

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.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

This episode is brought to you by ServiceNow. Everyone deserves great experiences at work. Eliminate frustration and improve employee satisfaction with a single access point for efficient, personalized HR services. ServiceNow helps you put service at the heart of your business. [Start today](#).

Jacob: Hello everyone, welcome to another episode of the Future of Work Podcast. My guest today is Bill Priemer, the CEO of Hyland. Bill, thanks for joining me.

Bill Priemer: All right, Jacob, thanks for having me on.

Jacob: You guys were one of the companies that scored quite high on my employee experience index, where I looked at 252 companies. I definitely want to make sure we're going to talk about culture, and some of the stuff you're doing internally. Before you jump into any of that, why don't you give people some background information [00:00:30] about you, and how did you become the CEO of Hyland, and what's a day like for you, a typical day?

Bill Priemer: Well, sure. Well, I've been with Hyland for ... I'm in my 21st year. The company was actually old for a technology company. We're founded in 1991 by a friend of mine, his name was Packy Hyland. He and I were classmates [00:01:00] growing up in Cleveland, Ohio. I had moved away from the Cleveland area after college and was on the sales and marketing side of technology company. I worked for a personal computer manufacturer, and I spent some time at Microsoft, and then, I spend some time with FedEx developing new services, which wouldn't make you automatically think of technology, [00:01:30] but that service, and their services are so technology enabled that the bulk of my time was spent on information technology support of the new services that we were rolling out.

Anyway, I was living down in Memphis, Tennessee working for FedEx. Packy had started the company in '91, it was now 1997, and he got to the point where he had 35 people, and he was generating some revenue, [00:02:00] and the company was actually just turning a profit. He convinced me to move back home, join him, and join them to see if we could accelerate the growth of this little software company that he had founded. I ran sales and marketing for Hyland for a time. Then, as we got larger, moved into the position of Chief

Operating Officer, and [00:02:30] that for maybe seven years. Then, moved into the CEO role, succeeding ... Packy retired in 2001. His brother took over the CEO role at that time. His name was AJ, both still good friends and mentors of mine. Then, I moved into the CEO role about six years ago.

Jacob: Very cool. Then, what is a usual day [00:03:00] like for you? Even starting when you wake up in the morning, because people are really interested in the routines of CEOs. What is your day like even before you get into the office?

Bill Priemer: Well, I'm not a ... When I wake up, I don't know if this is healthy or not, but I'm thinking about work. I'm almost automatic ... I move into work mode right away. My wife and children want me out of the house, because I'm already [00:03:30] thinking about work and in work mode. I'm not a guy who works out in the morning. I do try to stay healthy, but that's usually after work kind of activity. I'm grabbing an orange juice and a piece of fruit and I'm out the door. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, I don't know, I live two miles from our headquarters, so I have a very short commute. I hit the ground, hit the ground running. There's a certain amount of structure to [00:04:00] my work. We've got, at our size now, we've got series of meetings that are on the calendar.

Internal planning, strategy, meetings, a lot of my time is spent on communication, internal. We've got a weekly company-wide meeting that we [00:04:30] hold every Monday morning. It just last for 20 minutes, but we want to provide a nice synopsis of what happened to us during the previous week, the new customers that joined us, the bright spots of the previous week. There's a fair amount of internal communication. We're approaching 20,000 customers, so there's always [00:05:00] a lot of customer interaction and dialog, especially with our largest customers. Many of whom liked to have an executive level relationship with us. Then, we have a lot of business partners. We have about 400 business partners all over the world.

Many of whom, their businesses, their primary focus [00:05:30] is delivering our software to their market, geographic, or maybe an industry segment. We're very important to them. The relationship is very important to them, so there's a good bit of that as well. Then, these aren't only phone conversations and the like. I do a lot of traveling out to see our customers and partners, and increasingly, our own workforce, as we have [00:06:00] 30 offices around the United States and around the world.

Jacob: You're not sitting in Ivory Tower just yelling at people, and pointing fingers, and throwing stuff, none of that. It sounds like you're out there doing a lot of these human interaction, communication, building relationships?

Bill Priemer: Yeah, sitting in the office, that's no fun. As far as the travel goes, I don't know if I enjoy the process [00:06:30] of getting there and coming back, with all the travel hassles, and delays. Just the hassle of traveling, but I really enjoy being there. There is nothing more interesting or fulfilling to me than visiting a customer, understanding what they're up against [00:07:00] in terms of their

critical success factors, what's working for the business, what's challenging to them, what are the overarching trends. Then, usually getting a tour of their facility, and getting to see right up close how their professionals are using our software. It's really enjoyable. We have so many customers these days, I can go to just about any [00:07:30] city, and there might be one large customer who would be the reason that I would be visiting that city, but I can always see a handful of customers anywhere I am.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was in Pensacola, Florida to visit a large hospital system, but while I was in the area, I stopped by a smaller credit union, who's using our software. Then, stopped by [00:08:00] a re-insurance company who's using our software. Then, stayed over a day, drove over to Tallahassee, Florida to see about four State agencies that are using our product. Getting there isn't always fun, but being there is fantastic.

