



The Internal Comms Podcast – Season 9

Episode 74 – Andy Goram, *Culture with sticking power*

Transcript

Katie 00:03

The Internal Comms Podcast is brought to you by AB, the world's first specialist internal comms agency. For nearly 60 years AB has worked, hand in hand, with internal comms leaders around the world to inform, inspire and empower their workforces building great organisations from the inside out. If you'd like to discuss new, effective, exciting ways to connect with your people, please get in touch. Visit abcomm.co.uk. And if you do, I look forward to meeting you. And now, on with the show.

Welcome to a brand new season of The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay. This show is devoted to those of you responsible for improving communication at work. Every fortnight I will be asking leading lights from the world of communication, academia and business to sit in my hot seat, where we will tease out practical real-world ways to help employees feel more informed, inspired and involved at work. We kick off season nine with Andy Goram.

Andy started his career in hospitality, where he says I lifted the curtain on 'Have a nice day'. He then moved into marketing, where one of his biggest challenges was rebranding Gala Bingo, the UK's biggest bingo business. And it's during this project that Andy uncovered a deep human truth that lay at the heart of this brand. And this is just one of the many powerful stories you'll hear throughout our conversation. During his time as a marketer, Andy admits to spending millions on traditional marketing activities before realising that to make a real difference to the customer experience and business performance, you need to start inside an organisation. That realisation led him to establish Bizjuicer, his consultancy business, which is all about creating a sustainable competitive advantage for growing businesses by uncovering, articulating and connecting an organization's purpose, vision and values to their people.

Andy is also host of his own podcast Sticky From The Inside, where he interviews experts on workplace culture, employee engagement and business performance. Both marketing and HR are in the attraction, retention and growth game, says Andy, they just have different target markets. And throughout this conversation, you'll hear Andy talk about the magic that happens when these two disciplines form a closer alliance. We mentioned a few books throughout this conversation, all of which you can find in the show notes. And he talks about the influence of Kim Scott's book, *Radical Candor*, and her concept of ruinous empathy when as a leader or manager, we avoid those difficult, critical conversations with someone because we fear hurting them. We talk about the service profit chain, a book that some 26 years ago established the now indisputable link between customer loyalty and employee satisfaction. I really couldn't have asked for a better guest to kick off this new season. Andy's passion for this inside-out approach to building better businesses is completely infectious. We talk about vulnerability, leadership, dead simple ways to build trust and the hard thing about soft skills. I love this conversation, and I hope you do too. So without further ado,



here's Andy Goram. So Andy, welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast. It is a delight to have you here.

Andy 04:31

I'm so happy to be here. I can't tell you, Katie, it's so nice and weird being on the other side of the mic for a change. So, yeah, I'm really looking forward to it. Thank you for having me on.

Katie 04:42

That's a pleasure. We're going to start in a slightly strange place, but listeners, there's a method in my madness. Andy, can you tell us about where you learned or maybe from whom you learned your work ethic?

Andy 04:59

Oh blimey. This is assuming that I work really hard, right? I really value hard work. Simple answer. Mom and Dad worked really hard, right? Mom was a childminder, dad worked as an IT director for a holiday company. But I have to principally hold up Betty and Rosemarie. Betty and Rosemarie were two ladies of later years, shall we say, that ran a little bakery patisserie out the back of Tattenham Corner in Epsom near the racecourse, right? And as a 16 year old, I really wanted to be a pastry chef. I figured I would be the next Michael Nadell. Anybody into pastry knows who Michael Nadell is, but anybody else is going: "yeah, no clue." But anyway, I wanted to be like him. And I was given the opportunity to go and work in their kitchen on Saturday mornings, getting there for 6 am, I absolutely loved it. My very first job in there was making lemon icing, so the huge ingredient mix of icing sugar and lemon juice. That was my very first job. But I learned so much in that place about work ethic, and effort, and fun and engagement. Without trying to crowbar engagement in, I think, the fact was, I was earning a pound an hour, which was not very much even by those days, right? But I'd be volunteering, Katie, to work over the weekends in Easter and Christmas. You know, decorate in chocolate logs. I mean, no one could stand, none of my mates could stand being near me in Easter because I just had this reek of bun spice about me, you know, go to the pub, "what's that aftershave you've got, Andy?" That's sugar water and cinnamon, and clove oil. That's, that's what that is, mate." But I absolutely loved it. They worked so hard. I mean, they were there well before I was ever there. They left well after I left. They taught me so much. They were so patient. But they kicked my backside around that kitchen. They expected you to work really, really hard. And even if I wasn't decorating cakes upstairs listening to the radio, I was on the floor using a scraper to get all of the kind of flour and sugar and crud off the floor at the end of the day or shoved up the top of the ovens to clean those because they could get dusty. It sounds quite Dickensian, but it really wasn't. It was a wonderful, wonderful work experience for your first job. And for me, that's kind of seen me through the whole time, that combination of loving what you do, really being engaged in what you do, working really, really hard at it and having fun while you're there. It's a great formula.

Katie 07:44

And do you still have a signature dessert that you'd like to share with us?



Andy 07:48

Listen, there is a need, there should be. People keep telling me there should be an e-commerce site at Christmas because I have, let's say, I've evolved the humble mince pie on a few steps, and you know, people like Heston Blumenthal copy these, these ideas I have. But now my go to at Christmas is the Viennese topped mince pie. So, that is a mince pie, a shallow mince pie, topped with a lovely rosette of Viennese biscuit. So, you get all the lovely spice and luxury of the minced meat, and what have you. And you this beautifully buttery, just melt-in-the-mouth nice Viennese biscuit on top. So all my family want those, all my friends want those. You know, I think, how many did I make this year? I probably made about 20 dozen of them, this year, this Christmas.

Katie 08:39

Oh my goodness me, speaking as someone who hasn't had breakfast, I hope you're not going to stop to hear my tummy rumbling. We are going to fast forward now because you went on to work in hospitality. And when we were speaking earlier, before this show, you used a phrase which really piqued my interest. You said: "I lifted the curtain on Have a Nice Day." And I thought oh, what a wonderful, what a wonderful phrase. I'm just curious, what did you find behind the curtain, first of all, and then how did that experience subsequently kind of change or shape your thinking about culture and engagement?

Andy 09:20

It was really interesting. It was a proper Taylor Paradox. So, as part of my university degree, I had to get a job abroad, ideally to back up the language that we were doing. But I was doing Spanish, and I couldn't find a place in Spain, and frankly, I didn't really want to find a place in Spain. Not when I had someone who tapped me on the shoulder on a family holiday a few years before and said, "If you ever need a job in America, let me know. My brother runs a hotel. His brother ran the Pebble Beach Company in Monterey, California. So the home of the Pebble Beach Golf Pro-Am tournament is out there. You know, the lodge at Pebble Beach, the sister property of the Inn at Spanish Bay. So I went and worked at the Inn at Spanish Bay for well over a year as a concierge. Just completely incidentally, Katie, right? If you ever find yourself going abroad and looking for a job, concierge is the greatest job you ever get because it's a job where you have to learn the area, right? You have to learn all the really nice things that area has, places to go places to eat and drink, particularly where you can drink. Because all these restaurants want you to recommend their place, they want you to come and see it. They want you to experience it. So I spent my life pretty much going out, experiencing amazing restaurants and great places to drink for free, to then offer and recommend them to customers who would tip you for recommendation. It's just a beautiful virtuous cycle, right?

