "Here's your voucher. Go find a job wherever you want to where there's a need." Something like that I think just to have something at scale would be good.

Jacob: It seems like an interesting idea, which actually none of the people I've ever interviewed on this podcast, it's over now 300 executives from around the world, has ever

mentioned that before. You are the first one to mention that idea, which is fantastic. What about this notion of universal basic income? I'm not sure if you've spent some time thinking [00:36:30] about that at all, but that's always something that people talk about as well.

Charles: Yeah. No, I spend a lot of time on these sorts of policy issues, because I'm co-chair of a political action committee that's focused on developing jobs in the African American community. I'm talking about this constantly with a lot of different people. Yeah, I think it may come to that, and in some sense, we do a little bit of that already with the earned income tax credit. We have a lot of [inaudible 00:37:00] to just sprinkle [00:37:00] over various different programs. We're doing some of that already. If we wanted to package it and consolidate it into one program, that's possible. I certainly like that better than the job guarantee, which would cost us 500 billion a year every year.

If we could package the basic income differently of things we're already doing and then couple that with a job voucher, and maybe those are steps we can take before we go all out. I think right now it's probably a bridge too far [00:37:30] to get all of that done, but we can incrementally start to think of some of these ideas and put someone in place and experiment.

Jacob: By the time most people graduate college, I think you would agree, most of what they learn is outdated. It's very hard for them to apply the things that they learn into an organization. How do you keep up? As an individual, let's say I'm looking for a job to potentially work at a company like Infor. What advice would you [00:38:00] give to people for what they should be doing to make sure that they constantly stay relevant? These could be either people that maybe are looking for jobs, or maybe they already have jobs, but their company isn't doing a very good job of upscaling them. What would you do if you were in that spot?

Charles: Well, the first thing is to take advantage of training that's already created. We create tons of training courses. We have whole Infor Universities. [00:38:30] Not every employee is motivated to just taking it on their own. We have to push them sometimes. Some people are, and other people get comfortable with what they know and kind of forget you got to keep relearning, and there's new things coming out all the time.

The first thing is if you have training, take it. We found a lot of people just don't search enough inside of their own companies. Secondly, there's tons of online third-party organizations that deliver training as well. My [00:39:00] view is if you really want training, there are ways to find it. I wish it was simple and it was all in one place. That's not the case, but you have to be aggressive and want to do it.

Jacob: It sounds like there's some accountability and responsibility that should go on the individual here.

Charles: Yeah, and then find a mentor. People who are really good at the job that you like, that's who you want to be hanging around a lot. People like to talk about what they do, and

they see a genuine interest and you're going to work hard, usually a senior person will take that person under [00:39:30] their wing. They like that energy and curiosity.

Jacob: Yeah, and as a individual, I totally agree. I think you need to have a little bit of that accountability yourself to, like you said, make an effort to understand what training programs your company offers, because most people, I think we do a very good job of complaining that we're not learning things, but we don't spend enough time trying to figure out what the company actually offers. Maybe that's probably a good first step is figure out what your company offers, because I doubt that there's an organization out there that offers nothing. It seems [00:40:00] like almost every company I can think of is doing something in this area, so chances are at your company you have something that you can take advantage of.

I wanted to talk a little bit about this notion of engagement and disengagement, because it seems, and I'm sure you've seen the statistics that only 13% of employees around the world are engaged in their jobs. I know you're a big believer in passion and purpose and doing all these things for employees at Infor, but why do you think so many employees around the world [00:40:30] are not engaged in the work that they're doing?

Charles: If they don't see why or how the job, the thing they're being asked to do fits into the greater good, how am I impacting this organization and why do I care about that? Give me a reason why my role is important and to give it self worth and meaning. If no one's communicating that on a regular basis and telling them what that job that they're doing is important to the organization, why should they care? You got [00:41:00] to make them feel as part of the machine, part of the team. What they're doing is just as critical as somebody else who's doing their job that looks more important. As long as you can create that environment, people become more attached. If they feel like, "I'm just going through the motions. No one knows I'm here," then it's easy for them to kind of disengage.

Jacob: How do you create that? Is there anything specific that you guys do at Infor that allows employees to really kind of feel that [00:41:30] connection and sense of purpose and impact?

