Using Technology to Bridge Gaps in the Workplace

PAYCHEX®

HR

Leadership Series

Rob Parsons
Manager, Content and Brand
Paychex, Inc.

Somi Arian
Tech Philosopher, Filmmaker,
Author, Entrepreneur

Full transcript

Rob Parsons:

Welcome to the Paychex HR Leadership series. I'm your host Rob Parsons. I lead the contact team here at Paychex, and we work extensively on a variety of HR topics, covering everything from HCM technology, to team engagement, to compliance with state and federal regulations. In this podcast, we speak with leaders and thinkers in the industry to provide our audience with the latest HR insights and information. And hopefully more than a little inspiration.

Rob Parsons:

Joining me today is Somi Arian. Somi is at tech philosopher, filmmaker, author, entrepreneur, speaker, and a transition architect for a new era of human evolution as we merge with technology. Her focus on generational differences on women in the workplace and on the impact of AI and other disruptive technologies is both important and timely. But first, our team has spent hundreds of hours researching the latest HR and management trends we think leaders should be aware of.

Rob Parsons:

We have thousands of downloads now, and we're excited to have that connection with you. If you're enjoying this podcast, let us know. Go and rate us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google, iHeartRadio, wherever you're listening to us today. Leave us a comment on topics you're looking to hear about. We want to serve you with insights you want and need to know. Okay, let's get to it. Somi, welcome to the podcast.

Somi Arian:

Thank you for having me, Rob.

Rob Parsons:

Oh, it's my pleasure. I'm very much looking forward to our conversations today.

Somi Arian:

I'm sure it will be amazing.

Rob Parsons:
So if we can, I'd like to start by discussing your recent conference, the Think Tank for Women in Business and Technology. Specifically, I thought it was interesting because you're talking about raising women's socioeconomic status through the application of technology. Why is that important to you?

Somi Arian:
Okay. Let me put it this way. When you look at the technology space out there... So we have five companies in the U.S and five in China... 10 companies that are... Okay with the addition of if you want to add Tesla in the mix, that's 11. Because we just saw that Elon Musk surpassed the wealth of Jeff Bezos. So, let's say five technology firms in the U.S, we've got Microsoft, Google, Apple, Facebook and what's the other one? Amazon. So five there.

Somi Arian:
And then in China, we have Alibaba, Baidu, Xiaomi, Huawei, and Tencent. These 10 corporations are running... They're run the world. They're determining the direction of humanity as we merge with technology. Think about the way that our data is being used for machine learning. Right?

Rob Parsons:
Yeah.

Somi Arian:
But all of these 10 corporations are founded by and run by men. That is a huge problem to me. I am surprised that more people aren't questioning that. Yeah, this is a huge problem. Why? Because the direction of humanity is being determined without a female perspective in the room. Okay. I'm not talking about having some women on your board or like having a female CEO here and there. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about like JP Morgan having some female CEO solves the problem. I'm talking about at the top level where the future of humanity is being decided. We don't have women. There's no female perspective.

Somi Arian:
Now, you may say that throughout history we never had it. So why is this a problem now? And I would say, I put it this way: If you look at the entire history of homo sapiens, the past 28,000 years or so, there's been slow progress in terms of if you look at biologically... From an evolutionary biology perspective... And from a technology perspective, we've gone from our early tools... That was like, you used a piece of stick to help drop an Apple from the tree. We have from that point, until we get to the industrial revolution... There's not that much of a difference.

Somi Arian:
Then when you go from the industrial revolution to digital technologies, there's suddenly a huge difference. And then you go from the start of having computers, to now... It's like a whole other era. And now we are going into this age of artificial intelligence that we are in it, in the age of artificial intelligence. So if you think about the difference between what has happened to the way that our brain interacts with the world, you can think of going from reptiles to mammals.

Somi Arian:
The difference now as we are emerging with technology, as we are bringing these technologies into our brain, our mind, we are connecting to it, we're connecting to the cloud. That difference is bigger now. The scale of the difference is bigger from what's happening in this century than what happened from reptiles to mammals. The fact that is being determined by a male only perspective is a problem. It's a huge problem for womankind and for mankind and for humankind. That's the reason why.