Katie 10:49

Win win on every level.

Andy 10:51

Yeah. But as part of that, I went through the hotel's customer service training, right? And so my impression of American customer service training was the force feed of 'Have a nice day,

missing you already." And those phrases do exist. But, what I found behind the whole piece was some real, genuine authenticity with this desire to make a connection with the guests. I mean, in my own personal opinion, the American service industry has progressed so much faster than we had in the UK because the customer had evolved. You know, a British customer can sit there, have a meal, it'd be really mediocre or awful, and the the server comes over and says, "How is everything with your meal?" And we will look at each other, and then look at the server and go, "it's lovely, thank you, thank you very much." They will go away, we go on moaning about it. In America, if your water is a few degrees too warm, you will know about it, right? Now, because they are not afraid of complaining and have high expectations, the service industry has to evolve. But it's no great secret. They just learned that if you're a waiter or in the service industry, making a genuine connection with your customer is a great way of building a relationship and understanding, and the service journey goes a lot better. So lifting the curtain on "Have a nice day" was really the very simple premise of look, imagine you're going through this experience yourself, what's the best experience you could get? That you would think is a really, really great experience. And then, right, we'll go and try and deliver that experience. And at the same time, make a connection with the person that you're talking to, right? Make a connection, even for 20-30 seconds, be there, right? Be there with them. They'll tell you pretty quickly whether they want you there or they don't, and that's a good way to kind of gauge service. You know, some people like to interact with with their server, other people just want you to deliver food and leave me alone, right? Great people in the service industry have this kind of ESP to work that out. We were taught that ESP, and you get that from making connection, right? From sussing people out. But I think the really big thing was trying to make it as genuine as possible, because you can see through the veneer, and that's the paradox I was talking about. Our impression over here, back in the 90s of "Have a nice day" was just programmatic response to someone who didn't really mean it. You're dead behind the eyes, you're saying "Have a nice day." The really cool thing behind it was, no, this is an attempt to make a connection, right? And make a genuine connection. And to be fair, as may well come out in this conversation today, this making a genuine connection has tended to be the red thread throughout my career, really.

Katie 13:41

Let's move on, then. Because from hospitality you went into marketing. You did say to me that quite early on, you realised that marketing wasn't advertising.

Andy 13:54

Yeah, I'm not a clever person. So you know, marketing advertising was one big lump as a module as part of this International Hospitality degree that I was doing. And I came out going young going to go into marketing, thinking I'd be, you know, maybe set with a creative, you know, us living our lives, talking about brands and products and coming up with adverts, and you realise pretty quickly when someone's asking you to copy check a leaflet that marketing is very different to advertising. But I've loved my career in marketing to a point really, yeah.

Katie 14:26

You were very honest when we spoke earlier about certain time in your career when I think a new director called you out, and it ended up being a turning point in your career. Are you happy to share that experience with us?

Andy 14:43

Yeah, I'm happy as long as you don't mind me crying. I still kind of get emotional about this sort of stuff. I guess it's in the middle of my career, I'm working for a big pop company at the time. I had come to this first my first big company after working in a small hotel group for a little while. And I couldn't believe I was working in a business that pays you to go out and drink and enjoy pubs and restaurants. And you're working on the brand side, you're working on promotions, you're working with suppliers, what have you. And it was great. And, you know, I progressed pretty pretty quickly, I thought was pretty good. And I got a bit of a reputation as a guy who could do things. And I made the massive mistake of really believing my own price. And I thought I was a bit special, I got pulled out for CEO tasks and MD tasks, and all that kind of stuff. And I felt I was a bit untouchable, which I think resinated itself in a bit of a poor attitude, nothing nasty, not that sort of attitude, but just a little bit cocky. And I think at that age, I was just lacking some self awareness. But we had a new commercial manager come in to the marketing team. And I say he was a small man, because I was 663 and full of myself, and a small man set in front of me. And in our first one to one together, he'd started the conversation with something like, "Okay, Goram, if things don't change, you've got to find a new job." And I'm like, "okay, in which department?" And he's like, "no, no, no, another company." And I'm, I'm kind of shocked, stunned, affronted, but this major part of me, entirely embarrassed. Because I probably know that he's called out my attitude. And, at that point, you get a massive dose of self-awareness pretty quickly. And, you know when you know, you've done something wrong, and you get that cold hair piece at the back of your neck. Yes, I sat there in this meeting, I found it really hard to concentrate with what he was saying. But he pretty much, systematically, but in a supportive way, just showed all my failings. It was a big, big thing for me. And I didn't really know what to do at that point. The journey home that night was a very, very quick car journey. It wasn't, it was 70 miles, but it went so quick, because I just couldn't stop thinking about stuff. And I think I'd be honest, if I said, the next day, everything changed in terms of my attitude. I think I've been brought up to be a good guy. You know, do the right thing, be polite, all that, you know, all those kind of good values. And when someone calls you out like that, that's a pretty stark thing to hear. And I didn't want to upset anybody. I didn't want to do things wrong. I didn't want to get into trouble. But it made me reassess. And to be fair to Richard, he saved my career, I think, because if I'd gone on and continued to behave like I did, I certainly wouldn't have gotten the opportunity I eventually got in that organisation which changed my direction. And I would have gone on being the cocky, boastful idiot who thought people loved him, but probably was the kind of guy that a good laugh with and then when he walked away, I thought he was a bit of a tool. And I don't know, maybe people still think that about me. But I will be forever grateful to Richard. And do you know what the beautiful thing is? A couple of years ago or so in lockdown, I reached out to Richard because I hadn't really kept in contact, and eventually got to sort of speak to him. And he was completely unaware of it. He just thought, just doing my job. And he really didn't want to make a big deal of it at all, which I think, is wonderful because that to me, that's what leadership is about; you don't make the big thing about it. You go on and you do your best

for people. He says, "I thought you're better than you are presenting yourself, Andy," and so we had a chat about it. The fact is, no one else had. You know, to me this all links to the sort of Kim Scott 'Radical Candor' stuff. I sat there in this first meeting with Richard thinking, who is this guy telling me this stuff? And it was only because he cared deeply about me that he was confident enough to challenge me directly, right? But he was the first person in my career properly who had done that. So I will always be eternally grateful to Richard and it sort of set me on a path. I am not saying I was the perfect leader after that point by any stretch of the imagination, and I've made hundreds of mistakes, but they've all led me to a path to understand what it really, really should be about. And Richard kicked me off on that path, you know?

Katie 19:43

I think it's a wonderful story. It really talks to the importance of, as you say, that he didn't think it was a brave conversation. He thought he was just doing his job as the leader, but actually many of us would think it was a brave conversation. How many times have we tried to just brush something under the rug and hope that it just goes away? And actually, it was a moment in time that you've never forgotten. So, yeah, I think that's amazing.

Andy 20:06

I think, you know, that whole model of Kim Scott, I feel if I look back, I probably lived the vast majority of my early career in ruinous empathy, trying to be everybody's dad when I was a leader, and look after everybody, not call stuff out, but just make sure everybody's feeling okay. And actually, people don't want to be dad, they want a leader. And I think when you genuinely care about the people who are lucky enough to lead, then it's your absolute duty to help them be the best that they can be. And that means praising them when they do amazing things. But it also means, like Richard did, have the tough conversations, call them out. And I think that that's what the essence of real leadership is about.

