

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, and welcome to another episode of The Future of Work Podcast. My guest today is Mary Bilbrey, the chief human resource officer of JLL in the Americas. Mary, thank you for joining me.

Mary: Thank you. Happy to be here.

Jacob: So, today we're going to be talking about a lot of fun stuff. Really looking at Gen Z because I understand that's a particular passion area for you, but before we get started with that, why don't you give us a little bit of background information about you.

Mary: Yeah, [00:00:30] thank you. I've only been with JLL about two and a half years. It's a great organization and still really learning a lot about the corporate real estate environment. Previous to that I'd been with financial services, largely HSBC, in human resources for the prior 28 years. And I have two beautiful daughters, one a Gen Y and one a Gen Z, so, subjects close [00:01:00] to my heart. And as I've entered into JLL and started to learn more and more about real estate. The synergies between how the workplace strategy integrates with the talent strategy, so, coming at it from the HR perspective, really has become an intriguing opportunity for me personally to explore for my career but also [00:01:30] just as we think about it as an organization.

So, marrying the needs of talent and this conversation, of course, we'll talk about the new talent coming in and how that really integrates with the workplace strategy and how those two combined are really going to make a difference in companies being able to win on the war for talent.

Jacob: Do you know a Michael Fraccaro?

Mary: No.

Jacob: [00:02:00] He's a chief human resource officer of MasterCard, who I'm meeting with later today and he also used to be HSBC.

Mary: Oh, because his name sounded familiar. Can't put a face with the name but perhaps.

Jacob: Yeah, just thought it was funny, speaking with the two of you, both of you came from HSBC, so, small world.

Mary: Yeah.

Jacob: So, what does a typical day look like for you?

Mary: Well, my role has a couple components to it. So, [00:02:30] mainly as the head of HR, we spend a lot of time thinking about how we attract talent, how we recruit for talent. Today's labor market, as you are, I'm sure, very much aware of, is one of the tightest, we've ever experienced. So, having to differentiate yourself as an employer to be able to get the talent you need, and new skill sets that we're all looking for is a big part of the job. [00:03:00] Then, the second, probably biggest area is development of the talent within the organization.

So, we also want to make sure we develop deep bench strength in our talent that we give people the opportunity to achieve their missions, is what we like to say at JLL. So, developing leadership curriculum and development programs for all leaders at all levels in [00:03:30] the organization is the second focus that we have as an HR team. Corporate real estate for JLL actually reports into me, as well, and so that gives me hands on opportunity to think about what we just were talking about, which is the integration of real estate with the talent strategy and how is that helping us attract talent, promote collaboration, promote [00:04:00] innovation, be an employer of choice, reflect our culture.

So, that's a new piece for me, which is really exciting and then third is another area, is I help to usher our efforts around corporate sustainability. So, how all weaves together in the employee experience and how we give back to our communities. Think about being socially responsible [00:04:30] to the environment, driving agendas on diversity and inclusion are all part of our corporate sustainability umbrella, as well. I love my job. It's a fascinating role.

Jacob: It sounds like you get a lot of fun stuff to work on. For people that are not familiar with the JLL, maybe you can give us a bit of background on the company. How many employees do you guys have and what do you guys do?

Mary: Sure. So, in the Americas we have just over 27,000 employees in Canada, US and a number of countries within Latin America. We have a whole range of services to our clients. The first and foremost we like to position ourselves, is really the trusted advisors and all decisions around real estate for our clients. Our clients are oftentimes very large, complex, multi, country, [00:05:30] global organizations such as HSBC, B of A, Amazon but then also we've got smaller and more regional clients, as well. And so we provide a range of services in terms of helping them think through outsourcing real estate services, planning for their space, driving utilization, trying to meet their corporate sustainability [00:06:00] needs.

We represent the tenants of spaces and helping them to negotiate leases and design of spaces. We oversee the projects of developing spaces and build-outs and work with them in designing spaces to meet their own corporate needs. So, it's a pretty wide set of services but again at the core of it we like to [00:06:30] really start with, we're there as

the trusted advisor and then also have a number of products that we help to deploy to help our clients meet their needs.

Jacob: Okay, you mentioned earlier that the corporate real estate reports to you, as well. I'm curious, how is the structure? As the CHRO, obviously you run HR function, you run corporate real estate. Are there any other functions or teams that report to you as well, or are those the two big ones?

Mary: Those are the two big ones and then I also [00:07:00] oversee the coordination of our corporate sustainability efforts for the Americas.

Jacob: Okay, got it. So, you get all of the fun stuff.

Mary: Yeah. It is fun.

Jacob: Yeah, I know. I'm sure, it definitely sounds like it. So, I know you're really interested in Gen Z and I'm sure a lot of people listening to this, as well. Maybe we can start with, maybe just a high level look at Gen Z because I know there's been a lot of focus and emphasis on Millennials and a lot of companies, they're still trying to even wrap their minds around that and what that means. [00:07:30] And here you are talking about Gen Z, so, why Gen Z, as opposed to Millennials? What's the difference between Gen Z and Millennials?

