



Transcript for S15 , E5 - From crisis communication to resilience communication; the reality of geopolitical conflict with Ada Borucka

Intro: Welcome to the future of internal communication podcast. I'm Jen Sproul, CEO of the Institute of Internal Communication.

Since we launched this series in 2021, the world of work has been disrupted by event after event. A pandemic, geopolitics, AI, extreme weather events, remote and hybrid working, generational shifts, inclusion, diversity - the entire nature of how we work needs transformation.

This podcast explores opportunities for internal communication in the future of work. Internal comms is a critical function that helps organisations achieve lasting change, building trust and relationship between people, in pursuit of shared goals.

Please, join me, Dominic Walters and Cat Barnard as we dissect what this means for internal communication.

With relentless change the new norm, it's time to reimagine our profession.

Dominic Walters (0:59)

Hello and welcome to another edition of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I'm Dominic Walters and joined by my colleagues, Jen Sproul and Cat Barnard. And today we're going to be talking about the vast subject, but very important topic of geopolitical conflict and the impact that may have on internal communication. And we have with us Ada Boruszka, leading internal communication expert and strategist working based in Poland and the founder of Poland's first agency dedicated to internal communication called Pinpoint. As part of that role, has worked with leaders, teams in developing strategies, processes, and helping to adapt to an evolving market. Particularly though, in the last decade, Ada has been building a national community of communication practitioners through an annual industry conference, through podcasts and regular conversations

In particular though, also, co-authors Poland's annual internal communication market report and has recently published a study on workplace communication during election periods, which we'll be coming on to. Working with international companies, also obviously understanding the different internal communication landscape in Poland. But Ada believes that communication creates real value where it connects people, builds understanding and helps organisations evolve responsibly in a changing world. Ada, welcome. Thank you for joining us on the podcast.



Ada (02:21)

Hi, it's great to be here and thank you for this wonderful introduction.

Dominic Walters (02:27)

Ada look, it's pretty bleak at the moment. I mean, we're talking in January in 2026 and, looking at the news, certainly there are issues for us in the UK, but more broadly, geopolitically and in terms of the world economy, there was lots of stuff going on. But for many of us, I guess, it's all in the head. It's a theory. We read about stuff. We don't really see what the reality of it is. But I guess for you, you're having to deal with that reality geographically of course where Poland is very close to Russia and very close to the scene of much of the activity that's going on around there at the moment and I imagine that for what for many of us particularly those of us in the UK must be metaphor is often reality for you we use lots of metaphor about working in crises etc which are actual practical reality for you so I think it'd be great to kick off by painting a picture for us and for people listening as to some of the day-to-day challenges, situational challenges that you face that influence you as a communicator and I guess as a member of society.

Ada (03:26)

Let me share with you my perspective for what's going on here on our market. But again, I would like to tell you that this is, let's remember this is my perspective. And I think that all around Poland, people have different perspectives based on the, where we are based, where we work and where we live. But let's start with the whole picture. Because I think what's going on here is from our, you know, professional point of view, very interesting, although those times are really difficult. I think we are all overwhelmed here by negativity. I would say we have a lot of negative things going on around and we are constantly bombarded with negative news, which means that we are scared all the time, in fact. So this is something that is going on around everyone and it doesn't matter where you work, in fact. It doesn't matter so much how much you earn because you always take care either about your economical situation or for your family. So this negativity leads to disengagement. We all know that employees all around the world are disengaged. And I think that in Poland we are also very disengaged because we simply less care about our work now and our duties. We care much more about ourselves, our families, our situation. So I would say the first thing is that we Poles are quite positive people, but the situation makes us feel negative, especially towards the company and the ends of the company. To be honest, we don't care about companies anymore. That's the way it is. So this is the first thing. The other thing would be a big, big topic of the work contract in Poland. We all have to remember that the work has evolved rapidly because we squeezed everything a little bit. going from the basic, I would say, survival, where people earn the lowest wage and they had to go to work. It was just a commitment to get money and things like that. Then we evolved



to the times when work was the symbol of the status. We wanted to belong to the companies and we were much easier as employees, I would say, because we wanted to belong.