Jacob: I couldn't agree more, whenever I travel for speaking, the speaking, when you get there, it's fun, but actually, dealing with the airplane hassle, and eating airplane food and all of that [00:08:30] sort of stuff is never that great. Well, what about Hyland, maybe you can give us some background information about the company. How many employees do you guys have, and what do you guys do?

Bill Priemer: We are enterprise software company. This is software for organizations, and as you might imagine, a lot of software is moving to the Cloud, so it used to be that our software would be installed on a customer's infrastructure. These days, we run the software from [00:09:00] more and more of our customers and they access it over the web. The conversion of so many enterprise applications to the cloud is definitely affecting us and our customers. Our enterprise software, it used to be called document management, and workflow software, that's essentially what we do today. The industry moniker for years was enterprise content management. These days, we're referring to the platform [00:09:30] as a content services platform. Essentially, this is all about digitizing an organization's information, organizing it smartly, and securely.

Then, enabling the right information to get into the hands of the right professional, at the right time, so they can make a decision, accomplish their work, and move a transaction or a [00:10:00] resolution along the process. The goal ends up being, when it's all done right, a paperless workplace, where there isn't any physical paper, and an organization that is increasingly operationally efficient and effective, and can operate with greater agility. That's [00:10:30] the kind of software that we make. In terms of the size of the organization, we are 3,300 people. We've got just about 2,000 at our headquarters' location. We're out on a campus here outside of Cleveland, Ohio. Then, we've got offices around the United States, and there's about, maybe about 450 of us that work outside of the U.S., and it's only about 20% of our business that is [00:11:00] outside of the U.S. today, but it's a huge growth opportunity for us.

We have offices in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and London, and Berlin, and Sydney, Australia, and Tokyo, Japan, and Singapore. We definitely have a global footprint, a foundational presence in a lot of parts of the world. A lot of growth opportunity within [00:11:30] the U.S as organizations of all shapes and sizes are trying to digitize as rapidly as possible, but a lot of growth opportunity for us outside the U.S. as well.

Jacob: What are you guys doing to attract talent? Maybe you can even just talk about, is it a challenge for you, guys? Obviously, you're in Cleveland, so most people usually always assume, "Oh, Bay Area, Chicago, and New York," [00:12:00] but people forget that there are other States and other cities in the United States where we have big companies, that also need to attract and retain top talent. Not just New York and the Bay Area. What's your strategy? How are you guys able to attract some of the best and the brightest talents that's out there and get them to come to your campus and come to your location?

Bill Priemer: Jacob, that's a great question, because you're right, you wouldn't think of Cleveland, Ohio, and as [00:12:30] many technology professionals, as we ... think that would be a challenge for us. The reality is, it's been just about the opposite. We don't have a challenge building our workforce. Now, we've done it in kind of some non-traditional fashion. We knew we weren't going to have the ability, being based here in Ohio, [00:13:00] to have a lot of people that already lived here, that had a lot of technology experience, and expertise. There are just not enough companies that do similar things to what we do to have that. Similarly, look, we're based in Cleveland, I love Cleveland. I think it's great, but it's not the kind of place that someone on [00:13:30] the East Coast, or Californias, or Boston tech that's going to wake up in the morning and say, "I'd really to move to Cleveland."

We knew that we could attract for certain positions and specialized roles, but by and large, we weren't going to be able to get people to move to Cleveland. What we were left with is we were going to have to recruit out of the outstanding [00:14:00] computer science, and computer engineering programs of our local and our regional universities, of which there are many. Of course, you'd know Ohio State, and maybe Case Western Reserve University, but also universities like Kent State, the University of Akron, and Cleveland State. We've forged very [00:14:30] close relationships with their computer science and computer engineering departments. We have a very active internship program from all of those schools this past summer. I think we had something like 130 or 140 interns just in our Cleveland facility alone.

The idea is certainly that that internship experience is an extended interview, but we move further back than [00:15:00] that. In high school and for middle schoolers, we ran a whole series all year long of technology camps. They range from hackathons over a weekend, to maybe a once ... one evening a week over an eight-week period where you can build a website, or a mobile application. We're encouraging really young [00:15:30] students to develop an interest in programming, and in software development, and to consider a career in

technology. I was just talking to an intern the other day, he had spent the summer with us. We have offered him a full time job, which he has accepted. When he graduates, he's going to join us like so many of our interns do.

