



Transcript for Prioritising heart and soul in business with Shetal Joshi

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.

Jen Sproul (01.06)

Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I'm Jennifer Sproul and as always I am joined by my delightful co-host Cathryn Barnard and Dom Walters as we hope to guide you through what I think will be another fascinating conversation. Before I introduce our wonderful guest today I'm just going to sort of talk through how we've got to the conversation which is today which is going to be about how we prioritise heart and soul in business. It seems to me, looking in, there's been quite a few conversations in the internal communication community in the last few months, particularly after the launch of the latest Gallup Global Workplace Report, which talks about the fact that the UK is 33rd out of 38 in the European countries for engagement.

And this I think has led to a conversation about should internal communication be responsible or for engagement. And this conversation seems to be sort of going around and how we work with HR. I'm gonna introduce our wonderful guest today who's gonna help us chat through some of this, which comes back from an origin conversation that was had particularly between Shetal Joshi, who is joining us today, who is a seasoned internal communication and employee engagement expert. She's been doing this for over 20 years and has experience in shaping strategic communication frameworks across global organisations. Shetal is currently serving as the head of internal communication and employee engagement, hence the topic at Ørsted UK and has established internal communications as a strategic enabler, driving employee trust, culture and belonging. She partners closely with executive teams, leading global transformation and change projects, and has been instrumental in enhancing the visibility of senior leaders and the strengthening employee connections. Prior to her role at Ørsted, she's been leading internal



communication and external communication at RAPT Dev London where she developed communication initiatives to engage frontline employees, always a challenging audience and external stakeholders, and also spent over 18 years at BT Group, where she held senior roles in internal communication, change management, brand alignment, supporting major campaigns and diversity initiatives. So I think we can say, fully qualified to have a good old conversation about this topic, I think what we can say. And I think this topic began when there was a conversation a while ago about prioritising heart and soul into business purpose and how that led to the conversation of employee engagement. And I should also say that Shetal has been a major part of the IoIC AI ethics charter, because there's another string to that bow, and has also been a fellowship of the IoIC in recent months. So without further ado, that was a long intro, but I think we're going to have a good old conversation around how we prioritise that heart and soul within business. So Shetal, welcome.

Shetal Joshi (04:09)

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Jen Sproul (04:12)

Our pleasure. So I'm going to kick off, if you're right, the conversation with the question. So what in your view defines the heart and soul of business?

Shetal Joshi (04:21)

Thanks, Jen. In my opinion, it's around the positive difference that we as citizens of the world make, whether that's outside of work or when we're in the workplace. And it's about the connection that brings a community of co-workers together with a shared sort of purpose or a mission in the organisation that I currently work for, Ørsted, our vision there is to run a world that runs entirely on green energy. As a business, we develop, we construct and we operate offshore wind farms. And that's our core purpose. And there's something bigger than just coming to work to just, whilst it's important to sort of like enable the spreadsheets are all kind of going positively in terms of you know the numbers there's a bigger purpose there and a bigger reason for why everyone's here and I think that is what connects people together. It's that heart and soul of the business it's a greater good that connects people together around a mission that's good for society it's good for our souls as well as human beings and it's great to be able to do that with co-workers in driving that change forward for society.

The other point I wanted to just make on that was, as human beings, our core beliefs, they're shaped by how we treat one another, how we make decisions, how we operate outside of work. And I think there's an unsaid sort of moral compass that guides us in our



everyday lives. And I think as employees, we're looking for that much more from the companies that we work for, how they kind of show up in that area. And that kind of almost like builds the cultural kind of foundation for how we sort of conduct ourselves at work and how a business conducts itself at work and how it shows heart and how it shows its soul and how it shows its purpose and therefore every single decision or every decision that they make is based and framed from that kind of area but also from a commerciality point of view. I think that's how I would kind of view it and define it.

Jen Sproul (06:43)

Absolutely, and I think that things that things you've just said really marry as well with some of the things that we're seeing, for example, in this year's IC index. And I want to point to the point around thing that we found this year is that quite, I think it was over 61 % of employees take their work is important to their personal identity. And therefore then how that makes them feel. And myself and Cat were also at Henley Business School last week, and we had this really interesting conversation with a Professor of Ethics and Leadership at the institution when we were talking about values and purpose and why we need to do good and why it's really important for society. And we asked the professor what, hopefully we'll get him on the podcast to talk more about it, but we asked him about what happens, when does doing good go bad? And doing good, we have to make profit, we're adults in that sense, but he said it's drift from not having a compass and how we come back to that morality of what we're doing.