Mary: Yeah. Two things I think to start. So, Gen Z is just starting to come into the labor market, right, and so we're still learning, we're projecting based on what we have been able to learn from surveys and observations and great minds thinking about [00:08:00] it but we haven't really experienced them in any scope or size yet, in the work place. But two things that we think will be driving behaviors and expectations of us, of employers, as they do become more and more prevalent within our employee base.

The first is, they didn't experience the digital revolution. They were [00:08:30] born into an environment where digital was part of their lives from the very beginning. They had some screen and or keyboard or something, that option in front of them, almost from the very beginning of their young lives. So, that is going to have an impact. We're not necessarily 100% sure and exactly how but we know that that is different in this generation than it was in the others, even the Millennials [00:09:00] saw, experienced the digital revolution and saw it happen over their lives as opposed to the Gen Z coming in.

The second thing that I'll say, just at least for now and of course, it certainly could change but they're beginning to enter the work force, the workplace in one of the strongest labor markets in the US. And so the combination of always [00:09:30] having the digital tool sets which drive the ability to have instant information, choices and networking capabilities, far beyond, certainly as a baby boomer I ever experienced.

And having it coming in the state of strong labor market that says, "Hey I might not have to compromise as much as my previous, the generations have before me [00:10:00]

coming into the labor market, so I also have choices of employers and I can be a little bit more discerning on the roles that I might want to take, the work environment that I want to enter into, the company that speaks to me. I want to be, make sure I understand their purpose and be aligned to that because again I have choices and I have instant access to information about these organizations and I have a huge network of people [00:10:30] who can also help influence my decisions on this. Help me have, again, even further choices because I know people who can get me opportunities to a lot of employers."

So, the combination of being born with that technology in a really strong labor market means that employers really have to be savvy in how we are presenting ourselves to this next group of talent coming into the workplace.

Jacob: [00:11:00] I'm sure there are also plenty of stereotypes about Gen Z, as there are plenty of stereotypes about Millennials being lazy, entitled, all that wonderful words stuff that gets floated around online and I'm a millennial too and interestingly enough I found two cover articles and I put this up on Linked In a couple days ago where it was a 2014 cover article from, I think it was Time magazine or the New Yorker. That basically said the me [00:11:30] me me generation talking about Millennials and then there was another cover article also either from time or from the New Yorker in 1976 that also said the me me me generation.

Basically it was the same thing that people were saying 30, 40 years ago as they were saying fairly recently. So, I'm wondering what your perspective is on those different types of generational stereotypes that exist. Is there any truth to them or is that just like [00:12:00] we get bored and we just make things up about people?

Mary: There is a little of that, I think, but I think some of it is just every time we talk about a new generation they're young, right, and so is some of this just attribute of youth. I am going to be much more idealistic and maybe more self absorbed and maybe more conscious of [00:12:30] purpose and missions and things that are a bit more idealistic because I'm young. So, I'm not but I mean, the next generation coming in. So, we have looked at that and said, "How are the stereotypes of the Gen Z compared to the stereotypes we had with the Millennials and the generations before?" We do need to sort out what is different about this generation versus what is just maybe attributable [00:13:00] to it's a young group of new talent coming in."

So, I said, "I think the difference with this generation might be this, Entering into the world with instant information choices and I think choices is going to be a key thing here. Networks and then, at least for now, carrying that forward into the labor, into the workplace." That's an incredibly [00:13:30] good spot to be in to be looking for a job today.

Jacob: Yeah, yeah. For sure. It's funny because you mentioned that they're young and I talked to I was doing a workshop for her a large brain a little while ago and. Somebody stood up and said something about Millennials. They always want promotions, they want to do things really quickly and then an executive at that same company stood up and said, "Yeah, what, when I was their age, I wanted the same thing."

Mary: Of course.

Jacob: So, it's really interesting to have this conversation, [00:14:00] I think, about like life stage versus generation. I think that's something that probably most people don't do. They immediately jump to these stereotypes of Millennials or Gen Z and take that for truth.

Mary: Yeah, I absolutely agree with you. I have a daughter who's 22 and I was sharing with my colleague that if I ask her a question, she will roll her eyes at me and says, "Wouldn't it be neat mom if you had this device in your hand [00:14:30] that you could just talk into it it would give you the answer?" [inaudible 00:14:35] that does differentiate that generation as opposed to just being young, that's a difference.

Jacob: Yeah, it's a little weird to think that like, so, I have a two year old and it's really weird for me to think that by the time she grows up all the things that I saw come into existence she's going to take as truth. Like they were always there, [00:15:00] there was never a world without Facebook or Google or Linked In or high speed internet or any of this stuff.

