**Transcript**

Updated Spring Forward Podcast Ep 2.mp3

**Spring Richardson Perry 00:35**

Welcome to the Spring Forward podcast.

I'm your host, Spring Richardson Perry, the organizational change agent that is going to help your business achieve the excellence you desire.

If you're a business leader looking to take your business to the next level or simply looking for new ways, to spring your business forward then this is the podcast for you.

So let's get down to business and spring forward into excellence.

Welcome to another episode of the Spring Forward Podcast and I'm your host, Spring Richardson Perry.

**Spring Richardson Perry 01:27**

And today we are talking about talent.

We're talking about how to manage talent for organizational excellence, and here with me today, I have Michelle Kemp, to give us some insight.

She is the founder and principal consultant for MK consulting group, and she has over 14 years of experience leading human capital initiatives for organizations with a primary focus on diversity recruitment and retention.

Her goal is to support schools and organizations in creating equitable workspaces that see all leaders, especially those by pocket individuals for their unique talents and life experiences as a culture ad to propel their mission.

So before launching her firm in 20 19, Michelle Lehr recruitment, human resources, and community engagement for several schools across the Chicago area?

**Spring Richardson Perry 02:13**

She receives a bachelor of arts degree in communications from Northern Illinois University.

She has a master's in business administration with a focus and project management from Walden University, a certificate in leading diversity equity and inclusion at Northwestern and a certified MBTI practitioner.

She is a 20 23 Chicago Urban League impact leadership fellow.

A surge Institute Fellow, associate board member for the Golden Apple Foundation, secretary for South Oakwood Brookhaven community block club and a member of alpha kappa alpha sorority Incorporated.

So my mom's an AKA so I'm always super excited to connect with other AKAs.

**Spring Richardson Perry 02:17**

So welcome, Michelle.

Thank you so much for being here.

How are you?

**Michelle Kemp 02:24**

I am well.

Thank you for inviting me.

I'm excited about our discussion today.

**Spring Richardson Perry 02:44**

Well, I'm excited to jump right in Michelle, and I want to talk about first your focus on diversity recruitment.

Can you talk to us about what that process looks like for you?

**Michelle Kemp 03:32**

Yes.

So, of course, once the pandemic occurred, as well

as the racial unrest that happened with George Floyd.

A lot of organizations started shifting, how they identify individuals to lead organizations.

So specifically in education, there's always been a shortage of teachers as well as leaders of color, serve in communities of color.

And before I transition into my company, I was doing diversity recruitment without really knowing it because I was prioritizing, making sure that there was either black, Latino leaders making decisions for our kids as their experiences resonates with our kids.

Or with them being a reflection of our kids, how they can make decisions that are culturally responsive.

**Michelle Kemp 04:10**

And inclusive of our kids' experiences versus coming from a situation of let me just fix this issue and not building meaningful connections with the kids and communities.

And so when it comes to sourcing and finding these untapped, unique, very talented, smart, gifted individuals, it started off initially with affiliations that primarily serve communities of color.

For some reason, people more prioritizing this to tap into those communities.

So as you mentioned before, it could be a sorority, it could be affinity groups like how.

I'm in the urban league.

**Michelle Kemp 04:51**

It was also mega churches.

It was also making sure that I was out there in the community as far as events that's going on.

They're a lot of people that are in the field of education through affinity groups that I think people just weren't tapping into.

They were just going primarily to the PWI on colleges and institution as they categorize or identify as smart universities to attend versus looking at the HBCUs, knowing that no matter what our life circumstances may be, geniuses are surrounded all around us.

And being thoughtful and intentional through that process, I was able to identify leaders of color that were really doing amazing work for our kids and communities.

**Michelle Kemp 05:03**

And so I think now people are kinda reprioritized on what that looks like.

There's still some growth and unlearning that people still need to unpack around that, but I'm appreciative that people are starting to move towards that process.

**Spring Richardson Perry 05:39**

So I really like what you said here.

It's tapping into those already existing networks, right?

The groups that you were a part of, the sorority, the different boards, the churches, the leadership groups that you have been a part of tapping into those networks and leveraging that because, like you said, there's the there's genius around us everywhere.

And so, I really like that because it it seems really simple.

Right?

