

Transcript – Future of Internal Communication podcast with guest Perry Timms.

Cat Barnard (00:01.621)

Hello and welcome to the latest episode of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I'm your co-host Cat Barnard and as ever I'm joined by Dominic Walters and Jen Sproul. Today we have got a guest that I'm imagining a fair few of you listeners will have heard of. Perry Timms is a leading HR practitioner and HR thought leader. He's been voted onto.

The HR most influential thinkers list, half a dozen times at least, and has got some game changing ideas about the steps that HR needs to take to upgrade and reskill itself to prepare it for the future of work. I had come across Perry several years back, his work had been pointed out to me.

By various people in my contact network. And I'd been following his line of thinking with interest. And then about six, nine months ago, he was introduced to me by a previous guest to this podcast, Barry McNeil, who had come on to chat with us about the future of work and changing organizational structures. And Perry and I almost immediately got nattering and riffing.

of one another about the future of work. And rather than keep those conversations private, I decided that I wanted him to come and chat with all of us so that all of you could hear what he had to say, because I hope you will agree. What he has to say is very thought-provoking indeed. So welcome, Perry. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Perry Timms (01:49.047)

Thank you Cat, thanks for such a lovely intro. And yeah, I've often said to people, I've been living in the future of work for quite some time. It doesn't feel like I'm in the present because I spend a lot of time kind of thinking, what if, and how about? So it's nice to know that some of that has kept you interested and great to be able to share all that with you and listeners.

Cat Barnard (02:07.649)

Brilliant. And it most definitely has because I think, I think it's fair to say that anybody that has an interest in the future of work has been perhaps bracing themselves for quite substantial change since at least the middle of the 2010s. I certainly that's when the topic started to pique my interest coming out of

Cat Barnard (02:36.929)

quite substantial shifts and changes in the staffing sector and the labour market. But for you, although recruitment and headhunting is the natural bedfellow of HR, I think we can probably both agree that they sometimes sit in silos from one another and are sometimes very disassociated from one another.

So that begs the question from my side, how do you perceive the nature of work changing and why do organizations in your view need to embrace agility?

Perry Timms (03:20.607)

I mean, I think the agility word is obviously the kind of go to and the wraparound to it all. You're absolutely right. I guess what I'm seeing right now and whether it was a prediction or not is an enormous amount of uncertainty and I'll even describe it as change fatigue. I'm seeing a lot of people going, oh, here we go again, another change program. Whether the statistic about their failure rate is relevant or not, the perception of change is brace it, you know, get prepared for it. It's not going to be that pleasant. There's

double the amount of work going on. That's not a very healthy state to be in, when as human beings we're wired for continuous learning, discovery, and shaping our kind of systems and things around us. And I think that's like you said, I got really excited about the future of work because I thought, oh, I wanna be there. I wanna be in a place where it's better, it's more inclusive. And I've come across some words since I discovered the concept like you, like flourishing. It's like, yes, I want people to flourish in there.

Because what we see from statistics and just general anecdotal experience, a lot of people are like, oh, work, if I have to, you know, it's an economic transaction. The rest of their life starts when they shut the laptop lid or take the apron off or something. It's like, how did work become such a pervasive tolerance when in fact work should be something that we discover who we really are and what we're here to do? How have we got the program in? Wrong, Cat. I don't know. But.

To the question then about, I guess, HR's role with that, and its siloism, and its various factions, and so on. I see that all over the place. I see the way we've constructed mechanistic, vertical, trickle-down systems in work has been part of the problem really, because people become a cog in a very large set of gears. They're commoditized, they're disposable, they're not valued. When you ask people whether they're emptying your bins, cleaning your hotel room,

or sorting out your wealth management, when you say to them, what is it all about your work that you like? They'll say that what I do, people value and I can make a difference. And I do it with people who've got my back. Simple three things. We've lost that cap. So the future of work better get that back because that's what we need.

Cat Barnard (05:34.869)

That is so interesting. I mean, straight off the bat, what I hear when you describe that is that we have prioritised process and procedure over people. And you just said that little anecdote that you gave there, you said when you ask people what they like about the work that they do, regardless of the work that they do, they enjoy serving people. So it's a people

Perry Timms (06:02.534)

Yeah.

Cat Barnard (06:03.601)

people are the lifeblood of work. That's it. End of the equation, right?

Perry Timms (06:08.759)

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I say to people that until, you know, something like smart contracts and bitcoins means you don't need people to get involved, right? So you have a completely automated set up. It is all about people and work exists to solve problems for other people. Whether your problem is you haven't got the latest pair of Levi's, or the problem is you've got a health issue, people serve other people to solve the problem.