We are open to earn less money instead of, the status of things like that. So we, treated work as a status topic. And then we moved to this employer branding huge, you know, part when we started to say we love our job. We all learned how, to do the job. The peer to the work is something that's you should love, you should have passion for, even if you work as a bus driver or whoever, you have to have passion for your work. It's like this is what defines you. And then at this time when we had this, you know, and passion for work, we were said that work is our family. And some of us, some of people believed it. And now when we are in the different times, we expect, the outcome is that we expect our employer to be our family, to take care of us.

So when we listen that work is our family, then it means it's not about money. It's about love, passion, and taking care of each other. So this is where we are in the mindset. But at the same time, I must tell you everyone is in the different mindset. Some are that work is for, you know, just for money. Others are that this is the passion. Others is that this is like the status and things like that. So we are catching up. The third one is the one that I think we are here today to talk about the most. It's the reality of the conflicts, but also I must tell you of migration. Because we also have to face the topic of migration in Poland. And if we even compare the migration of Ukrainian people to Poland versus the post-migration to UK, which was the topic a few years ago. So we must remember that the influx of Ukrainians to Poland is very sudden. It was very sudden and driven by war.

And it also very much influences the way we work because I think there are a lot of things that happen. But one of them is that all migrants, and this was the same case in UK, the immigration raised efficiency thresholds. And this is difficult because on one hand, we know that Ukrainian people are in difficult situation and we want to help them.

On the other hand, there is this frustration because we can't keep up with motivated migrants. And it leads us to lower bonuses and financial strain and again frustration and negative emotions. At the same time, people have very mixed feelings because this is not something you can talk about at work because we all want to be inclusive, we want to be helpful. And this is another topic when we had this diversity and inclusion campaigns, especially in American corporations, they were widely communicated. But on the second hand, there is like my own situation where I am. And then we go to those threats we have. And we have here in Poland both, you have both physical and cyber threats.

And this one is important because it brings us back to the lowest point on the Maslow's pyramid, where it's about me and my security. And it's not abstract here, as you said, we face it. Russian attacks on our infrastructures are constant. We have, for example, 40 waterworks attacked 40 times a day.



We had energy grid attacks in the late December during the Christmas time and probably we have no idea how many other attacks there were. So this would be like, something that we can't see, but later on we have also some physical cyber cache like our songs, a lot of them here and tampering with rail tracks. So this is something that is like, no, I traveled, trains a lot and then it comes to it's me. It's like I'm threatened.

And so this, whole situation, and then again, we have everything that is around us, which is about, for example, disrupting the supply chain and every, you know, all those decisions that are made on the international field. So this is where we are. And I would say that it all leads us to the place where people are very much tired. And at the same time, we have to remember that our companies, they need to not only survive, they need to also learn new things and implement AI because the market is the market and we can't wait for people to feel better. So on one hand we have people who are very frightened and threatened. And in fact, which I think I will share with you the latest data because for me, it was interesting. People in Poland choose recently to detach. And we have some data on how we spent our time. And it looks like gambling became kind of an escape for Poles. In the last year, by 27, rose the money we spent on gambling in Poland. And also another data also for me that we have the lack of intimacy. And also we had this data then spending by polls on the only fast platform increased by 20 % year to year. So it looks like we are tired, which leads to being detached. And it links to be to choosing very simple, types of spending time. I mean, you know, it's like we are not we are not reading books. So our employees are not coming to work to to gain new competencies or to know something more or to train or whatever. They just come to work to survive.

