



TICP – episode 65 – Remote but not unreachable

(Season 7 Episode 10)

[Katie 00:03]

This episode of The Internal Comms Podcast is brought to you by my very own Friday update. Would you like to get a short email from me – never more than five bullet points long – giving you my take on the week's news from across the world of communication? This might be the latest reports, books, podcasts, conferences, campaigns that have caught my eye during the week. I always limit myself to just five nuggets of news. So you can read it in record time, but still feel hopefully a little bit more informed, maybe even a little bit more uplifted as you end your week.

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Hello, and welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay. This is a show all about improving the way we communicate at work. Each episode I invite a guest to sit in my hot seat, a comms practitioner, consultant, author, business leader. Often my guests are household names in the world of communications. But diversity is important. And one of the joys of hosting this show is bringing you a new voice, a fresh, thoughtful perspective that you might otherwise not get to hear. And this week is exactly that. My guest is Lily Goodman D'Amato. Now, when I first heard Lily speak about her approach to employee comms, she was Senior Content and Communications Manager at Paris Baguette, the global bakery chain with more than 3,000 cafes around the world.

I think it's fair to say that I only meet a few people each year who started their communications career by working in one of their organisations' frontline, customer-facing roles. But that is exactly where Lily started. And you can hear throughout this conversation how this first-hand experience infuses her approach to communication. We talk about how to tap into the motivation and energy of entry level workers. We talk about what to communicate to employees on the very first day with your company. We talk about the daily reality for most line managers, and about Lily's current role as Delivery Trainer at the digital pharmacy Medly in the US. How do you design and deliver effective training materials for your employees? Lily brings tremendous empathy, energy and modesty to this conversation, which made it really delightful. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Lily, thank you so much for appearing on The Internal Comms Podcast. It's great to have you here.

[Lily 03:59]

Thanks for having me.

[Katie 04:01]

Now, when I was preparing for the show, and listeners will know I do like to do as much research as I can, I found a clip of you singing on YouTube. Oh my goodness me. What a powerhouse voice. I'm just wondering, I think singing, possibly acting, was your first love. How has that - if it has - that theatre background informed your approach to communications?

[Lily 04:27]

Sure. Well, first I'm wholly embarrassed but thank you for the compliment. So, theatre was my first love, specifically musical theatre. That was the first intention of my career, though I ended up making a change which ended up being for the better and it brought me here, which I'm very grateful and humbled for sure. Theatre is about connection, right, and listening and getting out of people what you want, right? So, if I'm acting in a scene with you, there's an objective anytime you have a conversation with somebody, there's an objective, right? Even if it's just asking about the weather, there's subtext; there's other things. And, so, where theatre really connects with communication for me is I have studied people for so long that I understand how to get what I want out of them, and in sometimes very subtle ways that they don't see coming, which can help me have their guard down so that I know how to go in and get them the information they need, knowing that they'll connect with it.

[Katie 05:32]

How much of that you think is personality, and how much of it can be learned or taught, do you think?

[Lily 05:40]

That's an interesting question, at the at the sake of sounding arrogant, I do think a lot of it is personality and attitude. I do have a love of people, I have a strong sense of empathy, which I think comes from being an artist and growing up that way. But I do think that if you can really learn to actively listen and have the emotional intelligence to pick up on body cues, especially now in this, you know, Zoom age, through Zoom, is very important, right? What are they saying? What aren't they saying? These are things that you can learn and develop. But of course, having a base of being brought up that way also very much helps.

[Katie 06:22]

I first heard you speak on The Drip podcast, and I'll make sure the link is in the shownotes. Great podcast hosted by Brian Landau, who's been on the show. Back then you were at Paris Baguette (and just for listeners who may be not based in North America) it's an American cafe chain with I think 80 locations across 11 states, something like that?

[Lily 06:46]

Yeah, they've probably grown even more, and they're based out of Korea. So, there's 3,000 locations there. It's just that I was with the North American market. Yeah.

[Katie 06:55]

What was interesting to me is that you had, I think, around 10 years' experience in the restaurant business before taking on that comms role. And I'm just wondering how that hands-on, real life – 'lived experience' we would call it now, wouldn't we? – how did that inform your approach to creating internal comms at Paris Baguette?

[Lily 07:17]

You know, I started as a server. So, I started on the ground floor. And then once my, you know, I was acting and auditioning and all of that in New York City. And then once the dream kind of changed, I grew into management, and then I grew into corporate training. That's kind of the trajectory. But really, it's, if you can remember what it's like to be on the ground floor of a company, you will better naturally connect with the people you're trying to communicate with, because you understand their language. Right? You understand what makes them tick, you understand what makes them frustrated, and you understand their day to day. And so that helps in two ways. One, it helps with communicating, right, just basic communication, I know what will connect with you. The second piece is I understand what I can put on them and what I can't because I understand their workload and their day to day.