That to me is the simplest way to describe what work is, because people have often asked me, because I love what I do so much, if you won lots and lots of money, would you stop working? And I'm like, we're always working. Work is always going on. We just might not call it work if it doesn't feel like we're having to get paid for it. And with subservient, some other persons win, because we'll find community work, social work, education, whatever it is, you know, we've got a planet to repair, Cap. So we'll find plenty of work to do. It's whether it is congruent with

the meaning for you of what that value is. That's the thing that we're missing too much at the minute.

Cat Barnard (07:11.633)

And when there isn't that congruence, when there isn't that connection to something bigger than me, that then is a contributing factor to why so many organisational change programmes do fail because somewhere in that programme of work, there has been a failure to communicate effectively what that change means.

to the individuals involved and what the other side of that transformation will look like. So, and there was something that you said earlier, which I think tees this all up so beautifully is that humans love

new things. We know this, like we're all attracted to bright and shiny, which must then mean that at a cellular level, we are hardwired to embrace.

change, at which point, what this point about organisational agility, why do organisations need to embed that into their kind of their DNA? And how do they go about doing that?

Perry Timms (08:27.6)

Mm-hmm. So I think you're absolutely right, because we are an evolutionary species by nature of just where we've come from, right? So whatever you believe in, in terms of theories of evolution, we are evolving all the time. So the fact that we can talk to each other across digital connections like this is a sign of that evolution in many respects. But I think human beings have an issue about their sort of ego and sense of grandness in the world, right? Because I think some people think I've arrived.

And I think they think that's it now. That's like peak me. And therefore, nothing else needs to matter. But what happens is that quickly becomes out of me because the rest of the world and the rest of humanity, I guess, moves on. And then they feel frightened. And then when they're frightened, they think they've got to engineer some kind of catch up else they'll be irrelevant. And that's a natural survival instinct, right? So these things are, again, I think, are deep within us. So when we hear about saying,

we've got to change because we kind of think, oh, but I've just got it how I want. Now I've got to disrupt that. But you don't think I should do that because otherwise I'll become irrelevant. So there's some kind of hardwired responses to it that form into protectionism, but they're not really protecting our future. They're just preserving our now. And that now is subject to too many pressures and forces that are beyond us. So, you know, it's like trying to swim against the wave. You've got to surf with it. Do you know what I mean? It's that kind of metaphorical thing.

Now, the agility piece in organizations is because we've engineered them to the point that we think they hum along nicely and they make lots of money and their brand is very strong. That doesn't last for long. That's very fleeting. You have to keep working at it. The organizations I've come across and I've been into them and researched them because I'm interested in them, who just do this naturally, recognize their place in the world is only secured by being insecure about now and restless about the future. So they've got that kind of

mantra, I suppose, and people know when they step into those places, normative states are temporary, but the rest of it is all about future gazing, adaptation, experimentation to get agility, because that's the only way they'll survive. So you're absolutely right about why it bounces off and what we should do to make that more of a normative state.

Dom (10:40.346)

It would be great in the moment to look at what that future means for workers. But something you said also to spark off a thought I've been having and talking about with people is you talked about the fact we've lost the plot, my words, basically. So do you think that there's a golden era we've lost when people did find value at work and got much more fulfilment out of it? Or are we on a constant evolution towards that state? Or was it a bit of both? I don't know.

Perry Timms (11:06.787)

I think we've seen varying guises of it throughout history actually, Dom. So one of the things I'm interested in is a concept, the cyclical nature of human evolution. And it was put together by a professor in the 50s and 60s in the US called Claire Graves, and it's a he. And what he said is there are evolutionary states, but we can also de-evolve, right? And de-evolving sometimes comes from an absolute kind of cataclysmic event that happens around us. So we might have been in tribes and then we start to get more.

I guess you'd call them formal education, written communication and so on. But if there's a big war going on, all that stuff goes out the window and we evolve, de-evolve back into tribes. So I think it's not a linear thing. We kind of go forward, then we go back a bit and then we go forward a bit more and then back a bit more. So I think we've seen glimpses of it, Dom is what I'm saying. I think we've seen glimpses of glorious states of both human achievement and the care and attention and nurturing to human beings. I could even talk to things like the Iroquois nation.

not industrial at all, beautifully harmonious with the environment around them, believing in the concept of seven generations of progressive thinking that means seven generations after me, what I'm doing is going to help them or hinder them. I mean that stuff is a Greek philosophy, you know, we've seen it in all sorts of guises. We have this habit of destroying it and almost over consuming it and that's what we're in now. We're in an over consumption era of industrialism.