Dominic Walters (10:40)

You paint a fascinating picture there because it's interesting that the analysis we often get in the UK about the Polish economy is very strong. And so one of the things obviously it's affecting the UK is saying within five years, the Polish economy, the GDP per capita, the gross domestic product is going to be higher than it is in the UK. So the picture we get is of a very strong economy. But you're saying there's another side to that. And it sounds like you're battling some great things, well, some huge things. So you've got the evolution of a market economy over 30 years and all the things that happened in other countries over decades and centuries has happened very quickly. And you very clearly laid out the evolution there. You've got this constant physical worry about what's going to happen, am I physically safe? You've got the constant battle against bad actors, if you like, who are trying to do things with the infrastructure. And then you've got this influx of people and people are conflicted because they're saying we want to be welcoming but actually that's having an effect on my career progression or how good I feel about myself and so on. So there's a huge amount of things there which you're having to cope with. It'd be good just to get your take on what are some of the key things that you have to do as a communicator when you're communicating in such an environment.



Ada (11:48)

I think we all need to stop and take a look again at our people. We have to take a look at people, how they feel, because as you said, our economy is still growing. But let's imagine what would happen if our people came to work with another attitude. We would be thriving here. So I think as for internal communicators, it all goes back to the way that we have to start from the very beginning.

I would even say that this is the great moment just to stop and maybe stop doing whatever we were doing and start. I would go back to personas to just check again what's going on with other people who is on board, what languages you have on board because even this is, has changed. And I think that we should just stop because now we focus on delivering communication, but we need to take a few steps back and take a look at our people because they are still, as you said, we do deliver. We do our job, but maybe we could make it do it better. Maybe we could like, you know, we have a lot of people with some problems because they need to go for the leave because they are too tired and everything like that. So I think for internal communication, this is a great moment. It's January. So especially good moment to just stop doing what they are doing, what they are used to do, what even they think works and go back and take a look at the people they have.

Cat Barnard (13:05)

My head is blown, actually. My head is absolutely blown. I know that you and I spent some time on a briefing call at the end of last year and we planned out loosely the kind of theme that we wanted this conversation to cover. But when you just outlined the things, because I'm sure that's not everything that is going on, but some of the things that are going on for you in your work, and the kind of issues that organisations are facing. What really struck me as I was listening to you was the difference between acute and chronic illness. And I actually just looked up again because what you were describing is chronic because it is day in, day out. It's relentless. It is just one thing on top of the next thing, on top of the next thing. I had no idea as one tiny example just how impacted citizens are by consistent cyber attacks and malevolent intent to disrupt critical national infrastructure and the impact that that will have on your ability to function within your family, within your local community and what have you. And I think what I'm really reflecting on now, Ada, is for some time as we have produced this podcast, we have talked off camera off mic about the need to bring more conversation to the fore about **crisis communication** and how organisations prepare themselves and their people for crisis and the narratives that might appear around crisis comms or the tactics that are in place to make sure that if a crisis hits, the people that belong to an organisation can communicate with one another, even if it's little to say, I'm safe, I'm safe, right? We've talked about that, but what you're talking about is prolonged acute stress. And you hit the nail on the head at the beginning when you said how fearful



people are. And I think, my reading of the psychology books is that people can't operate beyond the bare minimum when they are perpetually in a state of fear. They can't think holistically. They can't give their best, like you said, about the disengagement numbers. so you paint a picture, you tell a story that is very, different to the one that we might pick up in the UK about the reality of living in such close proximity to very, very testing circumstances.

And yet you have to keep going as if nothing was going on, right? So there is this big switch. I was thinking about acute versus chronic, acute being a disease that hits suddenly and sharply and chronic being something that just plays out persistently over time. It's made me think about crisis communication versus, I think you called it this in our call our briefing call **resilience communication**. What would you say the key differences are in those two types of communication crisis versus resilience?

