

Erin Moran: People want to work for a company that has a sense of purpose and meaning and positive impact in the world, and that is what will attract prospective employees to join. The compensation is certainly a consideration, and it needs to be fair and equitable, but money is not going to buy people's hearts and minds and souls, but purpose will certainly have that opportunity to engage the full human being and not just the bank account.

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth, and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity and helping others to do the same.

Welcome to the Elevate podcast. Our quote for today is from Simon Sinek, and it is, "Customers will never love a company until the employees love it first."

Our guest today, Erin Moran, has dedicated her career to helping people have the best possible workplace. She's the chief culture officer for Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality group, overseeing an organizational culture that is a standout and it's industry. USHG runs some of the most popular and well known restaurants in New York city, such as Gramercy Tavern, Blue Smoke, Daily Provision, and Union Street Café, and is renowned for both its culture and its service.

Erin, welcome. I'm excited to have you join us on the Elevate podcast today.

Erin Moran: Thanks, Bob, really happy to be here.

Robert Glazer: So how did you get started in your career? I'd particularly be interested to hear about your first job. I found that a lot of people are passionate about culture, ended up learning that the hard way.

Erin Moran: Well actually, I think one of the primary reasons why I got into this field was because of some conversations that I had with my parents as a child, as strange as that might seem. Because neither one of my parents had college degrees, and therefore they were quite limited in terms of their professional opportunities. They described really terrible work environments where they weren't treated with respect or provided opportunities. Very early on, I made the decision, even as a child, I didn't know what a great place to work was, or what a culture was, but I said to myself that I wanted to work for a company where I felt trusted, and respected, and where I could thrive.

And then as I got older and started to formulate my professional skills, I decided not only did I want to be in a company that treated people well, I wanted to dedicate my professional career to helping companies to become healthy, thriving environments for their people.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. A lot of purpose comes from an early place, and that's interesting how it motivated you. So how were your early jobs? Did they end up being decent places to work, bad places to work, good places to work?

Erin Moran: Well, my very first job was in a snowball stand when I was 11 years old, so I don't know that that did a lot to...

Robert Glazer: How about the first job that had benefits?

Erin Moran: Sure. I worked for Anderson Consulting, and I thought it was a really, really great place to work. It's certainly helped me to build really strong skills. They have an extraordinary training and development program, and I really appreciated that experience.

Robert Glazer: All right. Well before joining Union Square Hospitality Group, I know you spent almost a decade at Great Place To Work, studying the culture of organizations who are on the Hundred Best Companies list. Can you give us a little insight into the methodology and how you conducted that research, and what your role was there?

Erin Moran: Sure. The way that the research is conducted, is that the employees of those companies are essentially the ones who are voting on which companies should be on that list. Meaning that, we deployed an employee survey and we ask the employees to rate their experiences in the organization. And then based on those scores, we would create the list of the hundred best companies to work for.

So it was primarily driven by the employees themselves, since they're the experts in what that experience feels like. And my role, I started out as a consultant with a portfolio of clients who I was advising on how to strengthen their workplace cultures, while I was researching and studying the best companies. Then I went into the international operations for several years, and by the time that I left, I was the executive vice president running the US business.

Robert Glazer: And in your time there, what commonalities did you find? You met with a lot of these companies. What commonalities did you find in the companies that really had these top cultures? What did they do, and what didn't they do? I always find both of those are interesting.

Erin Moran: It's really interesting because the sexy stuff that the magazine loves to write about, and that people love to read about, are all of the perks and benefits with Google, and the lava lamps, and the beanbag chairs, and that ping pong tables, that's not what it's about. There is no amount of lava lamps that you can put in, or summer Fridays, that's going to create a healthy, vibrant, inspiring work environment. The reality, the common thing, is that there's high levels of trust.

So you trust the people that you work for, you trust the people that you work with, and when you have high levels of trust, then people are willing to go above and beyond to take risks, to work really collaboratively, and to achieve extraordinary things. So that was the largest common theme. But trust, as we know, is not something that can be mandated. You can't have a policy and a handbook that says, "Effective immediately, everyone's going to trust one another." So while it is a simple notion, it is incredibly complex to execute on.