And we need to start thinking, what's the next cycle then for us? It's the stuff that Cat talked about. Let's remember this is about people. And actually we've got a big burning issue, quite literally burning a planet. We've got to put those two together. That's the next evolution of work. How do we work together to repair the planet?

Dom (12:36.685)

Mm-hmm.

Dom (12:48.294)

And so looking ahead at that state you're describing, my daughter's recently, she's three weeks into a new job, Kennedy University, she's working for a PR company, and I did try and sit down and give her

some parental advice on managing career, laughingly. And I realized I couldn't really because I wasn't too sure about what that might look like. For example, she started working one day a week from the office and the rest of the time at home, which seems bizarre to most people to start on their career to do something.

radical that we seem to associate with people later in their career. So from your point of view Perry, this statement you've described, what does that mean for people who are looking at their careers or who are working at the moment?

Perry Timms (13:20.161)

Mm.

Perry Timms (13:27.059)

Yeah. I tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean you think back nostalgically to like the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and think oh it's just a slightly computerized version of that because it's not. There is a much more complex landscape that we're in because we know things we didn't know then. I'll give you an example right. We know a lot more now about neurodiversity. Therefore, we cannot ignore the fact that certain fonts, certain ways of communicating with people,

just do not work in the wiring that some people have, and we need to make adjustments to that. And that's just being inclusive and civil to people who are different to you. So I think there's all sorts of factors like that around Dom that kind of say how we need to be in work is very different. And that's not wokeness or anything, right? That's just knowing this, you shouldn't unknow it, you should look at it as adaptations.

And I think the rhythm of work, like you've described for your daughter, that's in the office for one day only and then four days not. I think that's starting to talk to us about where do we need to be to do our best work. Right now, if you're laying bricks, you need to be on the site. Simple as that. But if you're doing knowledge and creative work and you need to think really deeply about some research you want to tabulate and put out to the world, you're probably best doing that at home because you're not getting distracted by people around. You've got no painful commute to endure. I don't know why we get so hung up about

in the office for a certain number of days. It's like it's not a quota. It's about the work you need to do and whether you need people around you or whether you need people to be distanced from you for very good reason. So I think your daughter's generation are going to be the first ones who are at the beginning of the mess and they're going to engineer it into something of a cadence and a flow and a sense of the energy, the creativity, the togetherness and all those things we might not have had the chance to do when I first started to work because it was one rhythm and that was it.

we've got multiple streams to kind of coalesce here. And I think your daughter's generation are going to be the ones who go, what were they doing back then? Because this is how you do it. And I think it's like, let them get on with it. It's what I would say, don't interfere with them. Almost like tap into their unbridled and perhaps, massively creative genes to make this work. So I think more listening needs to come from people in senior positions in organizations to people like your daughter.

Dom (15:48.927)

Yeah, that makes great sense and I guess leading on from that there will be people listening to this who are in those positions thinking what does that look like then? How do we do that listening? So it'd be great just to draw from your experience of what you see works.

Perry Timms (15:56.611)

Mm. Yeah. Mm. I think, I think no matter what people say about younger generations, they tend to hook onto a whole number of stereotypes. They might say, oh, they're not as different. And, you know, they talk back a bit. And I'm like, that's a good thing, isn't it? Because you know what's going on in their heads, right? Whereas in my day, you didn't do that. That wasn't allowed. That was insubordination. So I think we have to name the climate that we're in first. We have to go, this is a participative organisation.

we are in complex situations, we need everybody's eyes and ears tuned, but we need to socialise that so we can work it out collectively about what's best, because what you might lack in experience I've got, but what I'll lack in imagination you won't. Let's fuse those together. And what that actually looks like is more invitations, Dom, for people to participate in things that matter to them.

The days of having a job description that really describes everything you do every minute of every day. I mean, they probably went decades ago, but they're certainly not relevant now. So I think we say to people, it's almost like you construct your day and your job at the same time. Because if today there's a call to get more client centric for a particular market we want to get into and you feel passionate about it, if that's not your job, we don't want to stop you from getting involved in that. We want your energy to lean into that.

So I'd say the systems you've got for selection, inclusion, participation, shape, decision making, kind of start again. Keep some guardrails because of the governance and legalities, right? But all the stuff in between about how you work, co-create. I mean, that's super exciting an invitation for people to go, I can shape how we do what we do. Yeah, why wouldn't I want to do that? Some people might call that entrepreneurialism. I just say it's participation.

Dom (17:43.234)

Let me ask one more question on that, and I'm gonna pass over to Jen. But for people then looking to build a career now, what skills do you think they should be really focusing on to equip themselves for that new environment, or that changing environment?

