## Rob Henderson (00:08):

Welcome. My name is Rob Henderson. I'm the president CEO of BioTalent Canada, and this is our podcast series, the Science of Talent, where we interview dynamic human resource professionals from across Canada's bio economy to talk all things human resources, all things skills and talent, retaining and attracting the best and the brightest for Canada's Bio economy companies. Today I'm joined by Angelina Brathwaite from Brunel. Welcome Angelina.

Angelina Brathwaite (00:36):

Hi Rob. Thank you for having me this afternoon.

Rob Henderson (00:38):

It's my pleasure. I thought we'd give a little bit of a shout out to Brunel. Say a little bit about the company, a little bit about what you do before we get right into it. Is that okay?

Angelina Brathwaite (00:47):

Yeah, that's great. Brunel is actually a global staffing and recruitment agency. We actually support the life science industry by collaborating with our clients to find candidates for their positions. So I know this sounds easier than what it is, but we truly partner, we collaborate and we strategize with our clients. We're really able to provide things like market intelligence. Since Covid for instance, salaries have increased six to 7% and in some cases even more. We're part of several organizations that support marginalized and racialized communities. Therefore, we're able to provide access to candidates that may not have been previously considered. We also assist clients with their diversity, inclusion and belonging strategies, as well as prepare our clients with succession planning.

#### Rob Henderson (01:37):

And Angela, I have here that you've been with Brunel for 16 years. You're a Montreal native? And you're currently based in Toronto as the senior client partner for Brunel's life sciences team. And I can tell you from experience anybody who's been in life sciences in Canada, pretty much, you can't really go very far without running into someone from Brunel or running into your services in terms of what you offer small and medium size and even larger biotech companies. And I hear, see here that you serve as the regional leader for the diversity inclusion and belonging, or the DIB committee for North and South America for Brunel. Is that right?

Angelina Brathwaite (02:10):
That's correct.

Rob Henderson (02:11):
Okay, great. And so you've been with them for 16 years?

Angelina Brathwaite (02:14):
Yeah, actually going on 17 in April of 2023.

Rob Henderson (02:18):
And you came from the banking industry before that, correct?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (02:21):

<laugh> Yeah. I work for the Royal Bank for quite some time. The last position I held there was staff. I was responsible for managing the staff banking center. And I've also done a little bit of journalism. I was on city TV in the nineties covering the news.

## Rob Henderson (02:39):

Oh, so this is old hat for you, podcast for a veteran journalist like you.

#### Angelina Brathwaite (02:44):

<a>laugh>. Well, veteran. Ehh, I did it for a few years. Yeah.</a>

#### Rob Henderson (02:47):

Yeah. Well that's good. Yeah, exactly. So it's like riding a bicycle, I'm sure. Right. Did you find the transition from the banking industry into the recruiting industry, was that a smooth one for you or did you find that challenging to begin with?

### Angelina Brathwaite (02:58):

Yeah, I think so. Cause it's all about building trust and building relationships. So those skills were transferrable for sure.

### Rob Henderson (03:06):

Yeah. So let's get into it. Angelina, we, we've been talking about on some of the other podcast series, how tight this labor market is. I mean, oh yeah. Brunel has been around for a long time. They've seen <affirmative> tight markets before, but this one seems different. <affirmative> certainly I know in my time here at BioTalent Canada, talent over the last several years, it used to be with biotech companies, it was access to capital was their number one. <affirmative> challenge. Now I'll tell you universally, everywhere I go, they're all saying, where did we find people, Rob? It's really tight. It's very difficult to find the right people. And it's even difficult, more difficult to retain them because there's so much competition out there. So how is Brunel and how are you finding the labor market right now and what are the challenges you're facing in this industry?

## Angelina Brathwaite (03:54):

So the challenges that we're experiencing right now is salaries aren't necessarily aligned with what our clients expect to pay for the skill sets that are required. And also people are requesting to work remotely. So when it comes to the pay or salary inquiries, companies are concerned about their internal pay equity. And so now they're revisiting what they're paying their existing staff. Companies are also paying bonuses to accommodate for bonuses that could potentially be lost by the candidates with their existing employer. And to your point, many clients are now looking at their retention strategies. So they're looking at social corporate responsibilities, <affirmative>, they're looking at benefits. And one of the biggest things is career development and succession planning I would say.

