

## CareerMinded Episode 5 – Transcript

**00:00 Martin Schneider:** CareerMinded is sponsored by Careerminds, a leading provider of virtual outplacement and career transition services. You can learn more about Careerminds at [careerminds.com](http://careerminds.com). Welcome to CareerMinded, the show that explores the human side of human resources. I'm your host, Martin Schneider. Each episode, we'll talk to HR professionals and thought leaders about the personal aspects of what they do and why they do it, all the while discovering what drives the people that drive the people that drive businesses today.

**00:40 MS:** If you've watched any commercials over the past 20 years, you've probably heard this phrase:

**00:45 S?:** When you're here, you're family.

**00:47 MS:** Well, that's a pretty good slogan for a restaurant chain. It's another thing to make it part of your business' onboarding strategy. Businesses and organizations love to say things like, "We're one big family here." Especially to first day employees, and it's easy to see why. It conjures up images of TV show households like the Waltons; loyal, helpful, growing and building together. It's a real nice image. It's also not the truth.

**01:13 Cristian Hernandez:** I'm gonna give you my personal opinion: A business is not your family. A business has a bottom line that it has to maintain to.

**01:22 MS:** That's Cristian Hernandez. He's a Senior Relationship Manager at Exude, Inc, a consulting firm specializing in human resources and organizational health. He's also the father of two sons.

**01:33 CH:** I tell my son all this all the time, "I love you, but I know I can never fire you. You're family." I said, "No matter how bad you mess up, I can't give you a pink slip and say, 'Get out of here.'" That's the biggest difference. A workplace is not your family, but you can create a family-oriented environment that strives for people to find that balance between work and personal life.

**02:00 MS:** On today's episode, we'll talk about old and new ways that businesses can create that family-oriented environment, and help their employees with the age old question of balance. We'll also look at some of the most successful companies in the country to see what they do to support the family life of their workforce. And we'll hear from some people that are helping implement this culture into workplaces around the country. But first, I want to talk about a different kind of office metaphor.

**02:28 MS:** Reed Hastings, CEO of Netflix, has long used the metaphor of a professional sports team to describe his workers, specifically, not a family. Sports teams have specific missions, meaning, winning games and winning championships, that the team members must come together to achieve. And much like businesses, the composition of a sports team changes over time. The New England Patriots have won six Super Bowls since 2002, and the only member of that first championship winning team that's still on the roster is Tom Brady. That's business, and that's Reed Hastings' idea of a team. But since your business probably runs a lot differently than the New England Patriots, maybe that metaphor is still a little impersonal for you. Maybe your best bet is to try to create a family-oriented work environment, like Cristian mentioned. But in order to do that, you first need to understand the philosophy and reasoning, which explains why such cultures are successful. I spoke with Tracy Grajewski, an independent business consultant and former VP of HR

at Highmark Health, and she explained why she thinks the term 'family friendly' doesn't go far enough towards making a successful work environment.

**03:37 Tracy Grajewski:** Calling it family friendly is not inclusive enough. To me, it's life-friendly work, because some people do have families, some people don't, that they're responsible for giving care or whatever, and it's really flexibility around a person's life, and how they structure their life and how they can do their best work. You see a lot of tech companies have caught onto this, because again, they realize that some people do their best work in the middle of the night, or some people do their best work in the early hours of the morning, and maybe not at eight to five. And again, if you can measure results based on outcomes and not face time, I think that's a great way to do it. And I also think the definition of the family unit has changed so much that I might be caring for people who aren't related to me, and wouldn't technically be covered under some of the legislation that defines a family. And yet, if I fit that into my life, it can be very enriching for the individual I'm working with, as well as for my own life. So, it's really about being life-friendly, and recognizing that we're still all humans and we do love our work, but we also love what we do from a holistic standpoint in all aspects of our life.

