

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

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Jacob: Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of the Future of Work podcast. My guest today is Dan Shapero, vice president of talent solutions career and learning LinkedIn. Dan, thanks for joining me.

Dan: Pleasure. It's great to be here.

Jacob: So I have tons of questions for you, because I was looking at your LinkedIn, I looked at a report that linked in recently released, you've done acquisitions of Linda and Glint. I have tons of things I'm so curious about. But before we jump into anything related to that, why don't we start with some background information about you? So how did you get involved with LinkedIn, and what do you do there?

Dan: Yeah, so I run the products for all of our talent businesses, so that's how companies use LinkedIn to recruit, how they leverage LinkedIn as a learning platform, and also how members of LinkedIn use LinkedIn to find jobs. So I get to participate in all those different products, and it's a fantastic space to be in. It's super mission-driven which is something that really matters to me. I joined LinkedIn about ten years ago. We were a company of only about 300 people, and before LinkedIn, I had been a consultant at Bain & Company and had found the power of LinkedIn as a place to learn all sorts of things about what's going on in industry. So when I thought it was the right time to leave consulting, I contacted or tried to reach out to people that I could get in touch with at LinkedIn, because I love the product, and found my way here.

Jacob: Very cool. So what do you spend all of your time doing now, or what is a typical day like for you at LinkedIn?

Dan: It really varies. Last week we had a wonderful week. We hosted our talent connect conference, which is an event we put on once a year. About 4,000 leaders in the space of talent, recruiting, learning, diversity and inclusion, talent analytics, they all come together at a conference that we host, and we got to share with them a bit about the things that we've been building as well as the roadmap ahead. It's just a wonderful time to hear from our customers about what matters to them, what we're doing that's resonating, what we can do to improve. So it was a really fun week, and actually we hosted it at the Anaheim convention center and got to take everyone to Disney Land for one of the evenings, which was really cool.

Jacob: Wow, very nice. So aside from doing these types of conferences, do you have a typical routine that constitutes your day, or is every day just something different?

Dan: I find that it's better to cater, at least my own schedule, to whatever's needed at the moment. Sometimes for trying to figure out a particular part of our product roadmap, and we're spending a lot of time with users, with the design team, with the engineering team to figure out what we're gonna build to meet the needs of our members and customers. In other cases, I'll be spending a lot of time with clients, meeting them around the world, whether it be here in the U.S. or in Europe or in Asia. I really love the fluidity of the job because we get to work on such global scale problems, and depending upon the task at hand, I try to make sure that I'm working on the things that matter most.

Jacob: Can you give us a bit of background information about LinkedIn for the few people that might not be familiar with it? You mentioned ten years ago you had 300 people, and you originally just started off as kind of a networking site for business, but now you have ballooned into so much more than that. Where is LinkedIn now? How big are you guys, and what space are you currently in?

Dan: So LinkedIn currently has over 575 million members around the world. We're the world's largest professional networking site. We really are the brainchild of Reid Hoffman, our founder, and his founding team. About ten years ago he wrote a book called the startup of you, and the core thesis of the book was that in a world where we've moved beyond this idea of lifelong employment, it used to be the case that people joined a company early in their career and they sort of stayed with that company for most of their career, and if they put their head down and did a good job, then they would continue to progress. We've moved from that world to a world where it was really in the hands of each individual to figure out how to navigate their own career. So Reid starting asking questions around, well, what are the best practices of managing a career, and how could we build a platform that helped people do that through the internet and through software? And so things like, well you should have a profile. You should be able to build a brand. You should establish relationships with people that you've worked with and nurture those relationships.

The idea became that LinkedIn was this platform for professionals to join and start to run their careers much like a startup would think about building their own businesses. Over the course of LinkedIn's history those different capabilities have evolved. We've moved from being a place where it's really about building your profile and connecting to others, it's become a platform for consumption of what's going on in your industry and in your network. It's been a platform for understanding when the people that you've worked with change in roles in their career, or of something is happening in their industry that you should be aware of, and it's really become this global phenomenon of the space where professionals come together to help each other on things. And then as a business, we use that consumer platform to build really great business, mostly around helping companies connect with individuals.

Our talent business, which is the largest business at LinkedIn, is mostly oriented around helping companies hire great people. We have a great sales and marketing business as

well which is around helping companies engage with customers and leads to build their businesses.

Jacob: And how many people do you guys have now?

Dan: As an employer?

Jacob: Yeah.

Dan: I think a little more than 12,000.

Jacob: Wow. So you went from 300 ten years ago to 12,000 now. That must've been quite a change to see, because you were there that whole time. You saw that growth. What was that like?

Dan: It's been fantastic. I think that what's amazing is what hasn't changed. I'd say the focus on the mission of creating economic opportunity for people hasn't changed one bit. I think the tenants of the culture are still as crisp and we're as true to them as we were back then. But of course as you bigger, the way that the organization comes together and the way that you run the company scales, but the principles that we operate by and the thing that we're focused on in the world I think has been amazingly consistent over the ten years that I've been here.

Jacob: What is it like to work at LinkedIn? I actually had Pat Waters, your former CHRO as a guest on the podcast. I think it was last year. I was at your offices, we did a little video down there, and I toured some of space. It was pretty interesting to see the inside there. But you know, bay area, a lot of people think of LinkedIn, cool bay area company, free food, free perks, massages, like Pinocchio's island in there. But what is it really like to work at LinkedIn?