I said, " [00:16:00] How did we come to meet each other?" He said, "Well, my school came to Hyland as part of a field trip. I had a class that came as a field trip when I was in 7th Grade. From there, I learned about this tech camps that you have, and from there, I decided to study computer programming, and that led me to this point." We have absolutely taken a long term view [00:16:30] and this idea that we're going to have to develop our own workforce starting from an early age, and it's working. It's working for us. We'll hire about 300 people in the Cleveland area this calendar year. Most of whom, many of whom, we've [00:17:00] worked with along these lines for a pretty long line. Then, when we send our interns back to school, we have designated them campus ambassadors. We give them incentive for saying good things about us to their smart classmates.

We really have a nice program here, but it does mean though that the bulk of our workforce comes to us with some academic knowledge, but not a lot of professional experience. [00:17:30] From that point, we have to focus a lot on training and mentoring, and developing these younger people, not just as technologists but as professionals. We have to have some patience as we're doing that. Then, I think you're alluding earlier to us being a noted great place to work, but that's very intentional, because if you're going to make [00:18:00] this kind of investment, we've really got to keep our people, because after a couple of years, they are an experienced technology professional and they being recruited. Not necessarily by a lot of Ohio-based companies, because again, we don't have a lot of large software companies, but there are certainly lots of opportunity if they want to move out to the Bay Area.

We're doing a whole array [00:18:30] of things to make them not want to leave and maybe we can talk a little bit more about that, but retention of our workforce is really, really important to us.

Jacob: Yeah, I definitely want to talk about some of the things that you guys were doing. I love that you go not just universities, but even to high schools and middle schools. I'm just waiting for the elementary school Hyland baby technology camp to-

Bill Priemer: [00:19:00] Well, we do. I will tell you, so we have a daycare facility on site here. There's about 200 kids in it, infants up to ... right up to kindergarten. We have employees at Hyland that were at one time in that daycare.

Jacob: Really? That's pretty cool.

Bill Priemer: Yeah, it is just starting. [00:19:30] That has happened.

Jacob: That's a pretty cool story. That must be fun. Well, so I love that you're building these relationships with these educational institutions, but are other companies in the area doing the same thing? If so, how do you get these students to be interested in Hyland and not necessarily in one of the other companies that are out there?

Bill Priemer: Yeah, again, you won't have ... This is [00:20:00] the benefit of our geographic location. You won't have another software company of our size here. Although, we've got some very large companies that have great cultures, and as you know, any kind of organization is so technology enabled at this point, that there's a lot of technologists at our hospitals, and our insurance companies, and our manufactures, and the like. You're absolutely right. [00:20:30] There is competition. If you walk into our facility, you'll see, we've got a technology and a software kind of culture. We've got an open floor plan. We've got a casual dress environment. We have the accoutrements of a technology company. We've got slides that go from the second floor to the first floor. We've got volleyball courts. [00:21:00] We've got the rooms for the yoga and the spin class.

We've got tennis courts out back. We've got the things that maybe are becoming more common place on the West Coast. A place to get your haircut, and to have a massage, and the music lessons on site, and all kinds of things like that. These perks, but things that make work more comfortable, [00:21:30] that help you relieve some stress, that help you work on your personal health, and wellness. Work is stressful and anything that we can do to reduce that, I think, is going to be good for our people individually, but also good for their productivity. As I was walking over to start [00:22:00] this interview with you, I stuck my head into an internal training class just to see what they were doing, and it was a mindfulness and stress management class that we were conducting. The class was full.

There had to be 25 people in there. We're doing stuff like that, but I think more than that, I [00:22:30] think any kind of culture comes down to executing on some simple tasks that are probably easy to say but harder to do. You have to have a respectful environment, where everybody feels like they're an important, integral part of what's happening. There's got to be progress. Our kind of people, with all of their potential, and [00:23:00] talent, they have a healthy degree of ambition, so they've got to be constantly learning, and growing. It doesn't mean necessarily progressing through the organizational hierarchy, but somewhat that, so that's got to be able to happen, too. That happens with us, because we're growing at a nice pace. There are new roles, and new opportunities that are emerging all the time. [00:23:30] There's got to be that growth and that progress.

I think an aspect of our culture that I think people really appreciate, we're a very supportive, caring culture. It sounds soft and squishy, but we've got real friendships that form among our [00:24:00] people. They really feel part of a community. I don't know, there's a connectedness about our group. Some of

that has to do with the fun activities that foster such thing. I think more of it has to do with team-based work environments, where they're working together on projects, and celebrating the success when stuff gets done well. [00:24:30] All of that is rolled up into what you'd call company culture. We work on it all the time. Just like any good organization, we're serving our customers all the time, and asking them, are they satisfied and what can we do to make things better. We do the same thing with our employees. We're soliciting feedback all the time and then, developing-

Jacob: Not just once a year?

