

openSAP Invites Thought Leaders, Episode 10

DISTANT SOCIALIZING – LEARN HOW SAP IS CONNECTING & PROTECTING ITS WORKFORCE

Transcript

Cawa Younosi: We are open, we try new things, simply do it, not only thinking about the risk and focusing on risk but focusing on chances. We are not doctors, we are just HR, and we can only try.

Nina Strassner: We can be creative and there is no for fear that if this is not really working out or maybe it's not the perfect plan we ever came up with, it is the guidance and that we know that we have the room to come up even with the craziest ideas, because we know that we are allowed to think big.

Elisabeth Riemann: Welcome to a special Thought Leaders episode with Nina Strassner, Head of Diversity and People Programs, and Cawa Younosi, Head of HR, Germany at SAP SE. This is our personal invite to you to join our casual lunchtime chat where we discuss the personal challenges of working from home and the importance of good routines. Since COVID social distancing means that many of us are working remotely, Cawa and Nina have become expert enablers of distant socializing. Stay tuned to hear about their daily struggles and successes and learn what motivates and inspires them to drive pioneering HR projects at SAP. I'm your host Elisabeth Riemann, let me introduce you to Nina Strassner and Cawa Younosi.

Nina Strassner, Head of Diversity and People programs at SAP SE.

Nina's part of Cawa Younosi's management crew and is responsible for diversity measures and HR programs for SAP employees in Germany. Before joining the SAP management team in 2019, Nina previously worked as a lawyer and specialist in labor law for almost 12 years. She's a lecturer and business editor, has published a book on family and labor law topics, she writes columns in Brigitte Mom and Wirtschaftswoche and has a Golden Blogger 2018 badge on her backpack. Nina's a happy mother of two, and lives in Kiel, in the very north of Germany with, she says, an overweight cat and an annoyingly sporty husband. She grew up in a small town in the Swabian Alb in southern Germany and made her way to Dresden, Sydney, Australia and Stellenbosch, South

Africa, to the Baltic Sea, from where she now regularly travels to meet with her team and colleagues at SAP headquarters in Waldorf, Germany.

Cawa Younosi, Head of HR, Germany at SAP SE.

As Head of HR for SAP in Germany, Cawa provides opportunities for people to excel even if their résumé is a bit different. His own experiences have taught him to find the possibilities that lie beyond a conventional way of thinking. In the late 1980s, when war was tearing apart his home country of Afghanistan, Cawa's parents put him on an airplane to Europe. He was just 14 years old. As an unaccompanied minor, he was accepted as a refugee and put in a children's home and later in foster care. Despite this difficult beginning, he thrived. He learned the language, made friends and excelled in school in the German capital city of Bonn. After graduation, he married his high school sweetheart and started his own small business. Cawa joined SAP as a lawyer in the legal department and now as an HR leader, Cawa fights passionately for equal opportunity for all people. In short, he works to create the framework conditions to offer everyone the same access opportunities because equal opportunity is about fairness. Cawa says, "If you put trust in people, there is no end to what you can achieve together." Cawa's pioneering and sometimes unconventional HR projects are proof this works.

Hello, Nina, and hello, Cawa.

Cawa Younosi: Hi, Lizzie.

Nina Strassner: Hi, Lizzie.

Elisabeth Riemann: Welcome, both of you to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders. I'm thrilled you're here to talk about SAP's pioneering HR programs and highlight how SAP is supporting its employees as we continue to work from home. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns, they've really been impacting our lives in ways previously unimaginable and we're separated from our family, our friends, and our colleagues. And this is all taking its toll on our emotional wellbeing. At SAP in Germany, you're both leading HR programs to not only protect us during the pandemic, but also to connect us. And I think it's fair to say you've reframed our experience of social distancing over recent months and replaced it with the much more uplifting variant of

distant socializing. Our episode today is all about people. So, I'd like to ask you both what makes HR and diversity topics so important to you personally?

