

Maricel Giorfioni, Aspen Medical – Podcast

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Interviewer: Welcome to the Real Skills for Real Careers Podcast. In this series we speak with some of Australia's most exciting global companies in fast growing industries. We sit down with leaders in human resources and training to get their advice on how to land a great job and successfully navigate a meaningful and rewarding career. We also learn what these organisations believe they need to be competitive for the future of work and the types of candidates that will help them achieve this.

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Interviewer: In this episode, we meet Maricel, the Director of Culture and Performance at Aspen Medical. Aspen Medical are a global company who provide varied health care solutions to 14 different countries, working with Defence, the Government, multinational companies and N.G.O.s in the humanitarian sector. We talk to Maricel about training in the workplace and the future of workplace and career success. So we're sitting here in the open foyer with lots of people coming and going, and the team are kindly letting us take over their space a little. Thank you so much for having us at your H.Q. today Maricel. Can you start by telling us a little bit about what your role entails?

Maricel: So as the Director of Culture and Performance, I lead and manage the department which is composed of recruitment selection, capability, workforce capability and learning and development. So I design and create different patient initiatives in the organisation that supports our strategic objectives.

Interviewer: So let's go straight into the recruitment aspect of your role. What is the typical hiring process for a VET graduate at Aspen Medical?

Maricel: So at Aspen, actually it's the same with all other candidates. So we use similar process to all the vacancies that we have that we advertise externally. We encourage all candidates, including VET graduates to apply in all our administrative role. When we recruit for a particular position, we do not only look at the required skillset, but at the same time, you know, we would like to have someone here who could fit in the culture of Aspen Medical.

Interviewer: So in terms of that cultural fit, what do you look for in your people to support the Aspen culture?

Maricel: We value someone who has ability to work in a team environment, who has positive communication techniques and at the same time, has positive attitude. There are

candidates that may not have relevant work experience, however they do have life experience that might have taught them soft skills that we require for the position.

Interviewer: So what would you define as those soft skills? It's definitely something we hear a lot about.

Maricel: Yeah, so these aren't competencies, these are your ability to deal with people, intangible skills that you have. So let's say communication skills, people skills, people management skills, or as simple as planning or decision making skills.

Interviewer: So generally speaking, do you find that applicants or VET graduates have those skills?

Maricel: Yeah, they do. It is only sometimes especially when you are a newly grad, it's kind of difficult for you to explain yourself, so you tend to focus on what you do not have, instead of what you have. Life experience is really important because that's when you learn the most.

Interviewer: So basically you might not have a lot of experience, but your life experience can count for a lot. So once you've hired either a graduate or a person with a number of years of experience under their belt, do you tend to see them as complete in terms of their skills? Or do you encourage them to keep learning?

Maricel: We encourage our employees to progress in their careers. Recently introduced the Aspen Capability Development Program, and one of the initiatives there is vocational and education training. So we encourage our employees to look at opportunities to learn new skills and at the same time to get a certificate as well, while they're doing that education.

Interviewer: And do you have a VET graduate within Aspen Medical that you could tell us a little bit more about?

Maricel: Actually we do have a lot of employees who had vocational educational training Certificate I but at the same time we do encourage as well our existing employees to pursue VET education. For example in my department, all of my team members right now are pursuing Diploma in Human Resources and Project Management.

Interviewer: That's great to hear. So when you're recruiting applicants that do have a few years' experience under their belt, what kinds of things do you look for?

Maricel: When we're recruiting for a more senior employees, we look at basically the pattern of their career. What are the positions that they have held in the past, which are the roles that has provided them the skills that we require for the positions that they are basically applying currently.

Interviewer: It's interesting that you mention a career pattern, rather than a path, which sounds much more linear. Do you think there's such a thing as an idea career path?

Maricel: An ideal career path, it's kind of different to say that there's an ideal career path because people are different. So we have different learning style, we have different communication style, we learn differently. And at the same time, we plan our career differently. So it's more of setting your career, be passionate about it, and really work hard on it.

Interviewer: So to me, what you're saying is that yes, there is a pathway to career success, but it's very individual. So what advice would you give to help someone succeed in their career?

Maricel: So what advice I could give to individuals to succeed in their career would be that first they really need to have a goal. They need to be passionate in achieving those goals, and at the same time is that they need to be able to maintain a relationship with those individuals that they work from the time that they start with their career, to the people that they met as they progress to internal and external stakeholder. Everyone basically, people skills is really important.

Interviewer: So right now, people skills are number one. What kind of skills or traits do you think employers will look for in the future?

Maricel: So the skills or traits that employers will look more in the future will be more focusing on ability to adapt and respond to change, because we live in a very fast-paced era. So responding and adapting to change is really important.

Interviewer: And can you see the recruitment process changing in the future?

Maricel: I think the recruitment process will remain the same. We will still be looking for similar soft skills. Technical skills might be different because of the technology that we have, however we'll be able to predict more of how the employees, or what the employees will do in advance, so we'll be able to plan ahead before somebody resigns, or somebody looks for a new opportunity because there are information that we could use.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. The idea of data being able to affect not just the recruitment process but the ongoing retention of staff. So what kind of workplace culture do you think organisations will work on building in the future?

Maricel: I think in the future our organisation will be focusing more on an innovative workplace culture, because then again we are in a fast-paced environment. Everyone has to be able to adapt to change.

Interviewer: Adapting to change is a great one, because change can be quite challenging for people to accept. We often like to stick with what we know. So speaking of challenges, what do you think will be some of the biggest challenges to your workplace, or workplaces in general in the next ten years?

Maricel: I think the biggest challenge that we will have in the future is having an individualistic culture, because the technology that we have right now, it provides us

everything. It's very easy to learn, online, you can do things by yourself. However, people or young adults are missing the opportunity to learn with other people, to mingle with them, to develop people skills that could help them in the corporate world.

Interviewer: So that's a challenge not just for workplaces, but for young people too. How do you think young people can overcome that? To really thrive in a corporate environment?

Maricel: I think young people need to take advantage of what we have, whether it's technology or the ability to learn with other people. Learn as much as you can. Equip yourself. And in the working environment, sometimes you will find challenges, so always to stay positive and be focused and passionate with what you do.

Interviewer: Stay positive and be passionate. That's great, simple and doable advice, and I think that's the perfect place to end our interview. Thank you so much for having us today Maricel. It has been fantastic to visit your office and hear a little bit more about your organisation.

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