[Katie 08:14]

Is there a way of imitating that experience? So, if you can't get that hands-on experience, is there another way of getting that insight into the people actually doing the day-to-day work, do you think?

[Lily 08:27]

if you can (I understand that a lot of people are working remotely and things like that, maybe even across the world now that we can work remotely) if you can invest your time for a week, two weeks, however long possible to spend training in the frontline manager role, or even sometimes the base entry-level roles, that will give you everything you need. Because from an office, home office, corporate office, whatever, there's only so much you can understand about what comes up. So, I found that frequently to help with efficiencies I've been asked and I have done or the instinct is make a checklist, let people know exactly what they need to do all day. And you see the checklist and you're like, 'Well, that's fine. That's doable, right?' But you're not considering all the other things that come up throughout the day, an unhappy customer, your refrigerator goes down, and these checklists then are breeding more checklists, and you end up with resentment right from the field to the corporate knowing there's that underlying feeling that I felt it in many companies, that corporate (which is a term I don't love using when I'm a part of it, because I don't see myself that way) but corporate is so out of touch from the day to day and so

that trust, that feeling of 'We're one team and we're here to support you as the corporate office' goes away and you more feel like an authoritarian out-of-touch king trying to tell you what to do, thinking you know better when they've never done it themselves. So, if you can't afford that investment of time and going to a location and doing that, because I understand that we all have obligations and KPIs and all of that, find time to get one-on-ones with those frontline managers, and really talk to them about their day and what they go through and what's going well, what doesn't go well, how can I help? Those are three questions that will make somebody feel so heard: 'What's going well? What's not going well? And how can I help?' They'll feel supported in a way that they wouldn't otherwise if you're just helping them with a checklist.

[Katie 10:41]

I love that. And I had never thought before, and I don't know why I've never thought before, actually trying to do some of the training that they have to go on, as you said, because you're doing more than observing in that situation, you're actually trying the job on for yourself, aren't you? And you're, as you say, you're really expressing the experience in the pressure points and the pain points of that.

[Lily 11:04]

And in my experience with bakeries and coffee shops, you know, it's easy to say like 'I can learn how to make a cappuccino, no problem.' But can you make a cappuccino when you're working on one machine out of three, and you've got the busy breakfast rush, and you've got four call-outs, and the dishwasher breaks and XYZ happens? You're never 'just making a cappuccino', you're doing all these other things. And, so, you've got these really heady, well-educated and very smart people making assumptions about what it takes to do that. And when you have that attitude, it feels condescending, right? I was never a 'dumb server'. I'm college educated, I was working toward other things, right? And, so, if you don't make those assumptions about entry-level team members and frontline managers, you will end up communicating so much better naturally that the written materials will kind of write themselves because you know what's going on and you know how to connect.

[Katie 12:02]

You will have a vision of a real person in front of you that you're communicating with, which is, yes, so powerful.

Let's turn a little bit to the tactics. I'm particularly keen to hear a little bit more about your approach to really engaging with these busy frontline, customer-facing employees. Can you tell us about *The Gatekeeper*, which I believe back then for Paris Baguette was your weekly newsletter? Who was *The Gatekeeper* aimed at and what was its primary objective?

[Lily 12:33]



The Gatekeeper was for weekly operational announcements. So, the newsletter went to everybody in the company, because again, it's always good for your support team or your corporate team to know what's going on. But it was meant for both the company-owned operators as well as the franchise operators, because we were dealing with both communities there. And it was to very simply tell the team what's changing, and what they need to do about it. So, each communication was written as what you need to know and what you need to do. And that's it. Because if you're writing this flowery story, they don't have time for that. And it's overwhelming. And the other piece of it was and part of my role as the gatekeeper because I more compiled the information and then wrote it out in a clearer way than I was creating content in this case. And so if we ended up with something like five changes in a week, I would be the one to say, hence 'gatekeeper', 'Hey, this is too much for this week, do you think we can push this to next week, or the week after?' Or understanding that there's a menu change coming up, we probably want to have some light Gatekeepers leading up to that so that they're not, again, washed over with heavy week, heavy week, than super heavy week. So, it's a matter of controlling it, not controlling. It was a matter of curating the content and the information. And having somebody there advocating for the field, knowing if they receive this message like this, it's not going to go well.

[Katie 14:24]

I'm being super respectful with people's time in that way, which is really important.

