



The Internal Comms Podcast – Season 9

Episode 76 – Nicholas Wardle, *Employee experience: For and by the people*

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.

Katie 00:30

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.

Katie 00:51

Welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay. This show is devoted to improving communication at work. Every fortnight I ask a leading light from the world of communication, academia or business to sit in my hot seat, where together we tease out practical, real world ways to help employees feel more informed, more inspired and involved. My guest today is Nicholas Wardle.

Katie 01:24

Having worked in internal communication in the public and private sectors, Nicholas moved into the field of employee experience. Today, he is head of employee experience at the agency Brand Experiences, which says it's "on a mission to give employee experience parity with customer experience."

Katie 01:49

Nicholas is co-author of the book *Monetizing the Employee Experience*. And it's the tools and techniques in that book that I was really keen to explore in this episode: if employees really are an organization's greatest asset, why is the employee experience so undervalued, underfunded, and I think we can largely argue undermanaged, how do we build the case for investing in the employee experience? How do we get senior leaders' buy in? What tools do we need to develop a winning employee experience?

Katie 02:29

The commercial goal here for organisations is of course to improve productivity. And as you'll hear Nicholas say in this podcast, it's employee motivation, not satisfaction, that drives productivity, but of course, we are all motivated by very different things. So Nicholas explains how his agency helps people uncover their intrinsic motivators, and then measures their motivation over time. We talk about the key stages in the employee lifecycle, defining moments that matter and rescue moments and how all of this work needs to be done for the people, by the people. I don't know about you, but I feel employee experience like many umbrella terms, can feel a little bit amorphous, a little bit intangible. But I found this an



enlightening and informative conversation that brought logic and practicality to the topic. So with that, over to Nicholas.

Katie 03:39

So Nicholas, welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast. It is a pleasure to have you here.

Nicholas 03:45

Thanks very much, Katie. It's it's a pleasure to be here for sure.

Katie 03:49

We are going to do lots of talking, I think in this conversation, about employee experience, or what no doubt will end up calling EX for short. I thought it might be helpful to start with a definition. How would you define employee experience?

Nicholas 04:07

So at Brand Experiences, we have a quote for EX, and I shall quote it verbatim for you. And I'm not doing this off by heart to be honest, I'm reading it from our book, we call it 'the entire relationship between employee and employer.' It encompasses every interaction and touchpoint at every stage of the employee lifecycle. So to add a little bit more to it, we see EX as a holistic term, basically for every single interaction an employee has. Now I think if people struggle to get their heads around it, what I always say is "well think of the customer experience. When you talk about that it's every interaction with the brand, it's in store, it's the website, it's the careers page, it's TV advertising, you know, everything. Well, it's the same thing for your employees but internally. It's that big, big holistic term. So EX is a big and powerful thing indeed.

Katie 05:11

You had a long and interesting career in internal comms before venturing into this EX space. What drew you in particular to employee experience?

Nicholas 05:24

Well, there's a story behind that, Katie. In my last in-house job, at Brand Experiences who I now work for, we were a client of theirs. And after hours, one day, I was having a conversation with the Chief Experience Officer, Mike Sharples, we were talking about various bits and pieces, the work they're doing with one housing he'll work for, of course, was the first topic. But then we started broadly talking about business cases and how business cases for IT and governance and customer experience would tend to stand a far higher chance of getting through than anything related to people, be it internal comms, employee engagement, HR, etc, etc. So, you know, we banded the topic around a lot. And we saw a lot of it was based on the the ROI, or return on investment. And we thought that people functions weren't very good, articulating what the return on investment was, but IT and the like, were very good at that. It was all about pounds, and pence and things. So that's where it started. We then had a bit of a discussion about you know, what brand experiences broadly does, and they did, largely CX and UX, user experience, did a bit of employee experience, but wanted to do a bit more. So we started talking about potential tools that we could use, and really drawing on the customer experience tools that Brand Experiences



were already using, we kind of thought, you could use these for employees, couldn't you, as all of the principles are kind of the same. So that's what kind of piqued my interest. And then then from there started to work with Brand Experiences on the employee experience opportunity. We partnered with the IOIC; spoke to the brilliant, the amazing, the wonderful, Jennifer Sproul.