The things that companies did not do, is that they did not shy away from embracing challenging decisions or conversations. A lot of companies that struggle with having healthy cultures, shy away from those types of things: delivering tough news, or not wanting to scare people with the realities of operational challenges.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. So the trust, we could dig into that in a couple of places, but does that correlate with open-book management? Just generally more open policies, and processes, and philosophies all across the company?

Erin Moran: Yeah. I think that there is certainly a level of transparency that the best companies have. I'd also say that there's just a lot more, this is going to sound kind of crazy but, vulnerability. You can't have a high level of trust without having a component of vulnerability. When there's transparency, leadership is choosing to be a little vulnerable, to be a little bit more exposed, by sharing more information. And the impact of those choices, more often than not, is that it increases the levels of trust. It's hard to trust someone that you've never had any kind of experience, any element of vulnerability, and so that's kind of what helps to drive those high levels of trust.

Robert Glazer: And what about values? Did that come into it?

Erin Moran: Certainly. A core set of common values that were in place throughout the entire employee lifecycle, meaning that they weren't corporate values that were on a website or just on a poster, but that a company's hired based on those values, they promoted based on those values, they exited people who did not demonstrate those values. That kind of theme and thread throughout the entire employee lifecycle is absolutely vital.

Robert Glazer: And was this always top down? Did you ever see a great company, or a great team, who could do this where they really didn't have the support of the leadership at the top?

Erin Moran: I can't really think of an example of one, and I don't know that I'd say that it's top down as much as, if the most senior leaders of the organization aren't fully bought into this concept and this commitment, then everything else that next team down tries to do, is just not going to be as successful, because ultimately, the front line employees will understand that disconnect. They will know that

the senior leaders aren't walking the talk, and it'll just put everything else in the question.

Robert Glazer: So I get asked this question a lot. I'd be curious of your answer. If someone comes to your work with them, and they say, "Erin, I heard you speak, I heard about this culture, I want to do this stuff for my team, and I would be a great leader, but management or whatever, they're not really interested in that. What should I do?" How do you answer when someone asks you something like that?

Erin Moran: Well, I think you can create pockets of great cultures. As an individual manager, the thing that I would just focus that person on doing is being trustworthy. So focusing on the actions and interactions with their team, that builds a perception of trustworthiness. Investing in the one-on-one conversations with each team member, showing care and compassion and thoughtfulness in those conversations. Providing feedback, and investing in that person's growth and development, and just focusing on the building of the strong relationships with the team members. Setting clear expectations, and helping people understand how they're delivering relative to those performance expectations. You can create a really high-performing, high-trust team, even in the context of some broader dysfunction. I do think that that is in the control of an individual manager. Even if the senior leaders aren't necessarily bought into the structural commitment.

Robert Glazer: Right. I know when you give people back their scores, I think sometimes the companies apply, and they're surprised to see that they're not doing as well, and I think you guys would offer advice. So when you did advise companies on how to improve their culture and trust, what was the starting point for that? I'm curious. It's probably a very telling whether companies were receptive to the candid feedback they get, or did they get a little defensive about these things? Which probably tells you a lot of things in itself about how successful they're going to be.

Erin Moran: Yeah, definitely. A common first reaction when the scores are not really favorable is one that is defensive. I've heard a lot of times, "Well they're wrong about that." Meaning, "The employees are wrong perceptions," which is hilarious.

Robert Glazer: You can be wrong about reality. You can't be wrong about perception, right?

Erin Moran: Exactly, exactly. And what they mean to say, I believe often times, is that they never intended to create that perception. Oftentimes, leaders are very well-intended. They do want to do the right thing. It's not the question of the intention, it is more the question of the action being consistent with the intention, and creating a perception that is aligned with the intention.

That's the stuff that we would unpack a little bit. Unintentional mixed messages, which is, as a manager I could say, "I respect work life balance and people taking

time to do what they need to," and then at the same time, sending emails at midnight to team members, or scheduling calls on weekends.

