



Professional Biography

April Simpkins, SHRM-CP, PHR, is an internationally recognized keynote speaker, leadership strategist, and mental health advocate with more than three decades of executive-level human resources experience. She is the Founder and CEO of **Paragon Strategy Partners**. This leadership development consultancy equips new and emerging leaders with practical, people-centered strategies to lead effectively in today's evolving workplace.

April spent 18 years building and leading a highly successful HR consulting firm serving small- to mid-sized businesses across more than 15 industries. Her work supported more than 1,000 organizations through critical people challenges, including leadership development, culture, engagement, and organizational growth. After successfully selling her firm, April shifted her focus to speaking, advisory work, and leadership education—bringing real-world insight, credibility, and candor to every stage she steps on.

A sought-after keynote speaker, April has delivered impactful talks for Fortune 500 companies, national conferences, and academic institutions, including Ivy League universities. Her speaking style blends strategic insight, lived experience, and relatable humor—challenging leaders to rethink people, culture, and mental health at work.

Beyond consulting and speaking, April is a passionate mental health advocate. Following the loss of her daughter, Cheslie Kryst, in 2022, she deepened her commitment to eliminating stigma and advancing mental wellness. April serves as an Ambassador and local board member for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and is the Founder of the Cheslie C. Kryst Foundation, which supports mental wellness through creative expression. She is also the co-author of the New York Times bestselling book *By the Time You Read This* and the host of the podcast *As I Was Saying*, where she explores the intersection of work, leadership, and mental health with honesty and heart.