And I feel that's more evident in the workforce as well today. So I think it's really interesting that you think about it from that point of we do want to do good in the world, but do you think that we can do that now where the narrative seems to be we need to as a function focus in on what we do for business performance. From your world that drives business performance, right?

Shetal Joshi (08:04)

Yeah exactly and I think there's so much going on in the world outside of the workplace. People expect us to kind of have a voice and an opinion around what good looks like. And so when they come to work, they're coming away from all those possible troubles, and they expect companies to kind of have that sort of integrity and that feeling, that soul, that people have as well and they want a business to have that. And that's something that I think businesses have to be quite courageous about. It takes a lot of being brave to kind of be like that because a number of years ago, businesses weren't set up like that. Employees weren't demanding that kind of viewpoint or that kind of responsibility. And I think, that's where you start to sort of really engage employees, really start to build that trust. You start to build that kind of sense of they belong to something. They're a part of something that is being co-created together. And I think that's what makes the workplace joyful. And joy comes in such



different ways when you start to have that heart and that soul and that commerciality, joy comes through having meaning at work. That's what employees are looking for. They're looking at how are people contributing to that success, showcasing all of that through storytelling, giving people the space and the room to voice their opinions, in a constructive and empowered kind of way and allowing senior leaders to talk about that. Like conversation is so important in the workplace as much as it is outside. And I think, with that comes growth and with that comes curiosity as well. And then when you get all of those things and you start to talk about it and you start having those conversations, you start celebrating those successes and that recognition. It naturally brings that kind of sense of fostering inclusion and well-being and a genuine connection to a company and not just necessarily a leader or a senior leadership team. As part of that, you want to be in a place like that. You want that company to do well. You want to really engage and go the extra mile because you've now got a really engaged employee who absolutely believes in the mission, in the heart and the soul of a company and they want to go that extra mile, they want to sort of like bring that humanity into business. **So the word I'd use there actually is joy. I really like that word and I think it kind of encompasses heart, soul and purpose and everything that you want people to feel when they're in the workplace.**

Cathryn Barnard (11:00)

Can I just chip in, sorry, because what you said, when you said it Shetal, I was thinking, yes, Edelman Trust Barometer last year and this year, last year in particular, highlighted that people at work, literally, the employer, the organisation, the business is the last bastion of trust where people no longer trust governments or institutions. They look to their employers to stand up and act as a force for good in the world. So I think that's something just to reinforce. And the other thing that occurred to me, and I will hand over to Dom then, is I understand completely why people would feel anxious to be seen to be enhancing performance right now. I totally get that. Everybody at work will be anxious to the point of needing to show that what they contribute is valuable. But equally, if all we do is strip our work down to numbers on a spreadsheet, we are reinforcing the engagement problem. And I was really interested in a conversation that you and I had offline before we came on air about your time at BT because we bonded because we both worked in the telecommunication sector really. And that sector has had extreme highs and extreme lows just to explain to listeners. The 1990s was like a gold rush period for telecommunications and there was so much money pouring into that sector to build our infrastructure, mobile infrastructure, fixed line infrastructure, all IP, all of the things that we take totally for granted today when we get high speed broadband on our phones. So we went from this insane decade to a really cash strapped decade, which came about because the bubble burst, the dot-com crash happened in the United States and that coincided with European governments, recognising that there was money to be made out of 3G license or auctions and sucking the money out of the sector by basically just charging ridiculous amounts of money in auctions for 3G licenses. And I remember BT was really harshly impacted by that.



And so it's so interesting to me that BT as an entity has really faced the twists and the turns and it has endured and withstood all of those things reinvented itself. You said when we were off air that it had appointed a chief purpose, purposeful officer. Tell us more about that. Sorry, really quickly. Cause I think that is so interesting that 15 years ago it was doing these things.