Dan: Yeah, I used to describe my common state of being at LinkedIn as tired and inspired. It's the kind of place where people work really hard because they're so connected to the kind of work we do here. Last year, the team that I work on, we got 4 million people jobs, and we take the impact that we can have on the world incredibly seriously, and people work really hard as a result. I think that this mix of really always giving your best, partially not just because of the purpose of the company, but just by being surrounded by such wonderful people. I think LinkedIn has done an amazing job as we've grown to have been true to ... We want to be a place where people love coming to work. Actually we can talk a little bit about that in a little bit around our acquisition or intent to acquire Glint. But you know, LinkedIn's a place where you're inspired by the work and you're inspired by the people around you, and I think as a result people work pretty hard. But we also know how to have a good time, so I think it's a real environment that celebrates our successes and make sure that people take time to enjoy the progress that we've made.

Jacob: And what about some of the things that you guys offer for your employees? I'm sure listeners would be very curious about ... I don't know, are there any unique perks or

benefits that you offer, any unique programs that you have for employees, is it mainly an open floor plan, do people get free food? I know some of these questions might sound a little funny, but interestingly enough, for a lot of people that have never been to LinkedIn or don't know what it's like to work there, I think they would find it very fascinating to understand what it's actually like to be an employee there. So anything that you can share about the inside of LinkedIn would be awesome.

Dan: Yeah. Well maybe I'll share three things. One is every two weeks we have a company all hands hosted by our CEO Jeff Weiner, and it's just a really wonderful chance to make sure that everyone's able to hear directly from him what's going on in the business, what matters to him, and usually it's a company by some deep dive of some area in the company that you might've heard of but maybe you're not that familiar with. I just think that that kind of investment in making sure that everyone knows what's going on is so important. So that's one. We have a thing called InDay. Once a month, people are encouraged to clear their calendars, invest in themselves, invest in their teams. There's usually a theme associated with it. The theme actually, tomorrow is an InDay, is learning. So there's all this friendly competition going on right now within LinkedIn of which teams are gonna learn the most as measured by watching LinkedIn learning content, and executives are sending around the videos of what learning courses they've found most interesting and have been valuable to them. It's a really important part of our culture of taking time out to invest in yourself, connect with the people around you, which I've always really enjoyed.

And then maybe just in the area of perks you mentioned, we have a program where every employee every year gets a budget of money to apply towards any number of things that help make their life a little easier. It could be towards a babysitter, or if you're really into some kind of physical activity, but it's a little bit of self-directed perk that every employee gets to do.

Jacob: Very cool I love the self-directedness of it, because essentially you get to choose instead of having the company pick for you. I heard that you guys also have two things. I don't know if you still offer them or if you ever did. One was that you guys had a LinkedIn incubator, so kind of like your own internal startup where people pitched ideas and get funding for those. And I heard you also have a program where you can take out an interesting person for coffee. Are those two things still going on, or were they going on, or were those just rumors?

Dan: Well we have a pretty robust hack day. You can call it a program, it's just part of the culture that pretty frequently different engineering teams sponsor hack days where any number of the company, even technical and non-technical can pitch their favorite idea in an area. We recently had one about hiring, and there was just amazing ideas that people came up with around how to make hiring easier for the person that's trying to fill a role, as well as for the job seeker. It's just cool to see people that don't work on those products come to the hack days and bring new creativity and new perspective, and also people that don't really have a technical background but still get to participate in the idea creation or some of the research around deciding which ideas are good ones worth proposing. So hack days have been a big part of our culture. I'm not sure I'm aware of your take an interesting person to coffee idea.

Jacob: That may have been a rumor. That very well may have been a rumor that was started that somebody tweeted about. But I thought it was LinkedIn where somebody said that on a regular basis, you're given a budget to take somebody out for coffee. Again, I don't know. Could just be one of those things that people share online.

Dan: I don't know. I think that there's a huge encouragement to network throughout the company, so maybe that's where it came from. I would say irrespective of program, there's a lot of coffee doing at LinkedIn for sure.

Jacob: Oh I'm sure. And you guys have a gorgeous cafeteria there, the one that I was at in your bay area offices, which is fantastic, so cool. Thank you for sharing some information about LinkedIn, and maybe we can shift gears a little bit and now to get your perspectives and thoughts and some of the research that you guys are doing just on the world of work. And you touched on this a little bit earlier, but I'd be really curious to hear your perspective on how do you think employment has changed? When you think about work today versus work 10 or 20 years ago, what are the things that you think have changed the most?

Dan: Yeah, I think it's a great question. I think it starts with two really fundamental things that are happening. I think the first is if you look at the most important companies in the world, if you look at the companies that we tend to talk about in the news and the areas that are really driving industry, the new reality is that companies are realizing that they win or lose on their people. It's really that simple. I think 50 years ago companies might've talked about their financing strategy or their supply chain, or their real estate. And now, CEOs talk about their teams. I think that that's created a huge appetite for innovation in the HR function in terms of how companies are recruiting, about how they're investing in their own people, in terms of how they're upscaling and rescaling in terms of the perks and benefits that they offer their teams.

There's just a new focus on how to help people really thrive at work, which is so different from ... I like to be sort of a historian of business, and if you zoom back 100 years to sort of Taylorism, Taylor was this guy that said that the way you drive efficient at companies is you measure every step in the process and you try to show someone how to do something in four seconds instead of five seconds. It's just such a top down view of how business gets done, and I think we're now entering a world where companies realize that how each person shows up at work to do their best work, how they feel at work, how they feel connected to the people around them, is part and parcel with this doing good business.

Jacob: Couldn't agree more. And by the way, fun fact I forgot to mention, in my recent book on employee experience, I looked at 252 companies around the world to see which companies do an amazing job of creating great employee experiences, and LinkedIn was one of the companies that scored near the very, very top of that list. So clearly you guys are doing something there that is working.