Nina Strassner: I think this part of business life is basically the heart of everything, if we start to listen and if we are in close connection with our employees and if they're happy and if they feel heard, they stay healthy, they stay with us, they stay innovative, and we are basically creating a basis for the future. So that sounds very theoretical, but you can see it every day in the office. Or if you put that in your private lives at home, if you have a party, the party is staying. The people are always meeting in the kitchen sometimes. And there are people who are maybe very, very different. But in this area, in the kitchen where everyone comes together and where everyone can be herself or himself, this is where we have crazy ideas and where we have a good time. And this is where we kind of charge our batteries. And this is why a topic like this, apart from eliminating discrimination and kind of stabilizing the paths all our individuals are having, and I think that's the perfect combination.

Cawa Younosi: Yes, people has been always important, not just since Corona, but the importance increased definitely during the Corona pandemic because every company understood it's not about revenue only, it's not about profit, it's about people, our most important asset. The health of our employees, of the people, and that they are engaged and they are motivated has been important, but here you have more, uh, stronger feeling why it's important, because our employees are not engaged, because they have a thousand other problems and challenges, then they couldn't provide a service to our customers or to our colleagues. And therefore, we need this company to focus on their needs to help them become this company in order to enable them to provide the services needed for our customers, our partners, and colleagues. And it's also a test for a lot of companies if all the offerings they provided and that they have provided in the past, if they work really or not. Is it only something for career sites or really meaningful offerings? And I think we could show, especially Nina with her theme that the offerings are working and we are able to quickly develop new offerings for each employee group, being a parent or as a single parent, a reality test also for our organization, especially for HR organization.

Elisabeth Riemann: I think it's wonderful that you recognize how diverse the workforce is as well, and I think that's what I really love about SAP being a global company. It's so

culturally diverse and inclusive and that we all have that space to embrace our differences. And so I'd like to ask the both of you now as well, how have your own past experiences, say, your background in the legal profession for you both and your education and family prepared you for your roles at SAP?

Cawa Younosi: My past, because, as I said, I'm not born in Germany, but in Afghanistan, I came here as a refugee and there was a sense for equal opportunities not to be disadvantaged in the society and at SAP I find, as you say, the whole world. I was very impressed when I had my interview, my first interview at SAP, it felt like an airport. There were people from all over the world. There's no one dominant nationality. It's a very comfortable environment for me, of course, but it helps me my past, my background also to understand better our employees, especially those of them, who are not German nationality and at SAP in Germany, about 20 percent of our employees have another nationality than German, plus all of those who are of an immigration background. But we cannot, of course, count. And therefore, it helps me, my past to understand what are their needs. How can we help them to ensure in our HR processes and all other offerings and equal opportunities, the same starting point for everyone, no matter which background he or she has. Nina, do you have some examples from your Diversity and People area?

Nina Strassner: So private life is a big thing, so family dimensions at its best, so we did what we always do. We are looking on the people working for us that maybe need a little bit of assistance in business life and need flexibility. And then COVID came and then there was a group appearing that was not in scope before, but they were they are all the time, the people living alone, the singles. For me, this was really a learning that we learned from the people that were not visible before, because before they needed no further assistance, they had their friends at work, they had their colleagues there, they could use our sporting facilities and their social life came to an end. So, where I was sitting in home office surrounded by screaming children all the time, and I had like way too much company the whole day. So, I was looking also from my perspective. So, oh, wow, we need a Corona school and we need assistance here. And it really came like karma in a good way came back to us that the people who were living alone had the trust to talk to us and to tell us that they are lonely and that their social life broke down in a way that we needed a little bit of a spotlight on. And that happened really quickly. I'm really thankful for that, that they opened up and said, hey, can we, I don't know, it

maybe sounds funny, but I'm starting to talk to my plant and my plant is talking back, so I have the feeling that I'm getting crazier and maybe I'm lonely and Nina can we have maybe a coffee together tomorrow at five after work? And that really triggered something inside me. And what we then did is kind of shifting our work from the classic diversity and inclusion programs and initiatives. We brought back what they are missing. So how to do that virtually that was fun. It worked. So, we cooked together. We had lectures with authors, and we were not talking about their books. We were talking also about how they are working from home. And it was funny to see how many diverse aspects also our guests are having. And they loved to talk to us because they were not like asked about their, um, career only, they were asked about how they're living with their families. So that was quite a journey.