Robert Glazer: Or never taking a vacation themselves, or-

Erin Moran: Or never taking a vacation, right. So what are those unintentional mixed messages that we send, and then trying to align the intention with the action, and ultimately, what the perception is.

Robert Glazer: Interesting. Did you have people who really applied, and they thought they were going to be a hundred and they were a 10? Like they were just really, really blind to the reality at their company?

Erin Moran: Yes, definitely. Particularly if they had not gone through a process to collect feedback from employees before. That's usually when we saw people get really shocked with the results.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. So you mentioned one before. I think there's a couple misconceptions about great cultures and what makes a great culture. You said one of my favorite before, which is, I think Silicon Valley has sort of corrupted the perception of culture, that it is not just foosball table, and ping pong, and baristas, and sometimes that is there to cover up the 140 hour work weeks. I remember someone joined a law firm and they told me they did physicals in the office, so the people didn't even have to get out of their desk to get a flu shot. That was more about them not leaving.

I think another one in my book is that, I think people think that these companies with great cultures are everyone's kumbaya, and they're not high-performing, and they don't make tough decisions. Are there other conceptions, you think, that people have about a company with a great culture?

Erin Moran: Yeah, I think one of them is around compensation. Because of the Silicon Valley nature of what we've been reading about for so long, people, I think believe, that some of the best companies out there offer the best compensation packages. That's not actually factual, and it's actually not allowing companies to win the war for talent. Meaning that, approximately 95% of college graduates would decline an offer that has higher compensation, and accept an offer that has lower compensation, if the lower compensation offer is connected with a mission-driven, or purpose-driven organization.

People want to work for a company that has a sense of purpose and meaning and positive impact in the world, and that is what will attract prospective employees to join. The compensation is certainly a consideration, and it needs to be fair and equitable, but money is not going to buy people's hearts and minds and souls, but purpose will certainly have that opportunity to engage the full human being, and not just the bank account.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, I think you've probably read Dan Pink's book, Drive, about-

Erin Moran: Yeah, of course.

Robert Glazer: Right. That was the playbook, for me, of our culture, but autonomy, mastery, and purpose, and that. People need money up to a point because you have needs and safety, but at some point, I actually say, "If you are thinking about employees who will move for that extra \$5,000, or that's really their primary motivation, they'll just do it again for the extra \$5,000." They're not the type of people you're likely to keep. So again, a lot of firms have to pay that high price as a tax because, yeah.

Erin Moran: Yeah. And I do think that sometimes that companies do offer more competitive compensation packages, because they're overcompensating for a lack of substance, or meaning, or purpose, or connection, or inspiration.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. I sort of have boss envy, as I think I told you when we met. Your boss is Danny Meyer, who's really considered one of the great leaders of our generation, in addition to founding all these restaurants and USHG. He's also, somewhere on the side, started Shake Shack. I'd love to hear what it's like to work for him, and how would you describe his philosophy, and how you merge your two philosophies to build the culture at your company.

Erin Moran: Sure. I'll share with you that there are certain books that have been written by individuals, and I've read them, and I've really subscribed to the concepts and the philosophy. Then I've met the author, and there's sometimes can be a disconnect between what has been written about in the book, and who that person is. I've worked with Danny now, for six years, and prior to that, about two years in a consulting capacity, and he is the person that he writes about in the book. There is no gap between what one would perceive as you're reading the book, and who he is as a human being.

He is deeply, deeply committed to the philosophies that he writes about in the book, and he leaves our company in alignment with those philosophies. Meaning, the Virtuous Cycle of Enlightened Hospitality that he writes about, how we prioritize our stakeholders, and how we really want to create shared emotional and economic prosperity for all of our stakeholders. He is deeply committed to those concepts. He stays awake at night thinking about new ways to advance the Virtuous Cycle of Enlightened Hospitality, and he challenges all of us as leaders to do the same. He creates a safe space for us to continue to innovate, and ask the question, "Whoever wrote the rule?" And to push ourselves to the next level to see if there are new ways for us to advance the Virtuous Cycle of Enlightened Hospitality.