Katie 07:14

It's interesting that you, you saw immediately that the tools, the approach, frameworks for looking at and evaluating, planning the customer experience could be used equally in a valid way with employees. How much should the employee and customer experience align?

Nicholas 07:38

Very much so. And in many, many ways, a phrase we always use is, "they are two sides of the same coin." I always find myself using it every time I talk about EX because it's such a famous quote. And I kind of say myself, "don't say that, again. You say every one of us say every single time, it's, back to the whole Richard Branson thing. You know, he uses the word clients actually, he says, you know, "your clients don't come first, you know, your people come first – look after your people, they look after your clients." We tend to talk about it in terms of customers rather than clients. But that does run through an awful lot of what you're doing. The end result is pleasing the customer. There are so many interlinks between CX and EX, sort of the messaging is the same. As everybody knows, it's very, very hard to keep messages just internally. So, basically, you send anything internally, there's always a danger it could go externally as well. So, so yes, I think they're equally as important. They deserve equal attention.

Katie 08:42

And you've probably worked in organ– or certainly worked with organisations where and I can think of a couple where employees are also customers of the service. And actually investors because they hold shares.

Nicholas 08:56

Yeah.

Katie 08:57

So actually, as an employee, you can wear many different hats at different times can't you as well?

Nicholas 09:04

Oh absolutely, a great example of that is I worked in the Middle East for a few years for a retail franchisor. And they had, it floated a bit, but somewhere between 80 and 90 brands. So we're all customers, potential customers. I think it with many organisations, who are selling stuff and the employees are potential customers and also very importantly advocates for as well and that can move into the field of recruitment.

Katie 09:31



Your book, let's talk about that: Monetizing the Employee Experience. It starts by saying that EX is "undervalued and underfunded." What are the main reasons for that, do you think?

Nicholas 09:45

The ROI I think is a big one. I mean, I've sat on many change panels throughout the years. And it's one of the things I recommend to anybody in you know people functions, if you've not not been to one of these, go to them, because they're really fascinating. And what I've learned over the years, I know it's a very obvious thing to say, but senior leaders only really have the time, and for some of them only really have the interest, in KPIs and pounds and pence. That's it. So you see, you go to these project boards and that's what it comes down to. You can give all sorts of wonderful stories about, you know, engagement, and culture and wellbeing and things like that, but it really does come down to the ROI for senior leaders. So I think that's one thing I would certainly recommend that people go to.

Nicholas 10:39

In the business cases themselves as well. I mean, IT are absolutely brilliant at this, that in a way, it's to be admired, that they can have this, you know, back end scene, that I would sit there and say, "Why on earth do they need that?" It's just like, "What? What is this? No one's gonna see this." But you know, some back end thing that cost £50,000, but they justify it by saying, "You know if we get this, it means we could save one and a half FTE, which so in the first year, we'd save 75,000." "How great! Go through then." And of course, they never ever save that one and a half people do they because no one comes back to them three years later and says, "Have you saved this one and a half?" But it's the fact that they they know the game, right? They know its pounds, pence, APIs, they speak the leaders language. So I think that's very important.

