

Leyla Nalbantoglu, People and Culture Operations Advisor - Transcript

Denise: Today, I'm talking to Leyla Nalbantoglu. She is a People and Culture Operations Advisor at the Garvan Medical Institute. She studied her Bachelor of Psychological Science at UNSW. Hi Leyla, thank you for being here.

Leyla: Hi, how are you?

Denise: Good, thank you. So, Leyla, can you please tell me about your job? What do you do as a People and Culture Operations Advisor?

Leyla: Well, as an Operations Advisor at the Garvan, there's quite a lot that I get to experience, and quite a lot that I get to do in my day job. I can definitely say that no day is the same. So, one day I might be working on different contracts and extension letters and job changes and employment information. The next day might be working on annual achievement conversations and training, and on-boarding and off-boarding processes the next day. I might be even looking at the system and how to improve system accuracy and process improvements. So, there's a whole lot that I do as an Operations Advisor. Like I said, no two days the same, but it's definitely a really interesting and rewarding job.

Denise: Out of all of those different kinds of things, is there something that's really your favourite? What's the best thing about your job?

Leyla: Yeah, I would say the best thing about my job is that I love the system and the number side of things. So, it brings me back a little bit to the stats that you do in psychology at uni, so a little bit of that is what I quite enjoy doing in the People and Culture team. So, anything that's got to do with reporting. So, employee turnover, looking at different annual leave trends, and liability. But then also looking at the system side of things. So, how we make an HRIS system that we use as good as possible for the end user and also as easy as possible to use for other people and culture team as well. So those two things are probably the best things that I enjoy about my role.

Denise: And how did studying psychology help you to get into this kind of work?

Leyla: I actually didn't know that you could get into psychology when I first started studying psychology. I was sort of just really interested about psychology and was like I don't know what I want to do with it. But I like learning about the way people work and things like that. So, I went into it not knowing what I wanted to do. But I came across 'work in psychology,' I believe that was the what the course was called. And I realized that you could actually implement psychology in the workplace and sort of include it in training and development and also performance management, all that sort of aspects. And that's where I really fell in love with it and sort of picked up the HR or business electives to accompany that love that I had for psychology, but also, the HR space. And that's sort of how I ended up in this in this sector.

Denise: So, you discovered it while you were studying. You discovered, 'oh, that's also a different way I can go?'

Leyla: Yeah, so I never really had a passion for clinical psychology. I was always like, it's interesting to learn and I have the utmost respect for all the clinical psychologists out there, but I was also like, oh, that is definitely not something for me. And I was like, what do I want to do with psychology? And I ended up discovering psychology at work, which is pretty cool.

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Denise: Yeah, absolutely. So how did you progress through your career to this point? Because I imagine this isn't the first job you got out of school.

Leyla: Yeah correct, so I started off doing some admin work while I was at uni. So casually just doing some admin work in the reception team at a Visa Centre, which was really interesting because you meet a lot of different people who come through the centre and deal with lots of different people from different backgrounds. After that, once I had graduated, I was lucky enough to find a job at Bupa within the HR Admin services team. So really sort of that service contact point for general queries related to people and culture and HR things. So that was my first role. And that was sort of where I got my first taste of HR and you know, dealing with people on a different basis. I was really responsible for looking after the nursing home, so the staff that we're all in the nursing homes, and then from that I sort of just progressed my career and moved away a bit more from the general stuff, specializing into some of the more key areas like the reporting, and the systems, and the remuneration, for example. Even that aspect I find quite interesting. So, that's sort of how I've landed to where I am now.

Denise: What are some of the things you've learned studying psychology that you feel that you use a lot and it helps you to do your job now?

Leyla: Yeah, I think one of the key things that I probably learnt, apart from resume writing, which is I think a key skill that you get to do on that course. You know, applying for jobs and going through that interview process, I think that was quite useful and also applicable to human resources, which you know we come across resumes on a on a daily basis in. On the recruitment side of things, I think one of the useful things I found is understanding how different personalities interact. So, having that learning about the interpersonal connections but also learning about the wide variety of people and roles and things like that, I found that quite interesting. But also, the stats side of stuff, you know, getting my first experience of some of the stats and the numbers and pulling that and doing some reports and writing that is something that I can take now. And that logical thinking is what I can bring to my job and say, hey, why are we doing things like this, or like thinking about it in a critical manner. I think the critical thinking aspect is quite important.