[Lily 14:29]

Yeah. Well, and also, how many times have you written a kind of lengthy email knowing no one was going to read it? We're in an era of TL;DR: too long; didn't read. And, so, if you just create a newsletter that's fully too long; didn't read, you're going to be more likely to get some action from what you need versus explaining the background and why all these people made these decisions. And why did we choose cucumber as the seasonal vegetable? They don't care. They just need to know 'What do I need to know? There's cucumber being added to the menu. And what do we need to do? Here are the preparations and the new recipes and train your team.' That's it.

[Katie 15:07]

We had a guest on the show called Steve Crescenzo, who is amazing. And he talked about how often in communications we're writing for the approver rather than the audience. And you've just given a great example of why should always write for the audience.

[Lily 15:21]

That's very well put, you know, it's not about your VP or your director level, it is about the people you're writing for. I really like that.

[Katie 15:30]

Yeah, he's, it was a great episode. Again, links in the shownotes.

Do you have any advice for building a great relationship and really engaging line managers? And I ask this because I think I'm seeing, I'm hearing I'm, in fact, I'm involved in loads of conversations at the moment about line managers. And I think it's because the last two years, whether you're literally working physically on the frontline, or you have the luxury in some ways or privilege to work at home in a hybrid way, line managers, we're putting a lot on line managers to kind of involve, engage teams at the moment, and we're really seeing the importance of line managers, but at the same time, they can have a lot on their shoulders. Sorry, that's a very long question. But I'm wondering if you've got any help, sort of tips or advice for really engaging that critical community?

[Lily 16:26]

Get to know them, whether you can do that in person and work beside them, or scheduling one-on-ones to really hear them out, regardless of if you're their supervisor or not. Giving them that attention and giving them your ear will mean the world. And if they're making decisions where you don't necessarily agree, or that wouldn't have been your approach, ask the reasons why they got there, rather than just tell them why you wouldn't have done it that way. Because there could very well be a reason they got there that you wouldn't have thought of, or something happened, because your frontline managers, as you basically put in your question, are the most important people in your company, regardless of your company, right?

I used to say this in my orientation, where, you know, restaurants, Mom and Pop restaurants operate on their own. There's somebody who operates as HR and somebody who operates as accounting, but you're on your own, you're doing everything, right? And, so, as you grow, you create the need for a support centre. So, I don't have a job if you aren't doing yours. And if you forget that you're backwards in and you're maybe inflating your sense of need at the company, or your sense of why you're at the company to serve them. And that doesn't mean you have to let them steamroll you or anything, right? People are right, people are wrong, people can learn and develop. But if you don't treat your frontline managers, like they're the most important people, you might get stuck doing it yourself, which might not be what you want, right? No job is beneath you, especially not your frontline managers. Because again, your job is on the backs of them.

[Katie 18:26]

You touched on orientation there. And I mean I've often thought that induction programmes, regardless of the industry, the sector, the business, can often be sort of wasted opportunities to really engage, get to know in part culture and values. Just explain how you approached orientation.

[Lily 18:50]

I've facilitated orientations in just about every company I've worked for in my adult life. So, I've done the all-day extravaganzas, as I've done one-hour orientations. My approach is 'This is a sales pitch for why



you've made the right decision joining our company', right? If you can capture them on day one and get them really excited and get them buying into the mission and your company's values and your company's vision, and then paint a real picture of what life at the company is like, that will make a huge impact. Especially they'll come on their first day or whatever shift after that with such energy and excitement, and then it's up to whoever's leading them to keep up that momentum.

But I think a lot of times, employers, particularly in the hiring process and the onboarding process, forget that it's a two-way decision, right? Yes, I'm offering you a job and I'm interviewing you to see if you're a good fit, but at the same time, as the interviewee I'm also making a decision and interviewing you, right? And I think that a lot of times both parties forget that. And, so, we don't want to forget the shift of power, for lack of a better term, right? We've made the offer, they've accepted. And now we have to build that value so that they don't leave. The cost of turnover is high, I don't, I'm not teaching you anything knowing that right? It's much cheaper and more efficient to retain a team member. And your first day says it all. And they'll all say that both ways, the company has to show very well on their first day, because it probably won't get better or easier than that for the employee. And on the other side, the employee never behaves better than they do on their first day. So, it's a great indicator of 'will this work?' And so helping them put their guard down of 'You've made this great decision', and really thinking of it as a sales pitch of, 'Hey, you've joined this great company, and here's all the things you're gonna get, here are all the things you can do, here are all the growth opportunities' they're gonna feel invested from day one, they will benefit from your energy and you loving the company, right?

