

Life at Nuance

Two things an Olympic Gold-Medalist Skier and "The Team Formerly Known as HR" Have in Common

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Creating a team of mindful, present people is a group effort. As the adage says: "A rising tide lifts all boats," the same is true of creating a successful People Team. Even the simplest and seemingly small changes in attitude, approach, and action begin to create a groundswell.

We recently held our global Sales Kickoff in Boston where we had the honor of hearing from Olympic gold and bronze medalist in Alpine Skiing and the winner of four World Cup titles, Lindsey Vonn. No stranger to hard work, sheer grit, determination, passion for the game, and (most importantly) winning – she was the perfect person to inspire our Sales team (and, let's be honest, everyone who had the opportunity to hear from her).

In the interest of full disclosure, I grew up skiing nearly every weekend at Whiteface Mountain. I say "nearly" because in upstate New York winter lasts for approximately 46 weeks out of the year apart from six or so weeks of summer that rudely interrupt our elongated ski season. So, when Lindsey stepped on stage, I was, as my 11-year old daughter would say, "super-fanning" big time.

I listened intently as she told stories of her victories down icy slopes, her triumphant rise from numerous injuries, and how she continually pushed herself beyond limits and boundaries. She talked her journey to the top: a balance of setting long-term goals, while making a conscious decision to always stay focused and present in the moment. But more importantly, she talked about how her journey of success wasn't a

solo one, and the role her family and her team played in her victories, noting how communication, trust, and the ability to rely on someone to do *their* job right is essential for your ability to do *your* best job.

Listening to her was nothing short of inspirational and in reflecting on her time with us, I realized that the two pieces of philosophical wisdom – being mindful and staying present, and building a trusting, supportive team – is exactly the shift we are making at Nuance. Every day, we strive to foster a culture where our talented people can stay focused on what matters most, and build an environment together where they can be their best authentic selves every day. That was, in fact, also the reason I had shared with my team just a few days prior that we were making an important shift from being a more traditional HR organization that's inwardly focused to one that's focused on people-centered business enablement. A true "People Team."

But a simple change in name alone doesn't amount to much. It's mindset, attitude, and action.

Stay Present

One of the core attributes of a successful People Team is staying present and focusing on how we add value in creating great experiences for ... well... our *People*. And one of the many positive results stemming from a supportive and positive workplace is the creation of phenomenal outcomes for our customers and shareholders.

Sounds simple enough, right? If only. Anyone who has downloaded the Headspace or Calm app (and a quick internet search reveals that's more than 56 million of us), knows that mindfulness and staying present is not easy.

So, how do we, as the People Team of a fast-paced, high-tech Conversational AI company, do that? (Great question! Let me listen to my Calm app and get back to you soon on that one. Kidding!)

It starts with realizing that this is a journey. It won't happen overnight. It requires that we actively engage and evaluate, make incremental improvements, and focus on the situations *and people* that are immediately in front of us (read: no multi-tasking in meetings!). It also requires us to hold ourselves and our teammates accountable when we get distracted. And that brings me to the second piece of Lindsey's advice:

Strong, Supportive Teams Win

Creating a team of mindful, present people is a group effort. As the adage says: "A rising tide lifts all boats," the same is true of creating a successful People Team. Even the simplest and seemingly small changes in attitude, approach, and action begin to create a groundswell. This results in new and higher expectations for ourselves and our teammates, and, over time, drives adaptations in the ways that we work, the investments we prioritize, and how we to simplify and streamline our processes across the business.

As we focus more and more on the experiences and journey for our People, the positive outcomes will lead to faster innovation, better technology, and a superior customer experience. And, that's a win for everyone at Nuance, our employees, customers, partners, and our shareholders.

Like Lindsey said: when a team has good communication, is reliable, and trusts one another, that creates the space for each person to do their best work.

But, it all starts with staying present and working as a truly unified team.

Tags:



About Beth Conway

As Nuance's Chief People Officer, Beth is passionate about creating the best employee experience in order to support customers and drive key business outcomes. She is relentlessly focused on finding new and innovative ways to attract, develop, and retain talented people, so that Nuance continues to stay on the cutting-edge of Conversational AI technology. Prior to joining Nuance in 2018, Beth served as SVP of People at CA Technologies. She holds a BA from Siena College, as well as professional certifications from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the HR Certification Institute (HRCI).



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