Robert Glazer: You mentioned your stakeholders a few times. I'd love to hear who are they? And then how do you balance them? What is the rank order, if you have one?

Erin Moran: Well, I wouldn't say they're rank order, because it's a cycle, so it looks like a circle. It starts with, though, taking care of each other. So our team members, we want to be taking care of one another, because when we're taking care of one another, we are then able to take even better care of our guests. So, guests, being the second stakeholder. Third stakeholder is our communities. Forth stakeholders, suppliers. And Fifth stakeholder is our investors. And it's a cycle because when we are activating this virtuous cycle, and all of our stakeholders, their lives are getting better as a result of our work, and we're running really profitable and healthy businesses. Then we're able to take those profits, and put them back into taking even better care of each other, and then continuing to fuel that cycle.

Robert Glazer: What do you do when a decision that you're looking at really... Maybe see how it is incongruous between one stakeholder and another, or you're not sure how it'll affect one stakeholder or another?

Erin Moran: I think that the Virtuous Cycle of Enlightened Hospitality is an underpinning of our business, and it's a guiding principle, if you will. And, of course, we are a for profit business, so there are incredibly difficult decisions that we have to make every single day. What we use to help guide us, we have four family values: hospitality, excellence, entrepreneurial spirit, and integrity. We use those four family values to help guide us to make those tough decisions. And, of course, we have to. There's always a trade-off when you're making a difficult decision.

Robert Glazer: Absolutely. No, and I just interviewed someone who, Gary Ridge, he's the CEO of WD-40, who said something that I've heard before, but he said, "People are safe making decisions within our core values," which I thought was a really interesting perspective.

Erin Moran: Yep, very similar. Well said.

Robert Glazer: All right. We're going to take a quick break for a word from our sponsor, and we'll be right back with Erin.

In 2004, Mike Zani and his partner, started a search fund. A search fund is where you raise money with a leadership team already in place, and then look for a company to buy. Well, here's what Mike learned the first time he bought a company.

Mike Zani: Bob, we were really pretty good at the strategy stuff, and we were good at the financial side of things, knowing what to pay for a company. But when we finally bought the company, figuring out how to get the right people in the right roles, and managing them, was really hard; surprisingly hard, and we sucked at it.

Robert Glazer: So Mike and his team used The Predictive Index to help them fix their people problems. Then when they bought and ran two more companies, they used The

Predictive Index again. In fact, they became so enamored with The Predictive Index that, you guessed it, they bought the company.

Mike Zani: Yeah, we bought a 60-year-old technology company. I have to pinch myself. I get to run a company that helps people solve their people problems: designing teams, hiring inspiring managers. And when it comes down to it, almost all business problems come down to people problems.

Robert Glazer: So if you're trying to figure out how to get more out of your people, I'd recommend you go to predictiveindex.com/elevate, and request a demo of their product. That's predictiveindex.com/elevate.

All right, and we're back. So there's a quote that I've always loved which says, "What the wise man does in the beginning, the fool does at the end." However, that is counterbalanced by, "Being early is hard." I'd love to talk about, and you and I'd spoken about this before, I'm fascinated by it, but Hospitality Included, a program at your restaurants where you're working to not accept tips, and the prices are higher, so that employees can be paid higher rates instead. What was the, why, behind this? What led to the pilot of this system?

Erin Moran: Sure. I don't know if this is a well-known fact or not, but in restaurants, as the result of the tipping regulation, the folks that are in our kitchens, and preparing the dishes and the culinary experience, earn one-third of the folks that are on the other side of the kitchen door, that are serving the food and creating the guest experience. So that huge gap did two things. The first is that it really tugged at our integrity, because we really want to focus on taking great care of everyone, not just the folks that are on the dining room floor. And Having that gap didn't feel fair or right for us.

The second was that we were seeing a lot of culinary talent move from the kitchen into the dining room because they could earn 300% more. So that's the, why, behind. You might be asking the question, well why didn't you just pay your kitchen team members more money? Had we done that, we would've had to have raised our menu prices in order to stay, essentially, profit neutral. Then our dining room colleagues would have immediately gotten a raise, because you're tipping on your overall bill. So the only way to start to close that gap was for us to eliminate tipping, and take more control over the wages of our team members. So that's the, why, behind the, what.