And also, don't be afraid to be honest, too, you know, at a certain orientation I would tell people, you know, 'Hey, we're operating like a startup right now, and if you don't find joy in a hard day's work, and rolling up your sleeves and getting stuff done, this may not be the fit for you.' And people really appreciate that. Because there are people out there who want to operate in a system where everything's laid out, and they just have to maintain and do their job. And there's nothing wrong with that. But there are a group of special people who really find joy in creating those systems. But that's a harder job. And if you're not ready to do it, and acknowledge that, like, 'Not every day is going to be fun here.' You're gonna have them join and be disappointed later to find that out. Nobody ever left after I said that, right. So, it's not like that was a make-or-break for anybody, but it was honest. And I think people really latch onto that. And even from there, that's also how I gain connection because by meeting everybody I'm going to interact with as a trainer, I now already have an idea of what makes you tick.

[Katie 22:20]

Let's move on to where you are now at Medly. And research in this business. It's, I didn't realise how young it is, so 2017, is that right? when this business was established, and really shaking up, revolutionising, I would imagine the, you know, the pharmaceutical delivering prescription drugs, you know, it's been the same way for a long time. This organisation is changing the game. Can you tell us a little bit about Medly and your role within it?

[Lily 22:49]

So Medly is a digital pharmacy that focuses on same-day or next-day delivery. And exactly what you said, it's a really old profession, pharmacy. And it's one that has very much dragged its heels when it comes to progress and getting into the digital age. And, so, what Medly's doing is really getting ahead of that, and changing the game, like you said, right? And, so, we're very young, but we're expanding very quickly. My role there is the Delivery Trainer. So, I am in charge of training for the delivery department specifically. So that will range from the delivery managers to the in-pharmacy delivery team people who create the routes and pick the routes and organise the shipments and things like that. And also the drivers themselves. So, our drivers are a part of our team.

[Katie 23:45]

Would you say the drivers are the hardest audience you have to reach in terms of feeling and being the remotest, if that's a word?

[Lily 23:55]

They are the most interesting challenge of a group of employees that I've ever had to take, and I'm really enjoying the challenge. Because entry-level team members are my bread and butter. I know how to connect with your barista, your retail cashier. I figured that out, right? But they're actually in the store. So, if I have to tell you something, I can just do that, right? With our drivers, yeah, they pop into the pharmacy to pick up their routes, but then they're on their own, right? And this is not a population who checks email a lot. This is not a population who really wants to be spoken to, right? They're really enjoying this independence.

And one of the things we actually talk about in their orientation and training is pros and cons of being W2 versus 1099. You're not an independent contractor at Medly. You are an actual, well, a member of our team. And, so, with that, as opposed to, you know, a ride share driver, you get benefits, you get paid time off, you get all of those things as a driver, but you still have the same kind of independence, you're in your car and listen to whatever you want, you can be on your own, right? So, we tend to capture them really well on their first day. But because they're in and out, too, I think the managers have a hard time connecting with them as well. And, so, the hurdle we're trying to overcome now, is the approach to 'who is the best person to focus on?' Is it their manager to help them be more engaged, and lower the turnover, because there's a natural turnover with drivers and entry level work? Or how do we reach these drivers?

We're kind of in the middle of figuring that out. It's a puzzle in progress. But it's, it's a really interesting challenge. And the person on my team was a driver for a while before becoming a trainer so that he can use his experience as a driver. And I can use my experience as a corporate trainer, and we can really marry that together for something really great. So, a couple things, you know, you could send them a

survey, well, we can't get them to check their email. Maybe there's an automated message with our, you know, clocking system or something like that. So we're still in that phase. I'm still fairly new at this company. It's been a challenge, because they're so in and out, they're hard to reach. And there isn't a formula for who wants these jobs, either. It's similar to, like, my experience in the restaurant where you're usually working towards something else, right? You don't necessarily aspire to entry-level work. So, my approach as a manager has always been 'Why are you here? Are you working towards something else? Are you in school? Or are you looking for a growth opportunity?' And where I'm going with this ongoing puzzle is helping the leaders figure that out so that they can cater their response to their drivers, rather than have it be systemic. Because it's looking like this is best solved locally versus my coming in and figuring it out.

[Katie 27:12]

I love your approach, because what I can hear a lot of people doing in your situation is jumping straight to what's the media solution? Is it a podcast? Is it an app? Is it Yammer? And missing the point completely, that none of that is going to work. Unless you understand the mentality, the mindset, the motivation of these particular people, unless you're actually looking at them and thinking, are they all the same? Clearly not. They're very different. How do we segment them? Who's the biggest influence around this group? It's a much more nuanced, it takes longer the way you're talking about it. But at the end of the day, you're going to reach a much deeper understanding of who these people really are and how to have a proper conversation with them.