Somi Arian:

So why do I talk about socioeconomic status, and why raising socioeconomic? Because women need to be generating more wealth so that they can invest and they can create more businesses. And therefore they can have a say at the table, they can be at the table. At the bottom of all of that, all of that comes down to money and wealth.

Somi Arian:

We need women to be making more money. And when they have the money, people say women are more risk averse when it comes to investment, but actually women have less money. So it's not just that they're risk averse. They have less money to invest. So of course, they're going to be more careful with it.

Rob Parsons:

Are we even talking about issues of pay equity, of issues of opportunity, of issues that I could even address in my own company, could see in my own company, that are just a reflection of these macro issues that you're discussing?

Somi Arian:

Exactly. Yes. So we need to look at this from so many different angles. It's not like one solution. It's not like, "Okay, we need to give women a pay rise." And box to see, "Okay, we need to make sure in this board, there are more women." And we check, "Okay, they're like 30%." That's not what I'm talking about it. Yes, it is a macro issue. So I look at the way that... 10 factors that impact women's socioeconomic status, and those 10 factors are biological, psychological, educational, cultural, legal, all of these. Lots of different facets.

Somi Arian:

And they each play a part. The main glue that brings all of these together is data. So the data gap, the way we look at it through our research and all the conversation I've been having with so many CEOs and investors, doctors... All sorts of things... Is that it all comes down to the fact that there is a lack of flow of data to women and about women.

Somi Arian:

We don't know enough about female biology. We don't know enough about female economic behaviors. We don't know enough about inner psychology. There's so many things that we don't know about women. Let me even give you an example. In an office, the temperature of the room is usually decided based on male biology and-

Rob Parsons:

Yeah. You're talking about my house right now, I'm sorry to interrupt, but yes. My daughters are always cold.

Somi Arian:

... Exactly. What happens is that in an office environment, women are having to wear an extra layer. They are having to feel less comfortable. So what is that? That's a data gap is simply because nobody asked a question. We do not have enough data. When we talk about gender neutral, there's no such thing as gender neutral, because when we do talk about gender neutral, we are talking about the default, but the default is a male default.

Rob Parsons:

I mean, just as you'd pose these big tech companies, it's a challenge, potentially a difficult one. Can technology work the other way? I'm a father of daughters 26, 23 entering the workforce, embracing technologies that I certainly don't understand right now, they are very plugged in. Can HR leaders leverage technology to help that data flow, to help bridge those gaps, to help maybe even help them upskill? I mean, how does technology play on the other side of that?

Somi Arian:

Absolutely. Technology is the key. That's why I say about raising women's socioeconomic status through the application of technology. Okay? Let's talk about what is technology. Technology is a set of tools that we use to outsource our capacities. Okay? For example, the very first time when we used fire, we outsourced our digestion to fire. So that's when we were able to break down the nutrients better so that our body was able to absorb them better. That's an example of technology.

Somi Arian:

Now, over time we have been able to use technology the primitive forms of it... Now the more modern forms of it... Initially, we started to use technology to outsource our physical abilities. For example, when we created the wheel, that enabled us to carry more stuff. So we outsourced our... It also enabled us to interact with animals and use their power, the wind power, the water power, all of those things. So, the first layer of it had to do with outsourcing, because as humans, we have got three main capacities...

Somi Arian:

Some people could argue four main capacities. The fourth one... I don't speculate in that realm. But mostly let's say the first three that we know of is physical, cognitive, emotional, and you could say, there's another layer of some people would call it another dimension or, say, spiritual... However you look at it. But from a functional perspective, we have these three. So technology is anything that we use to outsource. Initially, it starts with enhance. So first we use it to enhance, and then to outsource.