**Spring Richardson Perry 06:30**

It seems really simple, really like common sense.

But like you said, that wasn't happening.

And so once you tapped into that it's super important, especially for us as as a black community to really be able to get these people who who look like our kids who have grown up like our kids who can identify with our kids is super important to have that display of mentorship of just success that our kids know that, yes, this is possible.

Somebody that looks like me can be a principal.

Somebody that looks like me, I can be, you know, the CEO of the school if I want to or somebody that looks like me is helping to recruit all these people and she owns her own business.

**Spring Richardson Perry 07:00**

I could probably do that too.

Right?

So having that representation In the in the foundational spaces of k 12 schools, I'm I'm totally in agreement with you is super important.

And you know, I'm glad that you brought that up in terms of, you know, where you were going to find these people, and this kinda leads me into my next question.

What are some of these best practices around hiring?

**Spring Richardson Perry 07:08**

What are some of the things that sort of sets sets you apart as you're doing your hiring from others and what they do?

**Michelle Kemp 07:39**

Yeah.

So outside of the representation piece, it's very important that I focus on the retention piece.

To sustain that talent that they're bringing within the organization.

And so that really goes to really understanding the organizational culture really understanding, like, the core values, those non negotiable collective beliefs for the organization.

And how that aligns with the individuals that I'm looking for to step into that role.

**Michelle Kemp 08:14**

So this is what creates that sustainability piece.

Unfortunately, in some organizations, some leaders of color may be the first.

And with them being the first, it's important that I create this kind of common ground that everyone believes in, so that goes to the core values and beliefs.

But then also, be an accountability partner with the organization to review policies, practices within their culture, so that they fully embrace this new identity that they're accepting within their community.

So I really talk less about inclusivity.

**Michelle Kemp 08:47**

Because for inclusivity, to me, that means you're included in a group and there's still parameters around it versus fully embracing that identity as a value add within the organization's So they're unique perspective, they're unique views, they're unique experiences, they will propel a organization.

And so that is initial, like, root of how I start recruitment, hiring process.

I have to establish common grounds.

Right?

So that's the you the the collective belief that both the candidate and the organization shares.

**Michelle Kemp 09:02**

And then from there, it goes to unpacking what are non negotiable competencies, around beliefs, around expertise, around skill set that that position that was step into that individual that was step into that position must have.

And

so

**Michelle Kemp 09:28**

And so once I kind of unpack that with the candidate I'm sorry, not the candidate, once I unpack that with the organization, I'm able to be more strategic and purposeful with my kind of recruitment to hiring process.

And I access assess those core competencies throughout the entire hiring process.

So from resume review to initial screening that I'll conduct to the in person interview with organization or client.

**Spring Richardson Perry 10:28**

I love that and 1 thing that really stood out to me that you were talking about is culture of the organization itself, and that too is an upcoming episode that we talk about Workplace culture, and how to really solidify and establish that because when you're hiring people, that you wanna make sure that you're hiring people that fit into that culture, that mission, that vision, what it is that you're trying to accomplish.

And I find a lot of times organizations sort of overlooked at.

They missed that piece, and then all this investment that they've made in terms of hiring these people it's like a revolving door almost, because we're not focused on the whole picture.

We're looking at feeling a spot, putting a body in this spot to have a person here and do this job.

But it's it's it's about more than just doing a job.

**Spring Richardson Perry 11:08**

It's about, you know, this this organization started for a reason.

Right?

And because of that reason, we have this this mission, this vision, this culture of community in our workplace, and we wanna make sure that each person that comes into our community can is is with us in achieving this mission, this goal.

And so I'm so glad that you mentioned that because, like I said, a lot of times, companies miss that.

And so what do you do when you notice as you're recruiting that perhaps some of these hires may not be a culture fit?

**Spring Richardson Perry 11:25**

They may not be the right culture add to that community, even though on paper they look great, they have all the experience, They have the certifications, the knowledge, or what have you, but not necessarily aligned with the mission and vision of the organization.

What do you do at that point?

**Michelle Kemp 11:49**

So for sure anyone I talk to has to be in line with the mission and vision, but culture part is the always tricky part.

And so I'm usually very transparent.

So with me being brought on board to represent an organization to recruit, I do an audit first.

I do an audit with leadership to understand the why and the need.