**05:04 MS:** If you look at companies that consistently have the highest employee satisfaction ratings and the highest retention rates, you'll see that nearly all of them strive to make these family-friendly, or life-friendly policies, a core part of their cultural reality. Looking down the Fortune Magazine list of best companies to work for, you'll see names like Wegmans Food Markets, which encourages growing families, with features like employee lactation rooms and fertility treatment reimbursement programs. Many of the list's mainstays, like Salesforce, Ultimate Software and Boston Consulting Group also offer backup childcare services for parents who need last minute care providers in order to get to work when unexpected situations occur. Salesforce, which topped the list in 2018, and boasts a 93% employee satisfaction score, not only offers a generous 26 weeks of parental leave for primary caregivers, but also offers more flexible family care options, including senior support, which can be a blessing for many working adults who are also tasked with taking care of their aging parents.

**06:07 TG:** I think definitely elder care is one of them. And that's a positive consequence that we're living longer, right? A positive consequence of good medicine and science. We are living longer. It does increase the responsibilities of adults, right? As their own parents and spouses and so forth live longer. So definitely, elder care is a consideration. I'm supporting my own mother, and just the amount and frequency and the number of physicians she needs to see for her own healthcare, and she's relatively healthy and can do a lot of this herself, I, when I go with their though, I see that there are families who are juggling support and care, just like there are when you go into a pediatrician's office, right? At the end of, or at the latter years of the employee life cycle, an employee may be taking care of their grandchildren, they be taking care of their own adult parents. So, your life changes as you move through the employment life cycle. And I think it's a huge benefit to employers to be supportive across the generations, if you will. It's a great attraction and retention mechanism.

**07:29 MS:** And there's the key phrase: Attraction and retention. As American unemployment rates stay low, it becomes more crucial than ever for businesses to offer unique and customizable benefits, and to create a supportive environment, if they want to remain competitive in hiring the best talent, and if they want to keep them there. Often, it begins with the basics: Flexible work hours and good medical benefits. Let's go back to Wegmans for an example. In 2011, Wegmans

surveyed over 1,000 of its employees. They gave the employees a list of 12 employment factors, such as wages, job security and company reputation, and asked them to rank these factors in order of their influence on the employee's decision to join Wegmans, and their decision to stay with Wegmans. On both lists, flexible schedules and health benefits were two of the top three factors. As unemployment in the US continues to stay low, and the workforce becomes more and more multi-generational, these two factors, which Wegmans offer standard, become more and more essential for companies wanting to stay competitive in hiring, because they work for people at all different stages of life and with all different types of family.

**08:42 CH:** Any broker can come and talk to them about a medical plan or a vision plan or a dental plan. At the end of the day though, insurance has changed dramatically in the workforce department. Before the employer used to tell the employee, "Here's your options. This is what you get." It's no longer the case anymore. The employee has a lot of power. We're dealing with a multi-generational workforce right now with the millennial generation coming out there, they wanna be in control of their careers. They're asking about, what's the pathway for their career at that organization? And how are they gonna influence that? More importantly, they're talking about the total rewards compensations for them. They wanna understand what value do they have, and it's no longer just what's their salary.

**09:29 TG:** Certainly, there's another war for talent. Unemployment's at very low rate in the US, and companies are competing for talent in many and varied ways. And so, I think that it's part of the employment value proposition of being a good and decent place to work is an attraction mechanism for future employees, and as well it's a retention mechanism for current employees.

**09:58 MS:** Okay, so you've decided to make your workplace one that is family-friendly and life-friendly, and you already offer flexible schedules, generous time off and great health and wellness benefits. That's a great start, but those benefits are slowly becoming the new norm as companies seek to attract a new generation of talent. So it's time to get creative. You could offer tuition reimbursement and adoption assistance for employees seeking to get out of debt and build their families. Like GoDaddy does. Or you could be like Ultimate Software which offers a yearly stipend to employees in order to fund their children's extra-curricular activities. You could also be like Edward Jones and offer employee rewards, such as baseball tickets, so that your staff can spend more time with their family on the company time. But even if your company isn't on the same level of financial freedom as these major players, there's still many family and life-friendly benefits that you can offer.