Perry Timms (17:55.616)

Yeah, I mean, that's the question de jour, I think, Don, because we're all sort of going, what's relevant now? What should we rely on? What do we have to acquire? The obvious one is being very digitally and technologically savvy. And so I still see people now who've just mastered Outlook. I'm like, what? I mean, there's so much more out there. So when you talk about generative AI helping them, they look at you gone out. It's like.

That stuff is here right now and it's probably using it, but you don't notice it because it'll also complete your sentences and you just think there's some magician in there making it happen. So master the digital stuff because that's how work is going to get done. No matter where you are, right? Whether it's military, constructed digital is the thing. But I think the other skills we need to think about are relational, human, understanding moods, understanding how we can help people without offending them, understanding how you can have different views on something, but still have a very

outcome to that kind of polarity discussion. So I think there's something about how do we do those? Well we just have to give people more experience of those and create the environments where perhaps they're working with a working tension and they work together on how to do that and take people's views into account and understand the process that gets you from a kind of what starts as a conflict to a very understandable and agreed kind of outcome. So I think interpersonal stuff I don't like to call them soft skills because they're not soft.

they're the hard ones actually, are what matters. And when we talk to people in leading roles, I think we need to see, are you showing empathy? Are you showing consideration? Are you showing imagination and visionary traits? Or are you just saying, I've got the keys, I'll tell you what to do. Because if you are, that's a busted flush and that ain't gonna last very long. Connecting with people is the absolute skill I would enhance.

Jen (19:47.096)

Perry, so much of what you're saying resonates with me and so many of the conversations that we've had on this podcast for some time now. And there's some things as you're talking, which makes absolutely, I agree, human empathy, keeping it up, interpersonal. It's those things that are

Perry Timms (20:00.23)

Mm, mm, mm.

Jen (20:08.22)

under pressure or under concern. I think those are the things that worry me more than perhaps keeping pace with technology. That's something we need to absorb as a knowledge. And I think that as I sit here and listen to you in terms of reflecting on our members and our profession, which is all about creating meaning, creating understanding, creating that sense of being valued, because communication, embodied communication, is the thing that...

Perry Timms (20:10.513)

Yeah.

Perry Timms (20:18.161)

Yeah.

Perry Timms (20:35.127)

Yep.

Jen (20:36.576)

enables that feeling, that enables that connection, that enables that emotion. But I think as I listen to you, what also sits here and worries me or I reflect on how do we fix it, is it feels like now more than ever, we seem more fractious. We seem more at odds with each other. We seem to misunderstand each other. I think we've lost the art of dialogue as ourselves in a work.

Perry Timms (20:51.281)

Yeah.

Jen (21:05.52)

context, which is a worry, I think, particularly when you're trying to solve such systemic issues. Are we learning enough from each other? Are we willing to learn enough from each other? We sit here as internal communicators and we can feel like, well, HR doesn't listen to us, so they don't care about that. Or in HR, this department doesn't listen over here.

Jen (21:35.288)

the reason why I'm going to leave is actually my manager's behaviours are just lack any sense of compassion. So when we look at all those, how do we get from that, I would call misalignment of our

human working kind to realignment where we are open to learning, to sharing, to being, when work has become, as you say, a mindset of an economic transaction?

Perry Timms (21:47.364)

Mm. Yeah.

Perry Timms (22:02.757)

Mm.

Jen (22:06.056)

I guess what does that might that future organization look like? Is it a matter of just breaking it all down from a process and systemic way you take change? Change has become a so because it's a project, it's a Gantt chart. Change isn't a Gantt chart. Is that what needs to change?

Perry Timms (22:08.767)

Yeah.

Perry Timms (22:17.119)

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, definitely. So I mean, the encouraging thing, and I share your kind of concerns about it all, Jen, the encouraging thing is I see it in pockets, right? So I had a conversation with the chief people officer in a famous airline that will remain nameless, but they often wear red. And what happens in that environment is they've flipped how they work from process and clocking on and rotors to listening and involving people and recognizing the individual.

Now, what they'll talk to is an uptick in customer satisfaction, loyalty and feedback. They'll look at an uptick in revenue. They'll look at an uptick in all sorts of areas. So they will turn to you and say, we're already doing it because we've proven the economic link for us as a business and the way we look after our people are congruent to the point that we know if we dial one down, it's going to dial the other down. So they're committed to it in a shareholder sense and they're committed to it in a humanitarian sense as well.