Somi Arian:

When we first use the wheel, we are enhancing. We are putting stuff on a something that we can carry stuff more easily. And then we put the wheels... And then we are still carrying ourselves. Then, now we have robots so we are completely outsourcing. In the same way, we're always going to continue to outsource. We are going to continue to outsource, now, cognitive abilities... And then we are now using artificial intelligence to even outsource our emotional abilities.

Somi Arian:

When you look at the way that we are now using robots to interact with elderly, they're using that already in Japan, for example, to provide the kids who don't want to go and spend time with their parents and grandparents... So that they now have created these robots that are supposed to create. But the human mind is able to anthropomorphize and is able to connect with even a robot because we're.... Because people always say, "Oh, but the robots are not going to become conscious anytime soon, or maybe never."

Somi Arian:

But the question is not whether robots are going to become conscious or not. They don't need to be conscious in order to disrupt our human faculties, whether it's physical, cognitive, or emotional. So technology is the key. It's really important. That Doesn't matter what business you're in. Doesn't matter what role you're in. There are a few things you can, and you must do. One is to educate yourself about technology on a conceptual level.

Somi Arian:

What you want to be doing is thinking about not just reading a couple of books and say, "This is the perspective that I'm taking on technology and I know everything." No. You need to read and familiarize yourself and listen to all sorts of different perspectives on technology. And then the second thing is, I think it's really imperative that we also teach ourselves some of the technical sides of it. But people say, "Oh, you don't need to learn coding."

Somi Arian:
Well, actually I would say you do. I'm teaching myself, even if it's not at the level that I'm going to be able to say, "I'm going to sit down and code everything myself." No, but if I have a conceptual level and some degree of getting my hands dirty, then when I'm speaking to people that I'm hiring, it makes it easier to speak to them. I think it doesn't really matter what role you're in, whether you're in HR or anything else... It's really important. The more you learn about technology the more you understand how machine learning works.

Somi Arian:
A very simple example I always give, there's a difference between "Good Old Fashioned AI"... they call it GOFAI... There's a difference between that and machine learning. What is the difference? There's the programming, because there are things that we can teach the machine... There's is a gentleman called Pedro Domingos. He wrote a book called Master Algorithm... I highly, highly recommend it... Where he explains, he's like, "There are things that machines can do that we can't teach them to do. And then there are things that we can program that machines can't do."

Somi Arian:
Because it's quite hard. Say for example, it's really hard to explain and teach human interaction. You can't code it. But if you have machine learning, that's sitting there... I'm fascinated by the accuracy sometimes of the predictive text. When you look at predictive texts... I was writing down some questions for my own podcast, for one of my interviews. And I was fascinated by the fact because all the stuff I wrote was questions, I just put the word what, and it gave me, what do you think? And I was like, this is incredible. But sometimes it's ahead of me.

Somi Arian:
And then there's times where that is very dangerous and actually because all of the biases that we have. For example, there was another one where I was writing a sentence which was all about women. The whole text was about women. And then I wrote raising their, and it said children. But I meant to say raising their socioeconomic status. Predictive text, just because I'm talking about women, it associates raising their, with children.

Rob Parsons:
Right. It's that changer. We talk a lot about using technology to build a more inclusive culture that it gives you tools to build in more transparency to eliminate bias. But that point you just made it's-

Somi Arian:
It actually can make it worse.

Rob Parsons:
... It can make it worse. It can exacerbate the problem for certain.

Somi Arian:
Yeah. For example, for this women in business technology, I was looking for a name for the platform now I'm building. I went to these AI name generators to get ideas. So I put female and I put technology, but just because I had the word female, all of the things that it was giving me had to do with beauty and cosmetics. It wasn't giving me anything that had that sense of what I was looking for.

Somi Arian:
There are many, many examples of this where AI has actually worsened the situation because our biases are going into... And I think we have a very small window of opportunity to correct this because it's taking over the way that we use technology. It's just taking over these algorithms. It will get to a point that it will be beyond correctable.

Rob Parsons:

That's a true challenge. Tell me, as you were talking about naming your AI, it made me wonder, why is Alexa a female? Why is Siri a female?