# Rob Henderson (<u>04:49</u>):

That seems to be really big amongst whether it's Gen Zeds or the millennials or whatever you want to call the younger people entering the market. <affirmative>. And you mentioned a lot of things dealing with compensation but obviously career mobility, upward mobility, professional development, these are

things that are facing the bioeconomy as challenges as well. What does your typical client look like? Angelina, are we talking a small and medium sized enterprise, or are you in the mid to larger range in terms of the kind of clients that you see?

# Angelina Brathwaite (05:21):

I think it's universal in terms of what the expectations are from the candidate side, but it's also important for the candidate to recognize that they have to demonstrate to the client as well, meaning biotech or pharma, that they are fluid and they're agile and collaborative. Because if somebody is going to be a stickler for some things, then it doesn't show that they're very negotiable. And those are some of the soft skills that the client looks for.

#### Rob Henderson (05:51):

And I would think as much as we were talking about, and of course in a competitive market, compensation or total compensation is going to be a big one. And I found it interesting, some of the things you were talking about, about compensating for annual bonuses or <affirmative> incentives I find that really quite interesting. But at the same time, with small and medium size enterprises and with the workforce changing so much, you know, got the great retirement, you've got the great resignation going on and you've got all of these young people coming into the market. Are you finding that allows small and medium sized enterprises? You said agile, if they are agile and they have that agility, can they become more competitive in this market as a result of that?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (06:29):

They can. And so can the individuals who are working for these organizations. I think what we're starting to see now is a trend towards skill sets as opposed to just somebody's level of education <affirmative>. So those soft skills that I mentioned, that emotional intelligence is really paramount. So they're looking for individuals with strong leadership capabilities. So this is somebody who has the ability to inspire and motivate individuals to be the best versions of themselves while accomplishing their objectives or their KPI metrics. I think that's critical. And so if somebody is younger in your career and they're looking at an opportunity, they should really focus on those skills sets that are transferable. So when you're in university, you're looking at even your own little budgeting that you're doing for your household. You're looking at working with other people, collaborating on your team. Sometimes you're taking the lead, whether you're volunteering for an organization. And those are some of the skill sets that clients are looking for.

# Rob Henderson (07:42):

And that's really important to realize with when you're talk. I talk to a lot of kids who are starting out in the industry, and I've always told them that don't lose that camp counselor thing. Like those summer jobs where you've done client service or you've been able to manage a team, those are exactly the kinds of, I mean they call them soft, but if you don't have them, those skills are as hard as nails. The soft skills you were talking about, being able to lead a team presentation skills strategic listening skills, all of these things that you're talking about. And a lot of them sell themselves short in some of these things because if they've been, especially in the scientists for a while, some of those skills are sorely lacking because a lot of the courses that, I mean I'm a science nerd myself, and I know when I was working in the laboratory, a lot of those essential skills, they just weren't in implicated in a lot of the kids. You had to get those from the outside, either through extracurricular activities or for summer jobs or part-time jobs and <a href="mailto:affirmative">affirmative</a>. I think a lot of organizations sell those short, or I should say a lot of kids, a lot of

candidates do, but the organizations don't. Because like you said, those, that kind of on the job skill is really quite valuable in today's today's market. Right?

## Angelina Brathwaite (08:52):

Absolutely. And when you're volunteering, I always encourage those younger in their career to really, that's an environment where you can create your network. And when you're creating your network and you're volunteering, the work that you're actually doing is you're building trust in your own capabilities, your own abilities. So I'll never take that for granted.

#### Rob Henderson (09:15):

Yeah, I agree. And so let's talk about finding the talent. One of the things that we found out in our labor market intelligence is that the Bioeconomy does a pretty poor job of diversifying its workforce. I mean, there's some companies that are absolutely fantastic at it, and obviously Brunel has been very progressive and in terms of its diversity, inclusion and belonging committee, and you're part of that. Tell us a little bit about that approach. What does that committee bring to Brunel and what is your vision for it in terms of your involvement?