Denise: So, Leyla, do you have any advice to someone who's studying psychology at an undergrad level and looking ahead to their future career options?

Leyla: Yeah, I think I would suggest really just expose yourself to things that you might not think you're interested in so or something you're not aware of. So, for example, I had no idea that organizational psychology was a thing, so I was happy and I guess glad that I actually came across it because I realized that, hey, this is actually really cool and I really like it. So, I definitely say try some new things. Things that you're like, oh, I don't know what that's about. But also, get involved in the different clubs and the different activities that the psych department actually run as well. I thought that was quite useful to make connections broader than just the people who are in my tutorials and classes and stuff like that.

Denise: Thank you. Do you do you sometimes consider doing a Masters of Organizational Psychology? Is that something that would be useful in your line of work?

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Leyla: Yeah, it's definitely something that I've sort of thought about and is in the back of my mind to potentially do. I think at this point in time I'm okay with proceeding at the current career level that I am, but I think if I wanted to proceed further in my career, you know, that additional knowledge of an Organizational Psychology Masters or something like that would definitely complement everything that I do in my day-to-day work quite well. So, it's definitely something that I'm considering, and because of the collaboration between UNSW and where I currently work at the Garvan, it's something that is definitely very possible for me to look into.

Denise: When you graduated with your Bachelors how did you make the decision to pursue work instead of pursuing immediate further study?

Leyla: I think I was really lucky in the fact that all the pieces fell together when I graduated. And it was an internal offer that I got at Bupa, and an internal opportunity that arose, so it just sort of all fell into place. And I was really lucky. And I was really looking for the practical experience. I thought that was really what I wanted to go after. I wanted to learn about as much as I can through the practical side of things and through the job. So, the on-the-job learning side of stuff I, I guess. Just thinking back on it, like, I sort of want to just get into a position where I'm comfortable with where I am at work and I'm quite happy where I am at work and if I can potentially go part-time where I'll pick up a Masters of Organizational Psychology part-time, that would complement where I am now quite well too.

Denise: Is there anything about your job that you think someone who is in psychology now would be surprised to learn about it?

Leyla: So, probably that there is so much more to to psychology other than the clinical psych. So, in people and culture you just never know what you're gonna get each day. So, for example today I signed in and there's a few things going on. So, there's the annual achievement conversations happening. But there's also some stuff going on in the recruitment space. But also, the industry that I'm in with the medical research sciences, it's so interesting to hear about some of the research that our scientists are working on as well. They're doing things like they're working on cancers, and they're working on Parkinson's disease and things like that. So, even though you might have a job as an HR professional, I'm still having a wider impact for greater society as well. I think that is quite rewarding and something I didn't expect to land in.

Denise: What kind of person who's currently studying psychology would really enjoy a career in HR, do you think?

Leyla: It really depends. In HR, there's so many things that you can do. You could be a general HR professional, but also you could specialize in things. So, for example, a lot of general HRs, they quite enjoy working with people and working with different people, so working on leadership with people, working, you know, in things like employment relations and stuff like that. But then you also have the specialists. So, we have organizational and design people who are responsible sort of the structure and our ways of working, and we also have diversity and inclusion people who also come from a psychology background occasionally. You also have people who like me who are really interested in the data and the system and the remuneration side of stuff. So, if you're into numbers then that's something that you

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can potentially do. In HR, we also have people who are in the learning space, so learning is definitely a big thing and quite big focus for new employees, especially with the new generations coming through. They all they want to be in this continuous improvement cycle. How can I upscale, or how can I potentially learn more? So, looking at that aspect is quite interesting as well. Also, there is so much you can do in the people and culture in the HR space, so it really just depends on what you're what you're interested in, what your passion is.

Denise: Thank you so much, Leyla. It's been wonderful talking with you today. Thank you so much for your time.

Leyla: Not a problem at all, thank you.