Like, why are they looking for a diverse leader?

**Michelle Kemp 12:16**

What is the whole objective?

How this fit in the collective belief within a organization.

How does this help with the mission and vision?

But then I also do an audit to understand the organization to get a pulse of the culture.

And from those questions, from surveys and follow-up interviews, then I can have, you know, enough context to speak about the organization, and so when I'm talking to candidates, when I notice there's a misalignment, I'm just transparent with them.

**Michelle Kemp 12:59**

I'll say, hey, I think what you believe is great and amazing, but I'm noting noticing a a misalignment with general educational philosophies as far as how to do the work.

And I don't want to find someone who's great that's misaligned with the organization because they will leave that organization within a couple of months and say, hey, this was a bad decision.

It has to be some common ground.

But at the same time, I'm looking for individuals that, of course, believe in some of the cultural practices.

But can push the organization to be more innovative as far as how they do things so that it evolves versus staying the same.

**Michelle Kemp 13:17**

Because we're always looking for growth.

Like, I'm representing an organization.

They're like, oh, I want someone to grow mindset, but that has to be a mutual practice, not only just to be acceptor from the candidate, but for the candidate to be able to share their perspective too so that the organization can grow and propel to the next level.

**Spring Richardson Perry 14:17**

I'm so glad you brought that up, Michelle, because growth and development is important when you think about talent and hiring.

But also you want to think about how an employee can challenge the organization in a healthy way to take it to the next level but you wanna balance that too with making sure that you don't create disgruntled employees who just complain and don't have solutions anything.

So, when I think about a disgruntled employee, it leaves me to start thinking about this transitioning teachers movement where there so many things happening in education right now and so many teachers are leaving the profession.

So, can you talk to us about what you seen in terms of recruitment with the schools, has it been a challenge to find teachers, and just in general overall in the media right now you know, they're saying that it's hard to find employees just in general.

So have you experienced that in general as well?

**Michelle Kemp 14:47**

Yes.

I've definitely experienced a talent shortage.

For the communities that I primarily serve and support, they serve communities of color.

And in those specific school districts, there was already a shortage before the pandemic.

So I just wanna name that too, especially having teachers, or leaders of color to step into those roles.

**Michelle Kemp 15:37**

And that was intensified due to the pandemic, where it's challenging work to make sure that people are wholly invested in our kids' development to really close that access gap for our kids of color.

To really transform and reimagining the trajectory for our kids and community and to sustain and rebuild those communities too as well.

So the shortage has always been a challenge.

It has forced me to be even more creative as far as how I target and source and build relationships with preferred individuals that may be a great match for a school or organization.

And I think that's something no matter what sector that you're in, everyone is struggling with.

**Michelle Kemp 15:54**

But that's always been an ongoing challenge, specifically, schools that serve communities of color.

So that also has pushed me to be even more strategic as far as organizations that I partner with that could be a great funnel or pipeline of talent to support those organizations.

**Spring Richardson Perry 16:26**

So here's my final question.

In the media, like I said earlier, they're saying how jobs are becoming less and less, and because companies are slowing down with hiring in terms of getting ready for this recession that's upcoming.

So, I'm wondering, does that mean that you've seen an increase in applications?

Because that would mean that there are less jobs available.

So can you talk to me about the volume of applications that you're seeing right now?

**Michelle Kemp 16:59**

Yeah.

As far as application, there's definitely been a decrease in applications that are school based.

However, there's been an increase for application that are, like, central office, home based position versus in the schools.

And so I'll do a comparison between school and kind of a network level or home office positions.

For school based positions, with a decrease of applications, Now my time is more allocated towards sourcing, myself and my team, towards sourcing and identifying talent.

**Michelle Kemp 17:38**

And then once we get that engagement, we have expedited the turnaround process from us conducting initial screening.

To that individual actually come into the schools who experience to see if there's an alignment with hopes of that will secure a hire for that organization.

So organizations have definitely been more flexible and open minded to having people come in sooner than later.

I know in the past there were processes where you'll submit an application, and then in a couple of months, you'll hear from us when we're starting the in person interviews and the screenings.

That is not the case anymore.

**Michelle Kemp 18:23**

It's once you apply with our organization, you will hear from us within a week and after your application.

