

When HR Takes a Seat at the Table: An Interview with Jamie Steider

By Ted Powell

I recently sat down with Jamie Steider, Director of Human Resources at Federated Wireless. The company pioneers innovative products for the commercialization and expansion of shared spectrum CBRS capabilities. Jamie is a successful strategic partner in Human Resources and Organizational Development with years of experience in the technology, agency, marketing, entertainment, non-profit and government contracting sectors. We discussed the value of engaging HR professionals as true business partners - the guardians of culture, trust, the employer brand and relationships within that organization - as opposed to the more traditional administrative role.



According to Jamie, if HR views its responsibility as “policing” employees and ensuring that they are in compliance with policies and procedures, they are missing a breakthrough opportunity. By becoming more knowledgeable and involved across various departments and teams, HR professionals can step up as real business leaders, contribute to a positive corporate culture and empower employees to resolve problems and conflicts on their own. Jamie shared her insights and included some surprising takeaways along with revealing anecdotes that can help companies understand the full potential of the HR role in helping to achieve organizational goals.

Q Ted: Jamie, you’ve been an HR professional for many years within multiple organizations. Based on your experiences, how would you describe the ideal HR role in support of a high performing organization? In other words, what kind of partnership should HR and the internal clients strive to create?

A Jamie: *That’s a really good question. In an ideal world there is a broader, more strategic focus on employee-related issues. Both HR and the internal client drive a really strong linkage between the company’s people, its culture, its brand and its business objectives. And so that’s really what I strive for.*

What I’ve seen in high performing organizations is that employee-related pieces are strongly linked to the business objectives. You can’t get one right without the other. The

HR role is identified as a business leader that owns a strategic linkage to strengthen the business. It positions the business for the long-term success.

Q Ted: So the goal is for HR to create a link between people and the organization's goals?

A Jamie: *I think when it's not working is when the HR, with other leaders, is expected to own that linkage and HR is just expected to kind of serve it up, execute against it. Placing HR in a truly equal executive team and focusing on business objectives accountability makes a difference.*

When you link HR's accountability to the business objective, not to policies and procedures or tactical pieces, you're creating that synergy between the people who get it all done. We all know that businesses can't do what they do without the people involved and the talent that they have. You're creating that linkage between people and the goals and objectives of the organization.

Q Ted: Do you have any examples that come to mind of a particularly strong linkage that you've noticed, or a way in which you have seen that linkage created?

A Jamie: *The best way that I've seen the linkage created is when the executives put together their individual goals for the organization, and the organization and their CEO hold them accountable. HR is right there alongside them with their business objectives when they plan what they are going to do over the next 12 to 18 months to help the organization meet revenue goals. If you can't tie HR's goals to revenue, growth or profitability, you aren't thinking about the partnership right because HR can absolutely affect those pieces. And when you make those links, that's when I see the partnership working really well.*

Q Ted: Before we move off of that question, any other comments in terms of how you would describe the optimal HR role?

A Jamie: *I think that if HR is a trusted leader it means that they have the same kind of relationships that any other executive has, down and through the organization. They don't sit in confidence with just one member of the executive team like the CEO or the COO depending on where it reports. I think that you have to have those relationships built and have the same level of expectations there. And in the same way, wherever the other executives report, HR needs to report in the same way.*

So if you treat HR like an executive and a business leader, that holds true for reporting structure, for accountability, for goals, for the way that you link the productivity and accountability for outcomes. It has to be equal all the way across the board, because that is what filters down through the organization. The employees see the regard in the

goals that HR is being held to. They know why HR is there and how they're going to help them reach the business goals that they're striving to achieve.

Q Ted: You just made me think of something that I've also noticed, and I'll see if this is something you agree or disagree with. When you talk about forming relationships you almost have to see all relationships, regardless of level, are somewhat equal. Have you ever seen situations where people might just serve the boss but not really develop the same kind of relationship with people at other levels?