Mary: Right.

Jacob: And the same thing when I talk to my dad. I'm like, "Man, I can't imagine cassette players and you had no cell phones and no internet. So, it's really weird just to think about that stuff. Now, that I have a kid I'm like, "Man, that's so bizarre." Curious what you guys are doing internally at [00:15:30] JLL when it comes to thinking about Gen Z? Do you guys have any practices or strategies in place to attract and retain this group or even Millennials, for that matter?

Mary: Yeah. Interestingly we and I am the executive sponsor but we are introducing a new employee resource group which is part of our diversity and inclusion framework. And the one we're introducing [00:16:00] is an intergenerational PRG, play resource group. And we're doing that to help think about and put in place changes in either in the environment, in our own policies, in practices and how we make the workplace work for all generations. So, right, we're going to have Gen Z, Y, X. Baby boomers and possibly traditional still [00:16:30] in our workplace for a period of time.

So, what does that environment that you create both with the physical space, the amenities your corporate policies, your approach to technology, your culture, our approach to recruiting, retaining. That can transcend all those generations and right now we've got to think about the generations we can understand better because we've we've had them in the workplace [00:17:00] for a while but this new generation then coming in is going to be bringing I think an expectation again of you've just always used technology so technology has got to be part of that employee experience in any workplace but also choice.

We're hearing that the Gen Z, actually have some desire to work individually. I mean, if they've had lost screen time, they've had all the time to [00:17:30] have entertainment

and interaction with digital. So, not always face to face but on the counter side of that, there's a desire to have face to face interaction with their supervisors and managers. So, it's this constant juxtaposition of choices for them and so what do we think about as an organization in our work space as well and how we provide opportunities to work [00:18:00] individually and also spaces for collaboration, big.

We have a club here in headquarters which is overstuffed chairs and a real great barista and stuff so real comfortable place for people to go if they want to collaborate but then we also have little, small phone booths if you will, that people can go in if they want to have some quiet time to study, be on the phone, et cetera. So, just this idea [00:18:30] of the space and the policies and the environment has to work for everybody and how is the Gen Z going to influence that and maybe and hopefully improve it, for all the generations coming in.

Jacob: So, it sounds like you guys have multiple workspace options for employees.

Mary: Yes.

Jacob: It's not just like all open or all closed. You've got some diversity going on in there.

Mary: Absolutely and we certainly promote that for all of our clients [00:19:00] and prospective clients, as well. Couple things that we've done I think are really intriguing. We think of the idea of casual collisions, we call them. So, we oftentimes will design spaces with really wide hallways. And at first, I was [inaudible 00:19:25] and understood it but now I experience it and you run into a colleague in the hallway, which I do [00:19:30] every single day and there's enough space where you can actually stand there and have a conversation and you're not blocking the hallway. It's a working space actually. And it promotes this idea hey if we run into each other we can have a quick, literally, hallway conversation that's really productive.

We have the spaces, we call, where we really try to show off our technology and technology not only for [00:20:00] our employees but for our clients that come in. So, walls of projectors where we can really bring our analytics and our data to life and showcase some of the things, the services we can provide from a technical perspective to our clients. Then we also have, we have open floor seating. We really recommend that so that people can have a workspace but then also be able to get up and collaborate and get face to face time, real [00:20:30] time.

Then small spaces, again, and conference rooms for when you really do need to have the privacy, phone calls, smaller group meetings, et cetera. We're really trying to drive more of the video conferencing, telepresence that environment, as well. So, if you're in different locations, which many of our employees are, how can we still have that face to face, that personal experience, via [00:21:00] technology.

Jacob: Has JLL always been like that or was this something that you guys had to evolve to? For example, I'm trying to think of like JLL 10 years ago or 20 years ago or even 30 years ago.

Were the spaces always like that or have you seen them evolve and did it use to be cubicles and conservative and grey walls and suit and tie environment.

Mary: Again, I've only been here for two and a half years [00:21:30] but we hope that we've been on the innovative edge of this. But I can share that in my and again this I've been in the workplace for a long time. Very traditional workplaces previously were closed offices and high wall dividers between the spaces that weren't closed offices. The off places were used as the meeting rooms. [00:22:00] I think this says like all things and it has absolutely evolved but JLL's done a lot of work with our client groups and listening to the needs of our client groups and having client advisory boards help us shape some of our thinking on this.

We've been talking about the future of work and what that looks like and using that information from our clients to really help us progress our ideas on how you [00:22:30] can use the space and technology within the space to really promote well being. I had the opportunity to tour the new McDonald's headquarters in Fulton Market here in Chicago. It's really a smart building. I mean, we just using the Internet of things, have built this application where with Bluetooth in GPS and everything connected to that magical device [00:23:00] in your hand mom. Your phone you can literally look up where is the next available conference room and whether it's available and book it right on your phone.