Katie 20:52

Without trying to shoehorn something in, there's a thread running through this already, from the minute you talked about your work ethic to here, which is that engagement and feeling really engaged, and performance that absolutely linked, you know. Anyone that still thinks that engagement is some kind of fluffy, woolly, nice to have thing — oh my goodness me, it is all about better performance.

Andy 21:21

Engagement is an outcome, Okay? It's, it's been diluted down to a measure. But that's not what this is about. You're hitting all of my triggers because people who talk about this stuff being fluffy, particularly when people refer to things as soft skills, winds me up. Because there's nothing soft having really good mastery of being a human being, and managing people on a human level, right? Because if it was that simple, I'd have nothing to talk about, I'd have nothing to help businesses about. Because it will just be common practice. The fact that it's common sense doesn't mean it's common practice. And it isn't common practice. And there is nothing easy in having those conversations. If you haven't never had those conversations, if your personality type would like to avoid conflict, that doesn't make it easy.

Does that mean you can't do it? Not at all. It just means you need to be conscious of it, you need to be intentional with it. And, like a lot of things, you need training in it, right? You need practice. Engagement is the key to unlocking so many great things. Like even my company name, which is an over-thought name by marketing, what a surprise. But it's all about getting the good stuff out of the people in your business, right? There's so much latent opportunity, innovation, energy, ideas, sitting within the population that you work with, that is just untapped. Because sadly, in most cases, people haven't been asked for that information. Or it's just taken that they've got a job and that's what they do, and they're here to do that. There's nothing else to it. The thing is, engagement isn't always about all the happy stuff as well, and agreement. Engagement means you're happy to challenge something, because you're interested, you've got a vested interest in it. And challenge is one of the great things. When we work stuff through and we think about all the different angles, we come to a better conclusion. And so, for me, engagement is about creating genuine interest in what we're trying to achieve, real connection between what drives the business and what drives the people within it. Finding those connections is where engagement lies, right? Having an interest willingly going above and beyond what you think you need to do to go and do it because you care about something. To me, that's what we talk about when we when we talk about engagement, and wonderful cultures are just fueled by this stuff. I think it is worth touching on the challenge you were actually set after that moment with Richard, because am I right in thinking you were involved in a transformation project to almost reengineer the business to be more customer-focused? Yeah, I had my greatest job title given to me, which was the mad director, which has helped me have interesting conversations with people forever on my CV. What's this? So the mad director was all about trying to get the business at the time, and now it sounds ridiculous, but have a real focus on the customer and the customer experience across the whole business. So people really took an interest in what the market was doing, what the customers were doing, what they wanted and how to delight them. And my job was to think about service and insight. And I didn't know at the time, but culture and engagement really. And I spent a couple of years, I guess, drip-feeding this stuff through the organisation with some great people around me helping, to try and get everybody to think a bit more customer. It's things we all take for granted now, but back in the day, less so. And it kind of moved me from the promotions and marketing guy into the customer engagement culture guy. My first values project came at this point, you know, helping determine the things that really are important to a business, and how they add value to the people within the business to help achieve objectives. That was one of my favourite projects that I ever did in that business. And now I get to do plenty of those sorts of things, right? That mad director roll, which for me was about making a difference. That's how I kind of changed the acronym, making a difference for customers in their experience. But you can't just focus all on the customer because you're a service brand. And so, your service brand lives and dies by the people who deliver that brands of the customer on the frontline every day. For a lot of my time, I was working with support teams in the centre, they need to understand that their customers are dealt with other guys on the frontline, not some holier than thou, ivory tower central team who told the operators what to do. You're there to support them to deliver a great experience, right? So a lot of what we're doing was about trying to create those relationships and understandings as well. So yeah, my mad director role was a pivotal part for me, and I absolutely loved it. Absolutely. And it changed my direction. I still after that went and did some brand roles in other

companies, but it broadened my view on things. So I might have been employed to do a marketing job on paper. But they always ended up being more experiential, as a result. And I'd crossed that paradigm of doing marketing promotions into a blend of marketing, operations, and people. I've always kind of ended up from that point on seeing myself sitting in the middle of those departments, trying to find the customer truth, the brand truth and the employee truth that kind of linked everything together. I'm not a massive believer in having consumer facing brands and employer brands within the same brand. For me, it's one thing, it's one attitude, it's one belief system that should work together in harmony. And that's where I've ended up going, you know? That's where I ended up taking a lot of my roles, and that's why eventually when the corporate world wasn't doing what I needed it to, I left.

Katie 27:39

I think that's so interesting. I think we're seeing ever more, aren't we, closer and closer alignment, almost blurring of the line completely between internal external, and total awareness, well hopefully a total awareness, that your employee experience drives your customer experience, and that they can't be thought of in silos.

Andy 28:02

We should all be aware of the service profit chain. Look, don't ask me to rattle off the authors of that book, because they've all got names I find hard to pronounce. But there's Heskett and Schlesinger, that's the one who I really struggle with. And Saskia (Sasser), I think? They wrote that original book, Service Profit Chain. I probably got some of their names wrong, okay? This is what happens with me.

Katie 28:26

That's what shownotes are for, don't worry.

Andy 28:28

There you go. That book, which essentially sort of says, happy employees equals happy customers equals happy shareholders is an old message but one that should never be forgotten, okay? Great service brand delivery. And not just service brand, but that's primarily been my experience. The be-all end-all of it is how it's delivered on the floor by the people every day in front of customers, because if they're having a bad day if they don't get something, if it's not working, if they haven't had something explained properly, that's the impression that the customer gets of your brand, product, service, whatever it may be. The closer that you can get to the people who deliver that brand to understand what it is you're trying to do, why you're trying to do it, and knowing their part in delivering that and enhancing that, the greater shot of you getting the experience you've conceptualised and built around the board table actually being delivered in practice? And as a marketer, I can sit here being all preachy about it, but I spent millions trying to tell customers "Hey, look at us!" Why should you consider us? Why should you buy with us? Why should you stay with us? Why should you recommend us to anybody. I spent billions of pounds explaining that, and two fifths of naff all on engaging my internal audiences. When I learned that lesson, and then it wasn't essentially learning a lesson because it had gone wrong, it was just uncovering something else that enhances the result exponentially. You never go back. You'll never go

back, you'll always be looking at, right, how do I engage that internal audience? How do I help them understand their part in this? How do I take all of our thoughts, wishes, ideas, criticisms, and what we do, and how we can make it better, because there's loads and loads of answers out there that are just waiting, waiting. If I had my time again, Katie, I'll be awesome, right? Because I've learned so many lessons about leadership and so many lessons about audience engagement, that I would do things very differently going back. I'd start inside, genuinely. And not just because my businesses, they're trying to do that now. Genuinely, I'd do that because it works. It works.

Katie 31:01

It works. Let's talk about a very practical experience of this at Gala Bingo, and establishing that brand. So for people that don't know, it's Britain's biggest retail bingo operator.