Shetal Joshi (14:07)

Yeah. So, I think BT was right at the beginning of, being an innovative kind of player in all parts of the way that they did business. And, from hybrid working, they were doing that almost like 15, 20 years ago. And then, just over 10 years ago, we were talking about I remember sort of coming on board as a senior internal comms partner to the chief purposeful officer and everybody was wondering what was this role and what were they going to work on and it was all about doing what was good for society and how as a business you could make a real impact around that and there was a three strand strategy. So it was all about improving the lives of others through charity partnerships.

It was all about helping to reduce carbon emissions. And then the third area was around kind of digital inclusion for all. Whether you were a vulnerable individual or whether you were somebody who was tech savvy or not, it was all about teaching people how to use digital skills. And that was the role that BT played almost all those years ago and they have been doing so incredibly well in all of that. Really sort of engaging people within the company around each of those strands. So I remember on the charity partnerships, we used to have these massive charity events that would bring people together and engage them to come towards a common target of raising funds for, let's say sport relief or children in need or comic relief and they were doing that by really engaging people within the company and they were empowered to go off and do whatever they wanted whether that was at work or outside work to help raise and contribute towards that target but the point of this was yes there was something commercial about it but it was doing something for the greater good for people outside of the company and it helped people come together as a community and belong as part of something. And even like carbon emissions and reducing that, they looked across their entire supply chain to look at how can we reduce our carbon emissions to every part of our footprint of our business. But also, there was a real education piece on how employees could do that outside of work. So they were engaging the community in that as well as employees in creating advocates for them.

And then the last area, which was around digital inclusion was all around teach the teacher. I remember doing this and I remember an aunt of mine who was in her eighties, it was teaching her how to use a mobile phone. It was teaching me the technology skills for how I could teach somebody something like that. So she could feel included in society. **So it was all about how as a business, they had the means and the mechanisms to help deliver heart and soul to their employees but it was also about how employees could also be advocates and engage them in the strategy and in that process to then kind of kind of almost ripple**



effect and do that not within the workplace only and help to contribute towards business success but also how they could impact the community.

Dom (17:38)

Shetal, I love all the things you're talking about but perhaps I could pick your brains you could help me with something. Last week I think it was I was in the pub I was chatting with three of my friends locally. One's a plumber, one's an electrician, one's an accountant.

Profession is not necessarily that sympathetic to what we do in communication to be honest. Anyway, we had this big debate because they were saying they asked me basically what my job is about and they often asked me this and I was talking about encouraging conversation, getting people connected, helping people understand and sharing information. All the stuff that you've been talking about and I could tell from their facial expressions and to be honest their hand gestures they weren't entirely convinced at what I was saying when I was putting across and their argument was the world is changed now.

We're in difficult time. Everyone's fighting for work in virtually every sector. Broader, politically, we're going to the dogs. There's all the wars issues that going on, the climate, etc. Their view was that organisations should get into survival method. And that means focusing on the work. And their view was that the stuff that I was talking about, that we do as communicators, is a luxury and that organisations can no longer afford it. And it was a tough conversation.

So can you help me with this? Can we identify the key things as to why what you've been talking about, and there's some great things in here about **building joy, about connecting people, building purpose, establishing heart and soul, getting conversations going**. Why in particular is this so important now in the economic circumstances that we face?

Shetal Joshi (19:12)

You talk about so much uncertainty outside of the workplace, in the world at the moment, there's so much that's been going on over the last few years and even before that. Organisations need to do this because it helps to create that type of resilience within employees. And as you do that and you give people the space and the chance to talk about these things and help drive those conversations, you almost like create an environment where people are problem solving together. And because of that, it naturally kind of builds that resilience. As you work through those problems, you create solutions together, you start engaging people in that process and people start building out those plans together. The bounce back is also faster and quicker the next time something like that comes. You want teams to be really united together when you're going through a process like this.