Dan: Thank you. LinkedIn really has this culture of caring about its employees, and I think that it's just part and parcel of who we are, so it's great that it comes through. I also think that that belief in the importance of how people feel at work is really what started our

conversations with Glint, which is a company that we recently announced our intent to acquire. We started as a customer of Glint. For those of you that don't know what Glint does, they're a piece of software that allows you to survey your employees to understand how they feel about work and the various dimensions of their work life. So then companies can look at that information, track it over time, and not just understanding at the corporate level, but cascade those insights to various leaders of functions all the way down to front line managers so that everyone up and down the chain can understand how the employees feel about their particular part of the company.

So we started as a customer just using this to help us track and measure our success as an employer in creating that kind of experience for our teams, as well as how we're delivering against our culture and our values, and it got to the point where we realized this is something every company in the world should do. We were seeing Glint as a company start to thrive, and it seemed like a natural partnership with the other things that we're doing in the talent space around insights, around learning, that we think is just a modern best practice for companies. So we're incredibly excited about that announcement, and about what's to come.

Jacob: Yeah. I'm quite excited about it as well. I worked with Glint a little while ago, so I'm familiar with the company. Great group of people there, so I was excited to see that you guys were teaming up. You mentioned that people are the number one asset, and now a lot of organizations are realizing this and trying to embrace this concept. Is there anything ... Basically why is this happening? What is forcing organizations to all of a sudden take a step back and say, "Hey you know what, we really gotta think more about the employee experience and engagement and all this sort of stuff." Did something happen over the last couple years that's now forcing us to have these conversations?

Dan: Absolutely. I think there are two things. The first is democratization in decision making. If you look at company 100 years ago and you asked what percentage of the employees of a company are really making day-to-day decisions that chart the future of the business, it would've been very small. It would've been a couple executives that oversaw a huge factory, or railroad, or a farm. And we've moved to a place where we have an enormous portfolio of information workers that are on a day-to-day basis making really important decisions that ultimately drive where the company's going. So if any part of that process fails, if the decisions that you're empowering people to do aren't the right ones, then you're gonna lose in your market. The alternative of not giving them that decision making power means that you become a slow company, which is worse than a company that can't make good decisions.

So I think that it really stems from this idea of companies are getting to the point where most of their employees need to be empowered. So then the question is, how do you set someone up to feel empowered and do their best work? And it has everything to do with how do they team up with others? How do they feel about coming to work in the first place? Do they feel connected to the mission and the purpose of the company? Are they gonna make decisions with real care for the outcome of what happens to customers? All those things really start to play a role, and I think we all recognize that

everyone needs to be in their own personal way of being at peak performance, and it drives business outcomes.

Jacob: I know that you guys also collect a ton of data. You guys probably know more about the world of work than pretty much any company out there, because people are finding jobs, they're learning to skills on LinkedIn, they're networking. It's just crazy the amount of data that you guys have. And not to put you on the spot, but I'm curious, are there any stats or interesting pieces of data that you think listeners of the podcast need to know based on some of the stuff that you're seeing through your platform?

Dan: Absolutely. So maybe I'll start with some things that wouldn't be surprising, and then share a few things that might be. I think everyone who reads the headlines sees, and there's a recent headline around there being more job openings in the U.S. than has ever been recorded from prior data, even more job openings than people looking for work in some categories.

Jacob: Which is crazy. I saw that headline and I found that to be very interesting actually.

Dan: Yeah, and I think we see the same dynamic in our own data around the labor market is tightening, the labor market is tightening specifically in areas of important skills, and that those skills tends to be localized. So what's in demand in Cleveland is not gonna be what's in demand in Houston or in San Francisco. So it really is a local phenomenon, not a global phenomenon. But what's interesting that most people don't recognize is that the area that we see as having the largest skill gap is soft skills. We all talk about the technical skills that we're trying to make sure our educational systems are built around, whether it's in STEM, it's preparing for jobs in computer science or machine learning and AI, but increasingly, business is a team sport, and soft skills are the capabilities required for teams to function in healthy ways. So we're seeing a very large trend towards companies trying to find people that are really great in team environments and really great connecting with customers and other constituents.

Jacob: So when you say soft skills, I hear a lot of about empathy, self awareness, communication. Are these the type of soft skills that you're referring to, or are there other specific ones?

Dan: Yeah, I think that those are great. Communication both orally and in written form, the ability to connect with someone to understand what they're going through, to empathize, to be able to problem solve with them, come up with a joint solution, things like negotiation. So all of those things about how people work together has never been in such high demand, and I think it comes back to this idea that no one gets their job done alone anymore.

Jacob: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Okay, so that's that stat. What were some of the others?

Dan: Well I think that the other thing that we see in our data is the specificity of roles that people are going into. It used to be the case where companies would hire for barely generic roles. They would say I'm gonna hire engineers or software engineers, and now

we're seeing an increased fragmentation in the way that companies are thinking about what they're hiring for. They're hiring for specific languages, they're hiring for specific prior engineering experience. They're hiring for some that's done it before. And I think it's making it even harder for the recruiters of the world to meet the needs of what people are asking for in the business, and doing it in an environment where skills are becoming harder and harder to come by.

And maybe something specific to in the category of HR is there's a huge surge in the number of analytical professionals going into the talent space. HR as a discipline is really becoming digitized, modernized around analytics, and it's happened in the last three years in particular. We've seen a 3-4x increase in the number of talent professionals that are adding analytics as a core skill in their profile, and it's backed up by the fact that the executive seat is asking for answers, because the executive seat understands that whether or not we do well in our industry is really gonna be based on our people, and I need to know whether the people I have are the people that are gonna get us to where we need to be from a strategic perspective.