They actually design the space where if you're cold or hot you can actually tell the HVAC through your phone that you would like it warmer or cooler and they have these little micro. HVAC vents that actually can detect where you are and [00:23:30] either send warmer air or cooler air to your location. It is just a really, really neat use of technology to change the employee experience in that [inaudible 00:23:44] fascinating [inaudible 00:23:45].

Jacob: Yeah, I'm actually very curious, as well and I heard that they were moving there. So, I'm going to have to do some research on that two. You mentioned that you work with your clients and internally to try to understand what the future of work looks like. So, naturally, of course, I have to ask. [00:24:00] What does the future of work look like?

Mary: Well, the way we think about it has a couple components to it and like all organizations and our contribution to our shareholders and bottom line is important so real estate's expensive. People are generally the only other expense that is larger than than real estate most organizations. So, we start with understanding and really focusing on [00:24:30] getting the financial efficiency of a building so, the way you use your space needs to be very, very smart and if you use it in a way that understands the ebb and flow of how people work and when the building is going to need some flexibility in its density and different days and different times, et cetera, you can really maximize the financial impact of [00:25:00] real estate and your organization.

We then think of it in terms of our employee experience and our operational, the financially operational efficiency but then employee experience which is largely what we've been talking about is really part of that future and how do employers differentiate themselves to be the employer tries to drive the connection of their brand,

their values, their culture with the employees. I'll give you, just [00:25:30] because I love this this example, I'll share an example of that.

I also had the opportunity to tour the new Toyota headquarters down in Plano, Texas that JLL helped partner with them on. There was this really weird light fixture and so of course I go, "What is that?" It was a chandelier that was made out of deployed airbags and I'm like OK it's not, it's , [00:26:00] it is ugly but I was like, "There's deployed airbags." But what it really was is a symbol to the employees that we save lives so we don't just make cars, we save lives. So, all of that stuff really does impact the employee experience. So, if I come to work every day just thinking, I work for Toyota, we make cars versus I come to work every day there's this physical reminder that actually we save lives.

That makes me feel much better about being associated [00:26:30] with Toyota. I've got this emotional connection to them, [inaudible 00:26:34]. That's one example.

Jacob: All right. I love that because one of the things that I found in my most recent book on employee experience is that the physical space needs to reflect the values of the company.

Mary: Right.

Jacob: That's more than just like writing the values on the wall or having the values hanging from the rafters but the truly seeing those things manifest.

Mary: Yeah.

Jacob: I love that example of the airbag chandelier because that's a, it doesn't say [00:27:00] text wise, we save lives but our manifests itself in that like people get what it means and that's important because I think oftentimes we get so obsessed with like the perks and the benefits and the open floor plans and this and that, that we forget to connect what the company stands for with the spaces in which employees work so, I think that's a great story.

Mary: Yeah [inaudible 00:27:24] work is about the digital drive and so I'd share the example of the smart building with McDonald's but digital [00:27:30] drive, I think, is really a fascinating part of an employee experience and future of work. The data that we can get from how people work and move around in the building and use a space is really telling us a lot about how we can use digital to further shape the spaces and [inaudible 00:27:56] the smart buildings of the future.

[00:28:00] Then the final leg of the future of work for us is the continuous innovation. So, as you and I are talking today about the Gen Z and we're just projecting forward on what we need to do to continue to be an employer that can differentiate itself. In the next few years I'm going to have to start thinking about it again so we have a continuous innovation piece of it that is. where we're in an environment of rapid change and that's not going to stop so we have to [00:28:30] continue to reinvent over and over again and



ensure we're keeping up with the expectations and demands of being a great place to work.

Jacob: Isn't that expensive though? So, I hear questions all the time from people that say, "We're redesigning our space but we know that things are going to change and we're going to have new generations of work or in the future. So, how do you plan, in the case of McDonald's, right. They created this new headquarters but how long [00:29:00] is the headquarters going to be relevant in modern before they need to upgrade their technology, before they see Gen Z being, taking over and all of a sudden they need to redesign things again. How do you balance things that you do inside of the company with the pace of change that we're starting to see, because it seems like you're constantly going to be playing catch up.

Like there's never, you can never be ahead of the curve. I mean, I imagine it's pretty frustrating for a lot of executives around the world.

Mary: Well, [00:29:30] yeah. I imagine it really is. I think the way that we've been thinking about it is, traditionally, buildings are static, right. They're brick and mortar and to your point, I mean, they become or at the risk of becoming irrelevant and obsolete quickly because there are a static thing. I think the way the future of the workplaces actually [00:30:00] do they have to be a static thing? They can be a very flexible tool and how do we start to think about using the physical space in a way that allows us to continually morph it and flex it?