Cawa Younosi: We set a German record for our virtual barbecue.

Nina Strassner: That's right.

Elisabeth Riemann: The most participants, how many were the Cawa?

Cawa Younosi: Thousand eight hundred participants, plus, of course, family and friends in front of a display, but one thousand eight hundred people. We barbecued together via Twitch with a very popular cook in Germany. And this was really a big event. Of course, newspapers reported on that and we had fun. And the same time we had the publicity. Not our first goal, but nice to have.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I think that's really wonderful to bring so many different people together.

Nina Strassner: Exactly.

Elisabeth Riemann: And Nina, you're an experienced author, a writer and blogger, as well as being a lawyer as well. And last year, you and your team started a monthly SAP employee magazine in Germany, and you called it How to Home Office. And it's packed with HR information, stories, and news to support and entertain us all while we work at home. And so, I wanted to ask you and Cawa too, how do you "do home office", what's your typical day look like when you're working from home?

Cawa Younosi: Waking up and then just switched your room from bedroom to office without taking a shower, and I try if it's possible, especially in spring and summer, to also go out to walk and to have your calls during your walk around in forests or around SAP building, because I am living just 600 meters from our headquarters, therefore home office has another meaning for me. It's important for ritual work that you have enough breaks. Not one call, one meeting after the other. Therefore, we decided last year, in November, I think, to stop back-to-back meetings and initiate it with our IT colleagues to shorten the meetings to twenty five minutes or fifty minutes to give our employees, our colleagues, the time to have a break to, to go out and drink something or do some sport. And this is what I try to do. And what I also try to do when working from home is not to leave my office if it's not really necessary, because when I leave I meet our son and my wife then I have a feeling that work is over and therefore I try to really have a cut. Here's working time and when I leave the office, then it's my private time. And, um, at least for me, it's important to have this separation.

Nina Strassner: Yeah, quite similar. I'm struggling with getting up in the morning, but I'm used to this because I watch Netflix until, I don't know, three o'clock in the night because I always click on the next episode. I don't know. My learning curve is not really steep there. So, I wake up every morning and I, I am in denial of everything. And then I have a cup of tea with my children because I'm responsible for home schooling. I mentioned that before, like when my husband and me, when we were sharing or when we were dividing the who's responsible for what and the tasks and things. We really needed to write that down, because home office showed after quite a while that both of us were doing everything and nothing. So, we really needed a new way of working with the children, working with each other, because we were together all the time and not, so we were not talking as well. So, we really needed to prepare our tasks and structures. And I accepted the task of homeschooling, which I regret deeply. But my husband is not willing to take the task back because he said he's going shopping and he's preparing the meals. At around nine o'clock, I start with meetings and, um, I think it's almost a year now and I could agree with Cawa. I need structure. I'm not good at this. It's easy for me, for myself to break the structure. I talked to the team about that if they feel similar. So, we decided to have like an hour of sports at least on Friday. So, this is like the hour dedicated to sports. And we invited a Pilates teacher who's doing Pilates with us. Of course, not the whole team agreed to do so, but they are using this hour of

maybe a little bit of limited contact with other team members to have a walk or do whatever they like. So this was I mean, that's a pretty new approach, but it came out of the necessity that we needed to help people and actually ourselves as well, as managers, to help each other with structuring, because I think this is nothing that comes natural for for everyone. And as it grows, as employers, we are responsible for the well-being. And I think this is something you could learn and what you need to learn. And I'm no exception to that. I really need to learn that to feel good.

Elisabeth Riemann: Now, thank you for sharing that, because it's a big responsibility to be that positive role model all the time, and we're all dealing and adjusting with things as well. So, it's really refreshing to hear that it's not something that always comes easy to management colleagues. If I might just jump back to your magazine, which I love, this how to home office, and I think it's great that you and Cawa work on topics that really cover HR topics. So, we get the information that we need, even though we're working from home. But I love the fact that you always want to entertain us as well. And I think that's something that we all love about both of your characters. And what I also like about the How to Home Office is your opening column, Nina, you're always are very honest in that. How do you choose the topics for that?