Andy 31:15

Well, it was Katie, it was. It was my job to change it, because I was the Chief Brand Officer, CMO, whatever you want to call it, for Gala Bingo retail. But we did an MBO as an executive team there to buy the retail clubs because the all powerful rest of the company want all the online stuff. So we were running Gala Bingo on licence, but that's no good, especially if you want to build an omni-channel brand of your own. So my job was to rebrand Britain's biggest retail bingo operator, not lose any of the 10 year in heritage and all the rest of it, completely separate it, and then set it up for a new omni-channel world. So, I'm the guy that had to change Gala Bingo to Buzz Bingo. So Buzz Bingo is its iteration. Now, I don't think there are many people who wake up in the morning and go: you know what, I really want to be the marketing director for a bingo company? I'm sure there are people, but it wasn't me. But I'll tell you, the six years I spent in that bingo business were amazing. I don't think outside of hospitals, that there are many businesses where frontline employees and customers spend so much time together. So maybe four and a half hours at a time a session, and people coming in three, four days a week. I mean, this is this is family in these places. You know, the relationships that you see built between employees and customers is a real blurred line. In a regulated gambling business, that's a that's an interesting thing to think about, right? The link between, I guess, customer and employee was so strong. I would walk into a bigger club as a guy in a suit from the centre, and I'd be sitting down and trying to talk to the customers about how they were doing and what was going on and what did they like. That conversation was for nothing if the employees were unhappy about something, because I would get it from the customers. If the employees weren't happy and had been talking about stuff, the customers knew and they would rip you to shreds when you walked in. "You got to look after these people, you've got to make sure they're happy about stuff, because it impacts on our experience, and we don't want to see them upset." Yeah, really, really amazing. But the thing I found most amazing about bingo was how humble everybody who works in bingo is. And this was a trigger for a lot of things that I've thought about subsequently around purpose and engagement. And whenever you spoke to somebody working in a bingo club, they would describe what they do quite literally. So you know, I shovel chips, sell a lot of chips in bingo clubs, or I give out change for the interval games, you know, or I sell books. And, bless them — when you spend enough time in a bingo club and you watch what's going on, that's very, very little of what they're really

doing. And you watch them. And what they are doing is they are fashioning and creating relationships right across the club, right? They are connecting people who otherwise wouldn't necessarily be connected, sometimes with themselves, sometimes with other customers, but they're making connections. And when we're doing the rebrand and we're trying to find our sort of space to reposition ourselves, and have some new space but be connected to what we were really intrinsically about, I started to talk to the employees about their roles. And in one conversation, it started that when they were telling you what what they did, and I said, "well, that's not my observation. My observation is you are creating relationships. In some sense, you're banishing loneliness." Because if you think about the archetypal customer going to a Bingo club, often the people that they see in that club are the mainstay of their community — the people they see. And yet, when they come to the club, and the reason they come to the clubs often, is because of they get a sense of community. And when you sit down and speak to the teams about this, I get goosebumps. You physically see a reaction in them. It's like they sit up and they put their shoulders back and their chest puffs out. All of a sudden, they walk with a bit more purpose. And you see him intentionally going around the club doing this stuff. I spoke to a few about what that impact was, and they just said, it was nice to be seen, and that they felt really proud. I didn't think I'm doing anything special. I'm just kind of shining a light on what they're doing, because they're the special ones. And we built a lot of the brand personality around them, and even in the design phase. I got a bit excited in the design phase of the logo and stuff. We had this animated piece, where I don't know if you remember the Colgate ding, you know. So that little sparkle, I put a little kiss kind of sparkle on on the animated logo. And genuinely, because I knew in the future I'd be going, that was my little nod to everybody in the bingo club, that I know what you're doing. And whenever I press whenever I presented the logo, when we were telling the story of the brand going forward, I always drew their attention to the little Colgate thing is, that's my little wink to you guys, because this is all about you. Again, that was a great bit of fun and engagement. But honestly, the engagement we got was brilliant. It came down to a head one day. So, there's a big retail brand, we've got a lot of faces and signs the change, practically. And I'm going out with our investor board, round one of the early clubs. And here I am trying to show you the bits and pieces that I've done, and all they want to do is go back of house. They go back of house, and this is where you take your heart and your hand because you know what they're gonna see back of house, that's not customer facing, right? And we walked down a corridor and there's one of the sort of the big kind of brand engagement boards on there. And they offer engagement about lots of different sectors about what we're trying to do and why. And an assistant manager comes down the corridor, called Colleen, and the board pounce on her, right? And they go what's all this about on the wall now I'm like, Ah!

Katie 37:44

It's the acid test!

Andy 37:47

My career is flashing past my eyes at this point, maybe I'm leaving earlier than I think I'm gonna be leaving, and Colleen, like takes a takes a beat, looks at the poster and starts telling her version of the brand's story and, interestingly, the offer development. And I'll tell

you what, she told a story better than I could ever, ever tell. I was then looking at the board in this corridor, and they were looking at each other and nodding and smiling. And at that point, I sort of backed up and thought, you know, we've got it right here. The minute that you can allow an equip and empower someone else to tell the essence of that story themselves, really see themselves in it and really understand what as a business they as a team were going to do to make it happen, I think that's when you can say we've got some engaged people here. And that was all through a series of storytelling and connection and spending some real time explaining why we were trying to do things, and where it was coming from. And that made a tremendous difference. So taking the time to do this stuff means that you can have Colleens all over your business, really getting it, really tuned into it and making it better than you think you could ever be.

Katie 39:00

There's something really interesting and what you've said around that phrase that someone said to you, well, it's nice to be seen. And I was thinking about that, because what you're describing is two benefits of really seeing and really understanding, and really celebrating what is genuinely happening on the ground. So one, you build a brand around something that oh, by the way, it has to be real, it's actually what's going on — as you say authentic, it's genuine. But two, you're as you're saying, you're giving people that moment where their shoulders lifts, they stand up straight, they stand up tall, because I know the contribution I'm making and it matters and it's been noticed. It's interesting. I was speaking to someone about, I won't say which airport, but a UK airport about line management, and the happiest people were the passenger facing teams. And I said, what was the big difference that line managers can actually make? And he just simply said to notice their people, to talk to their people, to smile at their own people in the team. That's the whole thing about just being seen, isn't it, and understood?

Andy 40:10

I spoke with a good friend of mine who runs a sort of mediation business about a similar experience he had, and he was working with a guy in a factory, relatively new line manager, didn't really know the industry very well. He parked his car in the factory carpark and would walk around the outside of the building to get to his office, because he wanted to avoid going through the manufacturing floor because he didn't want to expose that he didn't know what was really happening, and didn't want to get called out and felt embarrassed. The reality of this was, the shop floor thought he was really aloof. You know, oh he's just management. When my friend spoke to him about this, he was completely unaware, really, but quite scared about engaging with these these people. I don't know what I've got in common with them. I don't know what to say. And the conversation was kind of, well, you won't ever know until you talk to them. And we're really only talking at this stage about saying hello, and getting to know some names, and just putting yourself out there. And he literally had to walk him around the floor, helping him engage, right? But the change that happened, rapidly afterwards, in terms of his engagement with his team, his team's view and opinion of him, the questions they would ask him, and the questions he would ask them. I mean, you can only imagine the innovation and change, but just the general kind of bond that was created between the manager and the team. You know, there's lots of talk around