JLL has a partnership with MIT and there's a real estate innovation lab. [inaudible 00:30:26] like all they do is tour things but I recently had a chance [00:30:30] to tour [crosstalk 00:30:31].

Jacob: What do you do over there? You just hanging out and going around the world?

Mary: Yeah. Of course, some of the smartest minds that we have are thinking about, how do you make that physical space very, very flexible and retractable walls and reflective glass that can act as solar panels and all sorts of things that as you said, hard to imagine today what your two year old is going to [00:31:00] be thinking, how he or she is going to experience the world when they get to the point where they come into the work place. We've got minds thinking about how we use real estate differently so that it is not a static asset but a very flexible and innovative asset instead. A lot of that is forward thinking, future thinking and we're [00:31:30] seeing a lot of innovation happening in the real estate space today.

You and I will have to wait to see exactly how that works. I think it's going to be really exciting.

Jacob: Yeah, for sure. So, I'm curious, what do you tell your clients may come to JLL with those types of concerns? Like how do you design a space with that flexibility in mind? Maybe the retractable walls aren't standard yet.

Mary: Yeah.

Jacob: But in the case [00:32:00] of McDonalds, how does a company like that design their space with the flexibility in mind, with the idea that Gen Z's coming into the workplace. How do you go about doing that?

Mary: Yeah. A couple small examples. Back in the day, my day anyway, everybody wanted these large training rooms and of course, the HR people were always saying, "We need this large training room." Well, the [00:32:30] truth is the large training rooms were used, once a week, once a month, twice a year and they were packed when they were rolling out big initiatives. But they sat empty a lot of times so thinking about spaces that are dedicated spaces but can be converted into spaces is one of the ways we think about it.

We have a room here in the [inaudible 00:32:56] where we have the club, which I mentioned before which [00:33:00] big soft comfortable chairs and you can hang out on the couch and look out the beautiful views we have from this building but we do have then a flexible, a retractable wall that opens up into a room that is a multipurpose room, so, that room can be, oh you want to have an event in the club where you have more people. We open it up and we actually expand the club into this other space or we close it off [00:33:30] and we use it for big meetings, training so that's our that's our ad hoc training room when we need it but it doesn't sit empty as a training room.

When we're not using it, it's a very multipurpose. We also just think about maximizing, again, the flexibility of space. We have cafes in each of our floors here. We don't have cafeterias because it's a, we're downtown Chicago, so [00:34:00] we have a lot of options for food. But within the seating in the cafes there not just tables and chairs but we've made real intimate little booths so again you can use that space for a meeting, if it's not that confidential. But you have some level of privacy so we don't just, again, have a cafeteria where if you're not eating it's not being used.

We've created the space to say, "Well you can eat in here but you can also meet with your colleagues [00:34:30] and have a private conversation the way we've shaped the booth seating for you. Lot of just, double uses of space so that we try to minimize the amount of time that a space is just sitting empty because it was only used for a particular purpose.

Jacob: Makes sense. We talked a lot about space and the impact that it's starting to have on work and Gen Z. What about the space [00:35:00] initiatives, either internally at JLL or things that you think are going to be important for Gen Z going forward. So, any practices as far as HR practices, strategies for recruiting. Perks and benefits like what do you think we should be doing for Gen Z and have you guys started exploring any of this internally at JLL?

Mary: Yeah, that's a great question. So, I get back to the [00:35:30] what differentiates them from the other generations and again technology so, we do need to look at do we have the right technology to be able to do telepresence and in the future will they want to do

meetings with holograms instead of Skype and so technology will be a big part of it. We do think about that and our thinking from an innovation perspective [00:36:00] about that. And just even simple things like the phones that you have on your desks.

Mine has a handset on it. My fingerprints have probably never been on that handset because I've always had a headset and so you have the flexibility of moving your hands or walking around and doing other things. So, our CIO, our chief information officer, has been working with us on [00:36:30] building out a framework of tiering technology and for different work environments and different ways we get work done.

If you're not going to ever be using the \$1,500 standard speakerphone on your desk then maybe you're only going to be using your cell phone, then let's not invest in those but some of them are looking at things that take away from their [00:37:00] work space. So technology is a big piece of it and then the other piece of it is choices and I get back to this because I think that's going to differentiate this next generation coming up.

So, traces and benefit offerings. Instead of just here's a medical benefits and dental benefits with more flexibility on things like that. More flexibility on how they work so not necessarily coming in and working [00:37:30] in the office nine to five but perhaps they are going back to school for getting their master's or something and so can you have flexible hours and let them leave for a period of time and then come back and finish up work or work from a different location. Choices on things like what you can wear to work and just all those [00:38:00] little things that make a big difference, I think, to the employees coming in and then also, I think, it's making sure we have, I'll get back to the Toyota example.