Nina Strassner: I'm writing the column maybe a week before we're issuing the magazine, and it's always something that maybe was kind of troubling me, leading is, of course, a responsibility, but also it is a struggle. And you need to let people know what you're thinking about and what you're struggling with and to be open for feedback.

Elisabeth Riemann: And it's keeping it real. I really like the fact that you bring together so many different recipes because you said that lunchtime is a real struggle and Cawa, you said that you're eating pizza right now because your agenda is so full today.

Nina Strassner: Cawa, you have to tell us that you are responsible for cooking in your family. I mean, for you, it is a very, very important topic.

Cawa Younosi: My wife insists, she's a big fan of clean cooking, no industrial products, I have to buy everything organic and I have to cook everything here in our kitchen. It was something new for me. But meantime, it's not my hobby, but I learned to love cooking. Since Clubhouse is available in Germany, (you know the Clubhouse app?), I

can combine both while I'm cooking or cleaning afterwards. I open just some Clubhouse room and discuss people topics with my colleagues and other people from audience or customers. So yes, I really love cooking because of Clubhouse, because it's the only time I can talk about business with our customers in the same time nobody has to wait for something, especially not my wife, although she thinks I need more time since I'm Clubhousing while I'm cooking. I have to optimize multitasking and seems not to be my strength.

Elisabeth Riemann: Practice makes perfect,

Cawa Younosi: Exactly.

Elisabeth Riemann: So, you said that you're a big fan of the new Clubhouse app, because it's helping you to multitask, to do your cooking at lunchtime and also stay in touch with people. And so, I wanted to ask you, what other technologies do you use and what's maybe the most successful approach for communication within your team right now in lockdown?

Cawa Younosi: First of all, one question. Nina, your background seems to be my office. Is that a virtual background?

Nina Strassner: It's your office.

Cawa Younosi: You're in my office.

Nina Strassner: I'm in your office.

Cawa Younosi: Our new Head of HR Germany, Nina Strassner, welcome in my office.

Nina Strassner: Hiding in Cawa's office

Cawa Younosi: I

Nina Strassner: Because

Cawa Younosi: Miss...

Nina Strassner: I'm in Walldorf.

Cawa Younosi: ...my office.

Nina Strassner: Right? Oh, yes,

Cawa Younosi: I would

Cawa Younosi: To be there.

Nina Strassner: Everything is I mean, there's a lot of, there are a lot of letters lying around. So, you could see I mean, now we have proof that you are actually really taking home officing seriously.

Cawa Younosi: Exactly. OK, back to your question. I think it's not enough to have one platform, um, Clubhouse shows, but also LinkedIn and Instagram, uh, and Facebook, even Facebook. I have a lot of, colleagues who are only on Facebook still, not on other platforms and also Twitter. And therefore, I think the times where you needed only one platform is over. Now, you have to follow in multi-channel strategy to pick up the people where they are. I'm trying to use different platforms. Our SAP collaboration tools, but also the social media and of course, with target messages to stay in contact with our colleagues and also to get ideas, and feedback, and new suggestions. We love to get challenged by our colleagues. And so far, I think there's no other company, at least in Germany, with so many offerings which are very well received also by our employees. And the next one is one of the funniest and unique opportunity to launch our Wau Wau app.

Elisabeth Riemann: A Wau Wau app, tell us more.

Cawa Younosi: Nina.

Nina Strassner: It's about dogs, so it's the Wau Wau in German. So, what do they say in English? Woof!

Elisabeth Riemann: Woof, Woof,

Nina Strassner: Woof, woof.

Elisabeth Riemann: This is what I think's really fascinating, that animals make so many different noises depending on the language. It's completely different.