**10:54 CH:** Some of the more creative segments that we're looking at are things like Uber credits.

**11:00 MS:** Uber credit.

**11:00 CH:** Uber credits. Yup, being able to earn enough Uber credits to be able to take a few rides on the weekends on behalf of your employer. Pet insurance. People treat their pets, almost and sometimes even better than their own children, and they put a value to that, and they wanna have some ease of mind, it's one of the segments that they probably love the most. Another very creative one, and it's a hot trend right now that's going now, is organizations who are dealing with employees who tend to be in that lower income category. The reason behind it is because it's very tough for people in that segment, one, to be capable of saving through a 401K, and to understand the value that it has for their future. So if you don't have enough funds left over to put it in there, well, how

are some other ways, some fun ways out there?

**11:48 CH:** One of the biggest trends out there is, I'm not sure if you ever heard of an organization like Bizrates, where you're able to shop online on the website. And if you shop through their site, through their connection through that link, you get a certain percentage back of what you purchased. So very common things are people who shop through this website and shop at Target and Walmart. Well, they're gonna be shopping there either way, but because they went through the site, they're gonna get about 10% to 20% back of what they paid, back in a check. Well, now take that concept and apply that to a 401K strategy, where they're shopping at Target, they're shopping at Walmart, a percentage of that cost will be put into a 401K in that employees name.

**12:27 TG:** Long-term care insurance, although that industry is evolving, long-term care insurance, where you can set aside an insurance policy that will help with long-term care, long into the future. Some organizations offer that, and certainly something good to get in on when you're in your younger years in your career.

**12:49 MS:** But even if you implemented all of these policies, and you gave your employees all of these family options, that still wouldn't make your company one that was fully family-friendly or life-friendly. Sure, it certainly helps. But there's still a huge leap between implementing family-friendly policies and truly establishing a family-friendly culture. For example, you could have a very progressive paid time off policy, like Netflix or any of the other dozens of companies which now offer their employees unlimited paid time off. That sounds amazing, but what if the employee's workload is so heavy, and their environment is so stressful, that they're afraid to take any time off to begin with? What good is unlimited vacation time if your employees feel they can't take vacations? That's why culture matters more than policy, and HR plays a huge role in defining a company's overall culture, which includes helping leadership understand the overall strategy behind becoming a family-friendly workplace. And sometimes that means learning and adapting lessons from cultures other than your own.

**13:54 CH:** I was originally born in a small town called Perdida, Colombia. It's the sixth largest city in Colombia, but it's dead smack in the middle of the country in the wooded area. My parents raised me from a young age there. Through opportunity, we got the opportunity to come to United States with the hope of my parents trying to give myself a better future in life. But I had a great opportunity, because I still spent all my summers back in Colombia, too. So while I grew up here, I really felt like I was growing up in two different worlds. In Colombia people don't work because that's the biggest thing that they have to accomplish in their day, They work so that they can accomplish the goals that they've set out for themselves and for their families. And so, with that in mindset, you're taking actions about the career you choose, about the organization you work at, about how many hours you're putting in there, to make sure that you're leading a great organization and you're delivering on your job performance, but more importantly, that you have that balance with your family.

**14:54 CH:** So, for example, a big thing that's still very common in my culture, and to this day is, all my family members are still home between the hours of 12:00 and 2:00 PM, no matter what, and this is 2019. They are home, and they sit down and they have lunch with their wives, with their children, with their friends, and even after they're done eating, they sit down and they have time together to discuss about what's the rest of their day looking like, how are they planning the rest of the afternoon activities. The employee still goes back to work at that point in time, but they feel like

they've gotten an opportunity to contribute in their home, so now they're ready to go back to work, finish the day out, kick butt, and then go back home and be with them, and have these celebrations, especially on weekends. I mean, Sundays were my favorite days when I used to be back in Colombia, because I knew I was gonna see 40 to 50 of my relatives in one single environment. It'd be mayhem, but guess what? We used to go to bed and my parents never complained about waking up and going to work on Monday, 'cause they were fully satisfied about how things played out.