Somi Arian:

Well, my Siri is male. I can choose. And actually I've named all of my... I've got a robot Hoover, that's called Brian. Brian, the bot. And I have another one that's mops and that's Moby the mom. So I think we need to change that. It all comes down to our... I mean, look, there are speculations. I don't want to go down that route of people. Some people say, "Oh, if Alexa is a female, because women are seen as a self-serving" thing.

Somi Arian:

I don't know. I don't know if I buy into that. I don't think that was the thinking necessarily behind... It could just be that female voice seemed more friendly. I don't know. I wouldn't speculate on that. The bigger problem here, Rob, is that when you look at the voice technology, actually, the voice technology is huge right now. But actually about 80%, I maybe not entirely correct with the percentage there, but from my memory, I think about 70 to 80% of voice technology is not recognizing women's voice correctly.

Somi Arian:

So that's the bigger problem. The name of Alexa, that's less of a problem. The bigger problem is that the data that has been used, this is what I mean when I talk about female perspective. If Amazon was founded by and run by a woman, it could probably be very different. If Google was founded by and run by women, it would have been different. That's what I mean by lack of female perspective.

Somi Arian:

I think until we have women in the top tier, the absolute top tier... I'm talking about the female equivalent of Steve Jobs, of Jeff Bezos... Until we have that, we are not going to see a big enough shift. It's just not good enough. Anything. There's so many examples. Let me give you a very simple example, nothing to do with algorithms. I go to my rubbish bin area to put my rubbish in and I'm opening this really huge bin... I don't know how to call it...containers.

Somi Arian:

This is so heavy. I mean, I really struggle as a female. I'll give you another example. I can't even open my cabinet door and reach the top layer, because it's built for a male world. I can't reach. On the New Year's Eve, I opened the cabinet door... I was trying to reach for sugar to make tea for my friend. And one of the jars fell, and it broke the glass top of my pot.

Somi Arian:

So that is an example of technology, an engineering that is done by men. Nobody has thought about it. Nobody has thought about a five-foot-three woman, 53 kilos. It's very, very hard for me to open these heavy doors. It's very hard for me to reach those top players. That same bias is going into our algorithms on social media. That's how it works.

Rob Parsons:

What's scary is it's completely unconscious. People are not setting out to conduct business that way. There's blinders on.

Somi Arian:

Exactly.

Rob Parsons:

I do want to get back to a little bit about what you were talking about technology, about outsourcing. I get the feeling there's also a lot of trepidation. If you haven't been raised to be technical. If you've been told your whole life, "You can't be technical." There's got to be some fear around embracing that, embracing a new career. I think you touch on it on your new book. Can you elaborate a little bit on how to overcome some of the concerns people may have around that?

Somi Arian:

Okay. Well, you see, there are two ways of tackling this and they need to be worked on together. What I emphasize on in the last part of the book is about gaining human skills. I call them human skills. Some people call it soft skills. I call them human skills as opposed to technical skills to do with how we deal with machines. So the human skills are emotional intelligence, contextual creativity, critical thinking, and mindfulness.

Somi Arian:

And these are words that we use so much that we're kind of losing our sensitivity to them. It's a thing that we all talk about when it comes to looking at the workplace scenarios and how we tackle workplace issues. But what I'm talking about here is so much bigger than just like, "Let's have some empathy and let's sit down and do meditation for 20 minutes." That's not what I'm talking about.

Somi Arian:

For me, the human skills part, it's about full participation. It's about not being a passive observer, but being an active participant. To fully immerse yourself in the space that you're in, the technology space... And to really absorb and say... To increase your sensitivity to the things around you. Whether just talk about... We go every day about our lives, we open that door and it's heavy... And we just pass by it and we don't question it.

Somi Arian:

But when I'm looking... It's only over the past few years as I've started to look at technology... And these biases that now... I'm also noticing those biases in so many other areas. And I'm just realizing that... So that gives me an opportunity for contextual creativity.