What really resonates with the employees that make them want to feel connected to you as an employer. And to feel good that what they're doing during the day is meaningful and so we are thinking about that in terms of [00:38:30] just our branding but similar to the Toyota examples not just of branding by words it is a branding in our environment and the way we provide amenities. And help them. I guess the other thing that Gen Z is really looking for, well, what we believe to be looking for is not so much work life balance which I think is what the millennial is probably are known for in terms of shaping the workplace.

But work life [00:39:00] integration So again the example of being able to leave for a couple hours to go to my class and then come back or having the ability to have the dry cleaning service meet me at my employer in place of employment versus having that as a separate errand I have to run and all that digitally Of course All my interactions with all that will be through my work phone which helps me connect to my [00:39:30] private life as easily. As as my resume my technology does in my private life so those are the kind of things we're starting to look at, just really how do we drive technology, how do we make sure we give choices and that integration of working life because that's, I think, something that they can help bring into the workforce which will benefit everybody.

Jacob: What do you think about the impact that Gen Z's going to have [00:40:00] on leadership, on management and leadership because it seems to me that the way that we lead organizations is also changing. Moving away from the hierarchy in just thinking

differently about what it means to be a leader or a manager inside of a company. So, would Gen Z, do you have a sense of what or how that might impact the way that we lead and manage our companies?

Mary: Yeah, that's a great question. We just implemented a workday. We went live in January [00:40:30] and so one of the things we're trying to push is we call them quality conversations as opposed to performance reviews and we're trying to really drive the thought process that this is ongoing, it's continuous. I'm not going to remind you of mid year performance reviews or end of year performance reviews. It's a quality conversation that happens all the time and part of that is driven by the studies that work days in other companies have said, " [00:41:00] This is the best practice," and this is what your next generations will find valuable in an organization.

That it does have, it is having an impact on our leaders who are regularly call me and they're like, "Mary, isn't it time to do mid-year reviews?" And I'm like, "No. We don't do those anymore." "Oh, how come we're not doing those year reviews? How do we know what their performance is?" I'm like-

Jacob: You still get those types of calls?

Mary: Oh, yeah. Because you're having quality conversations on a continuous basis, that's why they know their performances and so [inaudible 00:41:30] anybody [00:41:30] but it is a change in how we have traditionally managed. And I think people actually will embrace it because I think that it is more intuitive and it makes more sense but it's not the way we've been doing it. And so we do have to have help our managers understand that, and part of this intergenerational play resource group I mentioned earlier is focused on that.

How do we [00:42:00] help think about our own practices and policies and how we interact with our employees and then how do we train each other both the existing generations in the workplace and the new generation coming in to be respectful and work in a way that that is positive for us all. So, I do think that one example of switching from traditional performance ratings or performance reviews [00:42:30] to this ongoing conversation is a good example of our managers having to change.

Jacob: You mentioned that you still get the some of these calls from managers at JLL that are like, "How can we not do mid-year performance reviews?" So, how do you deal with managers and not necessarily just inside of JLL but with managers in general who are having a very hard time embracing this new way of working?

Mary: Yeah.

Jacob: They're either scared or they just think, oh my God that's crazy, [00:43:00] that doesn't make any sense. What do you do with those managers? Just fire them all and replace them?

Mary: [inaudible 00:43:07] environment. We have, periodically, either from our own or from our clients have managers who want employees in the workplace every day from eight to five and so the idea of face time, we think is something that is got to be evolved and people are absolutely, the Millennials brought that with us [00:43:30] into the workplace, which is the idea of work life balance and some of that means working remotely or flexibly and at different points in time.

We have managers both, again, within our company and our clients who still contend that you need closed offices. I'm the head of HR for the Americas. I sit in an open cube, that's the exact same size as everybody else around me. I have absolutely the same environment [00:44:00] and it works really well. I have embraced it completely but there are some managers who think, no, how could I possibly be sitting out on the floor? Everything I do is confidential.

We still have managers who think that there's a, they really like the hierarchy of things and so there's a put in place ways they run meetings or ways of operating that are very much based on your level in the organization and all of that [00:44:30] is going to not be attractive to [inaudible 00:44:34]. So, how we handle it is, I've got the advantage right now of, again, the labor market that is tight so [inaudible 00:44:44] is a constant concern, I am guessing for most organizations right now.

So, we really talk to them about the business case behind more flexibility in how they manage, attracting talent, retaining talent, motivating talent, [00:45:00] the engagement of their talent and help them take that walk. Are you willing to lose some of your talent because you want to still drive this [inaudible 00:45:16] little older thinking in some of your aspects of how you manage a talent and generally they will get there [inaudible 00:45:24]. I think probably one of the hardest things to change is the [00:45:30] hold on to needing enclosed office. That is just an emotional [crosstalk 00:45:37] for a lot of people.

Jacob: Yeah I hear that quite a bit, interestingly enough. Okay, so, it sounds like what you've got to do is, what is it like education and training, just talking to them, devoting time and energy into explaining why things are changing and how they should adapt. Do you do some training programs for these managers?