Nina Strassner: Yeah, I mean, German dogs apparently like very cheerful personalities. They say, Wau, Wau, and we have a Wau Wau app and it was something that started before COVID, because we realized or we know that family issues or private issues are not only mom, dad, and kids, but also pets. And it is an app that connects people who love dogs and who want to go for a walk with a dog, but maybe don't want to have a dog themselves. I'm a mom. I don't want to have a dog. My children want to have a dog. So, it's kind of dog sitting. So, we came up with this within SAP. So, students were helping us with this. And it is kind of a program that can be used for other things, too. I'm looking forward when we can use it for children

Cawa Younosi: No.

Nina Strassner: And taking walks with children because I took so many walks in the past eight months, I don't want to take walks anymore.

Cawa Younosi: But you will start, it's just an SAP internal app only for colleagues and, um, we will start with dogs and maybe we can expand also for kids.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's the spirit of HR at SAP though in your teams right, you go into experimentation, you're really trying things out, having fun, thinking about the real situation, the real people, what we're dealing with in life, and then thinking what apps, what programs what initiatives you might be able to implement to serve those people, those colleagues. Right. So, you're doing brainstorming, I think, in your team meetings by the sounds of it and coming up with these fun ideas and just trying it out to start with.

Nina Strassner: Exactly. And this is what Cawa was emphasizing, I think that these social channels we are on are a source of creativity, and I'm using these also for contact

with my colleagues and also my team members, because maybe on Instagram then there is a funny post or there is a link somewhere and I can share it with my team members. And then on the next day or maybe weeks after they remember and they're like I see there was this link I sent you and that was nice. So, it's I mean, of course, we have to structure ourselves that we are not getting lost in all of these social media activities. But on the other hand, it's such a valuable source of getting a feeling on what's out there and we can do that too, we can do it better.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I think by the sound of it, you're so in tuned with your teams, and I think it's really great that you noticed that working life and private life, one spills over into the other, so there are no longer two separate entities in our lives. As you said, Cawa as well, you know, having that structure, not leaving your office unless you've kind of finished work and that's your way of coping with home office (working from home). And I think it's really good to really roll out programs and support us with that as well. That's really good. And if we look to the future a little bit and if we dare to talk about a post-pandemic world, what do you think would be the preferred working model? I mean, we've had this massive shift where most of us have been working from a remote location from home. How do you think we're going to get back into the offices? And what do you think that working day reality might be in future?

Nina Strassner: I think that we had a high acceptance of home office before, I mean, at least for Germany, we had two and a half days on average, where our employees loved to stay at home. And I think we have to realize that maybe home office forever is not a solution for everyone. And of course, we are evaluating right now what our employees want. But right now, there's still no point for discussion, it's simply forbidden. But when COVID, when the crisis is over and when everyone is relieved that maybe some of us can go back to the office, I mean, we have to count that into. Oh, thank God, I can go back to the office. And I think when this period is over, we get then we have data. We could really rely. And I think that there will be a home office in the future. We now find that the reason to go to work is not sitting at our desk and looking into our computers. This is not why we are going to work. We are realizing right now that it is having that contact with colleagues and getting in touch again. So why not transferring this for people who want that? I mean, of course there will be desks and if you need your private desk and everything because you don't want to be disturbed, of course you can have that. But better and nicer opportunities for people who shifted their mindset a little

bit towards the hey, I'm in the office to share ideas and to get creativity and to have the joy again that we now really value that we can just shout over a desk and someone is answering and it's not the plant or the dog or everything. So really, an expert, a colleague who can, you know, where you can use his or her mind with.

Elisabeth Riemann: Mm hmm, and I think these collaborative aspects, that's something I think that we're missing. Obviously, there are tools like Mural that we can use to do kind of interactive workshops and discussions like that. But there's no replacing really this one on one, or the human contact within the team where you can really have fun brainstorming, working together. And I think, you know, that might be a challenge, maybe looking at the office spaces that we have and maybe optimizing and evolving those in future to make sure a different type of collaborative work is then possible.