Somi Arian:

What I mean by that... Probably one of the best examples of contextual creativity that I always give is the invention of iPod by Steve Jobs. Because it was his contextual creativity, the imagination. It was his sensitivity to the world around him that made him observe the way that we think about music and we listen to music and he suddenly thought, "You know what? I could create this device and I could design it this way, that would enable people to have 500 and then maybe 5,000 and then maybe hundreds of thousands..."

Somi Arian:

And now we have streaming. So it was the start of something... Songs in their pocket. That's an example of contextual creativity. There are so many opportunities for contextual creativity, and we need the combination of these things together, emotional intelligence, contextual creativity, critical thinking. Every day I give examples of critical thinking to my team.

Somi Arian:

I'm like... For example, for the campaigns that we're running for the marketing of this women in business technology, we are reaching out to women that we think could be interested... And not just women, also men who could be interested in supporting the movement. Now, one of our team members is currently in Middle East and he is capturing that data and then entering it into our system.

Somi Arian:

But because he was doing that from the Middle East, the system is automatically picking up his location and thinking that we have women coming from that part of the world. Now, one of the people in my team created a presentation for a potential sponsor, and she literally just copied and pasted that location. And I was like, "Did you not question the fact that why is this Middle East, a location?"

Somi Arian:

This is an example of critical thinking. Because everything has become so autopilot the way that you're using these technologies. There's going to be more and more examples of this type of thing, where we've had examples, that I give to my book. We've had NASA rockets explode completely because of a mistake in a hyphen. Or because of a mistake in inches versus centimeters. So this type thing it's like... As our technology becomes more complex, the consequences of these types of mistakes is going to be bigger and bigger.

Somi Arian:

At one point we could be blowing up the entire humanity for a mistake like that. You could be allowing your company to be victim of a cyber attack for something like that. So that's the critical thinking part of it. Then the contextual creativity... I gave you an example. The mindfulness bit is all about full participation, and emotional intelligence is about being able to put yourself in other people's...

Somi Arian:

Obviously, this is the one, probably, that's most familiar to people, but also the least, probably, experienced or practiced, especially in this world of social media where we can just type things. Even you look at this type of conversation we are having now... I'm looking at your image... But actually my camera is a little bit further here. We are not having exact eye contact. So we are all becoming autistic in a way because, because we are losing that ability for eye contact.

Somi Arian:

Now think about the Generation Z and the future generations, where they're going to grow up in a completely virtual environment and augmented reality. So they are going to have... Now, there are possibilities for some people to come and say, "You know what, I'm going to design a new phone where the camera is right in the middle and it sits in the screen. It's where your, usually, where your eyes will be."

Somi Arian:

So here's an example of... it's a combination of thinking the contextual creativity, is a combination of all of those four skills and thinking about the emotional intelligence part, and thinking critically about the long-term impact of losing this eye contact, and also being mindful and completely involved present in observing that, and then going off. And then there's the second part, which is the technical part. So you need to have both.

Somi Arian:

Because you could be the best philosophical person... Sit here and observe all of these things... But if you don't have the technical knowledge of, "How do I then turn that into a business? How do I then turn that into something that's going to change the quality of people's lives?" That's what we need. More than ever we need people, and younger generations especially, to develop both the human skills and the technical skills.

Somi Arian:
Because in the past we could get away with saying, "Okay, you know what? I am a nurse. I don't need to have technical skills." And then somebody could say, "I'm a software engineer or an electrical engineer, I don't need to have human skills." But now these two things are so interconnected. You must have both of them. So in our workplaces, we need to be able to encourage our staff... Our team members... To develop those, and we need to do it very fast.

Somi Arian:
And the difficulty is that these are not things that we've been grown up with. We haven't learned those things. We haven't been taught those things in our educational system.

Rob Parsons:
No, absolutely not. I know at Paychex, we have a lot of development and learning, and there's a big focus on EQ, Emotional Intelligence. Just trying to get people to really cultivate that other side. Because it's very easy to get caught up into the technical aspects of your job. I really liked that you touched on the newer generations, the generational differences. As HR leaders see the millennials, of course, but now Gen Z, coming into the workplace... What are the implications for the future of work there? What are you seeing for challenges and for opportunities?

