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:          Welcome everyone to another episode of the Future of Work podcast. My guest today is Michelle Murphy. She is the chief diversity officer and VP of global talent acquisition at Ingersoll Rand. Michelle, thanks for joining me.

Michelle:       Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here.

Jacob:          The topic of diversity and inclusion's obviously one that a lot of organizations are paying attention to, so we're definitely going to dive into some of the cool things that you guys are doing at Ingersoll Rand, but maybe we can start with a little bit of background information about you, how you got into this role, and can you give us a little bit of background on Ingersoll Rand for people who are not familiar with the company?

Michelle:       Absolutely, would love to. I have been with Ingersoll Rand about 13 years, and most of that time has been spent in the greater HR space. I was a founding member of our women's employee network here, and actually, my involvement in that, and I'd say mixed with my lifetime long value of equality, is really how I ended up in this role, not because I set out to be a chief diversity officer, but more so because it really aligned with my beliefs and where I really felt like I could add value to our organization, aligned with where we were wanting to go. And it's absolutely been my favorite job so far.

Jacob:          Well, that's always a good thing.

Michelle:       Yes, yes, absolutely. To talk about the company for a moment, we think of ourselves as a sustainability company. I know others, maybe from the outside looking in, we may look more like a diversified industrial or a manufacturing company, which we certainly engineer our own products, and we certainly make them. We also, though, are equally interested in how we create and sustain comfort for our customers, and while doing so through innovative products and solutions, making the world better.

Jacob:          What does the company do, and how many employees do you guys have?

Michelle:       We have about 40,000 employees around the world. We have what I would call our strategic or our market-leading brands, which is Trane. It is a heating and air conditioning company, and Thermo King, where we provide transport refrigeration. There are a lot of people who receive food and prescription medication through the refrigerated transportation units, both over-the-road trucking as well as marine and rail.

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| Jacob: | For most people listening, would they be interacting with Ingersoll Rand somehow, but just not knowing that they are? |
| Michelle: | They could be. We tend to have customers in commercial, industrial, and residential spaces, so where people would most likely... from a consumer perspective would most likely be interacting with us would be homeowners who are purchasing a... either building a new home or purchasing a new air conditioning unit. That is probably one of the more obvious places that someone would be interacting with us. |
| Jacob: | Okay, got it. To get started talking about this, I wanted to start with an article that you wrote, that I came across. You wrote it for Quartz at Work. The title was Truly Effective Diversity Training Can be Measured in Goosebumps, which I thought was a really good article, and you had some fantastic stories in there. Now, of course, I don't want you to recite the article. I'm not going to read the whole thing on the podcast, but maybe you can talk a little bit about some of the key points in there, because you mentioned that there were some events that allowed you to have certain realizations around why diversity and inclusion is so crucial. Can you share a little bit about that story? |
| Michelle: | Certainly, and if I just kind of referencing my views from as long as I can remember, around how I always thought everyone should be treated equally, and I guess there was probably a part of me, fairly naïve, that thought that happened more often than it probably does. And I think what the timing of the events that led to the realizations I was sharing in that article were some of the shootings that had happened in 2016. They were shootings by police officers of black men, and then we had... following a few of those, we had the police shootings in Dallas, and it was really a culmination of those different events, one of which happened here in Charlotte, and very close to one of our facilities. |
| Michelle: | So when we started looking at we wanted to do something, we wanted to create a safe place to bring people together, we wanted people to feel supported and that they could share, so we held this session, and we called it Bridging Connections, and we were simply looking for a safe place for people to share perspectives. What happened, though, in that session, there were many of us who gained great perspective in really understanding something that we have never had to deal with, and that was my realization in kind of culminating in that discussion, hearing friends of mine, moms as well, who were talking about taking their kids to the bus stop or dropping their kids at school, and just the worry they had about them coming back home that night, or being safe for them to walk from the house to the bus stop. |
| Michelle: | For me, that was just not something that I worried about, and not something that I had had to spend a lot of energy on, and it was eye-opening to me, and heart-wrenching as I watched my friends cry as they talked about that, and just that realization that the world isn't the same for everyone. I think it solidified my interest in wanting to be part of something that helps move us forward, and that makes it different a generation from now. |
| Jacob: | I think you're right. A lot of people do assume that the world is the same for everybody, and recently, it's been a tough couple of years, with some tragic events that have been |

happening, especially in the United States, so it really forces, I think, organizations and people to think differently about all these things that you just didn't have to think about as much 10, 15, 20 years ago. This was clearly an important moment for you to think about diversity, and what was the outcome of these meetings, and what did you do as a result of this realization?