And so, you know, you kind of think, well, that's great for them. What about the other, you know, 900 million organizations that are nowhere near it? There will be a natural form of selection coming through. And I think we're already starting to see the collapse of some enterprises that just don't care enough. The economic squeeze at the moment may have suppressed some of the potential sort of movement where people vote with their feet, go somewhere else because you don't look after them enough. But the worrying thing is what you said, which is.

highest levels of mental ill health and stress related absence, like for decades, if not ever. And there comes a point when you've got to get government, business and almost like, you know, the voice of people to actually coalesce around a good work agenda. CIPD have done something recently on that. The RSA did it back in the day when we were looking at gig working under Theresa May. And I suspect that what we're going to see is some political pressures to start to show that. Now I'm seeing it in places like Manchester with Andy Burnham.

what he's done is he's brought the community together and he said we've got to create good work here because we're competing with Leeds and Liverpool and London and Birmingham and you know we want people to come to Manchester to live to create a prosperous community and to work well. Good businesses come here we do better so I think there's something about the link to societal good that business has a part to play in. So ESG is beginning to come much more into conversations. I'm about to go to a client where you know they make stuff in the food arena.

Perry Timms (24:40.259)

actually what they're showing on their recruitment side is how much they do for sustainability, for community and so on. So actually they're saying we're going beyond the profit here, we're going into the things that are right as an organisation. Now the younger generation that we talked about earlier on again without stereotyping them in terms of choices where the best talent goes, it goes to those people. So I think we'll see the shift, it might be the sort of thing where we'll not notice it until 10 years time when we do a research study.

But I see pockets of it much more stable than I used to. You know, the best companies thing used to be, oh, well, you've got loads of money to throw at it. So no wonder you're good at it. I'm seeing it in tiny little startups who look after people and do well because of that. And I'm seeing that trickle through. B Corporation certification, another example of that kind of thing. So I'm seeing things collide and combine. And what I'm suspecting is within the next three to five years, economic stuff and war stuff isn't helping.

this kind of renaissance of employee as a person, as an individual with choice, with agency that we've got a duty of care to, that becomes the beacon. That becomes the economic engine. And that changes the whole dynamic. At the minute, some people can just throw money at employees and say, you can put up with 80 hours a week because you're getting loads of dosh. It's like, well, I'm probably going to die prematurely and people will go, I'm not having that. And they'll eject from the machine.

So some of it choice, some of it systemic, some of it political, but I think businesses are starting to see how being good is a leverageable economic positive. So I think if that's the case, follow the money.

Jen (26:18.12)

I think that's brilliant, and actually, you know what, Perry, that's really encouraging to hear you say that as well, because I think sometimes you can sit in your, you know, in my job, for example, you consume sometimes just a lot of the problems as opposed to sometimes you don't always see where the great change is going as well, because that's where the dialogue takes you. And it can feel sometimes a sort of uphill struggle and certain, you know, our community can feel that. And I think the internal communicators would be really reassured.

Perry Timms (26:31.603)

Yeah.

Jen (26:45.9)

I've spoken to the, you know, you referenced the work they did in Manchester and we spoke to them and the way they're putting listening. We talked about that mechanism of listening at the heart of it. And it's almost, I guess I'm trying to visualize a sort of gearbox where you start with first gear is something very, very different. It's not a process, it's an emotion. And then you drive and it's a participation that then drives up the gears to get you to that, but it is that realignment. And actually.

Perry Timms (26:50.219)

Yeah, massively.

Perry Timms (27:00.645)

Mm. Mm-hmm.

Perry Timms (27:06.807)

Yeah.

Jen (27:15.116)

And as you say, it's cyclical and it's evolutionary and it's moments. And we, I think we've also lost a little bit of patience. So sometimes it feels like you just got to keep going, I think, to a certain degree. And I think, I just wanted to echo that. I think that that's really, you know, what positively reaffirming thing to say. And I think that, I think internal communicators, I think, what would your view be? I guess that internal communication is so important to that and how we do that.

Perry Timms (27:15.415)

Yeah.

Cat Barnard (27:20.213)

Thanks for watching!

Perry Timms (27:20.685)

Yeah.

Yeah.

Perry Timms (27:28.479)

Mm.

Perry Timms (27:31.811)

Mm.

Perry Timms (27:39.715)

I've always felt very close to internal comms when I've been in HR. In fact, I would say I've done my best work when I've been working in tandem with internal communications, because there's just something about the perspectives that we bring and something about the elegance of messaging and the sincerity and so on that we both kind of check each other in on. And so I've seen that work so, so well. And actually, I've seen the internal comms profession kind of broaden out its remit right from

corporate propaganda, because that's what it was, it was corporate propaganda to inclusive listening that says that people don't think that. Why? Because I talk to them and I see them and I hear them and I know what they mean and I know what they feel. So I think some of the corporate messaging now has to hit an emotional call, else it's corporate propaganda. And we've seen how mishandled some of that can be. As we go to record this ITV have just announced that you've got to declare your relationships with anybody in the workplace off the Schofield scandal.