Robert Glazer: You guys also did some research, because it's very cultural, particularly, how we tip in the US. I know people from Europe and other cultures get very frustrated at it, and don't understand it. But it's kind of like anything. We just do it without understanding why we do it, or where it came from. Can you share a little bit of that, as you guys dug into this.

Erin Moran: We did not realize this when we started to started the process of eliminating tipping, but tipping is actually rooted in post-slavery. Tips means, To Ensure

Promptitude, T-I-P. And the way that it worked was that, after the Civil War, and when slavery was obviously no longer permitted, what would happen was that, former slaves would be spending time looking for jobs at railways, or at hotels, and white people would give them a coin for whatever they had done, because they weren't allowed to do it for free any longer. It was a practice that was actually brought over from Europe in a post-slavery era. We didn't realize that until we had actually eliminated tipping, and then some researchers reached out to us and let us know that that is the origin.

The other interesting thing is that the federal-tipped wage is \$2.12 an hour. That changes sometimes by different States, but at the federal level, and when the law was originally passed to establish what the tipped minimum wage was in 1887, it was \$1. So it is 2018 and we've only increased the tipped minimum wage at the federal level, \$1.13. That is so crazy.

Robert Glazer: Right. And look at where, if we're being honest, and this is a little less in the era of credit cards, but for a long time too, it was a tax dodge, where you were getting tipped in cash, and you weren't paying taxes on it.

Erin Moran: Exactly, exactly.

Robert Glazer: So you looked at this. This is a big cultural change in terms of, both for the staff and for the customers, and I'd love to hear how is it going on both fronts? What's been easier than expected and what's been harder? Maybe nothing's been easier.

Erin Moran: I was just going to say, I don't know that there's been anything that's been easier than we expected. A Lots of things that were harder. I'll start with our people, the impact on our people. We definitely lost a lot of amazing, talented people throughout the transition, because the changes that we made didn't work for them, and what their needs were. So while overall, our retention levels have increased, I don't want to gloss over the fact that we did lose some amazing people in the process. We have, however, been able to attract a completely different profile of a candidate, because what we have built into Hospitality Included, is a really fair and transparent process for professional growth and development, as well as transparency around potential earnings. So we are attracting individuals who are more interested in a career in hospitality. That has been really exciting for us.

With our guests, I'd say that, initially they have sticker shock. They're looking at our menu prices, they don't fully understand this cutesy term, Hospitality Included. And they would be comparing what a similar dish in a different restaurant would cost and kind of think, "Huh. It's a little bit more spendy than I was expecting." And then after the experience, and they get their bill, and they look at it and there's no line for tipping, there's this immediate, "Wow! That was a huge value!" And especially, they're grateful of not having to do that crazy mental gymnastics, especially if they had a glass or two of wine, around what to add to the line for the tip. So the feedback at the end of the experience has

been very favorable. However, that initial sticker shock is there for first time guests that are experiencing it?

Robert Glazer: Did you do it across all restaurants, or did you pilot in a few of them?

Erin Moran: We have one business, still, to transition. Outside of that, we have transitioned every other business, and we've opened nine businesses since we started with Hospitality Included. We had originally thought that it was going to take us a year to transition all of our businesses, and we are in the fourth year. So that's definitely one of our lessons learned, and we just needed to slow down the implementation to ensure that we were being as thoughtful and as intentional as we possibly could.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Another point I hadn't thought of, that I know you said, which is really interesting if you think of performance management, because it puts you, I can't think of another business that had this, but your customers, in some ways, were determining the compensation of your employees rather than your team or their managers.