Cawa Younosi: As Nina said, and you too, Lizzie, hybrid work will be the future, and I think the share of mobile workers working from your home will increase after COVID too. Here in Germany our colleagues, um, worked, um, at the time before Corona two or three times per week. But at the end, we are social beings. We need to actually work colleagues and to we have to change the way how we, uh, we provide offices. We need more collaboration spaces. So, when you go to office because you have an added value, not because your boss asked you or you have done it in the past, but you have added value, didn't staying at home. And we are preparing ourselves and what I'm working on already is to organize our next Christmas party. It will be, I think, the best Christmas party ever at least in Germany. And we are already working on it because we hope that at that time, we, uh, we are able to come together.

Elisabeth Riemann: It's nice to dream of that and hope that it's not in the too distant future as well. And we've talked and covered quite a few of the different HR programs and initiatives. What are your personal program highlights? Which are you most proud of?

Nina Strassner: Cawa, you start, I have so many.

Cawa Younosi: I too, um, I think it was our virtual Christmas party, to be honest, because, the four hours entertainment by Nina, while all our colleagues are cooking. To

have a four-hour virtual party, a Christmas party, it's really a challenge. And, uh, to notice that our colleagues, we I think we had ten thousand at the end, was with us four hours to celebrate Christmas with us. It was a highlight for me. But at the end I was surprised by Christian Klein. I was, uh, I didn't know that he will also join our party, he crashed our Christmas party.

Elisabeth Riemann: The CEO crashed the party!

Cawa Younosi: It was really funny, and I think that this was my highlight. There are a lot of other highlights our wine tasting, etc. But Christmas party. Nina.

Nina Strassner: My highlights were these little insightful and helpful sessions we had. We had a psychologist who talked about what happens in our brain when we are under stress. And that's COVID that is a stressful thing. And they what Cawa mentioned before, it's so, so much easier than before to get experts on the stage because they don't have to travel anymore. They just switch on their screens and click a button and then they're on and then we have them right in touch with our employees. And these little nudges with we had Nicole Staudinger, the coach who talked about how you're resilient and how to communicate so that easy these easy little nudges in between where I also learned a lot while sometimes hosting it or just listening to it. And this is really what I really liked about last year, the willingness of our colleagues and employees to attend virtual meetings. Before it was kind of like second place or third. But now it's a nice way, you can sit there at home and our colleagues are listening to us even after work. It's not work for them alone. It's something that brings value to their lives. Now they're experts talking to our colleagues specifically. And this is something I really enjoyed.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I think one thing that at SAP and HR, you've been doing a lot for the mental health and well-being of employees, do you want to tell us some of the highlights there too?

Cawa Younosi: We started in Germany, already in 2018, with our mindfulness program, SAP for You, the largest mindfulness program in the German industry. And because we understood at that time that physical fitness and mental fitness are equal, it's not only about jogging sports, but also we have to keep in mind that we are facing a

lot of challenges, social media and quick changes, etc., that we that we stay also mentally healthy and the long time sustainable. I think we started in June or July. We had already five thousand colleagues in Germany alone who participated in one of our offerings. 2019, we had already 10,000, and that helped us to be well prepared for the Corona time that sort of the majority of our colleagues had some trainings for self-motivation and to take care to yourselves.

Nina Strassner: The main object of this program that it is it always has a direct impact on how you could structure and how you could work better for yourself. It is really searching inside yourself. And when COVID came, before the classes were full and then COVID came and the classes were empty kind of. And we were like, whoa, what is what, what, what's going on? Like, what's the reason for that? And it took six weeks and then we had to double the amount of classes and we were flooded by employees. So that's also a thing that we learned.

Elisabeth Riemann: I think it's great when larger companies like SAP really provide this offering to its employees and in such a way that it's so accessible and it's really on demand when they need it. There's been a lot of awards that have been given to HR, so I'd like to ask you, Cawa, which awards are you most proud of and why?

Cawa Younosi: It's the feedback of our colleagues on Glassdoor because there are, of course, a lot of awards, top employers, we are very proud that we reached a first place for the first time in Germany a few days ago. We have the highest number with 4.8 out of 5 stars. And there's no other bigger company in Germany with that number. It's just a very important confirmation that what we are what we are doing is not only something which we have fun with it, but also, it's something. Not only the top rating, but also the lowest rating is important to understand. If there any issue we could fix or the one stars or individual cases and nothing, something structurally, which we could fix at the company. And of course, all other awards, I love them also too. I can't get enough! Um, but that honest feedback I get is on Glassdoor. Nina, do you have a favorite?