Michelle:    I would say there's both a personal... maybe a personal set of actions and kind of a professional or what did the company do set of actions. From the personal side, I think I'm probably already fairly empathetic, but I think my level of empathy went up significantly, specifically for people who were dealing with some of these situations, and then really trying to help other leaders and managers of some of those people demonstrate the visible empathy needed to help people get through what they were going through. And that kind of dovetails into what did we do as a company.

Michelle:    I think for us, it did create that platform for us to have a different type of conversation, and encourage leaders to be... one, to seek to understand more, two, to demonstrate empathy in a different way, and then what it did for us was that particular forum that we created around that initial event is actually something we've kept going. We hold these sessions, and we call them Bridging Connections. We hold those sessions quite regularly, typically around somewhat controversial topics, but things that all of us are dealing with every day, and the idea that you bring your whole self to work every day is pretty true, at least for most people, so the idea that you're not bringing it into work with you, like that's just not the case anymore either, so creating that place for people to talk about things, and really to understand a perspective that's very different from your own, and to be open enough and willing enough to listen, it's really created and reinforced the culture that we want to have here.

Jacob:       How do you teach that stuff? I mean, specifically around diversity, inclusion, empathy? Because I would imagine that's not easy. Like, how do you take somebody that maybe isn't a very empathetic person and turn them into somebody who is, or take somebody who doesn't really understand or believe in diversity and inclusion and get them to change?

Michelle:    Wow.

Jacob:       If you can. I mean, maybe you can't. I don't know.

Michelle:    You know, it's interesting. When I think about how do you teach someone, I feel like what we do is we try to create opportunities to offer experiences for people, because I'm not sure that there's a training you could go to, or that you could teach people what it's like to feel certain ways. So, creating experiences where people get to watch others describe their feelings, and share in that, tend to take us a little bit further than I'll call maybe a typical training class. Because what you realize in that setting is, "These are the people I see and work with every day, and I know them pretty well, and I think they're smart people and good people, and I like them, and wow, I had no idea that that's what they were dealing with." Sometimes that acknowledgement is part of what helps create the opportunity for learning, for maybe that person who doesn't demonstrate empathy

easily or well. Sometimes creating those experiences where they have those opportunities is the best way to do it.

Jacob: Yeah. I mean, it's hard. And I also find that some people might be empathetic in their personal life, but then that kind of muscle shuts off when they show up to work, because a lot of companies just... You know, you just don't do a good job of encouraging it and practicing it, especially leaders. So it's definitely a challenge. Could we talk a little bit about some of the programs that you have going on inside of Ingersoll Rand when it comes to diversity and inclusion? And maybe we could just start high level, with some of the things that you're doing, and then we can jump a little bit deeper into some of them afterwards.

Michelle: Sure. And even to carry on from our last discussion, you know, thinking about some of the programs that we have, one of the things that we've done is really targeted at leaders, around creating inclusive leaders in teams. And just like we were saying, training isn't always the answer, and yet, this is a fairly complex topic, and oftentimes, people think about solutions related to this as being sophisticated or complex, and they don't necessarily have to be. And one of the things we've really tried to do is simplify what inclusion looks like. The way we talk about it are in the very simple, everyday behaviors you can choose to do. And it is a choice. You can choose to intentionally include, or you will unintentionally exclude.

Michelle: So what we talk to leaders about are all those different... taking advantage of all those different opportunities they have to be intentional about who they're including, whether that's in a meeting, meaning like who gets invited, whether that's saying something to the person who hasn't said anything for the whole meeting, asking them what they think. If it's a matter of you walk up to a group and you shake everybody's hand except for the one person who might be different in the group, why you don't do that.

Michelle: So, the everyday behaviors, and it is the simple things done consistently that actually make a difference in how the behaviors ultimately end up showing up over time, and that's what makes it sophisticated and complex, is that it has to be repeated by everybody. But that's what we think is important, are the behaviors that demonstrate inclusion and give people a sense of belonging.

Jacob: I like that you put an emphasis on sort of the purpose and the intention, because I feel like sometimes, especially leaders, and even employees in general, they sometimes think that they're okay with it, but there's not a lot of purpose, and intention, and drive behind it. It's just sort of like they let things happen if they do happen, but there's not a lot of push. And I think especially when it comes to leaders, like you mention, that kind of purpose and intention is absolutely essential. So it's really great to hear that you're focusing on the leadership training aspect of this, but maybe you can give us some more overview on what the overall diversity program looks like at Ingersoll Rand.

Michelle: Along with our focus on creating inclusive leaders and teams, we have several initiatives underway around fostering a globally diverse workforce, and with that, we have set

some pretty... We've made some pretty bold commitments. I don't know if you're familiar with Paradigm for Parity.

Jacob: I'm not, and probably a lot of listeners are not familiar with that as well.