Charles: Managers are responsible for that, but we try to measure engagement, is what I call it. You can measure how often meetings are held, if people are attending them, or off-site events. We have, for instance, the team building agreement with Habitat for Humanity. Any office can take off for a week and do a build. I do it as well. Do people attend those? Do they let everybody else go? Do they care about that? We have a number of initiatives like that. You just kind [00:42:00] of want to know are people participating? Is this office participating? Is this group of people in this department participating a lot? Just look for engagement, and we have a lot of different ways to measure that. Then when we don't see engagement, that's okay. Let's figure out what's going on in that department.

Jacob: Data it sounds like is your best friend in that solution.

Charles:	Exactly. No, we can measure everything. We can tell when people are swiping in their badges, how long their on our collaboration tools chatting, email traffic. You [00:42:30] can come up with a lot of things to see how active a person is and if they really care about what they're doing.
Jacob:	Do you use all that stuff? I'm curious. What are the metrics that you guys are looking at? You can look at email traffic you said? What are some other things you pay attention to?
Charles:	[crosstalk 00:42:45]. We have a collaboration tool. Think of it like I guess like a Facebook for the Enterprise. We created our own, and it's connected to other applications. We can see people solving problems together online, collaborating online. People tag [00:43:00] each other and mark them as experts. You can see who's helping whom and who's responding quickly. It's kind of a chat environment collaboration environment, but it's transparent and becomes a little bit of your HR system. It's called Mingle where we can see people having conversations on a particular customer issue, a product issue, and the audit trail is all there. It stays there. The people who solve those problems often get tagged a lot. You can see who they are, and the people who don't engage, you can see that as well.
Jacob:	[00:43:30] You and your management team are actively using these things as well?
Charles:	We are. We use them as well, and we're trying to package up the analytics and actually let our customers do it as an HR offering that say you really want to know. Engagement is what you're trying to measure. Here are some indicators of engagement. It's not total. You can't measure all the in-person conversations and all that, but there's enough going on online these days where the conversations are online instead of somewhere else where you can actually start to get the picture of it.
Jacob:	Yeah, yeah. That makes [00:44:00] sense. Earlier I think you mentioned that you guys went through a lot of acquisitions, and you're in 180 countries, and a lot of people listening to this work for organizations that are international. They have lots of offices all over the world as well. How do you scale any of the stuff that we talked about? How do you scale culture, values, purpose to make sure that somebody in Manila or Australia or China feels that kind of same Infor culture that they might in [00:44:30] New York?
Charles:	Yeah, it's not easy, but you have to work at it, and it has to be a priority. Luckily as a tech company, all of our employees are online all the time, so you could reach them more easily than you could in some other company. We have instant messaging throughout the company. Mine's on all the time. Anybody can instant message me from any part of the world we can just during the week. The entire management team, we travel a lot as a team to go visit Manila or India, let them know that we're super interested. Then we stay for a while, do the dinners and do all the engagement, [00:45:00] and spend some time with them. It's a combination of including them, giving them meaningful work as well, valuing them. Then you got to show up. A lot of the travel is doing exactly that, just listening, and showing up, and hearing people, and making sure they're included, so do things at the right time of day so they can participate. You can't just email US employees. You got to be able to email an attaboy to someone in France. All those things.