Mary: We have just rolled that out. [00:46:00] Great new curriculum and part of that curriculum is a set of training for people who are new managers, who are trying to get to our managers just as they start to manage people. And so part of that is, again, getting back to ongoing regular quality conversations the importance of that and the importance of how you interact and [00:46:30] the flexibility of work because we do stand for that as an organization. We tell our clients that that's important so we ourselves have to play this.

We do have the training for new managers. We also just rolled out a training earlier this year on what I call positive workplace environment and so it's it's broad it talks about diversity and inclusion [inaudible 00:46:55]. It talks about understanding differences in people. It talks about [00:47:00] respect and really appreciating our culture and so we pulled that out to a couple, I believe it's thousand of our managers already. That really

gets to this piece of you not just managing outcomes and deliverables you're really representing an organization and its values, its culture and what we want to stand for, which by the way, we believe very firmly [00:47:30] helps us be an attractor of talent, retention of our top talent, et cetera.

So, this business case, there's an ROI there that it's not just because HR thinks it's a good idea, it's the right way to run your company. That was just rolled out this year so we'll see if we start to get some feedback and outcomes and for some of that new training.

Jacob: Yeah, I'm glad that you guys are rolling that stuff out. In the sum, or I guess in the rare situations where [00:48:00] you find the managers are just not on board, do you find that, I don't know if you have to do this at JLL or if you would advise other companies do this but in the situations where some managers are just like, "You know what, I don't get it, it's stupid. Gen Z's nuts, Millennials are nuts. I want my cube and I don't care what you tell me, I'm going to keep doing things the old way."

In that situation, is it time for those people to go?

Mary: Well, yeah. If you've [00:48:30] got that kind of mindset, that probably reflects in performance more generally. Yes, I think then you start talking about well maybe you don't exit the organization but maybe you're not a manager of people. Maybe you're not a leader, maybe you're more suited to be an individual contributor but as I said, I think, if you have that mindset where you're not willing [00:49:00] to think about the importance of connecting with [inaudible 00:49:08] generations but most notably the ones who are going to be their future. Then you probably have a mindset that's not that conducive to high performance and aligned with our values anyway.

Jacob: Yeah. Then I suppose it's time to go. What advice would you give to organizations [00:49:30] listening to this, that are starting to think about Gen Z? So they're like, "Okay, they're coming into the workforce, they're still early but they're getting there. We're still worried about Millennials. We don't have time to think about Gen Z yet. I mean, what advice do you have for those organizations? How can they start making any changes or progress or educating their managers or their employees on this stuff?

Mary: Yeah, you said it from the very beginning which is, first of all [00:50:00] let's be careful not to throw too many generalizations on the next generation just because they're young. Because we need to embrace our youth and they are going to be our future, so, I would caution just on as I think a lot of us did with a millennial coming in and just put all these labels on them like the me generation and really in truth it probably wasn't fair.

The second thing is, [00:50:30] think about how the next generation actually improves the workplace for all of us. I think the millennials did that. The millennials came in and really made us all think differently about work life balance and that was a conversation we were having more than we ever had before and benefited I think all workers in terms of we just now have that. It's much more ingrained part of how [00:51:00] we get our job done. So, as a Gen Z comes in, we need to think about the use of technology, the use

of digital, that is something that will benefit us all and is something that the Gen Z, I think will demand of employers in the workplace.

So, embrace it and how do we be on the front foot on that in terms of the use of digital technology to enhance all of our experiences at work and then the second [00:51:30] attribute I think of this generation will be choices. And so flexibility, flexibility and policies flexibility and offerings flexibility in roles in experiences and in our workspace again not only will be I think attractive to the Gen Z but it's going to improve it for the rest of us, as well so I think a positive approach to what's important to this generation but then how does that reshape [00:52:00] us for everybody in the workplace.

Jacob: And we talked about managers and Gen Z but what about if you're not a manager? You're just maybe an older worker inside of the organization and maybe you're a little bit worried about Gen Z and you're worried that things are going to change and you're so comfortable with how things used to be and you're not very receptive or open to what's going on. Any advice on how to deal with [00:52:30] those workers but how to encourage those workers, how to educate those workers on the new changes that are coming because as I'm sure you've seen inside of JLL, even entry and mid-level employees, sometimes they get a little weirded out by some of the stuff. They're not comfortable with yeah they don't want to use these technologies so what do we do in that kind of situation?

Mary: That is that is the goal of what we're trying to accomplish [00:53:00] by rolling out this intergenerational and play resource group and not many companies have that as a focus yet and so maybe more companies can think about that. In some of the programming that we're at least considering in this new resource group is reversed mentoring and so maybe you align one of the Gen Z, Gen Y employees who are really technical savvy with a [00:53:30] more tenured employee who doesn't want to lose the phone with the curlicue cord on it and set up reverse mentoring relationship and help that older more tenured worker see the value of it and not be afraid of it and not think it's going to be too hard or too [00:54:00] difficult to learn.