Nicholas 11:27

So I think in the business cases, I've certainly seen a lot of people ones, although I thought they were very worthwhile, fail, because they don't have that, when a lot of leaders follow their leaders when they were kind of coming through. And there certainly has been and still is a feeling that where we pay our employees – that's it, it's that transaction, we pay them therefore they should work as hard as they can. There are so many other things that go into it and people are, you know, it's one of the phrases I say a lot, you know, we are human beings and not human resources. So I think that's part, the same part of it is the is the attitude of senior leaders, but certainly I think a lot of it comes down to the business cases and not talking senior leaders' language,

Katie 12:13

Your book makes a very compelling case for investing in employee experience, even over customer experience. You write: "EX is easier to obtain, quicker to realise and potentially more valuable." I'm gonna guess that a lot of listeners now are nodding along in complete agreement with you on this. But nevertheless, can you set out the case, for investing more heavily in EX, potentially even over customer experience?

Nicholas 12:42

Your employees have already invested; they're within your organisation, you know, talk about psychological contracts or whatever phrases you use, but they're already there. They're already engaged, invested, etc, etc. Whereas your customers then go anywhere else in a heartbeat. I mean, just this very morning, I bought some new running trainers. Now I have a particular brand I like, and you know, they fit me well, and you know, they last for quite a long time. But I'm a sucker for a bargain. So because they're a pair that was 90 quid and they're now 40 quid, and they're a brand that I've heard, it's "Ah, I can save myself a few pounds" and all that brand loyalty, even though they were from his out of the window, just because I feel I've got a bargain. When they may end up being useless and I end up with a bad back because of them. But I've changed in a heartbeat even though I've been, you know, talking to others about this brand. You know, "you should get these they're great," you know, but I'd say just shows that you can change. And yes, employees can leave organisations. But it's a much harder decision than then switching brands, isn't it?

Nicholas 13:46

I think that the two biggest outcomes of an effective employee experience are culture and productivity. I think they're two huge things. I think that the culture side of it has and is talked about an awful lot. I appreciate that LinkedIn isn't the barometer of everything. But if you if you go on LinkedIn, when people are talking about EX, almost all of it is talking about culture isn't it? Whereas what I suppose we've done a little bit different is talk a lot more about productivity. And in particular, we talk a lot about the 'three E's of productivity,' emotion, energy and environment. Energy, another word for that is motivation, If you don't have any motivation, you're not going to get up in the morning are you? You'll stay in bed. So you need to motivate your employees and give them energy to work. Emotion, incredibly important to how are people feeling? What's the interactions like between people? Are there silos and all those kinds of things? And the environment basically, is the tools. Do you have the tools to do the job?

Nicholas 14:47

I mean, all these things can can be fixed. But again, coming back to the ROI, when you put your business cases in, we've got, you know, our ROI calculator, which maybe I can touch on a bit more later, but in short that lists things like how much money you're losing on sickness and turnover. And for organisations of any size, I mean, this could be multi millions per year. If you're losing 10 million on sickness and turnover costs, recruitment costs, etc, etc, surely, it's worth spending a fraction of that, to try and stem that flow of wasted money. So that's one of the things we suggest. And the final thing I would say is there's quite a lot of research out there, that if you have an effective employee experience, it's much more productive in terms of time. One report I read said each employee could save, you know, about 100 hours per year, just by things being a lot more effective. So if you've got the right tools, it can save an awful lot of time. If you don't have all the siloes and blockages and things like that, they come back and save a lot of time as well. So there's a whole wealth of things there. So I think hopefully, listeners would agree that there's a very compelling case, to focus upon EX. I mean I suppose one of the further things I would say is that when an organisation gets a new client, it's like, "hurray, you've got a new client. And this this could bring in, you know, 500,000, a million, etc, etc." With your people experience, you know, if you've reduced turnover by X percent, or reduced sickness by X percent, because of effective health and

wellbeing programmes and EPs and things like that, you could easily save these kinds of sums of money or not more, and you should shout about this. But a lot of people experience teams don't even really, they would measure turnover and sickness in terms of numbers, perhaps, or percentages that they're not correlated to money that you should do, and you should celebrate that fact.