Jacob: Yeah, the data space for HR is completely blowing up, and I have a bunch of questions about that too. But maybe before we jump to that, are there any other data points or highlights from some of the research that you have done that you think we need to share with listeners, or should we jump onto something else?

Dan: Well maybe ... Yeah, maybe zooming out to a point you asked before of what are the big things going on? I think there is a fundamental shift going on of how the millennial generation thinks about managing their careers.

Jacob: I was just gonna ask you about millennials after this, so I'm glad you brought that up.

Dan: Yeah, well it's funny. If you talk to Gen Xers or people that aren't millennials and you say, "What are the adjectives you use to define what millennials are?" I feel like they use these terrible words. They're like, "They're entitled," or they expect something before they've earned it or something like that.

Jacob: I hear that a lot as well.

Dan: And I completely disagree. I think that they are rational, and they understand career management better than the generation before them. Here's what a smart person managing their career first figures out. The first thing they figure out is that every step in my career is on a path to the next set of things beyond that. When we're sitting down with a millennial and we're interviewing them, and they ask a question like, "Well what are the jobs after this one?" The response I often hear is they're already asking about a promotion before they've even started up for their first day. But actually, what they're doing is they're career pathing. They realize that the job I get now impacts the job I get later. They're asking about what am I gonna learn, and who am I gonna learn from, and who's gonna be my mentor? The reason they're asking those questions is they know that if they learn the right things from the right people, then they're going to have

opportunities in the future that are gonna be different for them than it might've been otherwise.

And they also recognize that you don't go to work for a paycheck. People come to work to of course earn for themselves and their families, but also in many cases to make sure that their fits with their life and that they're contributing to something that they find personally meaningful. I think that all of these things together actually point to a generation who just understands their career better than the generations before them, so they're asking questions to make sure that they're guiding themselves on the right path. What my recommendation always is to just embrace it. Recognize that what they're doing is really in their own best interests, and they're trying to just live the most fulfilled life and career life that they can.

Jacob: Part of me also wonders if that's also something new. I mean if you were to think back 10, 20, I don't know, 30, 40 years, do you think that when people were looking for jobs, this whole idea of meaning and purpose was really there, or was it really just about making money and providing for the family? Because it seems like purpose and meaning is everywhere now. Every company's talking about it. It's all over the place. I haven't seen anything like this before. So part of me wonders is this a new thing that we're starting to see?

Dan: Yeah. I think that it's a great question. I think every generation learns from the generation before them, and I think a lot of people in the millennial generation look at the people that they know around them and see many of them who went to work to earn a living but didn't love what they did. And I think that thinking about my own parents, one of the things that they always used to tell me is love what you do. I don't think that was a random thing for them to say. I think it's because they saw people that were around them that didn't, and they saw what an impact on your life it could have to really find your calling in some way.

Jacob: I saw this firsthand as well with my family. My mom used to come home from work crying and very upset, and she made a career change midlife, because she took a job purely to make money and provide for the family, and then I saw that and I was like, "Man, that really sucks." So thankfully she was able to make a change, but you're right. I saw that firsthand.

Dan: We've done some research on this idea of career sleepwalking, which is there's a whole population of people as large as 40% in certain categories where it's people that are in a role and just don't know how to get out of it, even though they're not sure it's what they really want to be doing. And we see it on the platform. There is a ton of window shopping on LinkedIn for careers. People go and look at jobs that are either different by industry, different by function, different by location, and as a crazy stat, near 22% of people on LinkedIn say that they really fell into their current job versus actively choosing it.

Jacob: Wow, 22%. That's a huge number.

Dan: And another 23% say that they feel like they're on a treadmill going nowhere. If you sort of marry that with ... The crazy thing about that stat is if you marry that with this idea of a skills gap, there are people out there that aren't in a place that makes them happy or fulfilled, and there are employers out there that can't find the people they're looking for. I feel like there's just a role to be played, and I think LinkedIn is trying to play a central role in this of giving people an understanding of what their options are, or what their options could be if they invested in certain things, in their own capabilities, to get to a place where they're happy, where they're earning the way they need to, where they're connected to a cause they care about, where their work and their life fit together in a way that makes sense for them. There's just so much to be done in this space to make people's lives better, and ultimately we all know. This is sort of where we started the conversation. When people are at jobs that they love and where they're connected to the mission, they just do better work.

Jacob: Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. Well for people listening to this, let's say they are one of the sleepwalkers or they are one of the people who feel like they're on a treadmill going nowhere. I get emails about this all the time about people that are making career changes, they've quit their jobs, they're trying to do something else. I mean, what advice would you have for somebody that is either on this treadmill or is kind of just sleepwalking through their career? Any suggestions?

Dan: Yeah, I would suggest two things. I think the first is reach out to your network and go have coffee with some people that are doing other things and see if something feels more closely aligned with what you're looking for, because A, you're gonna learn a ton from the people you know, and B, if it turns out that that sounds interesting, making a career pivot is often best done through a connection. So that's sort of the first thing. I think the second thing is there's some really great LinkedIn learning classes about this, about figuring out your next career move or taking a change in your career. There's some really wonderful resources on LinkedIn and more broadly on the internet of how you start that process, but I would really encourage people just to go have coffee with people they know and start exploring a little bit.