Ada (17:05)

You're perfectly right. We are now in the, I would say, resilient communication times here because the crisis would be something that would end one day. And what I would define as a crisis is when you have a problem, you focus on it, you drop everything else because you have to handle the crisis. And then for me, the most important part is that you usually return to the old ways. And here we can almost never return to the old ways because they are not there anymore. We have to create new ways, which means that now what our communication is to do, we need to build this resilience because we need to handle the challenges all the time, as you mentioned. And that's why I think that the crisis was the last crisis I would say was the COVID here. And then we have we call it, there's the girl who says about the Poli-crisis here in Poland that we have. But in fact, the Poli-crisis is our daily routine now. So I would say we can no longer like leave everything else because something has happened because we don't know what else is going to happen tomorrow, what has already happened and we haven't heard of it yet. Because we also have to remember that **we first face a great disinformation and misinformation. And in fact, we never know for the first 24 hours if something really happened or it is not true.** So you also have to handle the news and the information you gather. That's why we can't say that this is the crisis because the crisis you know that something happened and we first have to check what happened and what else happened and things like that.

When I talk to my clients, we talk about resilient communication and what's interesting and I think it's a great information for us. This year I have had three communication teams that came to me and they said, Ada, could you please, can we have a workshop on resilient communication because our CEO is talking about it, which means that we have this topic already in the management board, which is great because we needed to be right there. And we need to prepare our processes. We have to prepare our people. And unfortunately, and I will explain why our leaders, because they are everywhere. Whenever we talk about internal communications, we talk about our leaders. But we need to prepare everyone to be



able to respond to everything. And the challenge, I would say, is not only that they are parallel.

But it's also the topic is that the leaders are the most important here. And our leaders also don't know everything because now we want them to respond not only to the company topics, not only to the business topic, not only to the macroeconomical topics, but we also want them to talk about, for example, the drones flying from Russia. We want them to talk to people about things like cyber security, they are not experts on cyber security, but they have to handle. So I would say that we maybe we can't afford to focus on crisis communication and the world, I would say we have to focus on everything and at the time you're doing some communication, you have to be open for another things coming here.

But it's also the outcome is that we have to build the immune to change. So, and I think we as a society, because we are clever, people are clever and we can adjust to the situation. And we already know that you are not so much excited about things that happened. Now the first drones attack was like some everyone was talking about it. Now we kind of get used to it.

I live in Poznań, so I'm not that close to the border. So whenever I hear about the drone attack, it's like, OK, it's kind of not my problem. Although it's 300 kilometers from me here, because I had to prepare. I had to manage somehow, because I have kids, have work, have parents, I have everything. And I can't be worried, because my mom is going to the doctor, and then I'm worried, my daughter is sick, so I'm worried and then the drones coming, so I'm worried. you know, it's like you have to handle it. And this is what we also have to do with our people. And here comes the topic of narration. We have to choose the words very carefully and we have to choose which information is really important and we should bother people and which one is not. And we don't have to, you know, pay attention to everyone. So this is the moment. And for me **resilience communication is about being very responsible for what we say and how we say it.**

Cat Barnard (21:23)

Wow. I mean, just listening to you speak, it kind of makes me feel like I don't know what we're complaining about in the UK, right? And actually, I'm so glad that we've invited you on because I think we do need to be awake and aware of how things could change for all of us. You know, I like to think of myself as a an optimist and a realist. I think we every country now faces some degree of challenge because of the reshuffling of the world order and that's clearly playing out but the way that you describe it is mind-blowing and yet food for thought for all of us. What I will say before I pass over to Jen because this is something that I was toying with and thinking about last year. Last year we at Work in the Future published a white paper on the topic of vital skills, the human skills that we're all going to need for constant evolution and adaptation in the future of work. And one of the skills that we had listed was resilience. And resilience got quite a bit of pushback. And one of the reasons why



it got pushback was because certain people are of the view that in certain corners of the US economy, resilience has become misused and there is this idea that that it's on us at an individual level. We have to be resilient, we have to push through and if we aren't able to be resilient, that is a personal failing and in those conversations that I've had about the the labeling of resilience, I quoted from a book that was published in the last couple of years in the US by an amazing woman called Soraya Kamali, and it's called The Resilience Myth and she argues against resilience being something that we all have to become at a personal level. She draws on all of this socio-cultural record to say resilience is a community endeavour.