Katie 16:49

And I suppose as well as saving money, and being more efficient, and there's also, you've touched on it, the productivity increase. And I guess, because I always think of it, and listeners will have heard me say this before, so I apologise. But I always see employees, when it comes to thinking about the assets that an organisation owns, it's one of the few assets that potentially could appreciate over time. Most assets on the balance sheet, you're writing off year after year, the value as it depreciates. But if you invest in your people in the right way, and develop them, you could potentially be extracting more and more value out of their thoughts, their ideas, their conversations, the way they collaborate, and share best practice, etc. So there's that aspect of it as well as the efficiency gain.

Nicholas 17:44

Yes that's wonderfully well put. Yes, absolutely. Yes. I mean, again, we've done some of our own research. And what we found is that motivation is linked to productivity. And, of course, people can smash their targets, people can do more than what's expected of them. So if people are feeling, you know, happy, healthy, motivated, etc, etc, they can do more than what's expected of them.

Nicholas 18:09

I don't mean, to say the employees are like racehorses, but you kind of get my metaphor. So you know, you buy a racehorse, and then what do you do with it? You want to win races, and so you give it the best feed, give it the best kind of barns and shelters, you train it to the best you can in order for it to perform the best it can to maximise the investment. Well, you know, employees in this metaphorical sense are very similar. But what happens with employees, you invest all this, this money in them, you pay them, whatever, per year, but quite often, you give them barely any training, you give them barely any benefits, and you just kind of leave them in the barn to kind of fend for themselves. And then then you expect them to go out and either be incredibly productive. And then in this metaphorical sense, win races. It seems silly, really, isn't it? But again, I think a lot of it does come back to the attitude of well, 'we pay you, therefore you should perform.' And again, as you've articulated very, very well, sometimes you do need to spend a little bit of money to get a lot back.

Katie 19:12

I think your book also touches on, and when I read this, I thought "oh, this is so true." And we'll probably come on to talk about this a little bit further on. But because it is so many things, it is made up of so many moments in time, the employee experience, there is no one overall owner of it. I think in the book you described very well how it how employees get passed from pillar to post from the moment they enter an organisation to the moment they leave. And is that part of the problem? That with the customer, there is someone who says "it's me" at the end of the day, I own the customer experience, there usually is someone in an



organisation that has that, but with the employee it's so much more than what HR might be responsible for, because it's line management, it's learning and development, it's leadership, it's environment as well, isn't it? The built environment,

Nicholas 20:05

I think, ultimately you will need EX Lead, because someone needs to be responsible for it. And then every organisation will have, in effect, a CX Lead, they could be called the Chief Operations Officer, whatever they're called is slightly different. But a lot of organisations on the senior executive team don't have a senior People person, yet, and yet you have a senior IT person, but it is a support function. That's what they do, they support for the organisation to perform rather than on the people side there. So I find that very strange. So I suppose in order to magnify its importance, you do need to have this Senior People Leader, and someone needs to report on it, for example, someone needs to measure it and things like that.

Nicholas 20:49

But I mean, I certainly don't advocate an organisation, all of a sudden thinking, "yeah, let's invest in the employee experience, let's bring in a team of like 30 EX, or PX whatever you wana call it, people," because I just don't think you need that. And I think it is very much from the people for the people. And when we work with clients on the moments that matter, you workshop some. So you'd have something like someone's first day, for example, if you've identified that as a moment that matters to your organisation, you would bring in people who are responsible for the first day or the onboarding team, who would have representations from across the business. And importantly, you'd have someone who's just been through that moment that matters, in this case, the first day, and you would pull in all this rich thought, feedback data from these people to then, you know, what do we stop? What do we start? What do we change? What can we continue moving forward? You would then you know, track and measure how it's going over time. So, so yes, very much from the people, for the people. You mentioned line managers, they're probably responsible for 90 to 95% of an employee's employee experience. They're that vital to somebody. When again, you know, there is there's the cliché, that I'm sure everyone's heard a billion times by now about, you know, "people don't leave organisations, people leave bad bosses." But the thing I think is really, really important and really great is as I said, I don't think you need to bring in a whole tranche of new people to work on it. I think your employees, from the people for the people, can shape an awful lot of it themselves.