[Lily 28:03]

So, they're here, we're hiring them, right? We can afford the time to really figure this out the right way. Because the other thing is, you know, yeah, we could have our driver trainer, go on ridealongs, which is something that I'm really for, and we're about to maybe test. But on the other side, if you're a driver, and somebody shows up with a clipboard with like an assessment, you're not going to feel comfortable, you're not going to open up to that person. And even still, even if they don't show up with the clipboard, right? Because that's obviously thrown out the window very quickly upon going down that road of how will this go? In the event that this trainer ends up giving feedback to their manager, that's not so good. And they go, right? Even eventually, now they're afraid that he shows up. And so even that's not necessarily the attention, might not even be the answer. And so that's where this puzzle is really interesting. And it's funny, you mentioned a podcast, because that is something we've talked about, because you're in your car, right? So, we have you download this podcast, maybe that's a way we can reach you. But that's still only one-way. I want to know why you're here and what we can do to help.

[Katie 29:16]

We have been talking in this conversation a lot about entry-level employees, or those employees who are doing a job that is potentially supporting their love of something else, or their desire to do something else, or what we would call in the UK, and I know this is not true for your drivers because they're fully



employed by Medly, but what we have in the UK and probably you have in the States is lot of gig workers. Or if they're not gig workers, they're doing tours of duty. So, they're going to spend a year here, two years here, keep moving on. What's your instinct about whether you can really at the end of the day make these employees care about the goal, the mission, the culture, the *raison d'etre*, for want of a better word, of the organisation? Is it possible to make or encourage people to care that much when they're doing that kind of work?

[Lily 30:09]

I think it truly depends on the person. You know, one of the coolest things, and I use that word very mindfully, the coolest thing a manager ever said to me when I was a server, not caring about where I worked, was, 'I want to help you reach your goals. But when you're here, you need to give me 100%. That's all I ask. When you leave here, I don't care what you do, and I'll help you in whatever way I can. But you just need to give me 100%.' And that's it, right? And to him, 100% meant show up on time, be nice, do your work, give good service, do the job. So, I think it's not a one-size-fits-all answer.

I think the key is get to know your people, and find the ones who can care, the ones who can care or might care anyway, don't necessarily want to grow with the company, which obviously is a goal for any company, right? Internal development is efficient and wonderful for a lot of reasons. But identifying those people who do care, and really fostering that, and then finding a language to reach your team, the way my manager did, that makes them feel heard. You know, if I'm standing at a beauty counter in a department store, like my first job in New York City, and I had to call out for whatever reason, and you're trying to get me to believe that this is the most important thing in my life, you've lost everything with me. I am not going to believe you, trust you. I know that you're full of it. And, so, you have to know why your entry-level team is working. And that doesn't have to be super deep. It can be as little as 'this person wants to grow', 'this person doesn't' and then figure out your approach for both kinds of people.

[Katie 32:07]

You're making a great argument for quite a sophisticated understanding of your audience from a segmentation point of view, and not the segmentation that we usually say, which is hierarchy, job role, but much more around mindset, much more motivation.

[Lily 32:27]

I know it's super simple. And I don't claim and I won't claim in this podcast or any podcasts that I'm, you know, revolutionising anything. I don't think I'm saying anything that people don't know, I just think that we forget what it's like to be in that position. A lot of times, or in some cases, maybe you've never been in that position, maybe you went to school for executive leadership, and you never had to work entry level. And God bless you, you know. But, and you can even put it in a different way of, and I'm not relating entry-level team members to children, but what I do mean is, you know, you've got adults and parents who forget what it's like to be children so that when your three-year-old is throwing a fit, they don't



understand why because they're putting their adult perspective on their emotions, when really, you know, I'm trying to put on my shoes myself, and my parents are getting frustrated with me, and I'm just trying to put on my shoes. And I want to be a big kid and do that. And my, you know, my parents are insisting on doing it themselves. I'm very upset, right? And if you forget what it's like to have that be your point of view, you're not going to connect, you're not going to get that, you're not going to be able to efficiently communicate, because there will be that barrier. There'll be a wall.

[Katie 33:49]

And we should say here, I think, and I'm just reflecting on my experience of spending time with customer-facing people across different industries over the years, one thing, and I did a focus group literally a couple of days ago with some travel agents, corporate travel agents, the thing that does tend to unite people in those roles is the love of really delivering a great service to the customer. That does seem to be a real joy in that connection with the customer. Which sometimes I think we can potentially forget at a senior level while we're giving them instructions and commands. I don't know if you've seen that as well.