It's like, I think that's an intrusion into life that is just completely A, wrong and B, poorly handled. As a communicator, I'd go, well, I'm not getting behind that message. So, you know, fill your boots and off you go because that ain't right and that ain't fair. So I think there's something in this where corporate communications is holding such a lot of gatekeeping power. I'm, I'm hoping I'm getting a nod from people listening to this, that they can go.

that's not going to work. And I'll tell you why this is what you need to say. So if that's your decision, that's the wrong decision. You might have to go back and think the decision again, let alone how you communicate it. Cause I think you're holding an enormous amount of energy and expectation mobilization in the internal comms arena is how you put it will make the difference between people going, I feel that and believe it. I'm going to do it versus what's going on to me. There's one company I love who get this right. They're in the U S and they're called Barry Weymiller.

They make factory conveyor systems and so on and so forth. They've got a 38 minute documentary on their website. I'd recommend people give up 38 minutes to see an absolute master class in history, brand, culture, engagement, inclusion and power that comes from communicating who you are, how you want to be. So I'll leave you with that. And Jen.

Jen (29:52.912)

I love that. I'm going to pass over to Cat, but I was going to sum up my last point to that, which I think was something we said in the podcast. I said a number of, a bit a year or so ago now, is that we're in the business of, I like to say, return on emotion. That's your equity. But that's something that I'll pass to Cat now. I know.

Perry Timms (30:03.731)

Oh, I'll give you that. I'll give you that.

Cat Barnard (30:11.033)

needs to get it trademarked is what she needs to do. So I've just been listening intently to that and just to add a tuppence worth before we move on, a couple of thoughts arise. Even though we have a cost of living crisis and even though for many, many people up and down the country,

Cat Barnard (30:41.817)

and setting out on a journey that nobody knows where it's going to end. But we've actually, for the first time in probably 20 or so years, had to pay attention in much closer detail to how we spend our disposable income. One of the things that also strikes me is that the companies of which some of them are the fang companies, they've

the Facebooks, the Amazons, the Netflixes, the Googles, the ones that everybody aspired to work for a decade ago, the best payers are also the ones that seem to be most demanding when it comes to getting everyone back to the office. It's as though the high pay is now the kind of

Perry Timms (31:36.715)

Hmm.

Cat Barnard (31:37.621)

the whip that's being used to try and make unreasonable demands. And I think for many people, even though earning potential is a primary consideration, it's not the primary consideration. There's some wonderful research, I was talking before we came on air, that's come out of Peopleful and their alliances that shows

Perry Timms (31:49.347)

Mm-hmm. No.

Cat Barnard (32:07.273)

what the causal factors are behind workplace, stress, anxiety and burnout. And actually right up there is insufficient communication with managers and colleagues. So perceived poor job fit is one of the factors. Lack of effective workplace tools and equipment is another one.

and the emotional load of having to deal with leaders, managers and colleagues that aren't communicating effectively with you. And so I think the priorities are changing. Yes, of course, money talks when the chips are down, but it's not the single reason why people are opting out and electing to go and seek.

less pressurized opportunities. And the other thing that I think is really interesting that you alighted on you two when you were talking there is the fact that internal communication is unique in the workplace because it has the holistic helicopter view. I remember right in the early days of this podcast, we had Colin Archer on the program. He's a very

Cat Barnard (33:38.377)

His words still kind of ring out for me all the time. He said, we have this wonderfully unique position where we can knock on any door and go and have a conversation anywhere in the business and nobody will refuse us. We've got this connectivity across the entire range whereas other departments, teams, functions will be quite siloed in their work.

Internal comms has this panoramic view. It has a panoramic view and to your point, Perry, listening to all these different points of view and perspectives, it has the most inclusive perspective of all the departments and all the colleagues. And so all of those things woven in, I appreciate I've gone off on another massive rant.

Perry Timms (34:09.592)

Mm.

Cat Barnard (34:36.145)

What do you think all of this means for internal communication moving forward?

Perry Timms (34:37.539)

Mm-hmm. So that's lovely, because where you started was almost like the reputation of those titans that we call them, titans of tech. It's just highly paid serfdom in many respects, isn't it? Because it's almost like, you know, you're disposable. We don't really care about you. We look like we do, but it's all gimmicks. And that's showing through now. So I think there's something about that. We used to deify them, and now we kind of go, oh.