Jacob:	[00:45:30] It's not just about going on Skype or some video conferencing solution with somebody overseas. It's still important to have that kind of the CEOs coming to visit us or an executive is coming to spend time with us, sort of physical interaction.
Charles:	You still have to do both, yeah. The online is important and it certainly gives you reach in immediacy, but it doesn't replace showing up.
Jacob:	Yeah. I'm glad you said that, because there's been a lot of debate around that too. I'm sure you've heard a lot of those conversations. What role [00:46:00] do the leaders play in all this? When you think about the future of work and the direction that we're going in, what role does a leader play?
Charles:	Well, one of the things we did was create a leadership council. Since we're in so many countries, we needed someone in each region to represent the management team and get updates from the executive calls and meetings and make sure [00:46:30] that they can explain it in the local language, and take questions, and do the town halls as if I was there. They've been empowered to do that, and that actually does two things. They feel rewarded and recognized for doing it, but also gives us the culture carrier on the ground in that country. That's been important for us to say, "We can't do this by ourselves. We're counting on you as leaders to help propagate the culture, because you helped create it, and we're all in this together." When that [00:47:00] sense of responsibilities that they've been recognized as a culture carrier, people will take it seriously.
Jacob:	Yeah, you got to have the right people in place. What about millennials? What are your thoughts on millennials? Are you seeing that they're entitled and kind of a me, me, me generation? I'm sure you have a fair amount of millennials that are working at Infor, and probably you're maybe starting to see conversations around Gen Z as well. What do you think about kind of this new generation of worker, and are you [00:47:30] actually seeing differences in how they work and what they want?
Charles:	I know that's the common wisdom, but I see there's me, me, me in any generation. That's always been there. There's always people who feel that way, and your job as a leader is to connect with them to get them to see the greater good and buy into the mission. People that age, I don't see a huge difference than when I was that age and had to lead people that age. [00:48:00] I don't have an issue with Gen Z or Gen X, however you want to call them. I connect with them. As long as you're going to interact with them, they're human and respond like everybody else.
Jacob:	I love that you mentioned that, because maybe it'll put some of those myths to rest around different generations out there and how spoiled they apparently are. I'm curious what's the makeup at Infor? Do you guys have a lot of millennials that work there?
Charles:	We do, obviously. We're hiring 3 or 4,000 people a year. A lot of [00:48:30] them are millennials. I don't have the exact number off the top of my head, but like any technology company, as time goes on, people leave and retire, and we're replacing them with newer people and training them out of schools most of our new hires are within kind of one to five years out of school.

Jacob: Yes, they're fairly new and fairly fresh.

Charles: Yeah.

Jacob: Well, I know we have just a couple minutes left. Maybe we can wrap up with what advice would you give for people listening to [00:49:00] this podcast when you think about the workforce of the future? Maybe we can start with entry level junior employees or people that are just entering the workforce. What advice do you have for them to be able to stay relevant and to be able to kind of adapt and be successful in their careers?

Charles: Yeah, I tell people, number one, be intellectually curious. Know how your company works, how the products work, what the main mission is. Read everything you can get your hand on and more than what [00:49:30] you have to do for your job, what to understand the big picture. There's usually material on ways to learn it available, if you want to learn it and have a passion to do that.

              Then secondly, look around you. Don't just do your job. What are the three people around you doing, the five people around you doing? Learn their jobs as well and try to get an understanding of the full process. Then three, I tell people you want to be the guy in the huddle with two seconds left, and the coach is trying to decide who to give the ball to. He knows who to [00:50:00] give it to, because the guy who wants the ball who's been practicing, who's in early, who stays late, he's always reliable, and he's going to get it done, you want to be that guy.

              Opportunities are going to pop up. You want your name to be in the head of manager to go, "I know who to give this to, because he always comes through. He's reliable. He's easy to work with." Create all the things, all the environment to do that. Good things happen to you. It's hard to predict when they happen and plan it all out step by step, but if people know that you work hard, you're good at what you do, you know your domain, and you take on more, you're easy to approach, somehow things [00:50:30] come to you.

Jacob: I love that mental exercise for people to just think of. It's a couple seconds left in the fourth quarter. Are you the person that the manager would want to give the ball to? If not, how do you become that person?

Charles: Exactly. That's all in a nutshell. Be that guy.

Jacob: Yeah. No, I think that's a very, very simple and also very tangible way to think about that. What about skills and mindsets for the future worker? What do you think the most important skills are going to be for the [00:51:00] future worker, or even leader, and what are the most important mindsets that you need to possess? I know you talked about curiosity is one. You mentioned that a couple of times, so clearly that's near the top of the list. But what other skills and mindsets do you think we really need to focus on building?

Charles: I think there will be an enormous opportunity for people who can understand technology, but not as a programmer, just kind of the capabilities of technology, and then secondly how to apply it to a business problem. That is [00:51:30] a secret sauce. That's what an application is is the conversions of business problem and technology that solves it, and being able to speak to both audiences, understanding enough of the technology to say they can solve this problem in this company in this industry. It's hard to find people who can do both of those. Usually they have a technical undergrad, but maybe a business degree, but left brain, right brain essentially. That is going to be a valuable skill. We'll have plenty of technology. It's going to get better and better and better, but how do you use it? What business value is it, and how do I prioritize where to [00:52:00] invest this? People who can do that I think are going to be valuable.