Bill Priemer: No, no. Well, we [00:25:00] do that, sort of on your anniversary, where we'll send out the survey to you, but we got focused groups of internal employees and we're asking, what can we do better? How can this be better for you? Also, realizing that we've got a diverse workforce, different demographics, and so that there's not a one-size fits all. What is a fun even to [00:25:30] folks just coming out of college is different than what can be a fun team building event for someone in their 50s like I am. We're mindful that we've got a diverse workforce, and we've got to cater to all of those groups and individuals.

Jacob: You talked about a lot of pretty crazy perks that you guys here.

Bill Priemer: Yeah.

Jacob: [00:26:00] I always tell companies that oftentimes, perks themselves are not a core strategy, I don't know, maybe you would disagree. What I find is that a lot of companies, they give perks, but they don't treat people well. They give you the tennis courts and the slides, but your manager will take credit for your work. You'll be berated in front of your peers. That's why I [00:26:30] always tell companies, you can't use perks just as a core strategy. You need to move beyond perks to actually change what it's like to be a part of your organization. It sounds like in Hyland, you guys have lots of perks. What's your thought on all of these? Is it necessary? Is it crucial? Is it a core part of your strategy?

Bill Priemer: I think it's a nice to have. I totally agree with you. I think far more important aspects of our culture is the respectful environment, [00:27:00] this environment of trust, where people operate with a great degree of autonomy, where we can ... Yeah, we can hold each other accountable, and we can have a crucial conversation. We can disagree, but we're going to do so respectfully. We're going to recognize. Recognition is so important [00:27:30] and you talked about that. We've got a whole variety of ways that we recognize people not just for their work successes, things that they accomplished, products they developed, sales that they made. That's important. We also have recognition just for adherence to our core value system, and we celebrate that every week. Often, your core values, and we've got core values of honesty, integrity, [00:28:00] and partnership, and solutions, and passion

So often, those can be just words on a wall, but we recognize every week, and actually this is pure nominated. When you catch a colleague demonstrating one of those core values particularly well, you nominate them, and then, we pick one, and we celebrate it across the company. To your point about recognition, all of [00:28:30] that, meaningful work, all of that is so much more important than these perks. I think these perks are nice to have. I think they can reflect that we care about our people, and we're trying to make life a little bit more convenient, and a little bit more fun for them. Maybe give them opportunities [00:29:00] to relax, or decompress at times during the day. I'll tell you, one area where we've really done a lot more in over the last couple of years is in our wellness programs.

I'm really proud of those. Here at headquarters, we've got an on-site wellness center that's staffed by nurse [00:29:30] practitioners, where you can go for your annual physical, and pretty much any kind of ailments. They can write prescriptions there, and they can also refer you to a specialist for more serious things. We've got an on-site dietician, we've got all the exercise programs. As I said, we've layered onto that mental, and emotional [00:30:00] wellness, and I'm just really proud of what we've done there. My first priority is just not to be preachy with all of these, but just to enable our people to get a little bit healthier, live healthier lives. If they so choose, and many of them do, but [00:30:30] the secondary benefit is just the energy that people that are feeling good bring to work.

You and I both know, the difference in our work on the days when we're feeling our best, when we've got ... our body's feeling good, things are okay at home, our friendships are all intact, we're not worried about what it is. [00:31:00] We've got everything in our life managed, and those work days, as opposed to the days where we're not feeling so good about ourselves for whatever reason, and the difference in our productivity and our work product is just enormous. We get that benefit as well. Wellness is one of those things that I guess you could [00:31:30] look at as a perk, but I think really matters.

Jacob: Yeah, it sounds like it, like you guys have a lot of stuff going on there. Let's talk about maybe some of the non-perk things that you guys have, as far as how you attract people. Anything that you can share about any programs that you have, any growth opportunities, the non-perk stuff that [00:32:00] an employee might get inside of Hyland.

Bill Priemer: Well, we've got a very diverse business. We've got our, as I said, our core products is about document management and workflow, but the organizations that we do that for are very diverse. It's banks, and hospitals, and insurance companies, and manufacturers, and pharmaceutical [00:32:30] companies, and law firms. It's any kind of organization that you can think of. Though it's the same software at its core, the kinds of solutions that we construct from that software, and then, how we market to all of those different kinds of organizations, that is very different. We're organized into teams that can get pretty small, [00:33:00] that focus on that kind of work. Within that team, they

operate with a lot of autonomy, with a lot of discretion, and really have a lot of input as to the growth strategy, the product strategy, listening to the customers, [00:33:30] and advocating for them in terms of what additional that they would like to see in the product, or additional service offerings, or support offerings.

Although we're a big company, when you come to work for Hyland, more often than not, you're on a team that runs a little business within the big business. I think that's really [00:34:00] attractive. Honestly, that's one of the things that attracted me to Hyland coming from very large companies, is that, I worked for some great companies, but honestly, I thought to myself, do I really matter? At Hyland, because of the way we're set up, and the way that we go to market, you can work on [00:34:30] something where you individually really, really matter. I think we're also, I talked about growth, and progress, and I think to a person, we are very interested in their growth, and development as a software developer, as a consultant. Even if they start out with us in one capacity, and [00:35:00] have intentions or desires to move into another.