Michelle: It's a coalition of companies who have come together to make the commitment to get to gender parity in corporate leadership structures by 2030. It's a long-term view, looking at how we increase gender parity across corporations. We were one of the first 30-or-so companies to join back in 2017, and we set... Obviously, we were signing on for that 2030 goal. We also set a 2020 goal, wanting to have a little bit more near-term goal along with the long-term goal, and have continued to make progress on that, and have improved quite a bit so far, and have every intent on delivering on that commitment. And there are several other companies, about 100 other companies that are with us on that.

Michelle: This is where really putting a focus on how we're looking at developing our pipeline of women talent, how we're looking at who's coming into the company, and looking at how we are retaining our talent. And we've had some really nice success there, and we've also focused on it pretty heavily, with some additional formal development from a leadership perspective, aimed at women, and also from some of the informal aspects that we do through our women's employee network.

Jacob: Can you talk a little bit about the women employee network?

Michelle: Sure. It was our first... We have... We call them ERGs, so employee resource groups, and our women's network was actually our first venture into employee resource groups. We started that back in around 2012, so this is a group of people, and not just women, so we have several women members of course, but it is open to men as well. And we actually have several men who have signed on and our part of it, in showing their support for gender parity. I find that many of them are fathers of daughters, and they're certainly interested in making sure that, like I said earlier, kind of things are different for the next generation.

Michelle: Our women's employee network does a variety of things, from looking at how we create peer coaching circles within the company, that are made up of maybe groups of 10 to 12 women who choose to get together around a particular topic, and kind of use it for their own development, and they can go anywhere from six months to 12 months in that group, learning together. We also do quite a bit of volunteer work, targeted around a couple of specific areas, but we feel like it's really important to be engaged in our communities. And then there are a lot of other... I'll call them fundraising drives, or things that we do tied to... whether it's back-to-school events, or Dress For Success, or some of the other places where we know that we can really contribute to those who need it.

Jacob: Very cool. I love the employee resource groups. How many employee resource groups do you guys have?

| Michelle: | We have eight employee resource groups, and then we have another probably dozen-or-so what we call inclusion networks. For us, being fairly distributed, meaning our employee population, geographically distributed, part of what we started looking for opportunities to do was create inclusion opportunities, or inclusion networks, in some of our smaller locations. And those have really taken off in the last probably 12 months or so, and we have inclusion networks at 12, maybe 15 different locations, all doing a variety of great work in the work community where they are, as well as in the broader community where they live. |
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| Jacob: | I know some of the other programs that you have... And I have a list of them here. We talked a little bit about the Paradigm for Parity. Maybe if we could talk a little bit about their Relaunch program, which is about engineers, which I thought was a pretty interesting program. From what I understand, they can re-skill or up-skill themselves. |
| Michelle: | Yeah, so this is actually a relatively new program for us, that I'm super excited about, and I think has a lot more opportunity. We started it in the engineering function, and we're actually looking to extend it into other functions. What we're really trying to do is find a variety of ways to welcome people back into the workforce. From an engineering perspective, in this particular program, very specifically aimed at women engineers who've maybe been out of the workforce for a while and want to come back. With what I would say the war for talent being very real, and it's definitely here, trying to find ways to be that employer of choice, where people are seeking us out because of the different ways they can enter, the different opportunities they have once they're here, flexible work options, all of those types of things. |
| Michelle: | Relaunch was our way of reaching out to those who've been out of the workforce, some of them three, five, maybe seven years, I would say are the talent pool where we tend to be picking from are moms who chose to stay home with little ones for a bit, and are ready to reenter. So as they're coming back into work, we're just helping bridge the gap of what they may need to get up to speed on from the time that they've been out of the workforce. In some cases, that's very minor. In some cases, there might be a little bit more that needs to be done there, but really just creating a path back in, because there's a lot of really smart people out there who have maybe stepped away, and there's just a ton of opportunity to take advantage of their skills and knowledge, and finding ways to make it easy for them to reenter, we think, is really important. |
| Jacob: | You mentioned the war for talent, and that it's here. Are you seeing and experiencing that currently at Ingersoll Rand, and if so, how? |
| Michelle: | Yeah, I think it's a job seeker's market right now, and has been for a while. I think where we tend to see more of the... I'll call it the shortage is around skilled labor. We see it in some other places too, though, so it isn't just there. Looking at that gap, knowing that it's going to grow, really wanting to make sure that we are at the forefront of offering development opportunities, skill-building opportunities, as well as making manufacturing an appealing place for people to choose a career. So, looking at the different paths people might be considering, oftentimes manufacturing isn't at the top, and it actually can be a very viable, high-paying career, and we have some of those opportunities. So, getting people into our areas and into some of the skilled |

development we can offer, you know, I just feel like we've got a lot to offer job seekers. But we certainly are seeing some of that.