So some of those ideas and also get them involved in also sharing what they know and teaching the next generation in some of the value of their experiences but so they feel both contributing to the development of the next generation coming in but also learning from them at the same time but your earlier point, if you've got people who [00:54:30] are not really willing to be inclusive and embrace the changes, again, I'm going to guess that's going to be reflective broader and carry forward on their performance. Those things worked as the way out.

Jacob: Yeah yeah, hopefully. All right, so to wrap up, I just have a couple fun rapid fire questions for you.

Mary: Okay.

Jacob: So, first one is what's the most embarrassing moment you've had it work.

Mary: And I was on a presentation and I was at [00:55:00] a podium because back in the day and it had a lot already detail and short and so I stood up on a box and when I talk I usually use my hands and walk and so immediately, I took a step backwards so you need to step backwards and I thought the box and read stage wearing a nice skirts upset.

Jacob: So, fell off the box?

Mary: So, I never, ever [00:55:30] stand behind a podium again.

Jacob: Yeah, that's a good lesson learned. If you were a superhero who would you be?

Mary: This is going to show my age and my generation but I suppose it would need to be need to be Wonder Woman and so I would want to be promoting that diversity. And being a various strong strong female role model.

Jacob: Hey, there you go, nothing wrong with that. What's a book that you recommend could be a business book or non-business book.

Mary: [00:56:00] My all time favorite book is the book thief and I actually wrote years and years and years before the movie came out and it didn't matter what so because a book itself just has such a find as if my own creation of what and that is that a product of my absolute favorite park I'm going to check one out.

Jacob: If you were doing a different career what do you think you would have ended up doing?

Mary: And I was teasing team, I said I'm pretty sure to be a storm chaser. [00:56:30] One fascinated by them and two I just have a tendency to always the mark of the flame just ice cold where there where there's where there's where there's a lot of energy.

Jacob: What was that, the was it called Tornado?

Mary: Tornado Yeah with Helen Hunt.

Jacob: Yeah yeah, that was a great movie. I'm imagining you as the Helen Hunt there. If you could have dinner with anybody in the world who would you have dinner with?

Mary: [00:57:00] I always answer that question with Anthony Bourdain and I'm just crushed at the loss of Anthony. But if it's not Anthony, then [inaudible 00:57:10] from WGN here in Chicago who is just been the world class whether. Meteorologist for just generations here in Chicago and just seems like the settle Santa and let it.

Jacob: Cool. If you could who lived anywhere in the world where would it [00:57:30] be?

Mary: I've lived in a number of places and what it would be people Tara Italy.

Jacob: Ah, very nice.



Mary: I don't think literally there.

Jacob: Yeah I haven't been here but I would have checked that place out. If you could get rid of one of workplace practice inside of JLL tomorrow, what would you get rid of?

Mary: Oh. [00:58:00] How it's really hard. I'm struggling on that one. I cannot think of something that I just think if that were to practice I would just and we don't we just it's so my at which to transform [inaudible 00:58:19] here that. I don't I can't think of anything I would get rid of at JLL. it's a great place to work.

Jacob: That's always a good thing right. [00:58:30] What if you could implement one workplace practice in JLL what would you make the new standard tomorrow?

Mary: Oh. I do think that we do a good job of offering amenities and experiences of plays but I think if we could. Really implement our own way of technologies and what I think about at the end and then you. Have that just have that thing [00:59:00] in your hand where you can just instantly change the temperature in the lighting in the size of the room and whatnot. Well the actually get there but but but a futuristic smart building.

Jacob: That would be pretty good. I'm sure many companies actually around the world wish they could could do something like that. Well, Mary we've been talking now for around an hour or so. [00:59:30] Thank you very much for your time. Where can people go to learn more about you or JLL? You mentioned it's a great place to work so maybe you want to mention your careers page in case people are listening to this thinking they may want to work in.

Mary: JLL.com. We've got great opportunities. Several parts of most states and across the U.S., Canada [inaudible 00:59:54] and it is a great place to work. Please come check us out careers at JLL. [01:00:00] We would love to train new talent.

Jacob: And you I think are also on LinkedIn. Are you in Twitter as well?

Mary: Oh no. I was [crosstalk 01:00:10] then. I told you I'm a baby boomer. I am on LinkedIn, yes.

Jacob: Great so people can connect with you there. Well Mary thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me.

Mary: Great, thank you Jacob, nice meeting with you.

Jacob: Yeah likewise and thanks everyone for tuning in to this week's episode of the podcast. My guest again has [01:00:30] been Mary Bilbrey, the chief human resource officer of JLL in the Americas. I will see all of you guys next week.