And then within that time frame, our goals is is in is within 2 weeks for you to have an opportunity to meet in person with that school organization.

So the efficiency of the process has definitely accelerated, knowing that people have starved exploring opportunities within schools.

And so with that pile of type talent pipeline decreasing, we have to be more assertive in making sure those people get the opportunity to step and understand the organization sooner than later.

With network level, home office positions.

**Michelle Kemp 18:54**

There are some similarities.

However, the turnaround may not have to be as assertive or aggressive when turning that around from my initial screening.

But with us, we do try to maintain interest and engagement throughout the entire hiring process.

And we know by creating gaps, that means that other individual or the candidate may have opportunities to explore other organizations.

And to keep them engaged, we have to keep that communication going.

**Michelle Kemp 19:12**

So outside of doing our initial screenings, we're doing check-in, giving just general advice, any prep for that person as they transition to the next phase of the interview process to keep that engaged meant high if there is a delay as far as turning around from in person, from the screening to in person interview.

**Spring Richardson Perry 19:50**

Yeah, that makes sense.

And, you know, just in general, that's typically best practice, right, to get back to the candidate as quickly as possible, whether it's a yay or a nay, and then move along in the process if you're looking to fill the position.

And I mean, I don't know why you would posted if you're not looking to fill it.

And so -- Mhmm.

-- or, you know, at least express a timeline within the job description as people are applying to the job so they know what to expect because when you just leave it open, people are expecting to hear from you within a week or 2 to know, okay, am I gonna move forward?

**Spring Richardson Perry 20:12**

Am I not gonna move forward?

And typically, you know, there's more jobseekers that are that need to be employed than the passive job seeker who's, like, at work and is, like, oh, I'm gonna just see what happens.

And and and does have the time to wait.

So I find, you know, people get really frustrated with that particular part of the hiring process

**Spring Richardson Perry 20:13**

because

**Spring Richardson Perry 20:51**

you know, they wanna work.

They're looking to get started as quickly as possible, but, you know, there's really nothing that they can do.

They get stuck at the the application phase until someone reaches out to them, and sometimes it's a month later, you know, like you said previously, 3 months later when -- Mhmm.

-- when, you know, you're starting to ramp up and do things.

And so, yeah, I think best practice is definitely at least let people know a week, a week or 2 later, yes, you're going to move forward, no, you're not going to move forward, or put the timeline in the job description to say, you know, hey, we're gonna it's open for application.

**Spring Richardson Perry 21:25**

We're gonna start reviewing on this date.

We'll start reaching out on this date, and so people know what to expect and and how to sort of plan things out as they continue their job search.

So So, yeah, I'm Thank you, Michelle.

Thank you so much for being with us today and talking to me about your experiences, how do people get in touch with you if they want to consult with you for services or just for anything at all.

How do people reach out to you?

**Michelle Kemp 21:55**

Yes.

You can go to my website at WWW dot m k consulting group dot com, and you can select the menu bar to request for an inquiry, and that comes to my team, and so then we'll set up a a shirt 20 minute conversation to get a understanding of, like, your need.

And then from there, we'll customize kind of our process to address and support you through that process.

This.

So that's 1 way.

**Michelle Kemp 22:11**

You can also email me directly at info at m k consulting group dot com.

And again, 1 either myself or a member of our team will respond to you to get that conversation going so that we can support you.

**Spring Richardson Perry 22:35**

Absolutely, well, thank you so much for talking with us today, and I hope you guys were able to take away some nice little gems from this today in terms of managing talent and the hiring process itself and some best practices here and just some some things in the industry that that are happening in this moment in time.

So thanks for joining us today guys.

**Spring Richardson Perry 23:12**

Thanks for listening to the spring forward podcast.

I hope you were able to capture some of the gems that were dropped and are excited to start using the information to help your business spring forward into excellence.

I would love to hear some of your biggest takeaways from this episode, so connect with me on LinkedIn or Facebook or tag me on Instagram at springy underscore springtime and don't forget to subscribe to the show so you don't miss an episode.

And if you'd like to learn more about how we can work together, visit the website at time to spring forward dot org.

**Spring Richardson Perry 23:12**

That's TIMET0SPRINGF0RWARD dot org.

And until next time on the spring forward podcast.