When there's so much uncertainty people can become fragmented or teams can become fragmented. It's really important to not just do this when times are uncertain but to keep going when times are certain because when you go through because when you go through kind of doing that when good times are happening it just means you have prepared people for when the times are uncertain and you're constantly building that resilience and that engagement and that bounce back quicker. I think also, trust and morale are so important and leaders need to communicate with that kind of consistency and that integrity. And Cat and I were talking about something offline and it was around self-acceptance, which is all part of owning things and sharing your voice, as much as it might be difficult to kind of share what you're about to talk about or having it as a conversation. So I think those are really good. And ultimately that helps to drive that kind of long term sort of sustainability, which Jen, you and I have talked about quite a lot, right? Offline and at various different times. And, that sustainability is all about retaining talent, fostering a kind of culture that is adaptive and that can evolve and that is agile enough to take on these challenges because rather than resist them, in a rigid kind of way. And ultimately what that helps you to do is, co-create and make decisions that land better and that people take on board much more quickly and are able to kind of follow through and understand why they're happening. And when they don't know what's happening, it also, you've created that environment now where, people can align much more better. It fuels engagement, it fuels retention, it refuels the psychological safety and the belonging. So there's only positives that can come from it and it within that **your people are your greatest asset**. I don't know how many times I've said that but I constantly keep saying that to everybody I come into interaction with that our people are our greatest asset and they're the ones that help to build internal reputation and external reputation and trust because they go off and talk to their friends or their partners or their children or whoever it is and they can do that and I saw something recently I really wanted to talk about it **purpose plus values plus culture equals the immunity system of an organisation and that helps protect against disconnection, burnout, disengagement, misalignment and mistrust** and if you've got all of those it helps to if you kind of like do the purpose, the values, the culture and then build up the immunity, you're then able to avoid all of those. And what you get then get the opportunity to do is flip it on its head, which is all around kind of growing with integrity, with loyalty, with motivation, by aligning your talent, by creating meaningful impact. So I just wanted to quote that because I thought it's so beautiful, actually.

Dom (23:28)

It's a great equation. Thank you, Shetal. I think also what you've done there is you've given us the right vocabulary to have these conversations. I think sometimes, well, I'm guilty of this, we can be in an echo chamber. We know how powerful connection, conversation, purpose, focusing on values can be. And I think sometimes we forget why it's important, or at I do anyway. I think you've given us some words there to help us have those conversations. You mentioned resilience, bounce back. I think building this muscle memory



so that people have good connections so when things are tough they can deal with them better. I love the fact it makes people more adaptive, it helps things land better, helps people be aligned and the fact you talk about immunity. I think that is a really powerful lexicon with which we can have conversations about this with people who may not be so bought into as we are. So I appreciate that. I'm going to go back to the pub next week. I'm going to try those words and I'll report back.

Cathryn Barnard (24:21)

Yeah, do report back, that could be an entire new podcast episode. I think what you say though, Dom, is really interesting. We do need new language and we don't uncover new language until we are in conversation with one another. The very first time that we try and express ourselves on a topic, we struggle with our language, we struggle to find the words that best convey either our sense making or the emotion that we wish to express, right? But when we are in conversation with one another, immediately after that first time, you get a second crack of the whip because conversation is that dance, that reciprocal dance. And as you were speaking, Shetal, I was thinking, well, a couple of things. One was Myron Rogers is a very celebrated, renowned educator and thinker in the change space. And he has been quoted as saying, people own what they create. So when you include people in the creation process, there is immediately an emotional buy-in, a psychological contract.

Conversely and this has really hit me and I keep referring to it I must be like his biggest fangirl John Higgins who's been on the podcast twice now, on his home page of his website he has this quote and it just hit me like a train when I first read it and I can't stop thinking about it I'm just gonna read it now he has written on his website:

“To strip someone of their voice is to eviscerate their identity. To prescribe a way of knowing to speak on someone's behalf is to disappear them.”

And so tying all of these things together, you started talking about voice. I want to pick up on that. Voice, employee voice was identified as one of four enablers by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke when they were commissioned by UK government back in 2008 to establish whether there was a link between engagement and productivity. Remember this was in the face of the financial crash. So the economy, like most economies around the world, just completely tanked overnight. So they went out and they did a whole bunch of field work and identified these four enablers of which employee voice was a powerful one. So for me, this piece around engagement and inclusion and voice is really kind of self-evident, if you will. But what you and I had a conversation about offline, and I want to have that conversation now on air. Obviously, the reciprocal part of voice, when I am allowed to use my voice to convey to you how I feel about something.