Jacob: Yeah, part of it is I don't want to say tough love, but it kind of is tough love. It's sort of like if you don't like your situation, nobody's gonna change it for you but you. So if you feel like you're sleepwalking and you don't like your job, or you feel like you're on a treadmill going nowhere, you gotta get off the treadmill. Like you said, you need to take accountability over it, you need to learn new things, you need to look for new opportunities, you need a network. It's not as if your company one day is gonna say, "Hey, you know what, you look like you're on a treadmill going nowhere. Why don't we take care of everything for you?" So there's gotta be that level of individuals who want to just take their life and their career by the horns so to speak, and just do something with it.

Dan: Yeah. I think you're right. I also think that you know, it's ... I think a lot of people just don't have the confidence to think that they can do it.

Jacob: Yeah, that's very true.

Dan: They have families, they're paying their bills, they're trying to send their kids to the soccer camp that they wanted to go to with their friends. There's practical considerations of how do I actually make this all work within my situation, and I think there's a confidence gap that it's possible. So I think the first step here is not ... I don't think it's a motivational problem, I think it's a visualization problem. People need to be able to visualize a path to making change, and I find that the closest thing that they can do is A, find a friend that's gonna help nurture them along the way, and find a role model that can help them understand the steps that they need to start taking.

Jacob: I love that. I mean, the visualization piece is crucial. When you mentioned that, immediately thought of chess. So people that listen to the podcast know that I'm a bit obsessed with chess. Visualization is a big part of the game because you can't just start randomly moving the pieces on the board, but everything you make a move, you have to try to figure out what is your opponent gonna do, what are you gonna do as a result? And you have to kind of visualize all these moves in your head before you actually make the move. And so when you said visualization I immediately thought of that, and I think the same is true for work and career. It's sort of like mentally picturing what that might look like and then taking those steps. I think that's a great piece of advice.

Dan: Yeah, and I actually made a pretty big career pivot at LinkedIn about five years ago. I spent my first five years at LinkedIn in the [inaudible] market time running a sales organization for how we sold product to recruiting organizations. It was a big team around the world, and after about five years of doing have to I realized based on some conversations with our CEO Jeff and others that I really should learn about product management. I was passionate about it, I realized it was a skill that I needed in my career, but no one had ever gone through that transition at LinkedIn, and very few people ever go through that transition.

Really the way to do it at LinkedIn if you want to learn how to build a great product is to build a great product, to really come in at the bottom and go through all the stages of how you think about what a product could be and how you make it real. But it was really scary, because at the time I was the vice president on the sales side with thousands of people that worked for me, and going to just being an individual contributor on the product side. I found two things in that moment super helpful. One was talking to people that were in the job that I wanted to do to start to feel like I could do it, and then the second was a plan B. I think that knowing you've got a plan B if it doesn't work out is ultimately what gives you the confidence to swing away, because if you miss, which happens, then you've thought through how to get yourself back to where you need to be.

Jacob: What was your plan B, out of curiosity?

Dan: I think to go back to a similar role that I had before, to go back and lead a sales team at LinkedIn or elsewhere. But just knowing that I kind of had thought that through and I'd thought through whether I could do that if it didn't work out was really relax ... It helped take the anxiety away of what I was about to undergo.

Jacob: Yeah. I completely understand. I'm also really curious, do you guys have any data, because I hear this question come up a lot, on either job hopping or on tenure? So for example, people that maybe have not been in the workforce for a year or two that now want to get back in the workforce, or people that keep changing jobs on a regular basis. Are you guys seeing any data on that or is it happening a lot, or is there a stigma associated with any of those things, or maybe you guys don't know, I don't know.

Dan: Yeah. So it is definitely true that people who are millennials switch jobs more frequently than the generation before them. But actually what's funny is when we did the research and we correlated it back to what were gen Xers like right after school, we see that a big portion of the delta between millennials and the next generation is just that they're younger. People early in their careers tend to change jobs a lot more frequently. So millennials are switching jobs a lot more, but most of that is just the fact that they're younger, like the generations that happened before them.

Jacob: I'm glad you said that. It's sort of like when you were that age you would do the same thing too.

Dan: Yeah, and not quite to the extent, but I also would say I feel like the pendulum's gonna swing back, because I think that we've moved from a stage of lifelong employment, you spend 40 years at a company, to wow, I probably need to switch jobs every two years. And I actually think need is the right word here, because people think it's optimal to their careers to switch jobs, because it's how they learn the fastest, it's how they find new opportunities. And I think companies are recognizing that and making it more attractive to stay, making it easier to move within the company. I think it's gonna be a huge trend, because ultimately the right thing for a person to learn as much as possible and for a company to get as much value as possible is not for people to leave their company every two years. You should come to a company, you should do a job, you should find a new opportunity at that company, take what you've learned, apply it to the new situation, maybe learn some new skills in the process.

I think we're gonna find a situation where there's much more liquidity in the internal talent marketplaces of companies, because it's just good business. It's actually good learning because when you're trying to learn new things it's great to have a body of experience from that context to bring in. It gives you something to add even while you're learning so many things that you haven't done before. So I think you're gonna see a lot of investment in companies making the most of development of their own internal teams.

Jacob: Yeah. I mean, I think we're starting to see that now, because it's kind of sad to think that people feel like they need to leave their company to go to another one in order to grow. That just to me sounds morbid. I mean, you should feel like you can be part of whatever organization you're part of for a long time and learn and grow new things, and unfortunately as you mentioned most people just don't feel that way.

Dan: I think it's actually, I think it's that most companies aren't set up to facilitate that process for their employees. If you think about is there a process by which people raise

their hand and say I'm ready for my next venture at the company? And then how do I do that in a way that's okay with my manager?