# Angelina Brathwaite (<u>09:47</u>):

So in 2020 with covid, George Floyd and other social injustices, our clients in the US was actually posting their support and solidarity. And I said to myself, we need to that we need to take action and we're going to have to be part of the solution, not the problem. So I had a conversation with the president of our organization and that was escalated to our CEO. So I'm proud to say that it's now resulted in a global strategy for Brunel to actually implement diversity inclusion and belonging strategies.

## Rob Henderson (10:27):

Oh, that's fantastic. So what does that mean? Is that both an internal and external? I mean obviously you're recruiting. So this is not, something, is not something that, it only applies to you in terms of your own diversity and inclusion, It's something that you have to implement in terms of the activities you do for your clients, right?

## Angelina Brathwaite (10:44):

Correct. So initially we took an internal pulse to see where we were on the Richter scale to see if we had any policies and procedures in place. We had to take a look at our job descriptions to make sure that the writing of the job descriptions was intentional. We had to take a look at the demographics where we identify candidates for our clients. And diversity and inclusion is important to me because it's the right thing to do. Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and age is still a problem in Canada and across the globe. So it's vital for companies to take initiative to address these issues and to ensure this kind of discrimination is not targeted during the hiring process. So making your company, whether you want to call it DEI or DIV friendly, makes your organization more ethical and attractive to potential employees.

# Rob Henderson (11:46):

And I suppose in this market now, <affirmative>, I guess 10 years ago we used to talk about diversity and inclusion. It's sort of a nice to have sort of a charitable activity. <affirmative> And now, I mean, you're the one advising your clients. What do you tell them, Angelina, do you say, I mean, in terms of if they

haven't been addressing this internally <affirmative>, how do they stay competitive? I mean, do they stay competitive? Is it even an option now for companies?

## Angelina Brathwaite (12:13):

No, I don't think it's, it's going to be an option. When you take in consideration, and you mentioned it at the initial part of our conversation about the great resignation and people retiring, those who are younger who are coming into the workplace right now, they have a different mindset. So when they're looking to work for an organization, they're looking at their social and corporate responsibility. They're looking at even when you're buying an article of clothing, they're ensuring that it's made with ethical practices. So it's really important for the new regime, so to speak that the organizations align with their own personal philosophies.

#### Rob Henderson (12:59):

And how do they do that? Let's face it, we take a good look at the Bioeconomy companies. These are not multinational pharmaceutical companies. A lot of people think they think about big pharma, and that's not the case. They're largely small. Sometimes 10 or 20 employees. You've got a scientist doing human resources, which is getting a plumber to do your taxes. And some of them have said to me physically, I've been in speaking engagements where some of them have said, Rob... diversity and inclusion is just a luxury we can't afford right now. I mean, it's just simply we have to keep the doors open. What can these organizations do? What's the low hanging fruit, the changes that they could implement that at least to start the process?

## Angelina Brathwaite (13:38):

Well, they can't afford not to do it... Let's get that on the record. Because diversity, what it brings is employee happiness and engagement. It's really a way to improve the loyalty to the organization. People feel valued, they feel included. And diversity initiatives in the workplace can boost employee retention levels. And a recent Deloitte study reports that workplaces with good d DEI or DIV performed 5.4 times better than non-inclusive companies when it came to employee retention.

## Rob Henderson (14:28):

By 2029, there will be four jobs for every one candidate in Canada's bio economy. This is great news for those looking to pursue a career in the industry for sure. But such a talent shortage could spell doom for employers, especially the small to medium sized enterprises that make up 94% of the industry. BioTalent Canada's newest labor market information study dives deep into the issues and makes evidence-based recommendations to help secure the bio economy's future. Download your copy today at biotalent.ca/lmi study.

#### (<u>15:05</u>):

Now that's interesting. 5.4, I haven't heard that statistic before, but even from a diversity and inclusion perspective, if you take a little looksy and you're dealing with the life sciences industry all the time here in Canada, the market for these companies is outside Canada. It's not even inside Canada, the market for their products. So of course from a talent perspective it makes sense, diversity and inclusion. But even from a marketing perspective, if your market is the entire world, correct, it makes a little bit more sense that your company, your marketing, your sales, your internal makeup would be a little bit more reflective of that. It gives you a little bit more market insight, wouldn't it?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (15:43):

Absolutely. Because it fosters greater innovation and creativity. Not everybody is coming in with the same mindset. Right.