My hope and expectation is that you will listen and that you will listen actively. And when we were talking off air, you had told me about one of the first projects that you asked for at Ørsted was this listening tour. And I was so enraptured to hear about that. I would love for you to share with our listeners what went on and why **active listening is so important**.

Shetal Joshi (29:08.605)

Active listening is urgently needed across across businesses today because our people bring our business to life. Their well-being, their growth, their human experiences are the soul of the workplace. That's what kind of creates that vibrancy and that energy within the work environment. And because of that, we really need to listen to them and empower them and take care of their lives in the workplace, not just their output that they bring.

One of the first projects I did when I joined Ørsted was to look at the employee survey. And it gave me some really good insight into areas that we could further enhance in terms of our employee experiences. And so one of the things I said to the leadership team was I'd like to do a listening tour and pull together a listening strategy and they asked me what that was all about because they hadn't really heard about anything other than employee surveys and a pulse survey and maybe a survey at the end of a town hall. And I said, so what we're going to do is if we want to further enhance engagement, trust and build our culture, what we need to do is we need to go out there and talk to our employees. We need to have conversations with our employees.

And the employee base that I work with is made up of our frontline technicians who are out on a vessel or they're servicing a turbine to help turbine keep spinning so that we can produce clean energy. We then have individuals that are based in the office. We have individuals that are traveling out there, meeting different stakeholders, and then we have our homeworkers as well. So we've got four different types of audience members. And I said, what I'd like to do is when our technicians are back on shore I'd like to put them in a room and just ask them some questions around how we can further improve engagement and I'm gonna keep it open with them.

What do you want to know and get out from that? Because what I can get out from it is all of the internal comms bits that I need to do the engagement part and help to build the internal comms strategies. But we'll probably get more than that. And the leadership team were really up for knowing what our employees were saying. So we got some really good insight into very different kind of areas around our culture and around leadership and how we can strengthen the connection between leadership. So we did a number of these sort of sessions. There were small kind of groups, groups of 10 people each. I think it was something like 42 groups we did at a time. We did almost 62 to 72 hours worth of note taking and we had all of that information and we'd been able to look at that and map it against the employee survey and then come up with tangible areas that we within the internal comms team and I could sort of like take away to help build that strategy to help



improve engagement and the way we connected but I was also able to kind of take things from there and I had our HR team sign up to this process I had the leadership team sign up to this process and there was a whole raft of different engagement workshops that have been pre-running this, the listening sort of like tours. But what it enabled us to do is co-create an environment and a recommended approach which helped to improve on all parts and take ownership in every single area and part of the business. And what we found is the following year, satisfaction, loyalty, motivation on our employee survey scores shot up. And we could say, we contributed to that approach. And what I've been hearing quite a lot of in the last year or so, and we did this four years ago. So four years ago, we took this approach and it has really benefited us in terms of bringing employees up to a certain level of trust and belonging and engagement because when you've got all that change going on outside of work and then you have change just naturally just happening within a business it just helps with that resilience, it helps people to feel a part of that journey and I think as internal comms professionals we've got a responsibility around really listening to what our employees are saying, not just on a survey. You really got to get them in the room and allow them to talk and have conversations and then build together what are these themes that are coming out from these groups? Are people leaders all saying similar things? Are our frontliners all saying similar things? Are our homeworkers saying all similar things? And then bucket it up as to, OK, so these audiences need this and based on their personas and their roles adapt and create messaging and content and guiding your senior leadership teams around how they engage and connect better with them. That's so, so important and I think that listening kind of strategy and approach is really needed and I'm hearing it across all different internal comms forums and I'm hearing it across other peers who are similar roles to me. They're all talking about embarking on a listening strategy and what would that encompass and Jen it was really interesting, some of the festival stuff that, the activities that came off of the back of that, several people have approached me to just find out how we did it because I don't think there's not a written rule or how you can do it. You've got to just manage it based on who your audiences are, where your leadership teams are in terms of engagement and how valued they see it. And we were lucky. We were really lucky at Ørsted did that. They really value internal communications and employee engagement. And I feel quite proud that four years ago we embarked on this journey and we're continuing with it. We're not building a new strategy now around listening. We're just continuing on that journey and we won't let that stop.