It should never be about my ability to get through independently of anybody else. It's how we hold space for one another when times get really challenging. And so your choice of resilience communication, I just want to echo, I think it's a superb label because for me and I think the sooner we can all think about resilience as a group endeavour but for me I think it does encompass the collective and the whole and how we hold space for one another as we face into as you said polycrisis.

Ada (24:31)

I totally agree with you. And let me just add one thing, maybe a personal one, if I may. When I talked to my granddad, he is not with us any longer. And I have this huge conversation with him, which I video recorded, and he was talking to me about the Second World War. I admired his resilience to what happened and I said, how did you manage? he said, as it was and I had to handle because we wanted to live. And I think that times have changed, but we all want to live. And we have to remember that everything we do as employers and as our colleagues, as leaders, we need to make a space for people to live whatever it means to them.

Jennifer Sproul (25:10)

Thank you. I've just been sitting here listening and I'll probably reflect the same comments that both Dom and Cat have made so far as well as to paint such a picture to us to build our understanding of actually the realities and the things and how it actually works because we're not in it and it is a lot for our brains I think to process and how that works and I want to pick up on what you've been talking about with this resilient communication and how we pick up on our internal communicators because fundamentally when we talk about the picture that you've painted and we look at the role of communication, what communication is there to do, it's all about how communication makes us feel. But then the situational challenges we have is that we all feel differently. We all feel something. And as you said in your descriptor, it's a very, we're in a very personal conflicting space and an employer conflicting space. And we all have different personal and collective thresholds of resilience. We're not all the same. We're not in that way. And it is a, and our job as internal



communicators is to think about, as you said at the very beginning of this podcast, stop and think about our audience and think about what are we doing for our audience? How are they actually feeling? And how can I pull that through and think about that sense of resilience communication? As you said, that responsibility that we have of the what and the how and you also paint the picture for internal communicators and businesses as well as where leaders are highly exposed. They are highly exposed in that what and that how and that relevance. We feel highly exposed as communicators when we are feeling differently from colleagues or whatever to paint a picture or come up with a strategy or an activity or something that bonds and brings that collective community back when you all feel so differently.

Judging what to say and when to say it. What's the right thing to talk about? What's the wrong thing to talk about? If I think about it as I paint it back to the UK, was a conversation that I've heard a lot in internal communication is, is that something we should comment on? Or is that not something we should comment on? How do I make that discerning judgment? And if we are going to comment, how do I do it in a way that feels empathetic to everyone that feels differently, that gets interpreted in the right way, gets understood in right way but still also benefits the business in a direction that it wants to go. That's an awful lot for us also when we're feeling that conflicted to manage and so I guess with your sort of resilience communication hat on and that thing that you've talked about what can we do in these sort of turbulent uncertain times? We're making these judgments all the time so quickly. Or as you say now, like mundanely because it's just the world we live in. What can we get from the internal communication function and what is it that colleagues and leaders need from us to help bridge that gap perhaps?

Ada (28:21)

So let me start with saying, I will tell you how I feel, but nothing that you are implementing now to companies has been checked because it has never happened before. So I think the first thing is that you have to be open for trying. It's the first and the basic because we don't have any good examples. So **we have to have courage for changing things**. And I always say that I was always keen, you know, a fan of evolution in communication I said that revolution is not necessary, but maybe it's time for revolution. And I think it's time to think maybe it's maybe we should start and stop doing everything and just do the revolution and do it from the very beginning. And now, as you mentioned, that people react differently to different things, which I totally agree with. But I think that here we have to also go back to the company culture. This is the topic that has been forgotten for a while, I would say. Because we had the COVID, we changed the culture, everything changed. At least here, when I look at my clients, the culture has become something that nobody understands. It's like, you know, maybe you have this culture, but you don't have this culture and nobody knows. And I think it's a great time to go back because the culture will give us some directions and, you know, will show us the path, how we communicate it and why. You can tell the people that