## Rob Henderson (15:52):

Now, you finding, tell me a little bit about what the DIV committee is doing right now and in terms of the diversity angle, because diversity itself is a diverse term when you're talking about all of the underrepresented groups. Because we could be talking about women. We could be talking about immigrants, we could be talking about Canadians with disabilities. We could be caught talking about indigenous Canadians, we could be talking about LGBTQ. Is it everything or do you folks try to find a niche areas of focus that you are trying to either internally or externally focus your efforts on?

## Angelina Brathwaite (16:29):

Good question. We are definitely trying to be inclusive. So we have to take a look at all of the demographics that you just noted there. And one of the ways that we've accomplished this is through alliances. So for instance I serve on the board for many organizations. One of them is women's leaders in pharma, also in bio. There's another organization that deals with newcomers to Canada. There's the indigenous community, there's the LGBTQ community as well. So we have those strategic alliances so that when we do speak with clients, we're able to say that we do source from these environments. Not to say, so if a client says to me, okay, Angelina, we're looking for a specific demographic, we don't like to discount anybody, what we say is that, okay, well we have this community that we could reach out to, but we'll also include other members of different communities to make sure that it's equitable.

# Rob Henderson (17:44):

And do you find our companies, because I, the diversity part is obviously trying to go, trying to seek out underrepresented groups and have them more represented within the company. What about the inclusion part? What's, what's that part? I mean in the fact that you have some companies that where they might employ yes, a multicultural base, but they don't have a corporate culture that's very welcoming or to give those newcomers or those new employees a say <affirmative>. What kind of resources does the DIB committee or you and Brunel offer or impart to them as to some best practices that they can employ?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (18:25):

So in terms of best practices, there's always that high level of education to learn about different demographics, <affirmative>. And I'm also proud to say that our clients specifically support diversity, inclusion and belonging from all angles. So especially the equity piece, and I'll explain how, so I'm part of this organization and it's called Advancing Black Talent in Pharma specifically. And a client said to me, we want to sponsor student from a marginalized and racialized community. I said, that's great. And they said, okay, well we'll consider doing it for one year or for two years. And I said, oh, I think it's going to have to be a little longer than that. Why don't we discuss what your actual needs are going to be in the organization three to five years from now so we can align the studies, number one. Number two, ensure that there's coaching and mentoring for that individual so that they don't fail. And thirdly that there's a stream of revenue, so hire them during the summer. And so that was a very effective strategy. And the client was walking the talk. They weren't just saying, okay, we just want to hire a diverse pool. But they wanted to ensure that they follow these individuals throughout their journey.

# Rob Henderson (20:02):

And I can imagine, you've mentioned education, A lot of the kids are graduating sometimes masters or PhDs degrees in their late twenties, early thirties, which are the high reproductive years as we know. Do you find companies that, I mean some companies, they can't let people work from home because they can't provide an aseptic environment. There's laboratories and sometimes that we're talking about this. Do you find that the biotech companies or the life sciences companies are going to be at a disadvantage in terms of embracing the diversity that comes with the hybrid and remote working environment that we now see ourselves in? They won't be as competitive as some other organizations that can go 100% full on remote and hire anybody wherever they are and whoever they are.

## Angelina Brathwaite (20:48):

But I think you could still create that environment. We're fortunate that we have teams and zooms these days. 10 years ago it wasn't even a thing, but I think you could still nurture those relationships. Case in point, when Covid happened 2020 I would speak with my colleagues on the occasion, and I work for a global, as I said, a global staffing and recruitment agency. But being at home and being on teams, I'm actually more engaged with my colleagues now more than ever. So I think it's possible.

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Rob Henderson (21:28):
It is possible. It's hard work,
Angelina Brathwaite (21:30):
It's harder, but it is possible.
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Rob Henderson (21:31):

...in the sense, What about the sense of company culture? Because when you're talking about inclusion, <affirmative>, some of these things take, especially when we're talking about the eureka moments that happen in bioscience, they take collaboration. Sometimes it's not scheduled, sometimes it's a water cooler conversation, sometimes it's just a meeting that goes long. But often it's when you're in people's faces, <affirmative>, when you're in front of each other and you get all of the spectrum of communication running. Do you find that, so going from, you're just saying, you're saying that the remote work is promoting diversity even more so than it was before when it was strictly everybody in the office or in the lab together at the same time?