culture and engagement about how complex and challenging and difficult it is, and it's a life challenge. And all those things are true. But that doesn't mean you can't make an impact by taking the simplest human steps of seeing someone and getting to know them, and make a genuine connection. Don't do a veneer thing, this comes back to that whole kind of, "have a nice day." That's the veneer top, peel it back and get underneath it because this is about making a genuine connection with someone, because things change relationships change at that point. You know, I often talk to people about seeing a room where you visibly see the lights go on behind people's eyes when you start explaining the why behind something. And you help them see their role in it, right? That's when the lights go on. Some of the funnest times I've had in groups is when you have a CEO come in and tell the story. And then you kick the CEO out of the room, and you say to the group amass, "Okay, what did you hear? What did you take from that?" And immediately, you start to get feedback on all the little misinterpretations that people have, all the differences of opinion that people have. Now in a traditional sense, a CEO can get out, make that speech, walk out the room, slap himself on the back, yeah, great job, everybody's got it. And then a million people scatter, and all those tiny little fag paper differences and people's interpretations of things end up being chasms later on down the track. Whereas, if you kick the CEO out of the room, or the MD, whoever it is, the leader, and you talk to the guys who've just heard that message. And you go, "Okay, what questions you've got, what do you understand, oh that's different? You took this, you took that," and then you bring that person back in and you say, "right, here's what we heard. Here's some questions. Here some different opinions, please set us straight." That opportunity to make sense of something, to personalise it to hear back to consolidate, to then go forward. I mean, that's the best 30 minutes you can ever spend.

Katie 43:51

Gosh, I mean, so simple, but so clever. I'm sorry, but that's sort of turbocharging what could be six months of work from that CEO, he leaves the stage, people have got half the story. Some people have got a quarter of the story. Some people have missed it altogether. And some people are just completely confused. Now he has to, or someone has to help him, go around the business, and there's posters, and there's booklets, and there's toolkits and there's line manager briefings, to get everyone on the same page. You've just absolutely turbocharged that and condensed it down. That's, oh, wow, I'm blown away by that.

Andy 44:25

It's not my trick, I learned from working with some really cool people. Hey, I'm Magpieing thing that, I'm having it, and I've used it and it works. It saves millions. And what I will say, is we've all had examples, right? Where we sat in, I guess, rooms or, depending on the size of your company, theatres where someone's got up and made the big speech. And you know that's not what they intended the reaction, and I've seen in a company, one of the greatest people I've ever worked for, got up and gave the classic, I think, operator-fueled message of "you are the CEOs of your own business, now go out there and make it happen." And what they really intended was for everybody in that room to take real ownership of the P&L, take real ownership of standards, to hold people accountable for effort and results, and really care about the business. What people interpreted it is, "I could do what the hell I like. I don't have to use their suppliers. I don't have to do that promotion. I don't have to do that." Now,

in slow motion, imagine this, Katie, because I know what they want. And we're sitting there in this meeting. And you could almost divide the room between the Operations Team and the Central Support Team. At the point where this message is delivered, slow this down in your mind, you have half the room raising to their feet, fists clenched, punching the air in triumphant 'Yes, operators rule!' And a collective face slap going on in the support, saying, "Oh my God, how are we going to pick this apart?" And that took probably six months to put right, right? Best intentions, misinterpretation. I mean, you are an internal comms expert. You know the power of this stuff, right? And you've probably got loads of examples of that yourself. I just think that the sense making element of why we're doing what we're doing and where your place is in it, and giving people the opportunity to ask questions before you let them loose, is not a stupid thing to do.

Katie 46:25

Yeah, I've had people say, you know, I might even be John Kotter. I think he's got a phrase in leading change, "you've got to let people kick the tires on the strategy." I love that, you know, does it work? Do I understand it? Is it really robust? You said sense-making? Yeah, I love it. I love that. You've mentioned BizJuicer, it is an amusing name,

Andy 46:48

It got me into so much trouble.

Katie 46:51

Talk to us a little bit about your sort of everyday work, clients you work with, give us a sense of that.

Andy 46:56

Ultimately, BizJuicer is about, you know, sticking your business over a juicer and getting some more good stuff out of the people that are in there, right? I try to help businesses become what I call stickier from the inside out. And for me, that is a place where people really love what they do, and as a result of that, customers love what you do, because of why you do it. And ultimately, what I think becoming a stickier business does is it creates a tangible form of competitive advantage for you because it allows you to hold on to more of your talent, whilst also being naturally attractive to new talent, too. I guess the key behind what I try and help businesses with is to find it articulate that thing that connects what drives the business with what drives the people within it. I'm bringing the sort of marketing brand lens to employee engagement and workplace culture, and I guess leadership development, because that's traditionally an HR thing or an L&D thing, and I'm not trying to eat their lunch. I'm just trying to bring a slightly different perspective around engagement. Because actually, if you think about it, I actually think HR and marketing are in the same business, because we are all about attraction, retention and growth. You just have different target markets, right? So in my opinion, those two powerhouses should be working a lot close together, which is why I'm you know, not everybody agrees with me on this, Katie, but this is where I think that line between having an employer brand and a personality for all that sort of stuff, and a consumer facing brand. Just have one. The world is complicated enough without having lots of little bits. And also that feels like a schizophrenic brand, I'm

one person to one person and another person to something else. Well, no, you have different deliverables. But it's just come from the same source, right? So I learned pretty quickly that the way you get customers to take action is to find an emotional connection. I mean, you mentioned rationality, and ah, you know, a gut check and stuff before, you know, rational stuff are brilliant to make you think about stuff, emotional stuff is the bits that get you to get off your bum and do things. I think finding an emotional connection between your brand, your product and your customers, that's what makes marketing and advertising work. It is the same with your employees. And I think by finding and utilising the connections between those business and employee drivers, and then, as we've mentioned, equipping managers and leaders to consistently and authentically engage, I think that's when great enabling cultures really begin to emerge. And then you get all the amazing results that come with it. The stuff like the Colleen Effect, you know? These things happen every day, and you don't have to be there to orchestrate it every day. These things start to happen and occur naturally, because it's the way things happen around here. So to me, that's what I'm trying to do with BizJuicer is just release more of the great stuff that's sitting latent in people just by turning the lights on.

Katie 50:16

Just out of curiosity, when you talk about that emotional connection and where it comes from, and the story that pulls people towards the business, whether they're employees or customers, how often does that come? Because I often thought this, but I don't know if it's really true. Why the company was established in the very first instance? The problem in the world, or the opportunity that somebody somewhere had thought, oh, we could solve this, we could address this, we could make something of it. It is, am I barking up the right tree here?