A Jamie: Absolutely. Where I've seen it work the best is where every business leader and every executive are held to the same thing. Their relationships should not just be with one another, and they are not there just to make the CEO happy. The people that really matter are all the people that you work for. And frankly, at the end of the day, we work for all the people in the organization. The CEO leads us, but who we work for, in a good organization, is everybody below that level as well.

Creating those relationships understanding the people, their needs, their pain points and really listening, really digging in and trying to learn their world is how you can create the right types of environment for everybody to be successful.

Q Ted: I've noticed that it's not always easy and natural for an HR person to become a fully integrated member of a client leadership team. What advice would you give to someone desiring to move beyond just being an HR administrator? How do you go about that?

A Jamie: You have to just start showing up. You have to show up to team meetings, you've got to show up to sales meetings, to business meetings, wherever the door is open to you. And if it's not open to you, find a sponsor inside that meeting who can open the door for you and start showing up in a way that helps everyone there see that you're just there to learn.

Don't take notes at first because it really freaks people out when HR takes notes in meetings. Just go and listen, and don't go just once. Go every week or every month or whenever they need and start asking questions about the business problems that they're facing or the decisions that they have in front of them.

Q Ted: So getting more involved is the way for HR to become more of an equal partner?

A Jamie: They have to become a relentless listener and a learner of the business. That's the way you breach from an HR administrator to an HR partner. If your business has a call center and they record their calls, take the time to listen to a few hours of calls every month, so you know what the call center employees experience. If the business has engineers, take an intro to coding class for a common coding language that they use.

If you can understand the business, the people and the business challenges, then you can start to really build that bridge between the programs and the practices that you have to put in place with the perspective and the language of the business. You just get so much more buy-in, there's so much more confidence in what you put forward. And that's the way to make that jump from an administrator to a strategist and a partner.

Q Ted: It sounds like you're saying that HR should take the time to learn the business from different points of view.

A Jamie: *It is important to be the business leader with an HR background, not the HR leader who doesn't know the business, and that's really the biggest piece. You have an opportunity in human resources to take an organizational view of the business, but most of the individual business leaders don't. They only take a myopic view of their area - whether it's operations or engineering or sales - and they're really focused in.*

But HR has an opportunity to take a really big organizational view. I would say don't waste it on a myopic view on HR practices. Learn the business, learn the people, and they'll believe you if you just keep showing up.

Q Ted: Very good. By the way, I loved a couple of great sound bites in there, like just don't take notes.

A Jamie: *It really makes people nervous. At least the first time. The first couple times you cannot take notes when you show up. After they believe that you are there to learn, you can take notes.*

Q Ted: Well it also reminds me that I've seen some situations where people who come into an organization align managers, or what you would call internal clients. At the old company they came from maybe nobody trusted HR and they put HR kind of in a box. Have you ever encountered anybody like that where you had to really overcome their past experience with HR that kept HR at a distance? You don't open yourself up to them too much. Have you ever had to overcome that situation?

A Jamie: *Yes, absolutely. You have to be willing to break the biases and experiences that the people who have worked in previous organizations, or in that organization with a previous HR leader, and know that you have to change their experiences day in and day out. And that means it is just being incredibly vigilant with every encounter that you have with everybody in the organization, because it will only take one encounter to reinforce what they already believe HR to be. It's going to take 10 to 20 encounters with the exact opposite result to get them to believe that it can be different.*

You will feel and experience things like it's not fair, that's not how I am, or that's the position I keep getting put into. It doesn't matter why you're there, it doesn't matter how they believe it, but you're going to have to take a tack of giving them a different experience every single time.

Q Ted: What is the best way to change their view?

A Jamie: *They're not going to ever believe that you aren't the HR hammer if you show up with one in hand. So you've got to find sponsors within the organization and work with them to gain the trust and understanding of the team. The best thing you have going for you is not when you tell somebody, "Oh, I'm different." It's when their peer tells somebody, "Oh no, that new HR leader is different."*

And so word of mouth and the experience that their peers and their leaders and the employees and their teams share is what's going to gain you credibility. It isn't easy and sometimes it feels like you're pounding your head against the wall, but it is so worth it when you finally break through. You can never go back once you're there. You know this is really where you like to play and how you can show up to an organization.