Jacob: I know specifically in the manufacturing space, there's a lot of concern around AI, and automation, and technology. How are you guys thinking about that, or dealing with that at all with your workforce? Because I'm assuming you probably have some people who are a little antsy or nervous about the potential implications that that might have. So what do you tell them or how do you address it?

Michelle: Well, I actually think that's where another re-skilling opportunity happens. In some of the places where we've actually been able to bring technology in, what people there have found... And fortunately, we've been able to do it without maybe huge disruption to jobs. What we've been able to find is that it made... For many of those people, it actually made their life better, as in they were able to do other things, move into other jobs, maybe even kind of higher skilled jobs, jobs that might be safer, because of what we were able to do with the technology, and a human doesn't need to be involved in it. So I think there's actually a lot of opportunity there, and as people start to see that, it lessens the fear that jobs will go away due to the automation, versus we almost have to automate, because of the skills gap and kind of the open jobs numbers, automating so that we can have our human resources in higher-level thinking roles.

Jacob: It sounds like, then, you are optimistic about... Because, you know-

Michelle: I'd say yes.

Jacob: ... so much that you read about in the media is like doom and gloom, and so many jobs are going to be replaced, and it's going to be a disaster, but a lot of business leaders I talk to are actually very optimistic and positive, and it sounds like you fall into that category as well.

Michelle: Absolutely, I do. I think there's a lot of opportunity.

Jacob: Okay, I'm glad to hear. Yeah, and I agree. A lot of people keep saying the same thing. I know the other program that you have on there is called Level Up. Can you share a little bit about Level Up? And then I think there is one more, called Strengthen Economic Mobility, which we can talk about as well.

Michelle: [inaudible] Okay. I'm thinking about our ideas around strengthening economic mobility, and this really ties to our recently launched 2030 sustainability goals. As I was mentioning earlier, we have our Paradigm for Parity goal, which has a 2030 component to it, and it's part of our people sustainability goals. We've also extended, as we have for years, our look or our view into the communities where we live, work, and serve. So for us, part of what we want to make sure we're doing, as our purpose as a company, which is improving or enhancing the quality of life, we want to do that not only for the customers of the products that we make, but also those who live in the communities where we live and work. What we're looking at are different workforce development programs, where we can partner with organizations already in those communities, and

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|  | really help enable that economic mobility and help with re-skilling to get more people into livable wage jobs, and really into the higher-paying jobs. |
| Jacob: | Okay. Then the last one, I think, was the Strengthen Economic Mobility program. |
| Michelle: | Maybe let me talk a little bit about the... I'll call it our 2030 commitments around funding our STEM education. When we're looking at STEM, we are looking at... I would call it kind of two groups. One is really focused on youth, and bringing STEM education to young people, and specifically young girls, encouraging them to go into career paths that are more technical in nature. Then the second one is focused in around re-skilling for some of the skilled labor jobs, so whether you are a recent high school graduate or recent college graduate, even, and you're thinking about your career options, that you think about options that we might have, and we're able to do some of that workforce development, skill-building, to help you be successful in that role. |
| Jacob: | Can you talk a little bit about the metrics that you use to measure diversity? How do you know if you're becoming a more diverse and inclusive company? |
| Michelle: | We have a couple of ways that we do that, and I would say there's what would be considered basic representation numbers, which is how we look at diversity, and the numbers that I tend to pay a lot of attention to are some of the measures we have around inclusion, which we gain insight from from our engagement survey. We have a series of questions within our engagement survey, that goes to all employees across the company. We have a set of questions around inclusion, and what it feels like to work here. Do they feel like they belong? Do they feel like their ideas are respected? Do they feel heard? We use that as a really good barometer for understanding where inclusion is happening and where we might have work to do. |
| Jacob: | Do you guys measure or send out those surveys at like an annual thing? |
| Michelle: | We do them annually, yes. |
| Jacob: | Okay. So basically, those... I think you mentioned like three or four different criteria or questions that you look at. Those help you figure out if you are moving in that right direction or not. |
| Michelle: | Correct. |
| Jacob: | Okay. |
| Michelle: | Yep. |
| Jacob: | Then for people who are not in HR, how do you explain to them why they should care about diversity? Maybe I'm in sales, or I'm in marketing, and I'm just trying to understand this concept now. Why is this something that everybody should care of, not just HR people? |