you are very direct in communication and then they will understand why our communication is direct. So I believe that going back to the company culture will be very helpful to decide on this one, at the very beginning. And then we go to this resilient communication. And I think in fact, when I said about revolution, think this is exactly how I plan to do it with my clients. So I plan just to stop and analyse and ask our CEOs, ask our people to check exactly how we said what people feel because we communicators and leaders are usually more resilient because we are used to change. We work in the field that somehow is about change very often. So I would say that we are not the average employee in the company. So I think we have to check what people expect and where they are. But it doesn't mean that we have to do everything that they want us to do because, you know, people have various situations, various expectations, but we have to know it to understand. The second thing I said would be whether people are exalted or not.

Are they tired or not? Maybe they are not. Maybe this is my point of view, but maybe they are okay. Maybe they are looking to new projects and things like that because this is good for them. So we have to check how it is. I recently had a talk with some people from my clients and they are blue collars. And I know that they have to implement some new technologies because there are some new, know, that the other markets are evolving.

And they asked them and the CEO said that they have to learn new things, that they have to learn AI, they have to check the processes. So they will expect those people in this year to become more engaged. And they talked to them and I asked them what would have to happen for them to be able to learn. And they laughed at me and they said, you know, we are even too tired to watch Netflix in the evening because most of them, because efficiency cos lowered their bonuses, they have two jobs. And they said, we are tired, we are not going to learn anything, we come here and then we'll go to another job. And it's like, we have to know it because, it doesn't mean that the company will not develop, but we have to explain to people and maybe think of the wages and we have to decide here. So the listening, I would say would be again, the basics for our world, but we also have to have courage to give the feedback to our management board, because I think the courage here is the good word. And also we have to use the moment, the momentum, because, it's difficult to go to the management board and say, Hey, people are disengaged. And then they say, Hey, what have you been doing for the last two years? If they are disengaged, we had those budget and they are disengaged, but you can say, let's not, analyze what was happening before, because we have a totally different moment. So that's the first thing. And then I would say that we as communicators also should stop polluting. Communication pollution is a topic, I think, because we also have this huge tech stress right now. And the more we send, more pollution we do, in fact.

So we also have to have the courage to say, no, we are not going to send it because this is, it's like it's about people's time and energy and emotions. And we have to also first do it here. But it's something that we have to also be very, open to saying no. And then we have this simplicity, would say. When I was thinking about our podcast this morning, I was thinking about the metaphor of the water pipe system in the city. I think that now it looks



like we took it all like for people to see this is our water pipe system and you have to do only five steps to get your water in the tank. Right? This is the same we're doing the communication. If you want to know about the strategy, could go to the town hall or maybe you can find it in the email or maybe you could find it in a group on the teams. It might be that your leader will tell you this, but nobody knows. So you have to play with the whole system and then maybe the water will be there. And this is something we have to hide. We have to give those people like three places where they can find information about strategy of the company, then about things I need for my work.

And then everything else that is now very important, even if it's not the business. So I said to we have to simplify because otherwise we know we had this moment in Poland. don't know how it was in UK when we talked a lot about wellbeing and you know, psychological safety. And for example, one of my clients, they sent six emails about the wellbeing webinar and 3 % of people came. And then the question is what was the outcome of the whole communication? Was it only pollution? Because 97 % had to delete these emails, six emails, right? And was it about wellness? I don't think so. So this is the case where we have to be very careful whether we as communicators do not do the same thing. Like, no, we don't overwhelm people. But this would be about also our attitude. And then we have those leaders.

We talk about Poland and our leadership style is changing all the time. They are all trying so hard and they attend all those trainings and things like that, but they are so tired, I would say. So I would say that before we go to our leaders, we have to take care about our resilience as communicators, because now I would say we have a huge responsibility about the narration and the emotions we are going to get by communication. Because our leaders, they are going to people. And for example, if we have these drones flying over our border, they can say, guys, there were some drones flying, but you shouldn't talk about it at work, just do your work, that's why you're here. They could say that, but they can also go and say hi.