Q Ted: Very nice, thanks. Describe one of your most meaningful client engagements where you were fully integrated. How did that partnership work to achieve positive tangible business results?

A Jamie: *Probably my most meaningful engagement with an internal client was when I was asked to join the steering committee of the five year strategic planning process for my organization. I knew at that point that I had really broken through every barrier. I wasn't being asked to come and represent HR, I was being asked to come and represent the organization.*

That was because I had the best understanding of the skillsets and the pulse of the organization and the people involved, and I was representing the 350 employees. We were building a strategic plan to shift the business. The legacy business that we had was not going to support the organization forever, and so we needed to come up with a new product or a twist in our current product line to be able to sustain and move into the future.

Q Ted: How did you approach coming up with a plan for the future? Did the shift involve a reduction in the workforce?

A Jamie: *The steering committee was myself and the CEO and the CFO, and then we worked to put together a representative group. It was really important that we didn't just have an executive team that was the five-year planning committee. We had a representative*

group across the organization where I was able to contribute product ideas and marketing thoughts. I based my ideas on statistics and information on our customers. We were trying to reach things that are outside of the role of human resources, but well within the role of business leader in an organization. It led us to create the next path for the organization where we were able to tangentially find the business line where we didn't have to do any kind of reduction enforce or layoffs with our employees.

To make this move we were able to figure out an internal education and professional development plan to actually shift the folks who were on the team, give them new skills to be able to make this shift with us. That was really rewarding, to be able to show up as a business leader but represent the people. We were not only able to retain our staff, but we were actually able to grow them professionally and give them new skills through professional development that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

Q Ted: Very good, I bet they benefited from your fresh perspective on some of those non-HR issues that you were leading and creating around.

A Jamie: You know that you've kind of won the war a little bit when instead of people saying, "Why did HR show up?" they instead ask, "Where's HR? We really need Jamie in the room." Or whoever it is. And so I think that that was what, for the team, I really saw it put it over the top.

They were no longer questioning why human resources was included. It changed to wondering in certain meetings why human resources wasn't there and bringing me or somebody on my team in because they started to really see the value and the benefit of having HR there.

Q Ted: Now looking at the more challenging situations, what was the biggest mistake you ever made? One that made it difficult to get fully integrated. What did you learn and how did you recover?

A Jamie: I mean, I've definitely made mistakes in organizations and career, for sure. But I think the biggest mistake that I made was using positional power to get people to listen and to get something accomplished, right - head of HR, hear me roar. You have to listen to me because I'm here and I'm HR. It works in the moment, but it has some really drastic long-term effects where you become that dreaded principal's office or, "Oh no, HR is in the room." And you lose the ability to be the person and the value, instead become the title and the role.

I really learned a very difficult lesson of the difference between positional power and personal power. I saw how much more you can accomplish with personal power and trusted relationships than with your title. Especially if your title has HR in it, it carries

just a heavier load, and if you are willing to use it in the wrong way you can really break down trust. People will be wary of having you included in meetings because it takes on this level of seriousness and they have to act a certain way and are fearful of that, head of HR hear me roar, coming back.

Q Ted: How did you set things right?

A Jamie: *The recovery really did take a while. I built relationships, I listened, I spent time in the business instead of policing the business. But it was really more over time that when I would have ideas or opinions I was heard as somebody trying to contribute, instead of somebody trying to criticize.*

And so that was something I definitely took into every other role I've ever had and have not made that mistake. I want to be a business leader with insight, not an HR leader with a hammer. That makes a difference.

Q Ted: You know that's interesting, because as you were telling that story I was thinking of the number of times I've been sitting with a group of clients and HR wasn't there and then somebody says something or stumbled into something and then everybody goes, "Good thing HR is not in the room."

Of course you have to walk a balance there, right, because there are times when, again, being the guardian of keeping the culture in a good place you do have to call people out or bring things to people's attention that maybe others just wouldn't because they're not as sensitive to it. So the question is sort of how do you do that, but still maintain that relationship so that you're trusted and they desire to have you in the room?