| Michelle: | It might actually be easier to talk to salespeople about this, because they tend to understand their customer, and their customer mix, or the mix of their customer base, and when you talk about what customers look like, you start segmenting the markets, start segmenting your customers, our customer base is pretty diverse, and is becoming more diverse. So when you look at where are the decision-makers for buying decisions, how you think about where the decision-maker lies, and really trying to help people understand that broader perspective, the diversity... I would say the diversity question becomes less of a question and becomes a little more obvious for people. At least that's what I find. |
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| Michelle: | It's more when you start talking about we want an inclusive culture, and diversity is part of that, meaning diverse perspectives, which come from diverse backgrounds. And really, all we're talking about is that each of us are a product of our own environment and our own experiences, so there is something that makes each one of us unique, that we are bringing to the table. So how do you leverage that within your team, within your work group, within your company, within your customer set? People tend to make those connections, and that usually helps us move forward in the conversation. |
| Jacob: | Okay, yeah. I mean, I tend to agree. Yeah, maybe it's easier for salespeople than it is for people in other roles. You're also helping run the talent acquisition function at Ingersoll Rand. When you put that hat on, what are some of the big changes that you are seeing, or trends that you're paying attention to in the overall talent landscape? |
| Michelle: | At the trend level, certainly finding... There are a couple things that come to mind, finding that people are very interested in flexible work models, so really finding ways to think about how work can get done, where work can get done, and it doesn't have to look like it always has, or our traditional view of a 40-hour work week kind of thing. So certainly seeing the desire for that flexibility as a trend. |
| Michelle: | Also seeing a lot of people very interested in working on contract, and you know, seeing some of the predictions that are out there around that trend is that by 2030, could be something like only 10 to 20% of us work for a company, which is kind of an interesting thought, but we're definitely seeing that trend. We're also seeing a lot of highly educated, highly qualified candidates coming through. So, knowing that the talent is out there, and just figuring out how do you make the best match for the right role for the skillsets that they're bringing. |
| Jacob: | You mentioned flexible work, and even today, this is still a really hot topic, and a lot of companies are going back and forth on if they should offer it, if they should not offer it. I'm guessing that you are a believer in flexible work, but how do you make something like that work for people in manufacturing, or can you? |
| Michelle: | Yeah, I think you have to offer it. You know, I think it's just an expectation anymore. It is interesting, though. There are some roles where it's really hard to do that. You know, and there are some roles where it's really easy to do that. Offering flexibility where it's easy and obvious, like we should just do that. That just makes sense. For other places where it might be a little bit harder, it might just take more work, or it may be that we look at how we think about shifts differently, because I think for us, first and foremost is |

the safety of our employees, so when you think about flexibility and how does that factor in in a manufacturing environment, where safety is paramount, that's not a place we're willing to take risk, right? So really looking at how we can be flexible, what that looks like and means in a manufacturing facility versus what it might look like or mean in an office environment is really more of what we've done, and kind of taken it for what makes sense at various locations.

Jacob: A lot of naysayers when it comes to flexible work, they're always talking about, you know, it's important to have people in the office, to have that collaboration, that communication, so they have to be in the office. How do you respond to people who are just so against flexible work that they just believe that you have to be in the office?

Michelle: There's value in time together, right? And I think that's where somehow having the opportunity for that face-to-face personal time, the connections that get made, there's definitely value in that. It just doesn't need to be 100%. So, figuring out what the right mix is for any given team, or even the right comfort level for any given leader, and that's often how we'll talk about it with leaders who may not understand the full benefit, is we talk about what they are comfortable with, what they could be willing to try, and give them some ideas of success that have happened in other places, so that one, they know it's an okay thing to do, and that we're supportive as a company of the idea, but also giving them real examples, where they can even talk to other leaders that have had success with it, to be able to feel comfortable moving forward with it as an option. And some people take a while to get there.

Jacob: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I hear that a lot. But it sounds like that storytelling piece is important, so help connect them with other people who have made it work, and have that kind of shared learning.

Michelle: I think it always makes people feel more comfortable, and that what they're doing isn't wrong, or bad, or outside the lines, if they can see what good looks like, or hear what good looked like for someone else. That really does seem to make a difference. And not just in that instance, but in lots of... That applies to a lot of things.

Jacob: Yeah. Yeah. No, totally agree. What about in terms of skills for the future? I know a lot of your initiatives are focused on 2030, especially your sustainability, your diversity efforts. When you think about skills, or even jobs for the future, what are you thinking in terms of what employees are going to need, from a skillset or mindset perspective?