Erin Moran: Absolutely, absolutely. And just to take that a step further, if your customer is treating you disrespectfully, regardless of what that is, whether it's sexual harassment, whether you feel that he or she is demonstrating racism, or just blatant disrespect, in a tipping environment, because that person is responsible for your earnings, you are more likely to put up with it; to not say anything. In our situation now, our team members feel a lot more empowered to call the manager over and say, "You know what, this interaction did not sit well with me." Because they no longer have to just put up with anything in order for them to get their earnings.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett's number two, once said, "Show me the incentive, and I'll tell you the behavior." I think that's an interesting and unintended consequence in this case where, you're right, your compensation was just determined by the luck of your table, in some cases.

Erin Moran: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

Robert Glazer: So have you seen any copycats yet, or are people too scared?

Erin Moran: I know a couple of restaurants have tried it and then gone back. What we've always said is that this is the right decision for our company, for our people, for our business. If anyone's interested in learning how we went about it, we are more than willing to share our experiences as generously as we possibly can. However, we don't necessarily prescribe that everyone should be moving to this model, if it doesn't work for them, but it does work for us.

Robert Glazer: You've been on both sides of cultural improvement as an advisor, and now the person responsible for that. I don't know that there's a lot of restaurants,

probably, with a head of culture, but do you think it's important for companies to have a person whose full-time job is managing culture?

Erin Moran: I would say that, regardless of what the title is, it should be someone's responsibility to ensure that the behaviors throughout the company are aligned with the values and intentions. The way that we think about culture at USHG, obviously it is a shared responsibility, so I have culture in my title, but it is in no way my singular responsibility, because it is the culmination of everyone's behaviors and interactions on a daily basis.

Everyone's contributing to the culture. Anyone that works for us, is not a bystander to our culture. They are a contributor. The way that we think about it, at least on my team and traditional human resources does report in through me, is that culture is like a ever-flowing, fast-moving river. It is constantly moving, constantly evolving, and our responsibility is to put in the riverbanks, and lead the river to where we want it to go. So that's how we think about the body of work that we lead, in order to ensure that the culture is embodying the things that we say matter to us, in terms of our values.

So I do believe that there should be someone at every organization who is thinking about advancing the culture, and putting in those riverbanks in an intentional and thoughtful way in every organization, otherwise, I think there has the opportunity to be a between, again, that intention, and the experience.

Robert Glazer: I don't know. I think that's very, very wise advice. Having survived Hospitality Included, what traditional paradigm are you and Danny looking to tackle next?

Erin Moran: I don't have a spoiler alert for you at this moment. Maybe in a future podcast we'll have something to talk about, but.

Robert Glazer: All right. I figured there's got to be something that's on the red here, like, "I'm not done. We're not through this one yet."

Erin Moran: Yep. We're always cooking up something, so.

Robert Glazer: Well, one thing you did, you helped implement a significant parental leave policy for employees. What drove the push for that change?

Erin Moran: It was a lot of conversations with new parents, that under the old policy, that were just explaining what their struggles and their experiences were. So we just stopped and we said, "Let's look at this program, and just challenge ourselves to offer the most generous program that we are prepared to offer." So we went from a program that was triggered based on tenure, meaning you didn't get access to it until you'd been with us for a number of years, and it was targeted mainly towards a birth mother. And we thought, "Well, hey, if you have to work with us for a significant period of time, if you choose to join us later on in life,

and then start your family shortly thereafter, have we boxed you out of this opportunity?"

Then we thought, "Well, wait a second, birth mothers, don't fathers have a responsibility to be there? Don't we want them to have an opportunity to be there?" And then we said, "Well, wait a second, what about the adoption of a child? So same-sex couples, or maybe just an individual adopting someone." We said, "So let's just make it fully expansive and say that it is for the birth or adoption of a child. And then let's look and offer this, not just to our salaried employees, but to our hourly employees." Which was damn near impossible to create a business case for, because at least with salaried employees it's a fixed expense. We had no idea what the with the financial impact would be.

That's also going back to your question earlier about Danny and his commitment. There's no ROI that you can really put around to this, because A, we weren't quite sure how many people were going to choose to expand their families. So we couldn't really come up with the expense, nor could we really do a direct correlation for retention. We just knew it was the right thing to do, and Danny said, "Well then, dammit, we're going to do it." That's why, also going back to your question about, if there's not leadership commitment at the top, had I taken this to a CEO who wasn't committed, I would have probably been stuck in analysis paralysis trying to create an ROI. Thankfully, in my world, Danny just said, "Damn it, it's the right thing to do, so we're going to do it."