Angelina Brathwaite (22:15):

I wouldn't say it's more, well, I'm what I'm saying from my personal experience, I've had more engagement with my colleagues internationally.

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Rob Henderson (22:23):
I see,

Angelina Brathwaite (22:23):
I mean, we still meet once or twice a year, but we're building on a foundation, if that makes sense.

Rob Henderson (22:32):
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Yeah, that does make sense. So we talked about remote working, we're talking about recruitment, and you were saying a lot of what Brunel does is bring that whole idea of outreach to some of those underrepresented groups into your services for the team. Is there something else? What do you think is the other largely big challenge beyond the fact that small biotech companies don't necessarily have a compensation benchmark to get, if they, and they're constantly feeling like they're under the gun on the total compensation piece, but is that the piece that you think that they either have to fight the battle on, or do you think that there's other battles that they can win? Are there challenges that they should be able to face a little bit more? Are they be a little bit more able to face being nimble as largely small companies?

Angelina Brathwaite (23:20):

The growth, the career aspect. The career development is really critical if you're able to create a pathway.

Rob Henderson (23:27):

So the career pathway is key. How does a company though mean if you've got a small company of 12 or 15 people, <affirmative> and I don't have a dedicated, suppose I'm the CEO of a small company like that and I don't have a dedicated HR professional and I don't have those, that kind of experience. How do I get it? What do I need to do to be able to create that sense of belonging, that career pathway you're talking about and that sort of atmosphere of learning that a lot of these new employees crave so much.

Angelina Brathwaite (23:58):

In terms of education, you also have to educate your staff members. That progression doesn't always happen vertically. It also happens horizon horizontally, right? So in the event you don't have an HR, maybe somebody's interested in assuming that role. So there's things that they can do. So just providing that variety and that ability to learn, I think it's is a great pathway as well.

Rob Henderson (24:25):

And that's a great advantage to a small company, right? Because the last thing that describes you is your job title. If the door knocks, guess you're the reception person. If the phone rings, guess what? You're in sales suddenly. And a lot of companies I know that have said that, that's a great advantage for a small and medium size enterprise, but I guess sometimes it's difficult for them to relate that to candidates. That whole notion of smallness means you're going to learn a lot more than if you are sometimes in a big multinational company where you're seconded in building B in corner office D where your job description, in your job title and your job functions are very defined <a friendly stream of the young people to let them know, no start, don't look just for the big companies, look for the small companies. That's where the gold nuggets are for your learning and for your career path. Is that part of what the marketing we have to do?

Angelina Brathwaite (25:23): I agree with that, absolutely.

Rob Henderson (25:26):

Are we doing it adequately? Are you doing it adequately? I mean from Brunel, you're, you're working both sides of the street, right? <affirmative> Not only do you have to do, you have to recruit the companies and work, do your work for them, but you have to groom the workforce of tomorrow to be ready for them. Right? What is it you're doing there? What is it you're doing with the young people in the job seekers of today?

## Angelina Brathwaite (25:45):

We typically ask individuals, what is their motivation? Why do they want to work for this organization? Really understanding their purpose to make sure that it aligns with the organization's mission and vision.

## Rob Henderson (26:00):

And are the young people, especially in their twenties or just coming out of school, are they cognizant of what they should be looking for? I don't know too many, 24, 25 year olds that are going to go into the mission, vision, and values of a company. They're looking for that all powerful first job, that foot in the door to try to start their career. Is there something that we need to be doing to impart to them that there's more to it than just that we're you shouldn't be just looking for a paycheck in today's job market?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (26:34):

Yes, because this opportunity that you're providing them is going to propel them to the next level. So if you're able to articulate the value of joining your organization, the why and demonstrating the how you're going to obtain the buy-in from the younger person, from the students.

## Rob Henderson (26:51):

And what do you think about with your clients, Angelina? What's the biggest piece, piece of advice you tell them to if they're not finding the kind of candidates they want and they bring you in and they say, okay, great <affirmative>, but they have a sort of rudimentary platform as we described, small company, nobody doing HR. What is either the most common piece of advice or the most common thing that they could do really quickly to make themselves more competitive in today's industry?