Jacob: You don't want to get your manager mad.

Dan: Totally. But I think that we're gonna move away from this. I think we're gonna move to a place where employees are given the freedom to explore new opportunities at their companies, and in fact I think managers are gonna be rewarded for building teams that go on to leave their team and do great things elsewhere in the organization. We actually did this at LinkedIn. One of the big questions we ask oftentimes when leaders are promoted is what members of their team have gone on to do amazing things elsewhere at the company? And I think it's one of these really foundational litmus test questions of how are they a great leader if they're not creating a diaspora of leadership elsewhere?

Jacob: So you look at that internally at LinkedIn.

Dan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jacob: Interesting. I bet most companies listening to this do not do that, which I think is a huge mistake. I always talk about this idea of great managers and leaders believe that their job is to help create other successful people. But most organizations don't actually have that as a metric, they don't track it. They don't pay attention to that. So I'm glad to hear that you guys are actually looking at that and you know that that's happening inside the company.

Dan: Well it's a good sort of theme, because I think that you learn a ton about companies if you watch promotion conversations and you see what questions get asked. Like okay, so and so's about ... Are they ready for promotion? There's always three or four questions that get brought up, and they tend to be very organizationally specific. And even within a company, you might ask this across different functions, you may have different rubrics for asking about whether someone's ready for that next step. I think those questions are everything. And my guess is that a lot of companies out there that aren't even aware that there are a set of questions that they're always asking that essentially define who gets ahead and who doesn't.

Jacob: Yep. Absolutely. Well, kind of shifting gears a little bit, I'm curious, because this topic comes up quite a bit, and then we'll jump to the HR and analytics stuff. Do you guys do internal annual performance review and annual engagement surveys, or how do you approach that inside of LinkedIn?

Dan: Yeah, we do twice a year, we do engagement surveys. And on our performance review we have an official performance review we do once a year. But we encourage basically monthly and quarterly career check-ins between managers and their employees, and there's I'd say an informal but written check-in that happens twice a year.

Jacob: Because you've heard a lot of the conversations I'm sure about this, where a lot of companies are saying we're getting rid of performance reviews, but then Facebook said

we're keeping our performance reviews. So I find a lot of organizations very confused with do we need performance reviews, should we be getting rid of them? What do you think about that?

Dan: Yeah. I'll share my own leadership, like what works for me as a leader. And I think this is good practice. I think first of all, I believe that you don't give feedback periodically. You give it in the moment as quickly as possible with as little judgment as possible. So I actually think one of the challenges with performance reviews is it mixes feedback with judgment. If you had someone in your team that was just in a meeting and they did something that saw them do, and you thought maybe there was another way to do it, I think when the meeting's over you pull them aside. I saw you do this, I think there was a better way. But it's not about judging them. It's about awareness of something that could be better. I think that that should be happening all the time as much as possible to the point where it doesn't feel like feedback anymore. It just feels like your dialogue with your team.

I think in addition to that, I find it useful to once a year force myself to write down how I feel someone's doing, and sit down with them, read the words together, and make sure we're on the same page. I haven't found a good way to replace that moment of clarity that I think is so important between manager and their teams so that everyone's on the same page about where they're doing great work, how you see great work showing up, and also where they can work on. So I really think that a balance between those two modes has worked really well for me.

Jacob: Yeah, you mentioned something interesting is that you give feedback on a regular basis, but the actual review is once a year. I think most companies as you mention, they mix that up, where they only give feedback once a year, and they only give the review once a year. But it sounds like a more effective approach might be give feedback all the time. On an ongoing basis, have those conversations. But as far as the full on performance review when you need to get a raise, that sort of stuff, that can still be done once a year as long as the feedback is done on an ongoing basis, so separating as you said, judgment from feedback.

Dan: Yeah. I think that's great. And also even just calling it feedback feels so ... You know, it's coaching. You see someone do something, and you think maybe there's a way to do it better.

Jacob: Yep, couldn't agree more. All right, so I want to shift gears a little bit because we don't have too much time left. And it's looking at the future of HR. And the first question I have for you on this is, some people listening to this podcast are in HR, but some are also not in HR. They might be just general management or IT or facilities or who knows what else. So what do you think non-HR people need to understand about HR?

Dan: Well I think the first thing is, and I think people know this, but that in a world where talent is the most important asset of a company, it's how you win or lose, it's everyone's challenge. It's not an HR thing. Talent is for every leader at the company, for every member of every team, and I think the first thing I would encourage everyone to do is figure out what your role is gonna be in making your company a great place to work,

making your company an employer of choice amongst the talent you care about, because ultimately it's how you win. And so I would say figure out your role is the first thing.

I think the second is figure out how to measure whether you think your team is in a healthy place. Are you able to hire the people you need, are you keeping the people that you value, are people showing up to work inspired and empowered to do their best? So I would ask a measurement question. I think if HR has been plagued by one thing, it's been inability to measure the health of the organization, and inability to measure how your company compared to others. I think that those problems are being solved. So I think there are new disciplines to start to bring into the fold here.

Jacob: How do you think the role of HR is changing? Because originally, a lot of people assume HR is just where you go when you're in trouble, where you go to get a paycheck, where you go to interview, but it feels like in a lot of organizations HR is becoming something totally different, and even in the future in the next five to ten years, it's gonna evolve into something even greater. So what do you think the future of HR is? How is it changing?