We go through a pretty extensive and continuous career mapping exercise and discussions with our people about what they're doing today, and where they'd like to improve, and where they'd like to go. Then, giving them assignments and responsibilities that would prepare them for that next step. [00:35:30] I think we and our people, we're not taking ... We're not leaving their development up to chance. I think that's something that we're actively working on, and talking about, again, ideally, with all 3,300 of our people.

Jacob: Yeah, I love some of those programs, because I think that that's one of the things that I [00:36:00] believe the research says employees wants most, having that sense of impact, and feeling like you're making a difference, having that sense of purpose. It sounds like employees really do get and feel that instead at Hyland, which is great. I know one of the areas that you guys are involved, and of course, is technology. You create a lot of software on that. I'm curious if you have thoughts on the whole automation debate that's going on [00:36:30] out there. If you're optimistic about the future with jobs and automation, or just what you're thinking about when you think of automation today?

Bill Priemer: I know that more and more is and will be automated. That is absolutely the case. Of course, we know about [00:37:00] manual automation in a manufacturing sense, but it is happening with routine, processes, that knowledge workers are involved in, and we're very much a part of it. Today, what our software does, again, we collect and organize documented information, and we present it to a, generally, a person who's got to make a decision on that. A decision to pay an invoice, or approve a claim, or [00:37:30] look at this job application, and decide to give them an interview, and then, move that along in its process. That's what we do today. Increasingly with machine learning, and artificial intelligence, and robotic process automation, and this is very real today, the system will be doing more of what that person is doing.

These used cases are developing really rapidly, because we could start to see, "Okay, [00:38:00] why did that reviewer of this student's application reject that student and not admit them? Why did they? Given that these were the test scores, and the essay, and the transcripts, and all of those things." We could start to take that person out of the equation and say, "Ah, they're making this decision for this, and this, and this reason." This includes the fact that today the system, as you probably [00:38:30] well know, can even do things like, read that essay. Well, first of all, tell if it was plagiarized, and secondly, tell if it was actually written by a junior in high school, and then, get a sense, is this person sentimental, are they problematic. We can even decipher the system, the software, it can even decipher themes out of that essay.

We will be doing, our systems will be doing more of the work that people are doing. [00:39:00] We are getting to the point where, yeah, more and more of our organizational, operational processes are going to be completely automated. This also includes the entry point. You don't have a customer walking into a facility, or calling into a facility. They're initiating a request, or an application, or a process via their mobile device. It's going to be straight through processing. We're going to [00:39:30] return that customer with a decision, or a resolution. That is happening. It's happening quickly. I think, yes, on one hand, there's application, there's implications for people that are doing that work. I think part of the reality is that I don't think people enjoy doing that work today.

You certainly don't have college graduates today saying, "You know what I want [00:40:00] to do? I want to join a government agency, so I can process permit applications." That's not happening today.

Jacob: There might be one or two people out there.

Bill Priemer: There will be people though that want to monitor that process, tweak that process, and so that's going to be required, sort of not working in that process, but on that process. Then, also, [00:40:30] the people that are looking at the trends, and what's happening, and creating new product and service offerings, and better ways to add value to what that organization does, and to better respond to the needs of that patient, client, customer, student, citizen, what have you. Those routine processes, they'll be automated, they'll [00:41:00] be executed much faster. They'll be executed much more accurately, and with a degree of probably objectivity, and lack of bias that might exist today. There's definitely going to be some advantages, but automation is happening.

Jacob: Are you seeing, well, first I'm curious if you're seeing this internally, are you guys automating any things for [00:41:30] your ... even for your customers, for your employees? In those situations, what happens to the people usually? Either internally, or for your customers, what are you typically seeing happen? Are all these people being let go? Are they being fired? What's their fate?

Bill Priemer: Oh, people wouldn't be doing that kind of activity, but typically, they're ... I think what they're spending their time [00:42:00] on is responding to the speed of the

business and making changes to the business, and working on changes to the business as opposed to executing these routine tasks. That's a good thing, because these two, these are happening at the same time. Everything is moving so fast, right? What were formerly competitive differentiators are being copied, [00:42:30] and commoditized. New ways of doing things are disrupting the old ways of doing things. There's very few organizations or businesses these days that can keep doing things the same old way for a period of years. They've all got to be responsive, and more flexible, and more adaptive. They got to be constantly changing, and it doesn't matter the kind of organization or business that you're in.