## Angelina Brathwaite (27:16):

They could consider other industries. We've seen some skill sets that are transferable <affirmative>. If it's not ideal if they cannot find the candidate that has 1 to 10, but they have 8 and that person has a strong learning agility that's what we encourage the client to do, is to consider somebody who has a strong learning agility.

#### Rob Henderson (27:42):

And what do you think the most important thing that Brunel has done to make itself more competitive, attracting top candidates like you to it? To its companies?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (27:51):

Yeah. I'd say we're aligned with a lot of organizations in our industry. It's having a seat at the table with the decision makers. It is...

## Rob Henderson (28:06):

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That's pretty key, isn't it?

Angelina Brathwaite (28:07):

Yeah.

Rob Henderson (28:08):

I mean you've got to have, it's so much nice to have some of the bottom levels aligned, but if you don't have the C-suite executives, <affirmative> or the CEO aligned in that this is really pushing a boulder uphill, isn't it?

Angelina Brathwaite (28:20):

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Rob Henderson (29:02):

Are you finding there's good interest in that? Are you finding, is this a yes? You mentioned at the beginning that some of these efforts that you started, started with the George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement and some of those discussions are difficult.

Angelina Brathwaite (29:17):

They're very difficult. I mean, we're looking at mental health issues, we're looking at women equity, different things. But I think what's attractive about Brunel is that people are open to having the conversation and people are going to say things that might not, there is that unconscious bias. A lot of that happens and people aren't intentionally saying things or doing things, they're just not always aware. So just trying to increase that level of awareness and not reprimanding somebody if they, they're asking a question to keep the dialogue open.

Rob Henderson (30:02):

And do you think that Brunel's openness through the diversity and inclusion, the DIB committee that you're on, do you find that their progress in this area is osmotically changing your clients? Are the clients looking at brunette's example and saying, okay, these are the experts, their recruiters, I mean that they're doing it, we need to pay attention to this.

Angelina Brathwaite (30:22):

Absolutely. There's a lot of collaboration that takes place between ourselves and our clients. And those conversations take place all the time. In fact.

Angelina Brathwaite (30:34):

Especially in the last year and a half.

Rob Henderson (30:37):

So I'm conscious that our time is coming to the close, but I do want to ask for the DIB committee and for you personally, Angelina, what do you think is going to be the next challenge that on the horizon for diversity and inclusion? Is it going to be the whole idea of something we just talked about is changing the mindset of the C-Suite to come on board? Or do you think that's already progressed to a bit of a critical path at this point? Or is there something else that you see on the horizon that is going to be, mark, a big challenge for Canada's bio economy?

#### Angelina Brathwaite (31:13):

Well, in order for strategy like that to work, the senior leadership must increase its understanding around accountability for diversity and inclusion. So you have to get your leadership team prepared by undertaking knowledge and skill-based training seminars, the money they have to put the money where their mouth is. So you have to invest in company-wide training. And I think what's important is tying it to performance indicators.

#### Rob Henderson (31:44):

Right. So you're really walking the talk here. It's not just a nice to have, it's that you're actually evaluating executive and company performance along those quantitative statistics. Right, those analyses.

Angelina Brathwaite (31:57):

Absolutely.

# Rob Henderson (31:58):

I agree. That's going to be where the rubber hits the road. <affirmative> Angelina, thank you so much for joining me today. I was joined today by Angelina Brathwaite, who's a senior client partner for Brunel's Life Sciences team here in Canada. The work that you're doing is so important, not only because you're equipping companies with the talent that they need, but I think with the DIB committee and the diversity and inclusion and belonging work that you're doing as well is a great example of what I think small, medium size enterprises can aspire to. So thanks very much for joining me today.

Angelina Brathwaite (32:31):

It was really my pleasure. Thank you for your time, Rob.

Rob Henderson (32:35):

This is Rob Henderson. I'm president and CEO of BioTalent Canada and you are listening to the Science of Talent, the Bio Talent Canada's podcast on all things talents and skills related within Canada's bio economy. Thanks for joining me today. We'll see you next time.