Dan: Yeah. Well I think the first is, it's way more tech enabled. I think that most organizations wouldn't think of HR as an innovation center for the company, and that is absolutely changing right now. There is a ton of investment going on in technology, in AI, in helping companies find the right people to hire to evaluate the people that they already have. I think that that's only gonna get better. It's only gonna create a more fair ecosystem of how people connect with employers. So I think that there's a ton of great work happening there. I think also you're gonna see an increasing focus on the world of diversity and making sure that organizations are building diverse teams, because the research couldn't be clearer. Diverse teams outperform those that are more one-dimensional in whatever characteristic you're talking about. Behavioral, demographic diversity, cultural diversity. And so I think that that's a big lens. And then I think there's a whole slew of things that will happen in different parts of HR. To be honest in recruiting, recruiting teams are starting to look like sales and marketing teams. It is about building your brand, it's about reaching out to the talent that you want to recruit in, not just the ones that reach out to you. There's a much more proactive approach that's occurring in recruiting.

And I think you're gonna see a similar ... And then the other side of that is, I think you'll see a move where companies start to think about hiring and development as two sides of the same strategy, where these build buy decisions will start to occur more as one conversation than today which tends to be splintered across the silos of HR between learning development and recruiting. Really, they all report to the head of HR, but they often are doing their own thing. So I think there's a whole bunch of things that are gonna happen. Ultimately what's it's gonna translate to is to better experiences for employees, and faster ability to get the talent that companies need to build great products.

Jacob: Hey, let's hope, right? I think we're starting to see that as well, and I think HR is actually a very exciting space to be in right now. Analytics, the people analytics, the data side of

HR we mentioned earlier is really booming. What are you seeing there? So why data and analytics? What is it being used for, and do you have any stories or examples you can share of how companies are using data and analytics in the HR space?

Dan: Yeah. Let's start with why it's happening. It's happening for two very simple reasons. One is executives are asking more questions. Back to this point of I win or lose with my people, and whenever a conversation comes up around how we're competing, the natural questions are gonna be how do we know how we're doing, and what's the measurement that we're using to track our progress? So I think there's a ton of questioning which is happening which is guiding all of this. And then the second thing is availability of data. I think that organizations used to have HR systems that wouldn't talk to each other, and definitely did not integrate with business outcomes. It was really hard to figure out how your attrition rates were tying to your sales performance, or how your employee satisfaction was tying to safety. All those things are starting to get to a place where the systems are able to talk together, so you can just ask better questions.

And then finally, through LinkedIn and I would say we have the leading data set in this category, companies are for the first time getting access to information outside of the walls of their organization so that they can ask questions around how do I decide where to open my next office based on where the talent is, and where supply and demand are out of balance? If I need to go build a new talent pool in a skill that I don't have, is my brand already strong amongst those people, or am I basically starting from scratch? If I need to build a team of robotics engineers, how much of that can I fund through internal teams of people that are already there, and how much do I need to acquire from an outside world? We're getting to a place where all of that information can be available in a real-time way for organizations, and it's going let them move faster, and it's gonna let them switch from a world of making decisions based on guy instinct and moving to a world where it's really data driven.

Jacob: Which is, I think as you mentioned earlier, something that the CEO wants, something the CFO wants. I mean all the executives want it, right? If you can have data about the decisions that you make that's hugely valuable.

Dan: Well here's an example just to bring it to life that I love. So Intel was building out some technical capabilities in Europe, and they were using our new talent insights product which essentially allows HR teams to analyze data about labor market and talent pools around the world based on the data. It's all anonymized and it's all done in a way that respects privacy, but it really gives aggregate insights in a powerful way. They were trying to figure out where to put an office to hire technical talent, and how to market to those people. What they realized is that there was this really rich pool in Krakow, Poland. They then realized that there were five employers that had the exact talent they were looking for, and they were the kinds of employers that they thought Intel could actively recruit from. So they bought billboards outside of the offices of these companies, and instantly changed the pipeline of talent they were able to recruit. So think about it like here's a company that used the world's richest labor market data of billions of data points to buy billboards in exactly the right locations to hire key people. It's like, it's everything from how the CEO does their job down to specific tactics that the recruiting team can do day-to-day just to help hire the right people.

- Jacob: Yeah, that's a great story. Are you aware of any interesting stories or examples of how people are using people analytics internally, like with their own data?
- Dan: I think Glint is really leading the way here, and I think the best practice is around how do you tie employee engagement to business outcomes? How do you start to build the business case for understanding what would it mean to make employees happier at work? And I think what companies are finding very clearly is that it's just good business investing in your own people. I think the tighter that each organization can tie how their people feel to the health of the business, the more they going to invest. They're going to invest in the right places, and they're ultimately gonna have a win-win for their customers and their constituents. So I think that's one big area. The other is companies are really investing in just understanding the skills of their own people in a richer way. It's amazing, or at least I find it amazing how often I talk to heads of talent that struggle to understand who they have and what those people are capable of. So we've built a number of products that give them skills insights of their own employees, and then what they're using that for is to figure out how to drive their learning agenda. So given the most important capabilities at the company and the skills that we have and what the strategy is, these are the five areas where we're really gonna double down on education, and that's digital education as well as in person education.
- Jacob: How do you ... I hear this question a lot too. How do you tie the engagement stuff or the employee experience stuff to ROI? I'm sure you get this question as well. Companies say, "Why should we be doing this? How do we actually tie it to ROI?" Is there a process, a formula? I mean where can people get started if they want to justify the investment of these programs?
- Dan: Yeah, well normally where many companies, and Glint is a software platform that facilitates this, they have a piece of software that collects survey data from their employees to understand how they feel, and then separately they have some sort of business process system, whether it be a CRM that manages their sales pipeline, or an ERP that measures the health of a factory floor in terms of how much it's producing. And there are now ways to take those two sets of data, whether it be around a location or a business unit or specific line of workers, and see how changes in one impacts the other. And it does take some data science at times to line the data up correctly, but what you wind up finding is these really beautiful correlations that tie back to this very simple idea. Happy people just do better work. And I think it's gonna be a truth that we're gonna realize is actually much stronger than we ever thought.
- Jacob: It's fascinating what you can do with all the data that you collect. Well, one last question for you before I have just a couple rapid fire fun questions for you, and that is the future of LinkedIn, because a lot of people are curious about this. You acquired or are in the process of acquiring Glint hopefully, Linda.com, I mean you guys have changed quite a bit. What do you see LinkedIn becoming? Because it's so much more nowadays than just a networking site. What's your plan for world domination?
- Dan: Well our vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce, and we really mean that. What would it mean to help over 3 billion people, that's the number of people that work for a living as part of their day, to help them