Michelle: I think for us, our focus has been heavily aimed towards STEM and STEM-related fields, and maybe even just thinking about us as somewhat of an engineering company, the technical skills that are required to do many of the jobs here, and even the technical knowhow. Even if it's not the full-blown demonstration of the skill, the technical aptitude or the technical knowhow is incredibly important. So when we think about the skills for the future, there's what I would call maybe the hard, demonstrable technical skills, and then there's the demonstrable personal and leadership skills, and I think they're equally important and will continue to be on a more equal standing than maybe they've ever been before, because people have so many choices.

| Michelle: | With that means... With choice, I guess, kind of thinking about it this way, with choice it means that people have the flexibility to choose to work for an employer. They have the flexibility to choose to work as a contractor. Or, like we have continued to see, the entrepreneurial spirit spiking up, where people are choosing that. So just looking at ways that we can increase both choice and flexibility, I think helps us, and the more we can offer, in some of our partnerships with other organizations, that leads to jobs here, is great. |
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| Michelle: | And if that is the 10-year-old who is going through a project scientist with us, which is a fairly big undertaking that we have for helping introduce STEM to young girls, encouraging them to have careers in STEM, all the way to someone who is working their way through one of our facilities, starting out on the line, going to team leader, going to ops leader, becoming plant manager. You know, really trying to find ways that we're encouraging that through the development we're able to offer, both on the job and in a more formal way through the company. |
| Jacob: | The humanness, it sounds like, is still important. So you would, I guess, place equal emphasis on the human skills as much as you would put on the STEM skills. |
| Michelle: | I would, yes. |
| Jacob: | Okay. No, I mean, I would agree with that as well. I think that with all of the technology that we're seeing floating around, the human stuff like empathy is still going to be extremely, extremely crucial in the future. I saw- |
| Michelle: | Well, and the world... Oh, sorry. I was just going to say, and the world's getting smaller, so our ability to interact and work with people on the other side of the world, and across hundreds of countries, is different than it was 10, or definitely 20 years ago, and empathy shows up in very, very different ways when you start working across those boundaries, and that's a big part of why I think that matters more, or matters equally to the technical skills that someone may bring. |
| Jacob: | What do you think... Or at least for you, what are the things that you're worried about the most, or what are the greatest challenges that you are faced with, or think you will be faced with in the future, in the field of diversity or talent? |
| Michelle: | Not having enough worries me, and that's not specific to any one area, just simply knowing that companies are going to be competing for that same talent, so how we help ourselves by showing the things that we have to offer, and why this is a great place to work, I think is becoming even more important. |
| Michelle: | You know, another thing that I worry about is that people, especially young people, will continue to be discouraged from going into careers in manufacturing, because it's not perceived as being prestigious, or whatever adjective you might want to use. I know in some of the work we've done with the manufacturing institute, different studies that have been done, parents' perception is such that they're not really encouraging their |

kids to do that. If that continues, our shortage is only going to be greater in certain spaces, so that worries me.

Jacob: Yeah, and I think that because of the shortage, that's why we're seeing so many companies invest in employee experience, and in really trying to create places where people actually want to show up to work.

Michelle: Exactly.

Jacob: I mean, I think that the companies investing in that, I'm very happy to see that, but unfortunately, they had to wait for this big talent shortage to happen before they realized the importance and value of doing that. I saw an article that you wrote for Thrive Global, and you were talking about some of the important things that you look for in a candidate, and one of the things that you mentions was looking for talent that's very curious and adaptable. And I thought maybe you could talk about why specifically curious and adaptability, and how do you look for that? Is there a metric that you look at, or how can you tell?

Michelle: Yeah, that's a great question. Yes, the curious and adaptable, that kind of goes in my mind with those demonstrable leader skills, like empathy, or personal and leader skills like empathy. You know, people who tend to be curious tend to be good problem-solvers, because they will figure it out, and I think there's a lot to be said for people taking initiative, doing the research, trying things out, failing fast, and that intellectual curiosity will take people pretty far, because you're going to learn a lot along the way. And it isn't necessarily going to be what you set out or intended to learn, but there will be a lot of learnings along the way, and I think that's very important and critical to growing leaders, so looking for people who are curious.

Michelle: And one of the ways I assess for that, which I think is part of what you're asking me there, is it's always interesting to me when I'm interviewing candidates, if they don't have any questions. Part of it is kind of what types of questions do people ask, how many do they ask, how do they demonstrate their curiosity for your company, the role, the environment. That's a really good indicator for me on how they might demonstrate curiosity in their job.

Michelle: And the adaptable is kind of a follow-on to that, is that I believe curious people tend to seek out an answer, and they learn a whole lot along the way, and they're not so set in the way that they have to go, as if there's one way to write, because I believe there are many ways to write, and part of being curious is that you might have thought you were going to go left and you have to go straight, and when you're doing that, there's some people who just really aren't very adaptable, and that's a really big deal to them, to have to go straight instead of go left, so having people who can do that easily and without a lot of fanfare, yeah, I think again is something that we would look for in what strong leaders look like.