[Lily 34:32]

Sure, I also think being able, as a manager, being able to articulate a mission in a way that can connect with your team members can be really helpful. Now, that's much easier at Medly than it is in a bakery, right, because we're actually helping people in a basic way of 'I bring people their medication, especially at a time when they may not be able to pick it up themselves.' So, there's a lot of joy in doing good that way, right? But if you're working in, you know, my other industry has been food. The way I used to say it is, you know, 'You could be making somebody's day', right? Like, think about a time when you had a rough week, and you saved up your pennies to get that really special lemon tart that you love so much. And then you get there and the person's rude to you, or isn't nice, you know, or just as serviceable, right? It ruins the experience in the anticipation of that lemon tart, right? And how many times I've, you know, ended up as a restaurant manager talking to someone who was alone and finding out that, you know, they're a widow, and they don't really have anybody to talk to. And, you know, so there is a lot of good to be done in the restaurant industry, too. But it takes a little digging to sell that dream to people. Because again, I could make coffee at home, I can, you know, make my own muffins, I can do all of that at home. And so, yeah, you can easily resent somebody who comes in and yells at you because their flat white is wrong, you know, which happens, but you don't know what happened to them either. And, so, your job is to make their day a little brighter, a little better. Whether you've, you're the one who succeeds, or you're the one who moves the needle, you're still helping them. And, so, if you're able to articulate that and sell that dream to that can really help get your entry-level team members on board.

[Katie 36:31]

I love the way that you're humanising what can sometimes be quite dry corporate vision statements or mission statements; you're bringing it down to a really tangible, you know, you can feel the emotion in the stories that you're talking about. And they're so real. So, I guess that's a such an important part of

our job is actually turning something quite dry and high-level into an every-day experience that people can relate to, I guess.

[Lily 37:01]

Thank you for saying that. I again, I don't feel like I'm doing anything special. But I guess I don't know anything else than being myself. So, the question 'why' is very important. And if you haven't watched that TED talk of Simon Sinek, I think, yeah, talking about 'why', I highly recommend it. It's easy to find on YouTube or wherever. Because it does really inform not only your own 'why', but if you're managing people, understanding why someone's doing something can help you change your approach, which goes back to that theatre background of, you know, why might somebody do that? And that doesn't mean you have to be everybody's psychologist; I know that I put a lot of that in there. But it does help for sure.

[Katie 37:50]

We'll make sure link is to Simon Sinek's TED talk because it is yes, it's iconic, I suppose.

Let's talk a little bit about training materials. And I asked this question, because, again, on behalf of listeners who might be thinking about going back to line managers in particular, how we can best train, support line managers in their communication role as local leaders. I speak to clients who are often trying to develop these kinds of training materials and training programmes. How do you approach designing any kind of training? Are there any sort of hints or tips you can share with us?

[Lily 38:37]

There's a couple of things. In terms of media, I like to mix it up, right? If you're just sitting there reading something, even at a manager level, you might zone out, you might start not paying so much attention or it gets boring, right? And, so, if it's boring, it may not connect. So, I like to switch it up in a way where there's a video, there's something to listen to, there's something to click on, right? Learning Management Systems are very good for that. And, so, if you don't have one, I highly recommend it. But they do cost and that's an investment. But in my opinion, I've worked at companies where we didn't have one and I'm working at one now that has one and it is so much easier to build exciting content when you have something like that. So, highly recommend.

Use colour, use ways to make it pop the way a magazine needs to. You need different things to pull your attention and show you different ways, even if it's different ways to say the same thing, because, again, different people will connect to different ways of saying something. The other big thing I like to use a lot is humour. Why is Neil deGrasse Tyson so famous, right? He is a physicist; that should be very boring. We shouldn't know who he is. We shouldn't, I mean, we probably should know is and should care, but we do but why, right? And it's because he's so funny. He brings, and he'll talk about that, he brings humour into learning in a way that makes those deep questions he brings up fun, right? So don't be so dry, don't feel

like even if the material should be serious, find a way to get them to laugh, because it brings down their guard, it helps them connect, right? We connect through humour and fun and light.