achieve more in their lives by finding that great job, being better at the job that they're in, figuring out what their career path's gonna be. And then the flip side of that is helping the other side of the marketplace, the employers, to find amazing people. And we just think that based on the data that we have and the trust that people put in us and our brand, that we think we can become this marketplace and really this community. When you talk to Reid Hoffman or one of his co-founders Allen Blue, who I spent a bunch of time with. He's on my team with me. He talks about LinkedIn as a place where professionals give and get help to each other, and I think that there's a recognition that we all do our best work when we're working with others, and we're helping each other achieve as much as possible. I think LinkedIn really aspires to make that real.

Jacob: Very cool. It's a very noble mission and a noble cause. Well to wrap up, a couple rapid fire fun questions for you that I like to ask executives. Starting off with what has been your greatest business failure?

Dan: My greatest business failure. Well, I would say actually ... I don't know if it's my business failure, but when I was right out of college, I worked at a startup, and I actually wrote about this in my business school application. I worked at a startup and I learned something I shouldn't have, that the company was gonna lay off some people. And I was sort of weighing my moral dilemma of do I keep it to myself, or do I tell my friend, who was about to buy a house, that he shouldn't buy the house?

Jacob: Oh man, that is a tough ...

Dan: And I wound up telling him, and it created a real problem for the person I learned it from in a bunch of ways. I think that had I gone ... I still feel like I should've kept the secret, even though it wasn't my secret to tell, and it was really painful for the person who confided in me that I broke their confidence, even though at the moment it felt like the right thing to do for my friend, I think it was a pretty bad decision.

Jacob: Yeah, that's a tough spot to be in. What's been your most embarrassing moment at work?

Dan: When I joined LinkedIn, we still have a version of this, every new employee had to make an animal sound in front of all the employees at the all hands. We don't do that anymore. We do a special skill, which is much better. We get to see people's really amazing skills. We got jugglers and hula hoop artists and magicians, and all sorts of fun things that people do. But I had to make an animal sound, and apparently my animal sound was so bad that they made me do it again. I think I did a dog, and they ... I don't know if I got booed or just crickets, and I had to come out with a monkey as a second try. So that was pretty terrible.

Jacob: Oh my God. I was gonna ask you to make an animal noise for us, but I won't put you on the spot there and torture our poor listeners. What are you most proud of?

Dan: I work at LinkedIn.

Jacob: Okay, that's something to be proud of, definitely.

Dan: Yeah. I guess, are you asking a work question or a life question?

Jacob: Either.

Dan: Yeah. Well, I think in my life, I think I'm proud of my family. I have these three amazing kids who challenge me every day to be my best, and I'm just so proud of them and how they're growing up. They're so cool, and every day is a new adventure. So I'm proud of that. I think at work, I really think that LinkedIn has changed the relationship that companies have with their people. I really do. I think that because of the transparency we've built, because people can represent themselves in the public domain on what they have, they've got more power and we've moved to a world where they've got more fluidity, they can find a job they love, their employers have to treat them better because they know that they're out in the open and can be discovered by other companies, and if I just compare that to the stories I've heard from my parents and others about what it felt like 30 years ago to be in a job and basically not having any power in that relationship, we're in a much different place today, and I think that it's only gonna get better. I think people are gonna have happier work lives and ultimately do better work, and I think that that's really something that ... If that were my life's work, making people happier at work, I think I'd be really proud of that.

Jacob: All right, last two quick ones for you. What is your favorite business or non-business book?

Dan: My favorite business book ... I have two. My two favorite business books are The Innovator's Dilemma, I got to study with Clay Christensen a little bit at school and I just think it's such a groundbreaking book, and The Goal, if anyone's read that. It's a book about a factory, also the world's worst love story book ever written. But it's all about the theory of bottlenecks, which I think is one of the most powerful concepts in business. And then outside of work, I love the Count of Monte Cristo.

Jacob: Oh, that's a great book.

Dan: [crosstalk] revenge novel.

Jacob: Yeah, it's a great one.

Dan: Yeah, it's a good one.

Jacob: And very last question for you, if you were doing a different career, what do you think you would've ended up doing?

Dan: Oh, I'd a teacher, for sure.

Jacob: All right, I like it. I've had a couple executives say teacher. Well Dan, thank you very much for spending time with us. Where can people go to learn more about you or LinkedIn, or anything that you want to mention?

Dan: Yeah, LinkedIn.com. Dan Shapiro, come find me. I like to share and post things going on in the industry, so feel free to follow.

Jacob: Very cool. Well Dan, again, thanks for joining me, and thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest again has been Dan Shapiro, vice president of talent solutions, careers and learning at LinkedIn. I will see all of you next week.