Jacob: You also mentioned this idea of looking beyond qualifications, which I loved to see, because I think so many organizations now are obsessed with your resume, you know,

the school that you went to, how many years of experience have you had. I remember actually, when I was applying for a job, oh man, this must have been like 20 years ago, when I was still just in my mid to late teens, and I think I was even applying to work at Best Buy as a clerk, or a teller at Bank of America, and even for that, the requirements were just crazy. They wanted people that had like three to five years experience in customer service, and it was just these crazy long lists where you know you could do the job, but you just don't have the typical qualifications, so I love that you're looking beyond that. So can you talk a little bit about what that means and what you look for?

Michelle:     Yeah, that's exactly for the reasons you say. You know, I think sometimes job descriptions, or the requirement list that goes in a job description, is really more of a wishlist than it is a requirements list, and that's how I've tried to start talking about it around here, is let's make sure we get really clear about what's a requirement versus what your dream is, because chances are nobody's meeting that full wishlist of things, so if you can get really clear about the true requirements, like what does this person need to demonstrate to be successful in the job, and focus it less on the previous experience in terms of years, or exact experience.

Michelle:     One of the other examples we have here is we like people to have experience in our industry. Well, there are a lot of skills that are highly transferrable across industries. Let's not get hung up on that. So just being open to thinking beyond the... I'll say maybe traditional requirements for the role, or what you were expected to have 20 years ago when you joined, you know, thinking about it with a much wider lens.

Jacob:        Yeah, I love that, and I hope more organizations spend more time thinking about that too. One of the things that kind of freaks me out a little bit is I know a lot of companies started using AI and automation during the recruiting process, and one of the things that these pieces of software do, that these algorithms do, is that they just scan resumes to see if you're even a good fit for that first interview. I mean, that freaks me out a little bit, because it kind of eliminates this ability to look for being flexible, and looking for tangential skills. It's sort of like if it's on the resume, great. If it's not on the resume, automatically delete them. And I think that really hurts the company when it comes to looking for talent.

Michelle:     Yeah, that worries me as well, and that is not something that we have embarked on for that exact reason. There's a lot more that you can gain by looking and understanding. I know it's time consuming, and that's part of what I think we kind of have to wrestle with on the recruiting organization side, but I'm not sure that's the answer. There are some pretty cool technologies out there now that do video interviews, and what the research is showing on those is that it's actually reducing bias in the process, and you're getting more diverse candidates through, and diverse defined in a whole lot of ways, so gender, ethnicity, several other dimensions of diversity, which is actually kind of cool, and I would like to experiment with that a little bit more. But it's not the resume screen and out kind of thing, which I do know about, and not terribly interested in. That worries me.

Jacob:        Yeah, a lot of companies I know are going down that road, and I suppose it's hard to find that balance between the human side of work and the technology side of work, and I

remember... I think it was last year or the year before. I was interviewing Nolan Bushnell. He was the guy that created Atari, and he was the first boss of Steve Jobs.

Michelle: Oh, right.

Jacob: He was telling me this story, when he hired Steve Jobs, Steve Jobs came in for an interview, and literally a couple hours later, he just shook his hand and said, "You're hired," whereas today, companies go through this process where it takes many, many months, you go through all these different technologies, a lot of companies now want you to play some sort of a game that assesses your emotional skills, and it almost feels like we're going a little bit too crazy down the technology rabbit hole when it comes to people. So I don't know how you find that balance.

Michelle: Yeah, well I think that is the key word. There has to be a balance. You know, there are some cool technologies out there, that are helpful, and the jury might still be out on how helpful versus harmful in some cases. You know, if I think about the intent behind what the people who are creating the technology, how they're trying to help us, what they're trying to do, the intent is to take bias out of the process. And as humans [inaudible] being involved in the process, we have bias, and we're going to apply it, so what the technology is trying to do is take that out.

Michelle: I agree with you in that balance is where it needs to... It has to come together. The process has to be such that if you're using some of this technology enablement, and a lot of companies are, that there's got to be a place where it comes together with the human decision-making, to make those matches into the right job. You know, a lot of times we say, "Right candidate. Now let's find the right job." You know, making sure that we're getting people into the places where they can be successful, and people can do that.

Michelle: I think that's also where not only in the interview process, but even just in the broader connecting process, networking is really important, so how your networks work within the places where you do hiring, getting referrals that are coming from people who work here and know what it's like to work here, and have recommended a friend to come work here. You know, sometimes those are your best sources, and tie-ins or links to someone's potential success or ability to be successful within the company, so really being able to leverage that in the hiring process as well as even in the development process.

Jacob: Yeah. I mean, the recruiting, when you bring people in, that should be the most human aspect of your company. Granted, of course, like you said, there are some great technologies that can help with diversity, making sure that you're eliminating bias, but I think just giving all of that stuff to technology is just weird, and freaky.