Cat Barnard (35:07.169)

that I, let me just, cause I, this really rings true for me. Obviously we know there are ongoing, you know, significant racial issues in the U.S. and those of us who have chosen to educate ourselves also know that the backstory of the formation of the United States is built on slavery, right? I'm really drawn to a narrative that is playing out at the moment.

in the United States where inequality has never been so heightened, that those titans that you just, what I call them fangs, you're calling them titans, this neo-capitalism phase that we're going through is being cited and I agree with this, it's another form of colonialism.

Perry Timms (35:43.237)

Mm.

Perry Timms (35:56.047)

Mm, it is. Yeah. And lots of people will talk about cults and so on. And that's another thing that's going on in that realm. I think what we're seeing is the position that internal comms has, like you said, it's like it can go anywhere. I mean, that's the lovely bit about it really. Whether it starts to become a bit more like an investigative journalist, I don't know, but it could be because it could be like, let me see what I can say genuinely about you and your division.

for an employer brand piece or an internal positioning piece. And if there's some skullduggery going on, I think you ought to sort that out because I can't talk authentically about who you are and what you do. So I don't think the faking thing that perhaps we saw in the past is there anymore because I think internal comms people, when I go, I can't spin that no matter how much you want me to.

You've got to be sincere and genuine here. And if that's the case, I've got nothing to report. And that's in itself telling, right? So I think there's some teeth in that because there is jockeying.

inside corporates and there is jockeying for position outside as an employer brand thing, I'd use that as a positive to kind of go if you haven't got a sincere story to tell, that in itself is pretty telling but I'm not coming back until you got one. So I think there's something really nice about that you could leverage because often HR hears all the bad side you know when it's gone wrong already and so on so we're almost in the stage where we've got to try and repair something but I think you can pre-empt it, you can see it, you could probably call it out, I mean that would be lovely.

to get you as almost like internal spiritual guides, right? To get people to do some of that good. And I think what I see a lot of is people getting a little bit more oppressive in the way they manage, right? And it's almost like, well, why is that? And it's a rubber band snapback from COVID forced dispersal. And people kind of go, well, we haven't got that now. So I'm just gonna hold it back even tighter because I didn't like any of that. And I put up with it and I didn't like it. And it's like, well, but that's what it's gonna be, more dispersal.

Now, the reason I believe in that so strongly is because of the nature of the fragmented and multiple attacks, if we want to call it that, on our way of operating by the world. They don't come in a big block or nice, neatly compacted. They're all little tiny things that are firing off all the time. So we don't need to be more compact, we need to be more dispersed. And that means we need to be less oppressive. And that means we need people to be the intelligent source, the ideation creator, the connector, all those kind of things. Now, you'll know this, Cat.

Perry Timms (38:17.643)

You can only do that when you loosen the management grip and you create more self-managed, agile, self-organized teams. That's how it has to be. The military do it, all sorts of other arenas do it. So therefore I think a natural evolution for us is to be more self-managed. Now I'm gonna flip that back to internal comms again, because we will need you more than ever. Because if we're self-managed, we haven't got the line that the communication comes from. We've got to pick it up from broadcast from you, because we're not.

funneling it through the hierarchy anymore. So I think internal comms has an even better, stronger investigative journalist kind of commentating role and aggregating the multiple voices that come through that into areas where there is still some concentrated decision-making. So I think that's something really interesting about the panoramic view that you talk about. So I think all organizations are gonna have to have a panoramic view about where their people are and what works going on. So you're already...

going what the rest of the world of work needs to be like everywhere at the same time all at once.

Perry Timms (39:28.287)

Go on then.

Dom (39:28.406)

Perry, let me ask you almost an impossible question given what you've just said because look at it from an internal communicator's point of view and as we come into land I think there are a number of things you said great opportunities for us because it looks like internal communicators provide what organisations need to do all the good things you've been talking about and you've talked about improving interpersonal skills, you've obviously talked about digital skills as well, you've talked about

organizations need to demonstrate they care. And of course, who better to help them do that than internal communicators who can shape those messages. You've talked about the good work agenda and how again, we can help as internal communicators promote that. And you've made this really great point about when people are self-managed, they need somewhere to go to get good information to help them understand what's going on and we can do all that. So that's a great set of things that internal communicators can do. Almost to the point where I guess where it could look

Perry Timms (40:13.312)

Yeah.

Perry Timms (40:21.663)

Yeah.