Jen Sproul (34:46)

I love hearing that and I think it's so wonderful also as well. I love that the IoIC Festival people are talking to you about it because I think we're looking for practical strategies and you say it is different in different cases and different organisations but there are principles that we can adopt as a united group that fundamentally does this and I think that we know for example I'm going to go back to the IC index when we ask employees listening in feedback for the third year now that number is barely moving.



And it's wonderful, I think that as a community of professionals that we're talking about it much more because the power it has to unlock things. And I've noticed as well as we're talking a lot about opportunities for internal communication. There is a feeling that things are tough for our community, tough for our profession. The market is tough. Proving our value is tough. Having people understand what we're there to do and what we deliver to a business, it is tough. But I think that you used some wonderful phrases that absolutely drive that adaptability, resilience, agility. And in times of this, those are fundamentals that if we can embed in our organisations that will, and empower to co-create and deliver solutions at pace is what that enables.

I guess for you, when we think about the work that you've done, particularly at Ørsted, and the work that we know people need to do with listening and feedback and putting that heart and soul and with all that complexity background, it's very complicated. But hopefully a simple answer is what do you think is the biggest opportunity for us as internal communicators that help us tackle what we've always wanted to, but also get the ear of those people to understand the value and why it's so critical now more than ever?

Shetal Joshi (36:29)

Do you know what? I think there's been such a massive opportunity for us, over the last few years and it continues to be to really keep talking about how internal communications and employee engagement can be a strategic enabler to a business. And that's not just about broadcast communications. That's not just about launching a new Viva Engage channel.

It's much more than that. It's kind of looking at, what are the trends coming up through your employee surveys, right? What are they telling us? Where is the business actually going in terms of its strategic narrative? Where do they want to be in five years time? Where do they want to be in 10 years time? It's about co-creating and sitting down with your chief HR officers or your heads of HR and saying, what's on your mind right now? How can I help? and being that kind of enabler of the culture and of building the purpose, the value, not losing sight of the heart and soul within a company because that's so easy to slip away, especially when the times are uncertain, right? **It's about making sure that we have the kind of place at the table, at the business table to strengthen that connection, to help kind of guide our senior leaders and the C-suite or people leaders, right, around what is our shared identity here?** How can we help employees to see themselves in our purpose, in our mission, in our narrative, in our story, and that's through storytelling, but it's about helping our people and championing them to help create and live and breathe that narrative to life. So it's not that it's just a one-time message to make sure it's embedded into absolutely everything.



Jen Sproul (38:32)

I love that. I think that we've talked about how chaotic and I guess urgent things feel, right? Everything feels really urgent. Like we need to do everything yesterday or we've missed a boat or we're not going fast enough and we can't do these other things. We've to get this done. And if we don't do that, then we'll lose X, Y and Z. But I think that with all this panic, what we need is calm and a calm centre and a calm whole which comes through that environment that we create that allows our people to feel empowered. So when you're panicked you have control or when you're calm you can see a way forward. You feel calm in the trust that you have of your leadership and you feel equipped with resilience and adaptability to move and thrive and shape and shift during these times. And if organisations are going to sustain themselves and thrive in this next phase, we need to have that centre and that calm that brings us there because panic is short-termism, isn't it, versus long-termism and I think there's something in that but that was just one of my reflections as you were talking. Cat, I'm sure you've got something equally or much more intellectual to say than I do.

Cathryn Barnard (39:47)

Thanks, no pressure. So I will tie that back to what Shetal said about self-acceptance. So for me, self-acceptance is the antidote to hustle culture and perfectionism. And hustle culture and perfectionism are manifestations of late stage capitalism, that it's on us personally to fix everything within a really tiny window. But if we can take a breath for a minute and get a tiny bit more comfortable in our skin and have the courage, I think you mentioned courage before, didn't you, Shetal? Have the courage to hold firm in our convictions. Actually what I think the golden opportunity is in this, and I don't want to disparage anybody working in the people space. However, sometimes HR carries the burden of appearing to be the spokesperson for the business in a way that can impede it, that it is acting for the business. Whereas, as the wonderful Colin Archer told us all those many moons ago, internal communication has this unique opportunity where it is agnostic and it can go into any department, any function, any team and just ask questions. And the act of asking those questions and listening back to the point about active listening just is an act of trust building. It is an act of inclusion. It is an embodied act of saying verbally and non-verbally, I see you, I hear you, I value what you have to say to me. And that, in this day and age, we can go hell for leather with all the very traditional binary performance metrics. Of course we can do that. That is not in question. That is how the world works now. That is how late stage capitalism sets its stall out, right? Quarterly shareholder returns. We all know that. But if we focus singularly on that, we're not going to get very far because all at the end of the day that really matters, and I'm going to get very hippie here, is love and friendship. And if we can't create spaces in our workplaces where there is a little bit more love and a little bit more friendship, then I think we're pretty hosed.