Katie 22:23

You touched on this earlier your EXOpportunity Calculator and we will make sure there is a link in the show notes. There is some HR data though, that listeners will need to gather in order to actually use the Calculator. Can you share with us some of the some of the numbers that IC people will need at their fingertips in order to make sense of that calculator and to use it properly?

Nicholas 22:47

I'm biased, obviously I start half of my conversations by saying I'm biased, obviously we're talking about our own tool there. But yes, I mean, the point of the EXO calculator, is the fact

that it is bespoke for your organisation. If you go into Google, and type in 'reasons to invest in EX,' you will find all manner of wonderful, and I'm sure very true statistics. But you know, you can, if you would turn to look for, you know, 'was Liz Truss a great Prime Minister?' I'm sure somewhere you would find something that says 'yes she was because...' There are people to this day that think that what she did should have been the correct course. So you know, you'll always find something that backs up what you want to back up won't you?

Nicholas 23:30

But the point of the EXO ROI calculator is it's bespoke to your own organisation. This is about your people in your organisation. Yes, the data you will need... you'll type in things like your number of employees, which, you know, your HR team would have, if not it's quite probably on your careers website, there or there about. Ideally your average salary. If not, you could use the UK average which I think is about 38,600. Your annual revenue, which will be on your company reports which are normally on your website. Your turnover rate or churn rate however you phrase it. Average number of sick days, as well you would need, and ideally what you do need is your Mojo motivation score. Now if your organisation doesn't use Mojo, why not? But I mean if you don't, you could as a guide, substitute the overall motivation satisfaction score with an overall employee satisfaction score from your latest pulse survey or annual survey, whatever you do.

Nicholas 24:35

A slight warning with that, I've not seen any evidence of a correlation between employee satisfaction and productivity, which is at the heart of this ROI calculator. Whereas there is evidence that says motivation is linked to productivity. But it'll give you a guide, and basically you punch all these figures in and then immediately you will start to see slightly start to see some very big numbers, in terms of it will show you how much money you're losing on sickness, how much money you're losing on turnover, the figures then get absolutely dwarfed, quite probably, by the lost productivity, and definitely by the lost opportunity costs. And no organisation will be like this, but now if everything was 100%, you'll be 100% efficient, you know, if nobody left, if nobody was sick, everybody was working at 100% motivation, then brilliant, but you're never going to get there, of course, because you're dealing with human beings, and people will genuinely be sick, and they shouldn't be at work if they're genuinely sick. And people will genuinely leave, you can't promote everybody, can you, there's going to be some kind of turnover. But what you really want to avoid is you want to avoid people going off with stress, you ought to avoid people taking sickies 'cause, they're not engaged. And you want to avoid people moving to organisations down the road for incredibly small salary increases.

Nicholas 25:09

The thing that people say to us is, once you've seen these figures, you can't unsee them. So we love doing this with this exercise with CFOs, 'cause you kind of— obviously we know what's coming, so we preface it with, you know, you're responsible for getting the biggest return on investment of your assets. You know, you've got assets of X million in your organisation, your people, so your job is to get the best out of them, isn't it? And they can't say no. So then once we do the ROI calculator exercise, and you sort of see all these organisations are losing, in some cases 10s of millions of pounds, on these things, they can't unsee it. So you know,

really, they should then feel obliged to take some action. And we have seen organisations that have said, "Ah, yeah, right, we need to crack on with this, then don't we?"