A Jamie: *I think that it's up to the organization to make sure that it's not just the HR leader's job to police the business. If somebody says something inappropriate in a room it shouldn't matter if HR is there or not. What should matter is if there's a leader, whether a leader by position or a leader by culture and personal relationships that identifies that isn't something that should be said and shuts it down. And that is actually what you end up having to strive for. If you're doing it right, you're empowering other people to say the same things that you would say in those situations instead of you having to be there.*

A lot of places think HR is the one who polices, and it's not. Or if the organization has that high performing culture the HR leader has expressed and ensured their entire executive team has that same guardianship of the culture and of treating each other right and of being respectful and all those different pieces. And so it's not easy, but when you find an organization like that or an organization that's willing to move to that it's really gold.

Q Ted: What HR executives can do to undermine integration or hold themselves back. You've already mentioned kind of your mistake in terms of using the power play. Is there anything else that comes to mind that you've noticed that HR people can unknowingly do that would create a barrier between them and their internal clients?

A Jamie: *We get into human resources because HR people really like working with people and we really like to solve problems. So what ends up happening is a lot of times they think that they know how to solve a problem because they've either encountered it at another organization or within another team, and they immediately jump into problem-solving mode when somebody shows up to talk to them. And usually that point they're already jumping to some tool or some process or something to help fix this. And there isn't a magic tool or a process to solve organizational problems because, well, Ted, if there were I would have found it, marketed it and would be a millionaire instead of doing this interview with you today!*

So instead of trying to really solve those problems, you have to try to understand the problem, and get the context in the background. Then it goes back to what I was saying about having the guardians of the culture. All the executives should be the guardians with respect to treating people right. It's the same thing individually. If you're teaching people or coaching them on how to solve the problems themselves and sending them to the right person internally to get that coaching to have the difficult conversation. That's when you're getting it right.

Q Ted: So you need to give people the tools to solve problems on their own?

A Jamie: *You can undermine yourself if you go and say, "Oh I'll go talk to them for you." You become a part of the problem and just a tool to be used for people to talk to each other, instead of really strengthening the organization and strengthening the individuals by helping them fend for themselves. In the internal client perspective, they end up fearing that if they involve HR, they're making the problem serious because HR then becomes the mouthpiece for the problem.*

Instead of talking to people, say, "Tell me more about that, let me understand the problem. Let me give you some words that you can use when going back to talk to this other person." Or, "Here's some suggestions for how you discuss this problem with your team, why don't you go and do that, we'll talk about what they came up with and see how you respond. I can help you crack the response or know how to respond in those moments." Those are the types of things that are successful.

When you jump to solve a problem or you're empathetic and you really want to help somebody, sometimes you can inadvertently get too involved and insert yourself as a tool that shouldn't be there.

Q Ted: Yeah, and it's all out of positive intent. We all want to prove our own value and prove our worth, it's just we're not aware we're over proving that we can stumble into some non-effective responses.

A Jamie: Well and human resources is not, as we talked about, always a function within the organization that gets the high level of value and respect that other positions can get. And so we can go into value proving mode because of an organizational mindset, and then we become crutch for the organization and that feels like you're providing value. It feels like they can't do it without you because you become that crutch.

But in a good organization, you would be able to realize quickly that your value doesn't come in the fact that they can't be without you, in having those conversations. The value comes in that you're a critical piece of their organization and their culture and their business, and that's why they need you.

Q Ted: So Jamie, this reminds me of a good friend of mine who shared a story with me about how their boss is CEO of a company and my friend was in HR. The CEO relieved them from feeling that they needed to solve all the problems in the organization, and this person was telling me how that liberated them and freed them. Does that sound like a familiar story?

A Jamie: It does, yes.

Q Ted: Would you feel comfortable kind of sharing that? I think that was very profound of you coming to that understanding, and what that did for you in the organization.

A Jamie: I know a lot of organizations do expect their human resources people to flag problems and relationships in teams and be the fixer in an organization. That can be exhausting and at the end of the day that person never actually has the ability to fix those problems. They can't be fixed by somebody outside the team or by a third party who's not the two individuals having an issue. That has to be done by those people, and it's hard work and they have to do it there.