Andy 50:49

Yeah I think you are because interestingly enough, when I get to talk to smaller businesses about this stuff, they often think, well, this is for bigger businesses. And I'm like, you're never too small for this stuff, right? And I look, I am no, Simon Sinek. If you're honest with yourself; if you started a business, or you've gone down a particular career path, and you look inwardly enough, there is a germ of something that triggered you to do what you do. Yes, it's about getting in touch with that. So yes, when we think about purpose, which is I think really what we're beginning to talk about, why do we exist? Why does the world need what I'm trying to do? And what would be lost if I didn't do it? All good stories understand that, right? It's interesting when you talk to some people, and you say, "Oh, tell me your brand's story," you get some guys going, "oh well, there was a guy who had a lot of money who saw an opportunity, he invested in it and this is where we are." And I'm like, "that's, that's nice. That's a funding story. That is not your brand story." And other guys who will go on and tell you amazing personalised views of where the business came from, why it does, what it does, and how they end up delivering that every day, and why they're still there, and why they go and tell other people about it, who don't want to know about it, but they feel so engaged and excited about it and connected to it, any opportunity comes up to talk about that company, they do that stuff. That's the difference. It all comes back to tapping into that purpose. You know, purpose I think gets a lot of bad press, because it's utilised poorly in so

many instances. It's not rooted in what the business really does. And don't tell me you're going to solve world hunger with every biscuit you sell if you have no way of doing that, right? And then people look at those things and go well, that what is that that's just junk. And yet you look at purpose, in its greatest sense that gives everybody some real meaning to what they do. Whether everybody buys into it or not, I think is largely irrelevant at the start because I'm always a fan of go where the sunshine is, go where the energy is, right? And then you'll create a bow wave effect, okay? And I think we're purpose comes in is something that really does signify a greater meaning to what we do. And people can buy into that. And people can see what they do affecting that. And they can see decisions and actions being taken from the business to deliver and get closer to that, then it makes sense. And actually then it starts to attract people to your business from an employee and a customer side who connect with that and have a course to stand with, and fight for. It's not a big political over-worthy thing. And I think this again, we're purpose can go wrong, trying to be overly overly worthy. It's not about that. It's about having something with a bit more meaning. Shingo, the inventor of what's now called Lean, you know, continuous improvement, said something about, here's another quote that I'll butcher, but he said something along the lines of, "people spend so much time at work. If we don't add meaning to that work, you're making their lives meaningless. Do you want that on your conscience?" And I think that is such a profound thought about making something meaningful, whether it be a relationship, whether it be a quest at work, the mission that you're adding meaning and worth to what people do. It comes to me a bit back to "I serve chips, or I give out change, or I clean fruit machines." No, you're banishing loneliness, you're creating relationships, you're saving people. That's the purpose. You could we never got this far. But the purpose behind that bingo brand could easily have been, "we're here to banish loneliness and spread fun", right? That that could easily been our purpose and we could have tied everything back to that sort of stuff. That's not saying we're going to cure cancer or anything like that, because it's frivolous. It's not frivolous. It's a purpose. It's more than my job, it's adding some context and meaning to why I show up every day. And I think that's where real purpose can have a real effect. If you just do the tick box corporate exercise, not that everybody does it that way, but too many people have, of looking around and seeing what other purpose other people have gotten going, "we'll have that, that'll get some good press, and that'll sound good." And then have no intention of doing anything with it. Well, don't be surprised if it does naff all for your business and people don't believe in it. Intentionality comes behind all of this stuff. Yeah. You've developed five principles for what you call stickier businesses. And as I know, listeners love a framework Can you talk us through these, these five principles? So my five steps to stickiness, okay, and we just talked about one. So the first one is, create and tell your engaging future story. And so for me, this is about discovering, aligning and articulating purpose, vision, mission, objectives and strategy. And people will say, "well, why have we got objectives in there when we're talking about values?" Because you need alignment for these things, how many times you've worked in businesses where, you know, the stated vision, if you've even got one doesn't match up to what you're actually trying to do on a day to day basis, and the objectives go nowhere near hitting the mission, which will then help get you closer to the vision, tight? To me, these things all have to align, and tell a story. And then it's about equipping and empowering others to tell it, and come back to that, since making CEO-kicking-out-of-a-room type stuff, right? So create and tell your engaging future story. People want to know where the business is going, humans crave

certainty. You know, you talk to anybody on your show about psychological safety or any of these things. We crave certainty. The story is a way of saying, "you know what, this business has a future. This is where we're going. And here's your part in it. Can you see it?" That's what we're trying to get to. The second one I call match the cultural promise up to the reality. Yes. So don't force advertise your culture. It's a complete retention, customer, PR disaster waiting to happen, BrewDog, you know. Don't espouse something you have no intention of delivering or are unable to deliver. Understand the culture you have, but also understand what you need it to be to succeed. And this could be about creating refreshing, redesigning, renovating, enabling your values, whatever. Those values are really important. They set a behavioural framework, Okay? But the trick to making something like values work, much like we talked about purpose is transferring ownership for these personalised behaviours. Sometimes I scare businesses when we go in and we have we have a set of values, and I go, "right, well, we now want to give those over to your employee groups, departments, to work out what the behaviours are behind those." "No, no, no, no, we'll get thousands of values." And I'm like, "No, you won't. You've got your core values that we've got, what you're going to get is irrelevant behaviours. What happens in your department every day, how do I see this value come to life every day?" What's the sort of commitment you can give to your colleagues, that they're going to see the values come to life, and instead of having nice, neat four or five words for your values, and by the way, here are the behaviours that we're telling you we want to see, what adults likes being told how to behave anyway. But giving your employees the opportunity to personalise and relevance, if that's a word in this context, making them relevant. That's powerful, right? And then make sure you discuss these things, measure these things, recognise these things, set consequences for non-delivery, as well as delivery, with things like values. That's some of the biggest mistakes I made in my career, I let great performers, technically, get away with cultural murder. And I held them back. They, you know, they left teams, they may have gone on to be successful, but not half as successful as they could be if I'd called that stuff out earlier on. I also alienated, disappointed other members of the team who were pushing very hard to deliver those cultural values that by my actions I've shown weren't that important after saying they were important. So learn from the idiot who made the mistakes and what leaders show to be important end up being important. This is really, really true, cultural promise has to match up to the reality. The third piece, I think, is then equipping leaders and managers to engage. Yes, the basis of everything, especially when it comes to teamwork, come down to trust and your self awareness, and the impact that you have on others. Okay. You know, there's a management lesson in there, we could all start to recite Dan Pink, you know, purpose, mastery and autonomy, and I absolutely love those three things. But when I come back to stuff around helping leaders and manage, engage, it all comes back to trust. Do you know the work of Paul Zach, or Professor Paul Zach?

Katie 59:57
Only slightly.

Andy 59:59
Right, but because he's not that well, he's not that well known this stuff, but he's a genius. He talks about oxytocin

Katie 1:00:08

Oxytocin, that's it. Yes.

Andy 1:00:09

Yeah, he talks obviously oxytocin being the trust molecule, right? I told you I'm a proper fanboy for the psychologist stuff, right? But it's this trust signal that we give out, okay? I think this plays a lot of things about vulnerability in leadership. As humans, we're wired to help people. If you give off the vibe that I got this covered gang, don't need it. Don't be surprised if you really find it hard to engage with your people and create movements that follow you because we have already sniffed your pheromones and thought, well, we don't need you, you don't need us. I'm moving on to find some other soul who really does need me. Okay? So this vulnerability thing, I think, is that there's a link here with trust. Oxytocin, he's a scientist, he discovered that it causes us to put more effort in and help others when we see and feel this molecule. It effectively motivates us to become more trustworthy through empathy, we have a connection — again, the word connection kind of comes up. And when we are empathically connected to our colleagues, you instinctively understand where someone is, what they're thinking, where they're going, you know, that real, real connection. And so, his work around oxytocin has brought us eight practical ways to manage trust based on science. Now, I love the meld of practical and science, okay? So within this equipping leaders and managers, it comes back to trust, but it does come down to some practical things, you know, outside of other things, which I can talk about, but his eight ways to manage trust, you listen to these, right, Katie, and tell me, if any of these are like way out there, we could never do: recognise excellence, right? Induce challenge stress, which means that if a task you've got is tough, but achievable, that element of trust of being given a really tough task seemingly to do is huge, right? Massive motivator, right? Giving people discretion to how they do their work. Number three, right? Enabling job crafting, may be a touch more divisive, but this is where sometimes in companies, you get to sort of like put your hand up with this particular projects that you'd like to work on outside of your day job, but that job crafting, going after something you're really interested in, that's a huge way of kind of like building engagement and trust. Share information more broadly. How difficult is that in your world of internal communications? I mean, how many times do we hear people say, "well, I don't need to know that. I can't tell them that." Well, why can't you tell them that? What is the act of not telling them something do in terms of trust signal. Intentionally build relationships, looking to try and pair people up for an intentional reason, looking to build teams for intentional reason, trying to facilitate understanding and trust between individuals, you know, intentionally build relationships. Interesting one, around trust again, is facilitating whole person growth. So not just going on this course to learn a skill that we need in here. But you look at the business now they're trying to make a more rounded approach to personal development. Now, not everybody wants this. But again, think about the engagement and trust signals that that's giving off? And then we've talked about this, showing vulnerability, those are his eight ways to manage trust. Do you know the shocking stat around those eight is that in his research, the two most undelivered in that list of eight, I think it's shocking when you think about what they are, we're recognise excellence and share information more broadly. Now, pur of that whole list, are they not the easiest?