Robert Glazer: And you did it. That's great. I think you guys are clearly living your values, and making decisions that, they're not profitable in the first rung of that circle, but with the hope that they lead back to better retention, better financial returns, and helping all of the stake holders.

Erin Moran: Yeah. And just to be clear, I'm kind of describing a Nirvana of sorts, probably, with my explanation. We are not perfect. We absolutely have opportunities that we challenge ourselves to address every single day. However, we do have a passionate commitment to our values to continuing to get better, and that virtuous cycle of enlighten hospitality. I wouldn't want anyone listening to think, "Oh, they're perfect. They don't have any challenges." We definitely have flaws and opportunities that we're actively working on.

Robert Glazer: Well, that is a perfect segue into my last question, which is, and this could be a singular, or repeated for a lot of people, but what's a personal or professional mistake that you've learned the most from?

Erin Moran: Oh, it's kind of one that falls in both categories. I was a mid-level manager, and I was going through a lot personally. I was in the process of going through a divorce, I had a one and a three-year-old, and I did not share any of that with anyone at work. I just wanted to be perceived as a professional, and didn't want to bring any of my outside challenges into the work. I just wanted to keep those two worlds very, very separate.

I had a team member who was struggling with something really, really painful, and who didn't reach out for my support. She only told me about it after she had gone through this really, really challenging situation. And I said to her, "Why didn't you come to me? I could have helped, and I would have been honored to have supported you through this process." And she said, "How could you understand my world? Everything in your life is perfect. I never thought that someone like you would understand what I was struggling with." And I said, "What do you mean I'm perfect?" And she said, "Everything that you present about your life, it just seems so beautiful and idealistic." And I was like, "Oh my God, I have unintentionally sent the message that I don't have any chinks in my armor."

I was trying to protect people from the darker side of my life, and unfortunately, what I had done was sent this message that I was unapproachable, or not vulnerable, or wasn't making mistakes. Obviously, there's a line that you shouldn't cross in terms of divulging too much information in the workplace, but that mistake that I made, that moment, helped me to realize that I need to bring my vulnerability and my humanity into my leadership. Because if I wasn't doing that, I didn't have a shot in hell of helping my team members unlock their potential. So I'd say that that was a pretty defining moment in terms of my own growth and development.

Robert Glazer: That's a great story, and I think one that can help a lot of people. So thank you for sharing that vulnerability.

Erin Moran: Yeah.

Robert Glazer: All right, well, how can people find more about you, Union Square Hospitality Group, or maybe, I'm guessing there might be some people now who want a job. Where do they go look?

Erin Moran: Yes, they can go onto our website, which is usghnyc.com. You can also reach me at emoran, M-O-R-A-N, @ushgnyc.com, and find out more information about us. We would love for people to join our company, so please reach out.

Robert Glazer: Sounds like a good place to work, so I'm guessing you'll have some. Well, Erin, thanks for sharing your story with us.

Erin Moran: Thanks, Bob.

Robert Glazer: You've brought a lot of creativity and humanity to the company culture.

Erin Moran: Thank you. Thank you, so much.

Robert Glazer: Both you, and Danny, have set a great example for other companies and leaders to follow.

Erin Moran: Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity.

Robert Glazer: Anytime. We'll have you back when you tell us what that next initiative is.

Erin Moran: Will do. Sounds great.

Robert Glazer: So to our listeners, thanks for tuning in to the Elevate podcast today. We'll include links to Erin and the company information on the detailed episode page at robertglazer.com. Quick favor, if you enjoyed today's episode, I'd really appreciate it if you could leave us a review, as it helps new users discover the show and the content that you've been enjoying. If you're listening today on Apple podcasts, you can just select the library icon, click on Elevate, and scroll down to the bottom to leave your review. That's it. It's that easy, I promise. Thank you again for your support, and until next time, keep elevating.