And so there was a real breakthrough here at Federated Wireless with my CEO, Iyad, who freed me from that and said, "I don't want you to solve the problems in the organization. If you become a crutch for people in having difficult conversations, then we can't do it without you." And so when you're looking at the situation, figure out how to help them so if this problem were to resurface, they wouldn't need you the second time. And if you're solving it that way you know that you're solving it the right way.

Q Ted: Would you say that trust plays a big role in the effectiveness of HR?

A Jamie: We really got into how we can dialogue through what's going on in the organization, without deciding how to handle it. This tactic really allows me to be a partner who is able to listen. It means that people don't come to me with an agenda to have to go to somebody else, because they know it's not going to get there. I don't become the person who runs things up the flagpole and has the difficult conversations for them.

It's nice to be able to say, "Hey, if you really want Iyad to know that, you really need to go talk to him. It's not my story to tell." And conversely, Iyad never comes to me and says, "Hey, can you tell me about these conversations you're having with people?" Because he also knows that it's not my story to tell and doesn't expect me to be in the middle of that. So those trusted relationships are much easier to build in that kind of situation because people can come to me, and know that when they walk away I'm not going to be elevating it or escalating it, making it into a bigger deal than what they wanted it to be. It makes me a safe place to come. And it makes the CEO's office a safe place for me to go as well

Q Ted: Great, thanks. So the other side of the equation, of course, is the client, the internal client. And what I've observed is that many times they harbor different kinds of feelings and beliefs about HR and they act out of those, and that can push HR away from having a seat at the table.

Any advice that you have for those kinds of executives in terms of what they're missing and what they should be looking at if they don't feel HR should be integrated?

A Jamie: Yeah, I would ask them to examine why they don't feel like the person who is the guardian of the culture and the trust and the brand and the relationship shouldn't be at the table. Is it because of messages they don't want to hear? Is it because they're worried that means they aren't as important in guarding the culture and the trust and the brand and the relationships?

I found that a lot of times when people are not open to HR being that trusted partner, it's much less about human resources itself and how they're viewed, but much more about a feeling or a judgment or an insecurity that their leaders are making about their own value that they bring to the table.

Q Ted: Do you find that leaders are generally accepting of coaching to strengthen their relationships and solve problems?

A Jamie: A lot of times I find that human resources is the area within an organization that everybody thinks they have a little bit of experience in, but very few people have any training in. And so they think, "Oh, I already know how to do this." Or, "I know how to talk to my people." And they're not open to that coaching, they're not that kind of relationship.

So I would just ask them when it's going right, what is happening in the organization and do you think human resources leaders could make that better? And when it's going wrong, what's going on in the organization and don't you think that having the guardian of your people and your trust in your brand and the relationships there with you would be helpful?

If you think of human resources as additive in that way, you start to open your eyes to other things that they can provide. But at the end of the day when you come into an organization, I don't believe it is your job as an HR leader to change your mind about HR. It's your job to show up as the business leader and listen with the intention of learning, and not responding and being the leader you want to be. And some people will accept that, and some people won't accept that. If the people at the employee level and the manager level accept that, it can filter up and the executive team will ultimately end up accepting it because they serve the people.

Q Ted: So what would be your recommendation for HR professionals?

A Jamie: *Just show up and be the kind of leader you want to be regardless of what minds are made up about your role. You're not any more special than any other role in the organization. People have made up their minds about leaders of operations, or leaders of engineering and the personalities that come with that. So you're not any different, and you can't take it personally. You just have to give them the experiences and show up the way you want to be seen and do that over and over. You can really have a long-lasting impact when you do that.*

Q Ted: That's very helpful. I have another client that was suffering from a lower than average employee satisfaction results and higher than average attrition rates. As a result, HR was conducting more exit interviews for this particular group than the rest of the organization. And yet the leader, the client, was acting out of fear and wanted to keep HR out of there so this individual could kind of control what was going on in the group.