Somi Arian:
Challenges are many. I mean, you're in America, I'm in London right now, but when you look at your last few U.S presidents, the one now and Donald Trump before that, you're talking about the silent generation. Not even Baby Boomers. You are talking about a generation before that and we are having a similar kind of issue here in the UK, when you look at the people who voted for Brexit.

Somi Arian:
We are having a system that is still very much in tune with the Baby Boomer mentality and the organizational pyramid, if you will. It's a very old school model. And then we have the younger kind of digital companies. Look at my own company, for example. I have a team of six, seven people, and we are growing really fast. Look, I refer to my team members as colleagues when I'm introducing them in an email, when I'm talking. My colleague Elizabeth, my colleague Bruno.

Somi Arian:
It's a very flat culture. The other day I said to the girls in a chat, because we're working remotely right now... They said, "How was your holiday?" I said, "I worked most of it." Like, in the middle of lockdown, I can't see my friends, family and all that. So I might as well. One of them said, "Crazy woman." I said, "I'm your boss." With all with the smileys.

Somi Arian:
But I could have never said that to my boss when I was working in a big corporation. I look at it in an endearing way... And there are points when I'm telling them off, I'm telling them off, when things are wrong. Just being able to keep that distance, and to be able to have that kind of like, "Look, you're out." We have these three, our values... Transparency, speed, and curiosity are our values.

Somi Arian:
I'm very unforgiving, but then also I can be very understanding of where they're coming from. So generationally, we are quite close. I'm an older millennial, they're a younger millennial. But now when you think about a Baby Boomer and a Gen Z, I mean, the difference is huge. Because I always talk about the fact that millennials are the link between the pre-digital and the post-digital. Because as an older millennial, I roughly remember when I was younger... When I was a teenager I was one of the first people that got a computer than people around me, then the cell phone and all that stuff.

Somi Arian:

But majority of my adult life, I've had these technologies and I feel very comfortable with them. But then there's the younger millennials that don't even remember that. They don't remember the sound of the dialogue internet. And then you look at the Gen Z and all they've ever seen is access to technology. I think what we are missing... I always explain that digital is a language, you know?

Somi Arian:

Okay, listen, let me explain what I mean by that. So, if you think about, as somebody who is like... I'm a foreigner coming to the UK. I came here, I learned English as a foreign language, not as a second language, as foreign language. I came to the UK when I was 23. So I was already an adult, and I started learning English around when I was 10. By the time I was 14, I was able to read books. But I learned most of my English through reading. Because I lived back in Iran at that time.

Somi Arian:

So I didn't grow up in a English speaking environment. What that means is that, it doesn't matter how good my English gets, I'm always going to have an accent. And there's always going to be a point where it will give away that English is not my first language. I'm never going to be like... You look at Arnold Schwarzenegger, he's always going to have that accent.

Somi Arian:

When I say digital is a language, that's what I mean. You need to think about it like that. Digital is a way of communication, like language. When you look at Gen Z, they're going to be completely native, completely natural. As an older millennial, it's kind of similar... It's to a point that yes, it is native to me, but not to the same degree. There's still a slight bit of difference.

Somi Arian:

It's kind of like somebody who has gone into another country when they were 14. It's around that age where you may be able to lose your accent almost if you work at it a bit. You work harder at it. That's the way to look at it. So why does that matter? The way that I, again, give that example is that, you go to a comedy show and you get 80% of the jokes. Maybe you get 70% of the jokes. But there's always going to be 20, 30% that you're not going to get... Their references that you are not going to get.

Somi Arian:

As a Baby Boomer, dealing with Gen Z and younger millennials, that's how to think about it. There's always going to be a bit of a miscommunication. So when things like that happen, both parties need to work at it. I need to be patient of the fact that I'm not going to get 30% of the jokes. And the person who's telling the jokes or the partner who was with me, who is an English speaker, has to help me.