I think while [00:43:00] automation is automating the routine, changing the whole thing up, creating new products, creating new services, I think that's the work that people are increasingly doing. Even as we as a software companies, we do things more efficiently, everything from developing and testing our software, to managing [00:43:30] our cloud-based deployments, to executing our back-end processing, paying our bills, hiring people, and running all of our right contracts, and legal department, and everything else. We found that we haven't needed more people. I think we need more creative thinkers as [00:44:00] opposed to probably people that are just trained to just work on single-threaded process. I think the kind of talent that we and other organizations need, I think, is probably changing as a result, but it doesn't seem to me that we need far fewer of them.

Jacob: Yeah, and I find [00:44:30] that across the board. It's not that the employees are being let go, it's that they're being up scaled, the company is exploring new business opportunities. The particular tasks, the routine, might get automated, but it doesn't mean that the human themselves get automated. I think there's a big difference there.

Bill Priemer: I really think that's the case.

Jacob: Yup. I want to shift gears a little bit, just because I'm particularly interested in this, and this is the notion of employee data, and what you're seeing with that, [00:45:00] because when we were talking about themes that would be interested in exploring, you gave this example via email, how we can basically track everything, via Google, and Facebook, and all these information about our kids, and our friends. It seems like we're starting to be able to do this internally as well with our employees. I'm curious to hear your perspectives on what things are we looking at, or are you looking at, and what are you doing with the data? [00:45:30] Or, what can we do with the data?

Bill Priemer: Right, I think that is absolutely the case. Just about everything that we're doing in our personal life, on all of our devices these days are being tracked and recorded. The same thing is happening with our work life. I think today, or historically, we've interrogated [00:46:00] that data to prevent the bad things. We can do things today, like, we can tell when somebody is essentially not working, or if they're spending their time at work watching YouTube videos, or

on the ESPN website, or something like that. We could put a stop to that. We can make sure that they're not using profanity in their communication, [00:46:30] and things like that. I think more and more we can see the amount of work that they are accomplishing and we're also ... We'll soon have the ability to start to assess the quality of that work. So much in business, and this is the promise of taking all of these data and turning [00:47:00] it into intelligence, so many decisions that we still make, whether it's about our business, and our customers, and also about the effectiveness of our people, is based on gut feel.

We, as managers, and this is part ... our people want some trust, and they want some autonomy, and that is true, but they also [00:47:30] want an objective measurement of their work. They don't want to ... They want to be considered for that next job opportunity, or promotion, or stretch assignment based on the quality of their work. How do you get at that if you're not standing there [00:48:00] looking over their shoulder? Can you start to interrogate some of these data and see things, like, "Well, how much do over is required in their work? How much review is required? What's the volume of the work that they are doing? What are the amount of times where ... How much help [00:48:30] do they need in their work, or how much are they able to accomplish largely on their own?"

Because everything that they're doing, they're interacting with applications, and they're working all in our ... all of their work is being done via systems today. These are the kind of things that can be assessed, and I think more [00:49:00] objectively evaluated than they historically have been. It does mean, understand this, that privacy has gone away in the work environment just like it has in our personal lives. I think there's some good things that can come out of that, too.

Jacob: What data do you guys look at internally for your employees? Do you look at keystrokes? [00:49:30] Do you look at, I don't know, do you have sensors that are in there? What sort of stuff are you guys collecting internally and how are you using that data to improve things inside of Hyland?

Bill Priemer: Well, we're collecting it today. I think we are just starting to gather intelligence from it. One of the things we're doing in our sales organization, we just [00:50:00] adopted a sales optimization tool. Formerly, with our CRM, like a standard CRM, it has all of the information on a prospect that we are engaged with, who was evaluating our software, but the CRM is just data. Who are the various decision-makers and influencers are at that organization? [00:50:30] The emails we've sent, the contact that we've had with them, but the actual execution of the sales cycle, that was still largely in that sales person's head. How fast they were progressing on that, moving that customer through that decision process, and at what pace, that was largely lost to [00:51:00] us. It would only be known if the sales manager was very closely working with that sales professional. Well, now, we have ... We're recording every step of that sales process, where the system is asking them questions.

They are answering them, and then, based on those answers, stepping them through that sales process. It will not only [00:51:30] give us a much more accurate forecast, we believe, on which customers will actually choose us, and when they will, also, the likelihood of how deeply we might have to discount the offerings in order to secure that business. Also, serve the effectiveness of that sales [00:52:00] rep at executing that sales cycle. I think that's the example of the kind of tools and data that's now available. For the sales managers, and sales leaders, presents them with a dashboard of all the individuals on the team. Look, it does two things. One, it enables us to evaluate them in their performance, and their effectiveness. The other thing it allows us to do is [00:52:30] intercede and help, which is a really important part about all of these systems, too.

It's not just about measurement, and assessment, and accountability ... us identifying who we can help, and opportunities for coaching, and mentorship.