We know there were drones coming over our border. We are safe here. But if there's somebody from our family that you want to call or take care of, take your time. You can go. And this is simple things. Maybe one person will leave the meeting. **But this is about leaders who can respond to the situation, even though maybe they don't have such a need for themselves.**

Some of them might say, oh, I don't care. It's not a problem. What's the problem? It's like 300 kilometers from here. It shouldn't bother people, but it's not there. It's not them to say what bothers people or not. And here I like very much the recent report that I found about, it's history report about from SAID business school, Oxford side business school, it's about how leaders should react to cyber attacks. But I think it's very relevant also to other attacks because it's the story model is talking about four communication roles of leaders as being either the transmitter, the absorber, the filter or the amplifier. And I think this is something very, very important for us as communicators now. **What is the role of the leader? What is**



the narrative for the communication because, you as a transmitter, you simply say what happened and it's straightforward you don't do anything with it. As an absorber, you don't say everything because it doesn't help people to, know, to work or to survive, to do anything. As a filter, you carefully like choose what to say because some other things are not needed for now. As an amplifier, you sometimes have to tell people guys this one is really important. mean, there are a lot of things going on, but this one is really important. Let's focus on it. And I think that, when we also analyse the studies, we talk about how the channels that leaders, you know, go to people and the channels for the communication.

And I would say we have already those channels, just accept them. They are better or worse, but we have them. But **let's focus on the quality of the information and on the emotions that we give in our communication.** So I would say this is one important. And the next one, which is connected to this one, is about transparency. **I think we need to talk at transparency versus responsibility** because it's Sometimes I can hear people saying, no, we want to be transparent, so let's say everything to people. And it's not the transparent, you have to be responsible in what we say, how we say, and what will be the outcome. But to be responsible in your communication, have to be prepared, you have to be resilient as a communicator or a leader, and you have to understand the different and various emotions that it might have on your audience.

I'm not saying that, you know, content creation and things like that are not important, but I think we had fun with channels so far and what you've done must be good enough for now. We have to switch to another topic right now.

Jennifer Sproul (38:02)

I love that. I'm going to pass over to Dom in a second but and I agree totally anyway channel this is not the let's go there's so much big important work that you have outlined and with that so much opportunity for internal communicators to think about how they can step into those spaces. I love the phrase let's stop polluting, let's think about those things, get back to understanding what the culture is now, stop and analyse, but also as well how we can with our leaders as well help them switch on the empathy tone where needed, but also think about responsible models of communication and helping them move from that to understand that situation analysis into the thing that we're doing. I just want to ask one really, really last quick question before I pass to Dom is when you're talking, because I think tuning into that. where we are at, know how to then move the right communication and that responsible part of it. When you're thinking about stop and analysing, how often do you think we should be tuning in to those sense of that emotional, that sentiment in the workplace when we're thinking about our communication? Often we do things like an annual survey or we do this. in your view, when you're thinking about that resilience, how do we keep that frequency of listening and stopping and tuning in.



Ada (39:22)

I'm not sure whether we should do it with the service anymore because I think it's again something that if you build this connection between the leader and the team, because each team is different and sometimes the picture of the whole company gives you no information in fact. So I think we need to focus what I am suggesting and what we are introducing right now are, for example, some updates, like situational updates to tell leaders what's going on around them and for them to go to the employees and tell them what's going on, what are the challenges and they can get, you know, those feelings and attitudes and the questions right away. And I think we also, are not able to control it anymore on the company level. We have to keep it, we have to give it to leaders because they will handle, they were our leaders and they have, I would say it has to be like a service model.

When a leader can handle, he or she can handle. If can't, then he or she can come to us and then we can have this update how to talk to people about this topic, but only for those who need it. Because I don't think we need, one narrate for the whole company. I think we need to give some space to leaders here because they know their people.