I had to help them understand, and I said, "Do you realize that HR is only hearing from the people that are leaving? And HR, because they don't have a seat at the table they are not observing or participating in some of the things that you are doing to try to fix the root cause of some of these problems. So if you want to continue to leave HR out, they're going to hear from all the exit interviews and they're just not going to have a complete picture of what's going on."

A Jamie: *Well you're also going to hear from people when you can't do anything about it, right. You're going to get the information and when it's too late to help that particular employee or to change their experience.*

Q Ted: Right, good point. So people love tools and tactics, and you talked a little bit earlier about not taking notes and you talked about listening, any other specific tools or tactics that you've adopted that you like that have helped you build strong, trusted relationships with your internal clients?

A *Jamie: If you are truly curious about what it's like to live in that employee's world or that team's world and really take the time to understand their job, their pain points, then you start to be able to relate to people at a different level. I get much less of, "Oh, you wouldn't really understand." And much more excitement of, "Here, let me explain to you about why we're thinking about doing X." Or why we're cloud agnostic. And things that in a technology firm, they would think, "Oh, well they're not going to understand." But when you can speak that common language and you use your curiosity, and true curiosity, don't just ask just to ask, but ask because you actually want to know - it makes a difference.*

I've had fantastic relationships built around the algorithms that I could never create, but even if I can get 10% or 20% or 30% understanding, it furthers my understanding of the business and I can get really excited about what that person is working on. And then when you can see them frustrated, you can have dialogue about that and understand a little bit better. I also think being available and approachable is a huge tool in human resources. HR typically has an office, even if the other employees are in desks, so it becomes kind of this scary place to have to go. And so getting out of where you've got your little island and working from other locations and being accessible is important. Just making sure that they understand you're just like everybody else and that you want to work alongside them can make a difference in your relationship building.

Q Ted: So you said a couple of things that I think are very important. Accessibility, approachability, just like everyone else, and I'm going to throw a word in there and I'm going to play around with it a little bit because I see it as a potential opportunity and a barrier, and that is vulnerability.

I've noticed sometimes HR executives get into a place, maybe it's because they feel they need to play this guardian role where they protect themselves from being vulnerable with their internal clients, and I see that holding them back. Even sometimes when I've done team sessions, I've seen HR executives calling up and say, "Well, I'm on the team, I've been invited to the session, but I'd kind of like to be more of an observer." Which means that they wouldn't be in the middle of a feedback process. And of course, all of us go into feedback processes with a certain amount of trepidation.

It's just that sometimes I can see that because of just the role that they have, that being vulnerable can be a little bit more difficult. How do you see that?

A *Jamie: I think that vulnerability is a strength in an organization, and you can't possibly expect other people to be vulnerable to you if you haven't shown your willingness and*

ability to be vulnerable first during return. It's also when you hear things like, "Oh, well HR just showed up." I don't ever want to hear that, it actually feels kind of bad. I really would like people to just say, "Jamie showed up." Well, if I want people to talk about me showing up then I have to show up as me, I can't show up as HR. And I am imperfect, I make mistakes and I have feelings that get out of control and I have baggage and I have a family and I have a life outside of this business.

If I can't show up as me, how can I ever expect for people, when I walk in the room, to see me instead of my role walking in? And I don't think that makes me anything more than a stronger leader and a stronger human resources professional. I mean the H in HR is human, if I can't be human how can I possibly expect anybody else to come and trust me when they're at their most vulnerable, most difficult human moments?

Q Ted: Well some great stuff in there, thanks. Jamie, the last thing I wanted to do, just one or two other quick questions. You talked earlier about, you used the word guardian and what was the other one?

A Jamie: Custodian.

Q Ted: Yeah, guardian, which I think is kind of related to the question of how have you learned about your role as guardian of the company's policies without an internal coaching advisor? So talk a little bit more about the guardian versus custodian responsibility.