Katie 1:03:49

They're the easiest for you to think, wouldn't you?

Andy 1:03:52

So crazy, so you can do practical things to help build trust, trust is a massive, massive multiplier of engagement in in your team? You know, maybe because of my own lack of self awareness that we've talked about before in my early career, I also do psychometric work with businesses. I think helping managers understand themselves, yes, before they start to manage others, I think is a huge part in equipping leaders to manage and engage effectively. The next piece is what I call listen and act on employee voice: great cultures, great high performing teams, people in them feel like they have a voice, they can challenge, they can say something it's gonna get listened to, it may well get acted on, even if it isn't gonna get acted on, if they feed back, they will get an answer back as to why we're not going to do that thing. How many times have people in surveys and stuff made a comment in the verbatim comments on a survey, and it just goes into a void. If it doesn't match up with a strategy we're going to take, well who listened. If you had a conversation on face to face and they asked you a question or made a suggestion to you and you just blank them.

Katie 1:05:01

walked away. Yeah.

Andy 1:05:02

How does that feel? How engaged will you be with that person? They're not gonna bother. Even elite organisations like the Navy SEALs. This comes to life in their AAR, and I think BAR, so their AAR are After Action Reviews. So right after a sortie, everybody comes in, not the leader, or the guys on the floor, what do we intend to do? What worked well? What didn't? What would we improve? Fed back. And that's the living embodiment of it right at its highest order, incredible stuff. It's not about an annual survey, those things can be really, really useful. They can really set some context, but that can't be the only amount of your listening strategy. You know, where are you having conversations? How are you facilitating these conversations? All of those kind of mechanics is to try and understand and give people a voice that's listened to and acted upon. The last one, right in your ballpark, just wrapping it up in engaging communication, right? In businesses, the more people have in a business, the more complex communication can get. And what I try and help businesses get to grips with is trying to get them to think about all of their communication as a consistent continuous narrative on progress towards our vision, mission, all those sorts of things. So that it feels like it feels like a connected stream of progress, as opposed to a tsunami of unrelated download of information.

Katie 1:06:32

And another thing, yes, exactly.

Andy 1:06:35

Exactly. You know what I mean? I think you want to try and link it back to Vision, Mission, Values, wherever you can, constantly, so that it's always feels like we're moving stuff on, not that we're just peppering you with loads of information. So those are my five sticky steps.

Katie 1:06:52

Thank you very much. And it's a nice segue to your podcast stickied from the inside, you have now recorded almost 60 episodes, I believe. I'm just wondering, and this is probably a really difficult question, but I'm gonna ask you it anyway. When you sort of ruminate on all those conversations, are there some common trends or common themes that you've seen emerge from those conversations?

Andy 1:07:17

How long have you got? I guess, like you, I'm really lucky to get to do the podcast, right? Because you just don't know what you're gonna get, even though you prep a new search. But a conversation like this could go absolutely blinking anywhere, right. And you think when your set out on an engagement, or employee engagement and culture podcast, it would get very samey, and there are key themes that come up, but everyone's got different perspectives. But, I guess, what lessons are taken out, God. First up, definitely with engagement and culture, there are no silver bullets. It's a cliché, but there just aren't. And I think that's where a lot of people go wrong, they're always looking for the quick fix. Culture is not a quick fix. It doesn't mean you can't make impact immediately by doing stuff. But it's not a quick fix. And it should be an ongoing game, really. What's really come through and again, maybe this is why my marketing thing helps me, is you really need to understand the audience that you're trying to engage with. Don't assume you know them, don't assume everybody thinks the same way and wants the same thing. And I think that's what can put a lot of people off from even starting engagement or culture work, because it just feels so amorphous. And I've got to talk to everybody individually and attest to all those things. In a roundabout way, yes. But you'll be surprised at how many of the bigger connections kind of align people but it's understanding that stuff, right? Engagement is an outcome, not a measure, right? It's, the outcome of all the different things that you do. Human skills aren't fluffy, they're flippin' hard. But these are the things that make the real difference. These are the things that move people, these are the things that trigger new behaviour, okay? The spreadsheet might map it out. But you know what? It's the human connection that kind of makes things happen. I think also behind it is taking a genuine interest in people, and trying to understand them and find out what motivates them. Find out what they're interested in, find out what they struggle with. And from a leadership perspective, try and understand what they need from you to help them operate at their best. I think that's incredibly important. Those are sort of, I guess, some of the key themes. There's so much stuff. It's such a rich territory, Katie Yeah, if someone doesn't know your podcast but they wanted to dive in, I know it's like choosing your children, I shouldn't really ask you this, but is there a Sophie's Choice question, that dates me as a film, is there an episode someone maybe should start with that's a good overview, or is it too hard to say? Well, we talked about explaining why. So even episode one, right, which is just me with a short monologue explaining what the podcast is about. I hope that does tell that why, why I'm behind a mic, not knowing what to do and acting like the idiot in the room, right? But I spoke to a guy who's got the coolest



name in the world. Right? His name is Professor Zach Mercurio, if I'm ever going to choose a name for myself, I mean...

Katie 1:10:42

that's a Marvel superhero, isn't it?

Andy 1:10:44

And you know what, he is a proper superhero. I think he was something like episode nine, maybe? He talked to me about mattering and significance. Simon Sinek had posted about him and said, "this is the guy to watch." He came on and he's just one of life's gorgeous people. He's working on mattering significance, you come back to some of the stories we talked about earlier about, you know, connectin with the guys on the factory floor. He tells a great story about doing some research into leadership and came across a team who could not speak highly enough of their boss. I mean, she was amazing. She had their back, she challenged them, she, you know, she really knew them. And he thought, well, I must speak to this lady and understand where this all comes from. And when he spoke to her, she kind of gave him a sheepish look like, not quite sure you're going to like the secret. And she reached down into her kind of tote bag and pulled out pretty well used kind of filofax thing with nuts sticking out of it. And she said she had a really, really bad short term memory but I know how important it is to try and connect with peopl, I just forget stuff. So every time I had a conversation with some of my team, I'd write something down, you know, about their personal life and what happened to Tommy, and did the stitches come out, and she used this book religiously. And what it helped her do was intentionally make connections with her people, and really understand them. And so she was embarrassed about this book, she's like "I don't use this book anymore, but it's kind of like a habit now." And I just love that story because the effect that this lady was having on her team was immense. And yet, she'd found a very simple quantum mechanic to help her own kind of, in her view, failings of memory, to overcome that stuff, because she knew it was important. And Zach talks about mattering and significance with as much passion as I will talk about purpose and values and what have you. And he's making incredible strides with the clients that he works, really, really shining a light on what the effect of making someone feel like they matter in your world can have on somebody. He's a fabulous guy, go and look him up. He's an amazing guy.