Dom (42:31)

Every now and again we get nice gems on these podcasts that really strike me and I think Shetal you've given us at least two and they both link with that. So you talk about love and connection. Now Cat I can't imagine I get away with that next week in the pub talking about that but what I can get away with which is the same sort of thing is Shetal's fantastic phrase that **our role as communicators is to help employees see themselves in the narrative**. And I think that's a gem, absolute gem because that suggests we need to help them explore what it means for them. Who needs to explain the benefits to them, who relies on them and who they need to rely upon and also the sort of questions they should ask. So think you're talking about love and that's really important. A practical manifestation of that is helping people see themselves in the narrative. I think that's brilliant. And I think that for me was the gem. The other one was the, and I'm normally shy away from mathematical equations, but I like the one about **purpose plus values plus culture equals immunity**. So that's a really powerful thing to say to any business leader at the moment.

So I just wanted to echo what you were saying and build on it and thank you for those two bits of wonderful ideas which I will shamelessly use as my own from now on.

Cathryn Barnard (43:43)

So to close this down, because this has been a beautifully meandering but very focused conversation, I feel like we've created a lovely tapestry here, but to close this down and to bring things, as Dom always says, into land, Shetal one thing that you think internal communication ought to be focusing on right now.

Shetal Joshi (44:06)

I think the biggest thing really is human-centered storytelling. And I know there are so many internal communicators out there who are doing that so well and there are others who are embarking on that journey to do that and then there are others who haven't quite reached there yet.

And if they're listening to this, I'd urge them to jump on and really start to sort of like think about how do you through that human-centered storytelling showcase your people through the narrative? I think it's all so important. If I may, I might add one more, which is around equipping leaders to engage, not present.

And I think there's a skill around that. There's a massive skill around that, which is, there's a certain skill set that you need as a people leader, but there's also a different skill set that you need to be an engaging people leader or whether you're not a people leader, you're just a leader, right? So it's how can you as internal comms professionals, because we do



engagement day in, day out. We think about the tools, we think about the opportunities we think about, the messaging, like everything that we do is all about engagement. Don't underestimate what you know as a professional that others will know because they might be more senior or they're a stakeholder or whatever. Take that information, go and knock on your learning and development teams doors, talk to your HR teams and say, right.

How can we create like an engagement toolkit or how can we create a learning and development training course that's facilitated by the senior IC and HR leaders within the company or workshop it, with leaders and train them through it, give them opportunities to become more engaging in that process. And I think as people start to also see that within the leadership community, it also gives them permission to wanting to become a part of that story and that journey. So naturally, you will start to then start seeing even more of those human-centered stories because then the self-acceptance comes in. Then you start getting the sense of community and bringing that purpose to life. And then you've got all those sort of things that I was talking about, purpose plus values plus culture. And yeah, it gets me excited. I could go on for forever.

Cathryn Barnard (46:45)

Well, I feel quite excited actually at the end of this conversation, as you guys all know, my job in this gig is to look at the trends and look at, try and explore the opportunities for the for the profession. But the biggest joy is when I get to speak to people like you, who bring it all to life for me, because I can do the analysis in the abstract, but actually hearing your story about what you are doing and what you have done is super powerful and so I speak on behalf of all of us thank you so so much for coming and sharing your story today because it has been absolutely amazing and I really really really hope as I'm sure it will that it will pack a punch for our listeners and give them something more to chew on.

Shetal Joshi (47:34)

Thank so much Cat, thank you Jen and Dom and yeah let's create some conversations.

Jen Sproul (47:41)

Love it.