Jacob: I suppose some people might get a little weirded out by the tracking keystrokes, for example. Because I've heard a lot of debate and conversation around that, and I've heard both sides [00:53:00] presented as far as that argument goes. What's the boundary, or the limit and how much of it do you share with employees? For example, I know a lot of people, that if they were at a company, and they knew their keystrokes were being tracked, they'd be like, "That's weird." At the same time I know a lot of business leaders who say, "You know what? You're at this company, we're paying you. Why shouldn't we be able to track your keystrokes?" How do you [00:53:30] balance that? What's the medium?

Bill Priemer: Yeah, we don't track keystrokes, I know that can be done, and I know some organizations, especially managing the distributed workforce, wanted to make sure that their people outside the office, when they couldn't be seen, would actually sit down at a desk somewhere and doing some work. These days, you can work productively [00:54:00] on an airplane, anywhere, using your mobile devices. All of our systems are mobile enabled. I don't think that ... Certainly, look, for a knowledge work, especially with what we've talked about, it's not about keystrokes, or what you're doing any given minute. I think it's about the quality of the work, and the quality of your decisions, the degree of innovation, and creativity, [00:54:30] and resourcefulness that you're bringing to your work. At the end of the day, it's still about the end results.

It's still about, "What are we trying to accomplish?" For different organizations and different roles, I think, that's different time periods. It could be this week, it could be this month, it could be this quarter. What are the four main things that you want to accomplish over the next 90 days? How are you going to go about doing that? What's our cadence of communication [00:55:00] that I can check in to see the progress that you're making? Also, how I can help remove barriers. I think it's more about goal setting, and progress toward those goals, and measurement of those goals than it is about keystrokes. [00:55:30] Even though everything is being recorded, and is being online, and we can interrogate the

system to see every email you sent, and every text that you sent, what's the value in doing that.

I think it still remains to be seen, but nobody's hiding anymore these days. You can't [00:56:00] hide at work. One of the interesting things is, Jacob, I think it's kind of a corollary to this, is like, just like everything in our personal lives is so out there and transparent. It's true, like, we've talked about for an individual employee, I think it's true for an organization, too. I was thinking about this the other day, [00:56:30] our competitors, pretty much everything that we're doing, because we publish so much on our websites, and on our blogs, and our customers talk about it, and our business partners talk about it, and it's all findable. It's just a really interesting dynamic when every organization really knows what all the other organizations that they're competing with, or interacting with are really up to.

It's hard to keep [00:57:00] things as a secret. Some things still need to be, and that's getting more and more difficult, and the importance of security, and cyber security, and everything else. It's harder and harder to secretly, quietly outflank, or create a differentiator and not have a competitor know about it. It's just a really interesting dynamic. I think [00:57:30] another thing is, it's ... How our customers are actually ... their actual experience with our company, and with our software becomes the common perception. It used to be that, you wouldn't really know what an organization's customers really feel [00:58:00] about them, so maybe you would pay attention to their sales pitch, and their marketing. These days, it's so easy to find out what customers really feel, and if they're very happy, or just moderately satisfied, or if they're disappointed, and why.

It's just a really interesting dynamic now where I think actual customer experience, it's [00:58:30] come to the forefront and really trumps anything that an organization is doing, from a sales, and marketing, and positioning, and branding standpoint. The reality of what you're doing for your customers is going to carry the day, I think.

Jacob: I couldn't agree more. I suppose it also goes on to this notion of transparency, too, right? Letting people know [00:59:00] what you're doing with the data, I think that's been a big complaint about things like Facebook. It's not so much that the data is accessible, it's what you're doing with the data a lot of times people don't even know. In our personal lives, I totally agree, it almost seems like privacy is all but been wiped out. I suppose the argument could be made, if you don't have a lot of privacy in your personal life, how much privacy should you have in your corporate life?

Bill Priemer: Yeah.

Jacob: Yeah, I'm not saying that we shouldn't [00:59:30] have any privacy, but I'm just saying that we're ... It seems like we've given up on the privacy in our personal life battles, so maybe we're just hanging onto that corporate privacy flag.

Bill Priemer: Yeah, but I think it's going, as we've been talking about here, I think it's going the same way.

Jacob: Yeah, it certainly appears like that. Well, I have so many more questions I could ask you. I know we're just about at the top of the hour, so [01:00:00] I wanted to ask you just some fun questions to wrap up, unless there's anything else that you wanted to make sure that we cover that's more serious and business related.

Bill Priemer: Boy, well, as you said, this has been enjoyable, and it's gone fast. There's a lot more we could talk about, but no, we covered a lot. We'll talk about the fun stuff.

Jacob: Okay, sounds good. Yeah, the podcast does go quick. Everyone is always surprised. They're like, 60 minutes, and then, after 60 minutes go by, they're like, "Wow, we didn't [01:00:30] even get a chance to talk about a bunch of other stuff." A couple of fun questions for you to wrap up. What's the most embarrassing moment you've had at work?