I'll use an example in my interview process for Medly. They had me do a case study where because they wanted to see my work, and you know, that made total sense, and I had a lot of fun with it. And, so, the project was 'Build a training programme to teach your mum how to use Twitter'. Now, which was great, but also funny. My mum's a computer science professor, so not my mum. But someone's mum. I decided to 'Hey, if I'm gonna get this job, let 'em see me who I am.' I got, you know, and a lot of times I'll stifle some of my own creativity because of the corporate environment and what people expect for the approver, right? I said, 'You know what, if I'm going to get it, if I'm going to explore another job, let's do it my way', right? And if it works out great. And if it doesn't, whenever I have a great job already, which is kind of what that happened. I liked Paris Baguette a lot. But I saw this new opportunity in a new industry, right? And, so, I called the unit 'Twitter for Mummies' – a play on 'Twitter for Dummies'. It's mums and things like that.

And then I threw in things like, 'And this is what this is, and I can't even believe I'm explaining this to you, Mum', you know, like, things like that to just bring people's guard down. And luckily for me, they really took to that. So, I've been able to really foster that humour through my training materials with this new company. And the feedback has been good. Because again, you have to reach a lot of different audiences, the managers are going to take the same training as the new hires, at least for the base knowledge. I like that approach. Because your managers should know what your teams are learning. And if it's good for them, it'll be good for your managers, too. But the challenge then is you're dealing with two different levels of audiences. And, so, you want to make sure it speaks to both, you know, that humour really helps, throwing in a GIF, right of, you know, Michael Scott giving a thumbs up or something like that. So, it just, it makes them feel like, you know, I'm not just a trainer, I'm a cool trainer, I don't know. Like, don't forget to just have a little fun with it, because that's what people will connect with.

[Katie 42:41]

This might be quite a hard question to answer, but I'm ruminating on the fact that Medly is so young. And, at the moment, I'm hearing quite a lot from people in the comms world saying that younger startups are able to look at the whole employee experience, the employee journey, culture, values, all of those things differently, in a faster, more nimble, more agile, more collaborative way. And that's something that much more staid and larger organisations with a lot more heritage, maybe a history of siloed working. I don't know whether you've got any reflection on whether you've seen those two dynamics, and whether it's true of newer, younger, more useful companies that they are able to solve problems in a slightly different way? It might be a very hard question to answer.

[Lily 43:35]

What I'll say is, you know, there's been a big generational shift of what it means to work. So, my parents' generation was, 'you get a job and you work it, and we don't really care if you like it, when you come home, you're home. And when you're at work, you're at work.' But my generation has grown up, you know, I'm a Millennial, sorry everybody. And I grew up, you know, not necessarily my parents, they were always, you know, self-employed entrepreneurs, but they, you know, you see a lot of people kind of like, not care about their jobs or not feeling very passionate. And we were kind of taught like, 'live your dreams', right? And, so, I think a lot of people in my generation and age cohort are looking to make an impact, right? You hear that a lot. And, so, I think that you're getting a lot of new perspective on collaboration. I'm finding that with Medly, and collaboration is one of the core values, at least, so this is nice. But collaborating is really easy there. Even though like it's a larger company than I'm used to, with a lot of people I don't know, a lot of different kinds of departments I've never had to interact with, like, product, tech technology and apps and things like that has never been something I've had to really deal with, there's no ego. If I have to ask you to, you know, 'hey, can you work on this with me?' You know, and I've never met you before, it's always met with kindness and 'let's do it'. And 'let's get this done'. And, so, I can't necessarily identify effects like young company culture. But in my experience, that's true when you're saying the majority of workers at this point are Millennials, and we want to make an impact, which means that we have to work together toward a common goal.

[Katie 45:31]

But it's also making me think, if we don't do it that way, if we don't collaborate on the solutions, then are they less likely to be successful, less likely to be adopted? And embedded is the flip side of that, that actually, I would like to be involved. I'd like to participate. I'd like to be asked for my views.

[Lily 45:49]

Absolutely. I know that my work love language is being included. I learned by watching and I learned I'm able to then internalise what I like about this, what I don't like about this, what are my thoughts on this? And that's how I really have learned and grown through my career. And I find that to be very true for people who are interested in growth. So again, this isn't a technique you want to use with everybody. But one technique I use that I haven't mentioned yet is even as a corporate trainer, I utilise the frontline managers as feedback. So, if I'm writing a new training, yes, of course, I send it to my team and my supervisor, but I send it to them too: 'hey, is this helpful for you, for your team? Is there anything I'm missing?' And they feel good about that, because they're feeling like they're making that impact in a way that regardless of the truth of this, when you're a day-to-day manager, you don't really feel your impact on the company, right? You're kind of just doing it, even though you're the most important part. And the only reason why the company exists, you're removed from the innovation part of it. And a lot of times you're removed from the opinion piece, and the feedback loop and all of that. So, by bringing your frontline managers in on that (and again, you want to choose very wisely who you're doing this with), it really helps with that collaboration. And it helps with that internal growth and development, your

morale, things like that, because we're all in this together. And why wouldn't you ask your line managers what they think about whatever you're working on?