Dom (40:23.518)

overwhelming. So my unfair question is, from your perspective, seeing all this working in organisations, what's the one core bit of advice that you would give internal communicators, if you can distill it down to just one thing?

Perry Timms (40:25.123)

Mm.

Perry Timms (40:33.507)

I can, I can. So thank you all for kind of doing all the sort of pulls and so on with me because it has become very clear to me. Now, I've just read a paper actually, largely contributed by somebody called Heather McGowan, who you might know is a really strong futurist, beautiful way of presenting the

future. Some of the research she said is if you want to kind of boil it down to one thing that really matters to people, that one thing that really matters is recognition. So I'm saying to internal communicators.

absolutely everything you are trying to kind of take in and synthesize, keep looking for the recognition bit of individual feats, of team level feats or whatever it is. Because if you in your communication can recognize that, people can go, they're talking about me or my team or my colleagues there. There's an instant emotional attachment to that, which is an uplift in positivity, energy, belief and so on. Because what I think your big...

challenges as internal communicators and why I'm advocating this so strongly is people are putting in more emotional labour now than they ever have in the workplace and they need some respite from that. Recognition gives you that. You know when it's really tough and you've like spent hours and hours doing something and somebody just comes along and goes oh I really like that you suddenly forget the labour and you just feel that moment. Internal comms can do that. Little tiny quantum

Perry Timms (41:58.571)

That's not papering over the cracks, that's giving something back to people they really deserve. That's what I'd say.

Dom (42:07.57)

and it's going back to Jen's point. I'm gonna steal a line there, Jen, but making sure people have a return on emotion. Having just mercilessly stolen your line, Jen, I'm gonna pass back to you to put the wheels down and bring us onto the tarmac.

Cat Barnard (42:14.549)

hehe

Jen (42:14.629)

Hehehe

Perry Timms (42:16.786)

Thank you.

Jen (42:17.306)

Bye for now.

Jen (42:20.848)

Oh, no, thank you. I do think it's a phrase that works. And I think that what you said, Perry, is so simple and so doable. It's just doable. And I think that's something that we can do. And I think that there are many hurdles for us and there are many things that are happening, but I think we have to stick back to at the heart of it. What we're here to do, what our purpose is, why as internal communicators, we get better out of bed every day.

Perry Timms (42:26.903)

Good.

Jen (42:49.036)

And that will enrich us if you can be that voice, if you can be that investigative journalist, if you can be that person that goes, are we recognizing, are we giving people emotion, are we giving people respite? I think if we can use that purpose for our own purpose, because that's what we're here for, is a wonderful thing to do. And I think you said so much in there that we can take away as a professional community. So thank you so much for your time. And...

Perry Timms (43:04.025)

Mm.

Perry Timms (43:07.107)

Thank you.

Perry Timms (43:10.499)

Thank you, Jen.

Jen (43:15.144)

I'm going to go away and try and get a return on emotion trademarked because I've been pushing it for a few years now. This might be the takeoff it needs.

Perry Timms (43:17.527)

Okay. Yeah.

Cat Barnard (43:24.139)

We'll let you do that Jen, as long as you don't promise that you're not going anywhere and you're not going to like swan off into the sunset with your return on emotion trademark because Tom and I would miss you.

Jen (43:29.409)

It's to me.

Perry Timms (43:29.755)

Do it as a creative commons. Do it as a creative commons, so therefore it's not commercially oriented. Do it as a creative commons. I'd do that. Then we keep her cap. Thank you, Jack. Thank you. Pleasure.

Jen (43:32.784)

Hahaha!

Jen (43:40.747)

No. Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Cat Barnard (43:45.121)

Kerry, thanks so much for joining us today. And I think just as a tiny, tiny footnote, I know that various internal communicators have come to me in the last six months or so, inquiring about the intersection between internal comms and HR. And so for that reason, it's been a joy to listen to your perspectives and your ideas today, because I think what you've provided is...

Perry Timms (44:02.439)

Mm. OK.

Cat Barnard (44:14.128)

Lots of food for thought for how to add strategic value to HR colleagues for sure.

Perry Timms (44:17.011)

There's a definite we need you, you need us type unity thing going on there, Cat. And I think it's not even different because the point of the whole thing, as Jen said, is that we're both here to make sure

that what happens to people is what is best for them. And so that we can join in from and maybe the way we do it perhaps has its little nuances, but at the heart of it, we're in it for the same thing, return on emotion as Jess said. Yeah, thanks.

Jen (44:20.665)

Absolutely.

Perry Timms (44:43.883)

Appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

Jen (44:45.208)

Brilliant. Right.

Cat Barnard (44:45.776)

Thanks so much, Perry. We'll speak again.