Katie 26:49

We'll come back to talk about Mojo because I think that is, as you say, quite an important part of the of the jigsaw, if you like, of painting that picture of where you are and where you need to go. But I'm wondering about, I mean, certainly we see this in IC when we rock up into an organisation and we really want to deeply understand the employee audience, the internal audience, and we might start to think about segmentation, we might start to think about audience personas... And all of a sudden, we hit this roadblock of a lack of really insightful, smart, deep HR data. It just doesn't for whatever reason exist. I had one client that openly admitted that she was worried that they were paying people that were no longer on the payroll, it was that bad. So I don't know whether you see this as well, or whether you think this is rapidly changing, but yeah, I'm just interested in your observations on HR data in general?

Nicholas 27:50

I've found this in the past, I'm sure you have too, Katie, that some organisations don't even use their survey data. They ask their employees what they think, and then get the results and then don't do anything with it. I mean, it's no wonder that people are disengaged, if that's the case. And tempting though, this opportunity for employee voice again, the feedback and then they're not using it, I read the Gallagher State of the Sector report yesterday, actually. And one of the questions was something I've mentioned for an awful long time. The question about you, do you use people's or your employees' names on communications internally? Cause you do with your customers, right? You know, as a customer of organisations, when I get emails from wherever I sign up to whatever, you know, running sites or whatever, or concerts and things like that, it's always "Dear Nicholas..." that's how it starts, "Dear Nicholas..." or you know, whatever, "you are a valid customer, here's an offering" and things like that. So organisations have this capability. But yet the results were saying only a third, actually, in effect, bothered to then use it for their employees. And what does that say? You know, again, it returns missing, I say quite often they're treating people as human resources, not human beings. And you're right. I mean, I think there's so much rich, rich data there.

Katie 29:09

I think there's an irony in all of this, and you've touched on it already, you know, invest in the people you already have. The people that turn up every day is not necessarily the customer you don't yet have. But also, and this is something I've never quite understood, to do customer insight and customer research and get closer to your customers takes time and money and effort. But for your employees, these are people who are willingly, hopefully willingly, turning up every day. They are down the corridor. They're on the shop floor. They're in your retail network. They're in your manufacturing units. They're there waiting for you to ask them questions. I mean, there is, for free you could go and walk down the corridor. I don't know, there's just, there's an irony here.

Nicholas 30:01

Yeah some senior leaders and even sort of middle managers, they almost forget basic life lessons, when they enter the world of work, it can go back to all kinds of Maxims can't it? Put your own house in order first. So a lot of people say, isn't it? Well, the, you know, similar principle here, put your own EX in order first, you know, kind of going back to the Branson quote, isn't it? Yeah and in all manner of things about, you know, treating people with respect, you know, manners don't cost nothing do they? You know, that kind of thing. But yeah, you know, in some organisations, they treat their people terribly, but they still expect those people who are treated terribly, to treat their customers brilliantly. It's odd to me how people behave and how some people frame their people experience.

Katie 30:48

At the heart of your book is a survey, a global survey of 2000 employees. And this survey was designed to find out more about, basically how people are feeling about their work. And you conducted this at a really interesting time, because I think this was either mid-pandemic, or post-pandemic?

Nicholas 31:06

It started just before the pandemic, we swiftly added some questions on to the end of it.

Katie 31:12

What findings particularly struck you as being surprising, or maybe concerning?

Nicholas 31:18

So there's one here, you know, 58% of people expect to leave within three years. You know, as we've just said, this was towards the very start of the pandemic, we've now seen the great resignation, there are now statistics that say something like anywhere between a third and half may well look to leave within a year. So it's getting worse, isn't it, rather than, rather than better. So you know, clearly, there's a reason there to invest in either your EVP, and your broader EX. Only 56% have confidence in their senior leaders. I mean, the senior leaders are supposed to be the best of the best, you know, they're supposed to be technically very good at what they do, but also they're supposed to be, you know, people people who are able to, you know, lead, motivate, inspire. But clearly, that's not necessarily happening.