Katie 1:13:05

Before we head over to those quick fire questions, I wonder if you've got time, just to talk us through how we might be able to increase engagement in 2023. This was a topic of a recent episode I know that you recorded — what are the biggest levers we can use, or pull, I should say, to improve workplace culture and engagement this year, do you think?

Andy 1:13:28

Looking at what's going on, the seven key things, okay, this year. And we've covered a few of them, so I'll skirt over some and pick out the others. So, the first one is still to match the cultural promise to that reality, which we've talked about before. The second one is provide personal learning opportunities. And again, that comes back to that trust thing. You know, at the moment, L&D budget is under pressure in the in financial crisis and in your businesses.



And so L&D Money is really, really being pulled back. But I think where businesses can really make a difference outside of the central technical training that we're given is, what other support can you give personal learning opportunities outside that. If think about retention, which is at the heart of this list, if you can retain people, show that they really care by doing some extra learning opportunities for people. The third I would always have in there is focus on building trust, much like we said with the Zach work. Fourth, really interestingly, I'm a volunteer for Engage for Success, which is the UK's largest voice on employee engagement. And we recently did a big survey of pre, during and post-pandemic, as to what was going on, what were the factors? Really interesting thing that came out of that, and this is why number four is, have a well being strategy, because everybody's engagement dropped during the pandemic, everybody. But the difference between the drop in businesses where employees had access to a comprehensive well being strategy. So not just mindfulness and all that sort of stuff, but perhaps financial help, mental health, obviously, physical health — they dropped 13 points fewer than people who had some access and no access. So those people had no access and some access dropped 13% and 12% on their engagement score, whereas the guys who had access to a comprehensive wellbeing strategy throughout the pandemic dropped 1% in engagement. I mean, that's big. I think it is more than just giving someone the headspace app or something, that is not a well being strategy, that is access to an app. It is having a well being strategy. The fifth one, find more ways to listen. Six, I love, intentionally create collisions. This is about getting interaction with people, hybrid working has been amazing but it's also been disastrous. And I think trying to find more ways to create collisions. I love the story of Disney and Pixar, who if they had their time again, would redesign their offices because the corridors aren't big enough. The restaurants aren't big enough to create more collisions, right? That's what we want. And then the final one, I think, is really tricky. But we've got to find our way through it is to try and offer flexibility and certainty when it comes to working practices. The three and two hybrid working thing is quick and easy. It's not necessarily right. We are still learning, there's a big threat to people who've changed their personal lives to cope with kids and job and home. And now that the pandemic is receding, visit, we'll get everybody back, or you're going to work these these three and two split, whatever might be, and that is putting a lot of stress and worry into people being able to manage this new combination they've had to deal with, and we're all still learning. This has to be an individual business consultation with its employees to understand what we really need as a business, and how we can do that as employees to balance that need for certainty, but also the need for flexibility and for business performance. It's no easy task. But I think if you get that right, retention and engagement will multiply.

Katie 1:17:11

Yeah. Fabulous. Have you got time for those quickfire questions, Andy?

Andy 1:17:15

Yeah, go for it. Yeah!

Katie 1:17:16



What trait or characteristic do you possess that above all others has most led to your career success.

Andy 1:17:28

I'd love to say humour, but I often feel like an awkward dad at a teenager's disco, you know, when I do that. So, I would like to say maybe warmth. Maybe combined with some some empathy in there. I think one of the nicest things that was ever said to me, as I left buzz, was the CEO who got up and said some very nice words. And this was a guy I didn't have the greatest relationship with in the end. He was a new guy and it just wasn't necessarily the best for both of us. We're different people. But he said, Andy is proof that nice guys can be successful too. Actually, I like that. You can take the nice guy moniker and it can be, mm, he's a nice guy. It came from with with a genuine message behind it. And I was quite happy with that.

Katie 1:18:13

How would you complete this statement? World class cultures are...

Andy 1:18:21

I'm supposed to come out with something profound, right, at this point? I would say world class cultures are constantly, diligently and enthusiastically cultivated.

Katie 1:18:35

Coming back almost to that intentionality you have.

Andy 1:18:38

100% intention. You've got to cultivate a culture.

Katie 1:18:41

Yeah, it doesn't just happen.

Andy 1:18:44

Well, no, if you want it to be good.

Katie 1:18:47

You'll get a culture that way, but hey, you might not want it. If you had to recommend just one book to our listeners, what would it be?

Andy 1:18:55

Culture Code by Daniel Coyle. I think it is a fabulous read. I mean, I'm a slow reader, I have to put voices and everything into, it takes me forever. And this was a book I just consumed in a matter of hours. It was a really, really good book. If anybody is interested in anything to do with culture and engagement and teamwork. That is a book you have to read.

Katie 1:19:17



Thank you for the recommendation. And finally, we give you a billboard, you can put on this billboard a message for millions to see, what is your message going to be?

Andy 1:19:27

That's so dangerous to give a kind of brand marketer a billboard to talk about stuff. I mean, this could go anywhere. I could come up with a trite stuff about it's okay to be you, which I do believe but I don't think that's necessarily the brightest billboard. I would say, and maybe come back to a bit of Zach. B Mercurio here. When you say you value someone, Show them why, too.

Katie 1:19:49

Oh, that's got me thinking. This whole conversation, Andy, has got me thinking. Thank you so much for your time, your wisdom, your insight. I have loved everything about this conversation.

Andy 1:20:03

Oh, listen, it's been an absolute pleasure and joy to just get to talk to someone who will listen to all this stuff that I love going on about frankly. I've absolutely loved every second of it. Thank you so much for having me on.

Katie 1:20:21

So that is a wrap for this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. For the show notes and the full transcript, head over to our website. That's abcomm.co.uk/podcasts. If you did find this episode helpful, I would be very grateful if you could give us a review, or even just a star rating on Apple podcasts. That will help other internal comms pros find our show.

Thank you Andy, my producer, John Phillips, sound engineer, Stuart Rolls, and the fabulous team at AB, all of you keep the show on the road, and I am immensely grateful to you. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to you, for choosing The Internal Comms Podcast, this show would be nothing without you. Please feel free to get in touch via LinkedIn or Twitter. Tell me what you want more of less of, I genuinely want this show to be as helpful as possible to you. So, until we meet again, stay safe and well, and remember, it's what's inside that counts.

This episode of The Internal Comms Podcast was 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 and 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 a little bit more informed. Hopefully a little bit more uplifted as you end your week. Now, this is a subscribe-only email, which was initially intended just for colleagues and clients. I don't post this content anywhere else. So you do need to sign up. But that is super easy. Simply go to abcomm.co.uk/Friday, and you just need to pop in your email address. It is equally easy to unsubscribe at any time. So give it a whirl that sign up page again abcomm.co.uk/Friday.