[Katie 47:38]

When you say you want to select them carefully, are you looking for any particular traits or attitudes in your selection process?

[Lily 47:47]

Absolutely. I'm looking for people who will take the feedback seriously. I'm looking for people who would like being included. I think that's a really important part. And, of course, people who aren't too busy, because I wouldn't want them feeling like, as much as I don't see myself as somebody corporate, I can't control how they perceive me. And so I'm very mindful of the fact that if I'm asking you to look this over, and of course, I'll say like 'when you get a second, this isn't urgent, when you can, at your leisure', all of those things, they still, depending on who it is, may perceive that as somebody from corporate's asking me to do this, 'drop what you're doing and do it', and I wouldn't want that. And, of course, I'll loop in their supervisors to make sure they know I'm doing this and things like that. So, you don't want them to be too busy. You want to make sure that you know them and you respect their working style, their opinion, things like that. And you also want to make sure that it's not somebody who's just gonna say 'Yes', you too, because, again, somebody for corporate assessing your opinion, you do get people who are afraid to say, 'No, I wouldn't do it this way.'

[Katie 48:58]

Yeah, very good point. Are you happy to go on to those quick-fire questions?

[Lily 49:04]

Yeah, let's do it.

[Katie 49:06]

So, if you could go back in time, what careers advice would you give your younger self?

[Lily 49:12]

Sure. Oh, nice. Two things. One, a career change doesn't mean failure. And more people do it than you'd ever consider. And don't downplay your alternative and untraditional experience and point of view because that's what makes us special and what helps you bring something new to the table.

[Katie 49:37]

I like it. How would you complete this sentence: World class communication is...

[Lily 49:46]

...clear, concise, and a little funny.

[Katie 49:53]

I like it. Is there a book, a report a film, even, that we should all read to better understand how to communicate effectively.

[Lily 50:05]

This is a tricky one. Part of me is like, watch the American Office and determine what works and what doesn't. I think that's really good. But the serious answer, I suppose, and this isn't so much about communication, it's like more self drive, is the book *12 Week Year*. And it's about how to set goals for yourself and how to achieve them. So, thinking of throwing out the annual KPI review process and thinking of it in 12 weeks. And basically it breaks down how to set a goal and how to get there in a very like, metric-based way. It's a really simple book, easy to read, very repetitive, because it's meant to teach you. But it's been really helpful to me, in not so much in the communi-. Well, it helps me with communication up the chain. But I think that if you understand how to set a goal and figure out how to get there, you'll do it, if that makes sense.

[Katie 51:15]

Oh I like it. It does. So, *The 12 Week Year* written by Brian P. Moran, I believe, and we will put the link in the show notes. Thank you. And then, finally, you get a billboard for millions to see. And you can put on that billboard anything you like, any message, any image, whatever. What are you going to put on your billboard?

[Lily 51:41]

Big block letters: EMPATHY. I don't think you're surprised by that. I just I, I firmly believe that if you can connect and put yourself in somebody else's shoes, you will get somewhere with them. And that's a good message for the world right now, right? You know, we're so – everybody's saying this 'we're so divided' – but we are. And I think that there's, what we're missing now that we weren't even 20 years ago is the idea that, like, how did you get there? How are you? And I don't care what you're thinking about and what side of whatever you're on. It's just like, how did you get there? What brought you to think that way? And getting into somebody's brain that way and, like, having some empathy of like, why they may think that way, doesn't necessarily, you know, explanations are not necessarily excuses, right? Why somebody, you know, a serial killer probably went through some pretty terrible trauma. That doesn't mean I feel bad for them. But it does mean I understand maybe how they got there. And that's an extreme example, but if you can really empathise with your people, with your team, with whomever you're trying to communicate with, you'll connect with them more than you would if you didn't.

[Katie 52:53]



I love that. Explanations are not necessarily excuses. Understanding not just what someone thinks, but why they got to where they are in thinking that thought, wow.

Lily, this has been such an enjoyable conversation. Thank you so much.

[Lily 53:12]

Thank you. I really enjoyed myself as well.

[Katie 53:17]

So that brings to a close this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. For the shownotes and the full transcript, head over to our website. That's abcomm.co.uk/podcasts.

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Finally, thank you to my producer John Phillips, our sound engineer Stuart Rolls and my wonderful talented colleagues at AB, all of you keep the show on the road. And a heartfelt thank you to each one. So, until we meet again, lovely listeners, I wish you a wonderful summer. Stay safe and well. And remember: it's what's inside that counts.