Michelle: Well, and people... You know, as we were saying earlier, people have choices on where they're going to go to work, and the big part of what someone who... a candidate is looking for is they're looking for, "How does it feel here? How do I feel here?" That requires interacting with other people, and seeing other people interact with each

other, and watch how it works, and see if that's how you're going to feel included and like you belong. I just don't know how technology can replace that part.

Jacob:     Yeah, and I think companies also forget that just because... If your experience is very tech-heavy and so is everyone else's, I just think about a prospect that's applying to, let's say, 10 different jobs, and for each one of those 10 different jobs, they're interacting with 10 different bots, they're playing 10 different games for 10 different companies, they are going through 10 different... It's very overwhelming for the candidate who's applying to multiple jobs to repeat this same process over and over and over. Like, it's just not a good experience for any prospect. I guess the moral of the story is don't forget to include the human side when you are bringing in people.

Michelle:  Totally agree.

Jacob:     I know we just have a couple minutes left. To wrap up, I thought it would be fun to just ask you a couple of fun rapid-fire questions, starting off with what has been your most embarrassing moment at work?

Michelle:  I've had so many. I'm trying to think of what I would say would just be one. Wow. I know you said rapid fire, and I'm not very rapid right now.

Jacob:     Hey, it's okay. I'm sure the audience knows that it's going to be worth it when you think about it.

Michelle:  Oh, boy. Can we come back to it? Like, honestly-

Jacob:     Yeah, yeah, of course. We can come back to it.

Michelle:  [crosstalk] struggling to come up with a... I'm struggling to come up with a... I don't take myself too seriously, so a lot of things just don't bother me, so I'm having a hard time with true pure embarrassment.

Jacob:     Hey, no worries. If you think of something, then let me know. We'll go back to it.

Michelle:  Okay. [crosstalk]

Jacob:     What's been the hardest business decision you've ever had to make?

Michelle:  Working through restructures that involve people losing their job. Those are absolutely the toughest decisions.

Jacob:     What would you say has been your greatest failure in business, or biggest mistake?

Michelle:  Yeah. I have multiples of those I can think of. I think sometimes our strengths can also be our biggest weakness, and I think that's an area where I would say my empathy can sometimes get in my way, and that would probably be what I would say has resulted in some of the biggest mistakes.

Jacob:      What is your favorite business or non-business book?

Michelle:   One of my favorites is What Got You Here Won't Get You There. I think it really helps people think about beginning where they are versus maybe where they were, and I use that phrase quite a bit too, just making sure people are really thinking about where they are and meeting others where they are.

Jacob:      Last two questions for you. Who's the best mentor you've ever had?

Michelle:   My parents.

Jacob:      Hey, those are great mentors to have.

Michelle:   I was really fortunate, and grew up with fabulous role models who turned into mentors for a variety of reasons. My mom was the one... This is obviously going back some time now. She was the one that had the full-time day job, and went to the corporate office every day, and my dad had multiple small businesses, but he also knew how to do laundry, and run the dishwasher, and the vacuum. So I certainly did not grow up in a house of traditions. I didn't know that there was such a thing. You know, you don't realize a lot of those things until you're much older, but I was very fortunate to have really strong mentors.

Jacob:      And last question for you. If you were doing a different career, what do you think you would have ended up doing?

Michelle:   I would be a preschool teacher.

Jacob:      Preschool teacher? I've actually had quite a few executives as podcast guests who've mentioned that they would be in the teaching space, so interesting. Preschool. You must really like kids.

Michelle:   I do. I do, and they're so open at that age.

Jacob:      They are. I have a three-year-old, and she's definitely fun.

Michelle:   Yes. Yes. The opportunities are endless.

Jacob:      Yes, for sure. Where can people go to learn more about you, and some of the work that you're doing over at Ingersoll Rand? I know you write articles frequently. You're on LinkedIn.

Michelle:   I am, and I'm getting better about being a little more social. I'm probably not the best, but our Ingersoll Rand website is a great place to learn about some of the things that we're doing, and the work that we have published is certainly all shown there, LinkedIn of course, and I would encourage people to connect with me there. I'm always interested, and any other suggestions that you might have, I'd be very open to as well.

Jacob:  Very cool. Well, yeah, I mean I think people should definitely check you out on LinkedIn. You have a couple articles on there, and you're pretty easy to find by doing a Google search, so if people are interested in some of these articles that we talked about during the show, just Google, "Michelle Murphy Ingersoll Rand," and you'll find some of those articles there as well. So Michelle, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to join me.

Michelle:  Thank you so much. It was my pleasure.

Jacob:  And thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest, again, Michelle Murphy, Chief Diversity Officer and VP of Global Talent Acquisition at Ingersoll Rand, and I'll see all of you next week.