Nina Strassner: I

Cawa Younosi: But

Nina Strassner: Mean, I wanted

Cawa Younosi: What

Nina Strassner: To talk to

Cawa Younosi: I want Nina did

Nina Strassner: The LGBT?

Cawa Younosi: Exactly.

Nina Strassner: We are the most LGBT+ friendly company in Germany, and it's not that they just give it to you. So, my team was really, really busy in answering, like a million questions for that. And it helps us to think about all our initiatives. And there were like little nudges in between, like, oh, that's a good question. Are we actually doing that? Yes, we're doing it about maybe, oh, let's get better there. So, it really has a use for us as well. Um, but what Cawa said, the, um, the employees and the honesty, that is kind of what I really appreciate and what Cawa is always saying, we are not green washing or pink washing here. We want and we need the honesty. And then it is fun if you have the reward for it then at the end because you know it's honest and it's not because you pretended to be something that we are really not doing. So, when we look on our numbers, we want trustworthy numbers. We want real numbers and we want the real opinions and of course sometimes they hurt, but then we need to find out where we can get better.

Cawa Younosi: And, the biggest feedback award is when your own works council posts on LinkedIn, as it happened today, and give you compliments, as Head of HR. We have, of course, different perspective, etc. But today, "Cawa kudos, it's honestly hard to explain how integral you are to this team. Team player!" I think my job is done when

Nina Strassner: Life

Cawa Younosi: Work

Nina Strassner: Goals.

Cawa Younosi: Begin.

Cawa Younosi: Begins to push our compliments on LinkedIn, not only internally for everybody out there.

Elisabeth Riemann: That speaks volumes. It does.

Cawa Younosi: Yes, it's maybe it's also and, uh, Cawa, you need another job now. Next step.

Nina Strassner: It stands for a good atmosphere, right, that there is a good collaborating space already.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's so important, I think, for employees to see that as well, that's collaboration there and that the honest feedback really plays back into the system as well and is evaluated. And so, I want to ask you, what are the most important HR topics for you then 2021, where do we need to improve and what do we still need to learn?

Nina Strassner: With a focus on Germany, I think we have to work on motivation like how do we stay motivated in a lighthearted way, because I think it still is a struggle to not knowing when this drama is stopping. It's very hard for all of us. And looking on my team, we really want to work on our stay in touch approaches. So that's not also parents who are in their vacation times at home, but also other employees, how to stay close to each other. That really stays important from my perspective and also to really keep an eye on how we are working, because I think everyone needs breaks and we really have to have a close eye on the employees helping them, as we already said, and structuring and keeping a close eye on how these meetings structures are going and especially also caring for our managers as well, because we're talking about employees a lot. But good managers who care for their teams, they need assistance as well. And a hand sometimes and sometimes a hint to do. So, from the diversity point of view we have, we focus on racism, um, and programs around that and initiatives a lot, because I think that apart from COVID, there also still other aspects and topics we need to

discuss. And diversity, as we're always repeatedly saying, is not only about gender, even if this is sometimes the spontaneous reaction we have. We have important topics to discuss, especially in times where we need empathy more than before.

Cawa Younosi: Yes, most important topic. 2021 for me is as mentioned our Christmas party, upcoming Christmas party for me. Uh.

Nina Strassner: It helps you to stay sane,

Cawa Younosi: Exactly,

Nina Strassner: Admit it

Cawa Younosi: To dream at least.

Nina Strassner: To dream.