Jacob: How do you approach really tough decisions that you need to make? Obviously the CEO of Infor, you probably have a lot of tough things that you need to do, whether it's around people or acquisitions, do you have kind of a mental framework that you go through, as far as how you make tough decisions?

Charles: Yeah, I tell people you hear about EQ, I think it's about JQ, having judgment. To me, [00:52:30] having good judgment to make decisions comes from three things. One, you got to be curious, get a lot of information in data, and digest it. Two, experience helps, but you can't always have that, but you can learn from other people's experience, so adopt experiences. Just realize how it's been done before. Have some framework. Doesn't mean you have to do it, but you want some frame of reference.

            Then three, just have the intellect to apply logic to it. I tell people that I may be in charge, but logic is the boss. [00:53:00] That's what Berry Gordy at Motown Records used to say, and I love that saying. I may be in charge, but logic is the boss. You got to do it around data and logic. If you can get a process down where you understand and disciplined about looking at data, trying to leverage people's experience, but also applying logic to it and get good judgment, that is valuable at all times. That's basically what running a business is. You got to make a lot of hopefully good decisions with good outcomes.

Jacob: I love it. I think that's a great way to [00:53:30] wrap up. Now I just have a couple fun rapid-fire questions just about you so people can get to know you.

Charles: Okay.

Jacob: Starting off with what is the most embarrassing moment you had at work?

Charles: Oh jeez, usually something where I didn't know I was going to speak and I wasn't prepared. This happened a couple times where something's on my calendar, and I don't know who I'm speaking to, and I have to make it up when I go up there. It's usually that.

Jacob: Oh that's keeps you on your toes.

Charles: Yeah, that's right.

Jacob: If you were a superhero, who would you be?

Charles: [00:54:00] Black Panther.

Jacob: Oh, that was an awesome movie. What's a book that you recommend? Could be a business book or a non-business book.

Charles: Non-business would be ... God, there's so many of them out there. I like military history. It may not be of interest to everybody else, but Masters and Commanders was a fascinating book about the [inaudible 00:54:22] between FDR and Winston Churchill and their generals. A book about [inaudible 00:54:27] written from the memoirs of the person who was in the room [00:54:30] taking shorthand notes. Somebody turned it into a book on Andrew Johnson. It's a fascinating book.

Jacob: Oh wow, I'll check that one out. If you were doing a different career, what would you have ended up doing?

Charles: Anything in music.

Jacob: Anything in music? I heard you're also a huge basketball fan.

Charles: Huge basketball fan as well.

Jacob: Yeah? You could have been either a musician or a basketball player then.

Charles: I'll take either one of those in a next left.

Jacob: If you could have dinner with anybody in the world, who would you have dinner with?

Charles: Jeez, well [00:55:00] probably right now, probably with Marcellus, although I've had dinner with him before, I'd probably do it again, and yeah, for right now, or [inaudible 00:55:14].

Jacob: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?

Charles: Well, I live where I want to live in New York, but if I had to pick other places, it's probably be either in Madrid or New Orleans.

Jacob: Oh, very nice. Both beautiful places. Last two questions for you. If you could get rid [00:55:30] of one workplace practice at Infor tomorrow, what would you get rid of?

Charles: Well, if it needed to be gotten rid of, I probably already did, but I don't have one off the top of my head, but I'm always looking for them. As we see them, we just make decisions. Yeah.

Jacob: All right. What if you could implement one workplace practice at Infor? What would you implement and make standard tomorrow?

Charles: That people spend time with their employees, at least once [00:56:00] a day interview somebody and just see how they're doing. Just make that a regular practice. Just pick a person. Just sit down with them of 15 minutes every day throughout. If you're a manager, just rotate through all your organization.

Jacob: Oh, I love it. I think that's great advice. Well, where can people go to learn more about you, to learn more about Infor, anything that you want to mention, maybe the careers page even? Please feel free to let the listeners know where they can go to connect with you.

Charles: Oh great, sure. It's on Infor.com. I'm on Twitter, CP Infor. [00:56:30] Easy to find me [inaudible 00:56:32]. We're all there.

Jacob: Perfect. Charles, thanks for taking time out of your day. I know you're super busy, so I really appreciate it.

Charles: Jacob, thanks a lot. Good meeting you.

Jacob: Likewise. Thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest, again, has been Charles Phillips, the CEO of Infor. I will see all of you next week.