Bill Priemer: Boy, that's good. Boy, that's good. An embarrassing moment.

Jacob: Yeah.

Bill Priemer: Well, we had a dodge ball tournament in our central atrium, and I was hit squarely [01:01:00] in the face by a dodge ball, in front of a couple of hundred of my peers. Left a big red mark on the side of my face, that was right-

Jacob: And that person no longer works.

Bill Priemer: Yeah, nobody would admit it, right? Because we had just started, so there was the full team by the other side, so I didn't even know where it came from.

Jacob: You didn't stop and say, "Who did that? You're gone."

Bill Priemer: No.

Jacob: All right, that's a good one. I like that one. If you were a super hero, who [01:01:30] would you be?

Bill Priemer: Oh, that's great. I have been watching the Batman ... I watched that Batman trilogy again with my son. He's a little dark, but I like the Batman. Maybe I'd be the Batman.

Jacob: Yeah, all right. That's a good one. You can't go wrong with Batman.

Bill Priemer: Well, he's also relatable, because he's a real guy. He doesn't have any superpowers, right?

Jacob: Just unlimited money.

Bill Priemer: Yeah, [01:02:00] he does have that.

Jacob: What's a book that you recommend? It could be a business book, or a non-business book.

Bill Priemer: I just finished Condoleezza Rice's book, what did she call it? I think it's called the Pursuit of Democracy. I don't have it in front of me.

Jacob: No worries.

Bill Priemer: [01:02:30] She was talking about the progress that democracy has taken and the journey that it's undergone in our country, and in regions and countries all over the world. She's got a really engaging style. She was a professor before and after she was a politician, so she writes [01:03:00] well.

Jacob: Sorry, go ahead. Were you going to ask something?

Bill Priemer: It was called just, Democracy. Democracy.

Jacob: Democracy, okay.

Bill Priemer: Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom.

Jacob: Oh, that's a good title. What was the most valuable business lesson you've ever learned?

Bill Priemer: Well, boy, that is really good. I think [01:03:30] in terms of working with people, trust is very powerful. I think when you are trusted, more often than not, you rise to the occasion to earn that trust, and [01:04:00] to justify that trust that was given. I think trusting is a very powerful concept. I think there are some minority of cases where trust is not wise, and so you have to be vigilant about that, because you can be burned. In most cases, trust is a very powerful [01:04:30] motivator of people, partners, and it's got a great place in a professional environment.

Jacob: What was the greatest mistake you've ever made? Or biggest failure, biggest failure or biggest mistake.

Bill Priemer: I think one of the things I had to recognize is that in managing people, or situations, [01:05:00] it's not a one size fits all. I think there was a time in my career where I would manage people and I say, "Well, I work with people this way. If it's not working for them, well, that's on them, it's not on me." Then, I realized, "No, that's wrong." That I have to tailor my approach, sometimes work [01:05:30] out of my natural way of working, or even comfort zone, to be an effective manager and leader for a team member. I think that was a really

important lesson. I've certainly learned that, too, as we do more work across the globe, [01:06:00] that the way that we interact, negotiate, just work with people in different organizations, we'll take on some different nuances, and some different ... there's some different cultural implications there. It's probably that this one size does not fit all, that a tailored approach is often necessary.

Jacob: [01:06:30] That's a good one, and very last question for you, what are you most proud of?

Bill Priemer: Well, I'm the father of four, four teenagers, really proud of all of them, and what they're doing in their schooling and their lives. That's an immense source of pride. I've got 3,300 [01:07:00] colleagues here at Hyland, and awfully proud of them in what we're doing as a business. The kind of business, the kind of culture that we've created, and the degree of value that we're providing for our customers. That's also just a tremendous source of pride, and just gratification for me.

Jacob: Well, [01:07:30] that's a great one, for sure. Well, Bill, we've reached the end of our podcast time, but where can people go to learn more about you, and Hyland? Maybe they'll even apply for a job there after listening to this.

Bill Priemer: Well, they can go to hyland.com, that's H-Y-L-A-N-D dot com, and they can learn all about us, and our products, and certainly apply if they'd like. They can also reach [01:08:00] out to me. My contact information's on that site. They can follow me on Twitter @BillPriemer, that's B-I-L-L P-R-I-E-M-E-R. Yeah, happy to hear from any of your listeners, for sure.

Jacob: Well, Bill, thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to speak with me, and even going 10 minutes past our agreed time, so thank you.

Bill Priemer: It went fast, [01:08:30] Jacob. Thanks so much. When I get out to the Bay Area, we're definitely going to have a cup of coffee.

Jacob: Yeah, that would be fun. Thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest, again, has been Bill Priemer, the CEO of Hyland, and I will see all of you next week.