A Jamie: Sure. I was thinking about your question and how do I balance the role of guardian of the policies, and I thought, "I don't think I am a guardian of the policies, I'm a custodian of the policies." And when I think about it that way, the custodians, they clean up the policies, they keep them compliant with the law, but they're just words on paper until the organization stands behind them. And I think that the leaders and managers along with the people and the human resources professionals have to be equally the guardians of the company policies in the way that we keep them consistent with the real values of the organization. And so I started to make a list of the things that I am a guardian of, and the things that I am a custodian of, and it really started to separate that out for me. Kind of that difference between an HR partner business leader and an HR administrator.

If you believe that you are the guardian of policies, processes, and programs you're firmly stuck in an HR administrator. But when you see yourself as the guardian of culture, the guardian of trust, the guardian of the employer brand, the guardian of the relationships within that organization, that's when you are that true HR partner, true HR leader. That's the progression that people make in human resources is when they move away from that.

Q Ted: How much responsibility gets placed back with the employees in that regard?

A Jamie: *I always like to tell the story of when somebody came to me and said, "Hey Jamie, I have a question." I'm like, "Yeah?" They said, "Can I wear shorts to the office?" And I said, "I don't know, can you wear shorts?" And they looked at me like, "But that's why I came to you." I said, "I don't know, can you wear shorts?" "Well Jamie, what's the policy?"*

I said, "I don't know exactly how to say this to you, but what I really care about is that you're making very good business decisions and that you're working hard, and you've got the right environment to be successful. And if you think that the day that you have tomorrow based on your meetings and what you're going to be is appropriate to wear shorts, why do I care? That has nothing to do with your productivity and your output and your outcome, and I trust you to make the right decisions there."

And when I could answer that way instead of reciting a policy was when I knew that I wasn't a guardian of a policy, I was a guardian of the culture. And the culture is that we trust our people to make good decisions and let them go do that regardless if it has something to do with where to spend money in the budget or how to dress for the day.

Q Ted: So the question is, did they wear the shorts?

A Jamie: *They did wear the shorts, and every time they were the shorts it actually makes me smile because I know that I empowered them to make a good decision that they're comfortable with. I don't think it has ever made a difference in how they work as to whether or not they wear shorts.*

Q Ted: I love that. So last question is just finishing up with a final one word, phrase or sentence of advice to help people elevate their value and standing with their internal client. If you were to share that, what would it be?

A Jamie: *It doesn't matter who came before you in human resources or how the organization has seen or valued human resources before. The value that you bring is always going to be up to you. And so you can't take it personally what their experiences have been before, and you can't let that change the kind of HR leader you want to be.*

Figure out what that is, learn from the others around you. Find the leaders in the business that are highly respected and figure out what they're doing differently than the others. You are no different than any other business leader, and so knowing the people, knowing what works, knowing how to build relationships and trust, that will make all of the difference.

And if you go to your Chief Technology Officer, they can tell you all about the business and what the company does, you should be no different. See yourself as a business leader with an HR background and make the impact there.

Q Ted: Fabulous. So how do you feel about what you expressed?

A Jamie: *I think it's the direction that HR is going. The more people who can show up like this, the more broadly and widely HR will be fielded this way.*

Ted: Absolutely.

Our thanks to Jamie Steider, Director of Human Resources at Federated Wireless, for sharing her views on the ideal role for HR professionals going forward. From transformative insights to helpful hints, Jamie gives us an insider's view of the optimum role of HR professionals as they evolve from administrators to true business partners. According to Jamie, in an ideal world, Human Resources will have a broader, more strategic focus on employee-related issues where both HR and company leaders drive a strong link between the company's people, its culture, its brand and its business objectives.

Jamie trusts that HR professionals who believe they are the guardian of policies, processes, and programs remain firmly planted in the role of HR administrator. But when they see themselves as true HR leaders, they drive personal relationships within the organization, improve the culture and become trusted allies accountable in promoting the goals of the company. They can then encourage a synergy between people to position the company for long-term success. HR professionals need to show up at meetings, find advocates within the company to ease the way and take the time to learn what's going on in the organization. Only then can HR professionals develop a broad viewpoint and take their seat at the table alongside C-suite executives.