Dominic Walters (40:29)

Ada, thank you. I mean, just a couple of things actually, in listening to what you've said and listen to your context, you've shed some light on two, I think, perennial issues for communicators. One is, you're right about if we go to people who are leading organisations, where there are lots of people who are too tired to watch Netflix when they get home, to use your phrase, and or concerned about their actual survival because of what's going on around them, if you start talking to those leaders about channels and contents, you're dead.

So you've just emphasised the importance of relationships, connections, giving people chances to talk. So that's one thing. Secondly, your point is a really good one. We have this debate a while about to what extent should internal communicators be responsible for engagement? And I think you've highlighted that we can obviously influence engagement, but we shouldn't be held responsible for it because you could be doing all the right things. But if someone looks out the window and sees a load of drones buzzing around, they're going to be less engaged. And you can't do a huge amount about that other than to help them deal with it. I really good insight there. So to bring it to conclusion I suppose, I doubt if many people listening to this face the sort of challenges that you've described.

But we can learn a lot, I think, from how you and your fellow communicators have gone about dealing with them. And I've pulled out just a number of things I think are really fascinating. You talked about words. **Words are powerful**. And I think you said we have to be really careful about the words that we use so we don't inflame unnecessary concern, I think is one of the key things. You talked about **helping people make priorities**. We talk a about making sense. I think one of the roles of communicators is to help people make sense of what's going on. And that's particularly the case in the scenario you've painted, where



people have to say what should I be most concerned about, where should I put my attention. You've talked about, as we've just been picking up and Jen's been talking about, understanding where people are at really understanding what they're feeling. Not because we want to respond to everything, not because we want to be a democracy always, but because we want to understand where they're at so we can understand the context we're working in. And lastly, as Jen, for me anyway, as Jen also said, around this pollution thing. That's a really interesting point. We've talked before about managing brain space and people's capacity.

But it's interesting to see or to talk about some communication as pollution. there's lots of stuff that we've taken from that I think which we can apply even if we don't face the gravity of the situation you've described. But it'd be great to finish with your thoughts based on your experience. One key important thing that we as internal communicators should be trying to integrate into our work at now to help us face the next few years and beyond. A big question I know, but what would you say that one thing would be? Ada from your experience.

Ada (43:08)

I think we have to have the courage to start doing things the other way that nobody knows how. I mean, we have to use the feelings we have, you know, all the things we have learned so far, and we have to trust ourselves that we know what we are doing. Because, you know, even when you open the book, have no idea, there is no book that will tell you what to do. So I would say that if you are a communicator with I don't know, 10, 15 or even five years of experience, you have to believe that you are good enough and you have to open your head and start doing things the way you feel they should be done. So because nobody will help us, nobody will guide us here. And as you said, we in Poland, have the situation that is particular here for us. I think this was the report of World Economic Forum that this information is going to be the first risk for everyone around us. So I would say we have to trust ourselves. We have to finally believe that we are experts. We are. Nobody else is a better expert than we are where we are now. And we have to start doing things, in a new way that nobody knows. But we have to move the system. For me, this is the most important. We can't know if there is somebody who is in the moment that has no resilience, for example, because he's tired, has some personal problems and things like that. It's time maybe to find somebody to cooperate and to discuss the topics and to discuss with CEOs, to discuss with management boards because it's a time to open everything again. And I think we have this opportunity to build the system again from the very beginning. **So I would say that we have to trust ourselves and do things anyway.**



Dominic Walters (44:44)

Yeah, I think trusting ourselves, having confidence in our own ability, that's going to be crucially important. And I guess that's also a role for us as the IOIC, to help people have that confidence and build that and advocate for the profession and what we can do. A good place to finish an excellent conversation, Ada. Thank you very much for your insights and for helping us apply those to different situations. It's been good to talk. Thanks very much for joining us.

Ada (45:08)

Thank you. It was a great pleasure. Thank you.