**16:00 CH:** Here, it was very hard. I mean, one, where we grew up, it was very Spanish dominated, but they weren't all from Colombia, right? So when we were on Sundays together, it'd be my parents, my sister and I, that was it. We had no more family. There was no going out. I was going to bed early because there was nothing else to do. And if we did wanna go see family, we'd have to drive three or four hours to see them for an hour or two, to drive three or four hours to get back. So the environment that the American culture had created was very much separated. You get in your car and you drive somewhere. And in my culture, you walked out your door, you looked to your right, that was your aunt's house, you you looked to your right, that was your uncle's, across the street was your grandmother. You all lived in the same vicinity. You all took lunches together. You all had weekends together. Here, if we do have family, we're very far apart, and if it is, it's almost like a job just to be able to hang out with each other.

**16:56 CH:** So now, being in the type of environment that I'm at, and the workplace that I'm at, they prioritize it, they understand that you might have to drive three hours on a weekend. So they're saying, "Hey, on Friday be responsible. Work from home. Take care of everything you need to do. But if you're commuting for an hour or two beforehand so you can go see your family for the weekend, we'd rather you do that, so when you show up on Monday you're 100% ready to charge and you're ready to kick butt and leading by example."

**17:23 TG:** I think it demands for us as organizations, and certainly HR professionals, it demands for us to think about managing work differently, right? Back in the day of the Industrial Revolution, we had to manage piecemeal work, right? Workers had to be on a production line, etcetera. And in a lot of cases, workers are knowledge workers now. And so, if we shift our focus from managing hours and face time to managing results for knowledge-based workers, and then we're a little less concerned about whether that work happens during the eight to five or the eight to eight, or whatever is normal in a workplace, and more concerned about what outcomes are we giving or getting, and that really opens up the door to be able to think about accommodations in a very different way. HR can really impact how the culture evolves by helping leaders think differently about this topic, and highlighting examples of when leaders have stepped back and thought about the needs of the business along with the needs of an employee or a group of employees, and thought differently and come up with an elegant solution that worked for all parties.

**18:53 MS:** Ordinarily, this podcast only has one guest, but this time I included two voices because I wanted to illustrate something. Cristian is 35-years-old and has two children under the age of 10. For him, a family-friendly work environment is one that allows him to be both active and present in his sons' lives, something that, while maybe not providing the daily lunchtime break he knew growing up in Colombia, is a reasonable equivalent for American work culture. Meanwhile, Tracy is at a different phase of her career, and has already achieved a high level of success, including a VP role. For her, a life-friendly work situation allows her time and ability to take care of her aging mother, as well as supporting adult children in college.

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**19:39 MS:** Cristian and Tracy both offered valuable information and perspective to the development of this episode, and sometimes their answers matched up perfectly. You can see how useful they'd both be at any given company, but if you wanted to hire both of them, you probably have to have offers and options that meet their individual needs. They both need flexible schedules, but for different reasons and at different levels. And while Cristian could use a benefit, like the extra-curricular activity stipend I mentioned earlier, that might not be as helpful in attracting a worker like Tracy. On the flip side, elder care is a major concern in Tracy's life, but Cristian isn't necessarily at that stage yet.

**20:18 MS:** In the end, the specific terminology, whether you call your company a team or if you're still dedicated to calling them a family, that may not matter so much, as long as you recognize that teams and families are not monolithic units. They're made up of individuals with unique situations and needs. And as a company, it's a good idea to offer multiple creative life-friendly benefits options for them, partially because it's the right thing to do. But also, because it can have a positive impact on your bottom line, which is definitely a conversation for the boardroom and not the kitchen table. Here's Cristian one more time.

**20:56 CH:** The studies have proven that if you are a happy person that doesn't have all these dilemmas on your brain, when you clock into work, you're there to do your job at the best effort that you can. So, if you can provide something to your workforce that's gonna come at no cost, or at minimal cost, but that it's gonna improve production by 30%, I think that's a no brainer to make that right decision.

**21:25 MS:** And that about wraps it up for this edition of CareerMinded. If you like what you heard, be sure to give us reviews and share with your friends and your colleagues. Don't forget to subscribe on the podcast of your choice, so you never miss an episode. We've got many more in-depth interviews with real HR leaders coming up, so you're gonna wanna stay tuned in. And as always, for more HR news and information, check out [careerminds.com](http://careerminds.com). CareerMinded is written, edited and hosted by me, Martin Schneider, and produced by Aley Brown. For all of us at CareerMinded, we'll see you next time.