Nicholas 32:09

This is going slightly off topic, but I had this conversation with someone recently that I think for probably a decade or more now, I've heard from HR, that there could well be a shift towards having people managers, and then, if you like, technical experts within an organisation. So you know, not everybody is cut out for line management, that's true. But traditionally, you can only be promoted if you first of all, start to line manage people, but then start to line manage even more bigger groups of people. But some organisations, you know, I believe Amazon have this model, where they do have technical specialists, so you can be very senior within an organisation, but not necessarily line manage somebody. And you can perhaps not be as great a technical expert, but a great, you know, people leader, and I think that to me seems to make sense. But I think that's quite a shift for a lot of people having worked in one way for, you know, perhaps decades.

Nicholas 33:11

Only 51% think their boss understands what motivates them. I mean, imagine a sports coach, imagine if you know you're in charge of a football team, a tennis player, a rugby team, whatever, and you're unable to understand your employees and know what motivates them, you won't be very successful would you.

Nicholas 33:31

And 48% think their organisation is committed to providing the best possible EX. Well again, imagine if only 48% thought you have committed to providing a great CX. Imagine, if you imagine, if you know it doesn't directly correlate, but imagine if half your customers left, you'd be in all sorts of trouble.

Nicholas 33:51

So on the basis of you know, EX and CX being two sides of the same coin, only 49% said they felt kept up to date with what customers think. And the last ones I'll pick out is about change. So only 28% said their organisation manages change well, and only 41% said they have their say about change.

Nicholas 34:15

So as I've said before now, you know, from the people for the people. People who do the work and know and understand it the best. So they should be pivotal to helping any change programme for me, you know. I'm a consultant, but I actually wouldn't advocate, you know, bringing me in, telling everybody what to do, and then leaving again, you know, you need the people who do the work to drive this kind of change. The fact that change isn't managed. I mean, there's an opportunity there for internal comms teams to support a bit more definitely with with employee voice around change, but also getting involved right at the start, well this is a bit of an IC cliché, isn't it, that with projects that come up, quite often get—being brought at the end, and they say, "Oh, can you do a video on this please?" It is a bit late by then, isn't it? Yeah. So obviously getting IC at the start and communicating would be great because there is, you know, there's the old statistic about change projects that fail, you know, I think it's two thirds of them or something failed due to poor communication, something like that. So obviously IC teams are vital to the success of change and should absolutely be there of the very start.

Katie 35:26

I couldn't agree with you more. And I think we live in a world now where I think people would rather sort of co-create the change that's happening to them, or at least become, be quite involved early on in the change that's about to... and I think, I've been reading over the last few months about the IKEA effect. I didn't actually know about this, but we hold certain things in higher regard, we attach more value to them, when we have helped build them than if we went out and bought something off the shelf that was ready made. Even though the quality might be better, we have this attachment and value things that we have created ourselves.

Nicholas 36:08



I completely agree. I mean, my brother does LEGO for Christmas, every year he gets gets the latest LEGO, whatever it is Millennium Falcon, all sorts of other things, Darth Vader head, whatever. So he, he builds them, it's a wonderful thing to kind of, you know, have on the shelf and things like that. It looks very good. But knowing that he's built it is wonderful. I mean, he, you know, he could have just bought the finished one, and it just wouldn't have the same value to it. So I think there are loads of metaphors there with projects at work, isn't there?

Katie 36:41

Absolutely. We touched on Mojo earlier. And I'm really interested in this because, and this is where I think a lot of your standard employee engagement surveys fall down slightly, because we are all motivated by different things. And the most interesting piece of work we did around this was a client that came to us and said, "I don't believe my employee engagement results, not because they're bad, but actually because they're too good. And I think when we're missing parts of the organisation that are fundamentally disengaged, because we don't really understand what motivates them, Katie." And I said "absolutely fine. Let's go and find out actually why people get up, as you say, out of bed with a smile on their face in the morning or not." Can you tell us a little bit about Mojo and how it works in practice to kind of deconstruct that problem and work out people's motivations?