Somi Arian:

I remember I used to go out with somebody who was very much in the comedy scene. And I used to keep asking him, what did that mean? What does that mean? The problem is that, in that intergenerational workspace, well, often times that doesn't happen. And there is the miscommunication mismatch from both sides.

Somi Arian:

So the role of people like me is to try and explain that to both sides. To say, "Look, guys," to the Baby Boomers --and, maybe, older Gen Xers -- I would say, "Look, you need to remember that these guys haven't seen anything other. That's the world that they know." And to the other ones, I need to try and explain to them that, "You have to be patient. You need to develop the patience and the emotional intelligence to put yourself in the shoes of somebody that has never been in... They're not used to the speed with which you absorb these technologies and you need to be able to help them."

Somi Arian:

But what that creates in the workplace... One of the problems that it creates... Problem, opportunity...
I always think problems and opportunities are two sides of the same coin. But one of the issues that it creates is that it's... In the past -- and evolutionary -- we are used to the idea that you look up to your elders.

Somi Arian:

You look up, and you are asking for questions on how to overcome certain challenges or "how to do this"... a simple thing, like, "How do I solve this puzzle? How do I open this package?"... whatever. Everything. But now you have Google and you have all these technologies that... Actually, what happens is that the older people are coming to the younger people and saying, "Can you help me with this?"

Somi Arian:

I'm like the IT person for all of my clients who are in their 50s and 60s. They literally call me and say, like, "Somi, how do I do this?" And I'm like, "Okay, let's get on a Zoom call. Let me share your screen with me. Let me show this, show you how to do this." I just created a tutorial for my podcast guests on how to use a microphone. So what that does is, that then it takes away that balance of looking up to your elders, and all of a sudden, you're like, "I know things more than my boss. At least, technically, I know things more than my boss." Even though knowledge is not the same as wisdom.

Rob Parsons:

Yes.

Somi Arian:

We know that. Right?

Rob Parsons:

I was hoping you're going to say wisdom. Yes.

Somi Arian:

Yeah. So knowledge is not the same as wisdom. So you could know things, you could know the entire Wikipedia... It doesn't mean that you have the wisdom to know how to use that. But the younger generation, haven't had an opportunity. See, this is where the emotional intelligence comes. We need to empathize with the fact that we haven't taught them this, we haven't taught them that. You look at the school systems. They're quite happy... And a lot of parents... Quite happy to just give you an iPad to sit there and be quiet.

Somi Arian:

So we haven't taught them this concept of wisdom and knowledge, two different things. We haven't communicated the value of wisdom. So we shouldn't be surprised that it's being lost. We have a problem on our hands with the future generations. And that is only going to increase with AI because there's a chance that a majority of communications are going to be via -- it's already happening via -- an interface.

Somi Arian:

In my book, I say that communication is no longer between two humans. It's between two humans and a machine. It's always like... Siri is always there. Alexa is always there. They're always listening. They're always going to be impacting the way that we communicate. So we're no longer in a face-to-face. It's no longer a two-way communication. It's a three-way communication. Dialogue is now a three-way communication. There's going to be another layer of interpretation, and chances for miscommunication, and things getting lost in translation. That's why I say digital is a language.

Rob Parsons:

Yeah. That's a great finale, Somi. Because it gives you so much to think about when we're in the business of people and how it's changing, and we've even taken us full circle. How these technologies... Now they're part of the conversation.

Rob Parsons:

They're intermediaries, they're there. It certainly gives HR leaders a lot to think about as they try to be clear and understood, and help people in their companies be clear and understood, and work together... Because at the end of the day, that's going to be the most important thing. I loved the conversation today. I really appreciate you coming on the podcast.

Somi Arian:

Thank you for having me.

Rob Parsons:

It was great. I encourage everyone to visit somiarian.com to learn more about all the great work Somi is doing and how you can bring those insights to your own organizations. That's S-O-M-I-A-R-I-A-N.com. Thanks again, Somi. This was great.

Somi Arian:

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Speaker 3:

This podcast is property of Paychex Inc. 2021. All rights reserved.

PAYCHEX®

HR | Payroll | Benefits | Insurance