Cawa Younosi: But seriously, I think for me to manage the transition phase between a lockdown and virtual working and I hope from Q2 on, or Q3, we are able to also go back to office and to not only work at home and there's a transition phase, how to manage it best for both, for colleagues who want to continue to work from home office and for those who want to come back to office and to, um, to offer them a warm welcome. It's not only, I am back in office and continue, but that we have also an experience for them, a new feeling to go back to office to see our colleagues again. But life won't be the same as before Corona. There are some changes and the challenges to be prepared to have to continue with our offerings and maybe develop new offerings for flex workers who want to just jump in office and go back to home. And also for those of them who want to continue to work from home and others who want to come back and who says, enough home office, I will come every day to office. And we have to also provide and, um, an experience, an environment where they feel good in the offices and they have also fun and other, um, offerings to stay motivated.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I think to give direct feedback, I think that's a really amazing approach. I think that's very reassuring to hear that a big employer like SAP is really going to provide a transitional phase that I think most of us are going to need to get

back into society and these social interactions that we've missed, I think it could be too much too soon for some people in some cases. And I think the fact that everyone can decide for themselves at their own speed, their own kind of feeling, how much of the mix they want, I think it's about finding the right balance for our diverse and inclusive workforce and for other people, too, and to making sure that everyone's opinions are respected and everyone can find the right model for themselves.

Cawa Younosi: Thank you very much.

Elisabeth Riemann: Cawa and Nina, I've really enjoyed our chat today, and it's been so much fun to share with our listeners a real behind the scenes take on SAP HR in Germany. As a final question to you, though, what in your own opinion, really makes SAP's approach to HR so very successful? What's the secret to your success?

Cawa Younosi: I think it's our mindset. We are open, we try new things to simply do it, not only thinking about the risk and focusing on risk, but, uh, focusing on chances. Therefore, our motto is there's always risk with every offering, every flexibility. But as management, we have to manage the risk, not ignore the risks, but to focus on chances and chances are opportunities share is bigger than the risk. It's 98 percent, 99 percent. And we are not discussing too long. If there is a good idea. OK, let's do it. If it works good. But not, uh, so what? We are not doctors. We are just HR. And we can only try. And to always stay close to your colleagues. We don't need surveys to understand what are their current needs. We don't. And, uh, of course, survey numbers and insights are good. But it's not the only source for our ideas and feedbacks. And to stay close with your colleagues and, uh, employees and to understand what they need and to come back and ask Nina. Nina, I have an idea. Could you please provide some options?

Nina Strassner: Solutions, right? Yes, yeah, I'd say it better.

Cawa Younosi: And Nina loves these calls.

Nina Strassner: I love it.

Cawa Younosi: From my side.

Nina Strassner: Nina, come up with something! Someone has someone has something to say, make some something out of it! But I couldn't have said it better and I really can't emphasize that this is really how we work. Cawa is kind of a lighthouse here. Like we can be creative. And there is no fear that if this is not really working out or maybe it's not the most perfect plan we ever came up with, it is the guidance and that we know that we have the room to come up even with the craziest ideas, because, of course, we can cut things off. But we know that we are allowed to think big and then we kind of see how we can muddle through. And sometimes we crazily worried about some outcomes we like, oh, this is going to, but is this not happening? And we're like, OK, this was OK. Again, a learning here, it worked. And it showed us that we can work with the feedback. And if something is a great idea, we continue doing it, then we continue making it better and when it's a bad idea, we just stop doing it. I mean, this is the answer behind it. Um, and no one, could have said it better, Cawa, this is really what is inspiring the team as well. This is really how everyone is working here. And how I learned how HR are in Germany is running. And this is what I loved when I entered the company, that this is really a place where we can, yeah, keep running and keep building and be creative.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's so great. Thank you so much, Cawa, and thank you so much, Nina, for your time and energy today and for sharing so many wonderful insights with us.

Cawa Younosi: Thank you, Lizzie, for opportunity,

Nina Strassner: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Cawa Younosi: Stay healthy.

Elisabeth Riemann: Take good care of yourselves.

Cawa Younosi: Thank you very much.

Nina Strassner: You, too, thank you.

Elisabeth Riemann [Outro]: Thank you for listening to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders with Nina Strassner and Cawa Younosi. If you enjoyed this episode, please share rate, and leave a review and don't miss your next invite. Subscribe now.

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