Nicholas 37:38

So you take a Mojo map, which asks only about 50 questions, to tease out, what you're motivated by and your satisfaction levels. And then the individual employee can then get to understand their own intrinsic motivators. So there's nine of them, and it ranks them in order for you. So you can you can see what's most important to you.

Nicholas 37:59

It then tells your motivation satisfaction level, which again, is not something to get too hung up about. Because if it's low, it's not necessarily your fault. It could be your manager, could be the environment, it could be the team, but there's action planning, which I'll come on to.

Nicholas 38:17

It also shows propensity for change. So is the employee someone who's up for it? Are they going to be more reticent? And you need both. There's no right there's no wrong, you need no you need a yin and yang. If everybody in the organisation was, you know, very, very risk friendly and saying "yeah let's try new things all the time," it'll probably end up with you know, 100 different internal social media platforms just because it's the new thing. When really the people who are less up for change will say "well why do we need something else?" So you need those kind of checkers and balances.

Nicholas 38:48

So as well as understanding yourself, a manager can also have a team view, or you can have an organisational view as well. So in effect, you can look at your team, and across them, you can see their popular intrinsic motivators.

Nicholas 39:04

So if we take an internal comms team, for example, something very close to our hearts, with the intrinsic motivators, you can see if it's largely what you would expect from an internal comms team. So, you know, you'd expect to see creativity quite high. We'd ordinarily have graphic designers and things in there and videographers and you'd expect to see creativity quite high. There's one called searcher which is about you know, they like the core purpose, they like feedback. Because internal comms teams spend so much on core purpose and connecting people to it, you'd expect to see that quite high. You can potentially see where the gaps are within the team. One of the motivators, which is always in my top two is star. That's why I love appearing on podcasts and things like that. That's why I was delighted when you invited me on but what we often see is that's the lowest then many teams don't have anybody with star anywhere near high, you know, you need somebody who shouts about what you do. Because a lot of people functions are particularly good at that, IT are great at it, as we've already discussed, but you need someone to shout about what you do.

Nicholas 40:15

And you can also look at potential clashes. Now an example of of that would be someone who is a director, for example, you know, they like control, dynamic influence, if they've got a really high motivation score for this, they could be a bit more well the highway. Yet, if you've got somebody who's a spirit, you know, free spirit, freedom, autonomy, likes to receive instructions and be left alone to get on with it. The person who's director may well micromanage this person, and that spirit won't like it. But if you're aware of it, you can then discuss it, you can flex your style somewhat. And you know, I've had myself in the past of work just just to give an example.

Nicholas 41:00

So my lowest intrinsic motivator is always friend, I normally say if people have friend low, it doesn't mean that you're incapable of having friendships, but it's the fact that you come to work to work. When I was working in an office, I would usually be one away from the first person that because I need that Nicholas time, start the day, go through emails, look for things to do list. And one particular organisation, there was a woman who used to come in early as well for travel reasons. She clearly had friend very, very high. So she was stuck on my desk, and she would talk to me about TV last night, dinner last night, all of these things which I know makes me sound like a terrible human being, I just don't care about, I just want to get on and work. So I must confess a couple of times, I'll go a bit short, I felt guilty afterwards, for being short. Had we known this about each other, kind of found a little bit of common ground and a little bit of flex, and rather than thinking, you know, "why isn't she just just keeping quiet?" I'm thinking, well, actually, she's motivated by being a friend. So perhaps we need to just come to some sort of agreement that, you know, official agreement or just a kind of unsaid agreement, let's have a little bit of chat, and then get on with kind of, well, we could have kind of found some kind of common ground there really couldn't we?

Nicholas 42:20

So there's many other kinds of examples by there, I could give. But the important thing is the absolutely important thing, of course, is to affect improvements. So what you do with all this information is you create action plans. So rather like employee surveys, having the data is one thing, we need to do something with it. So you would create, so the individual

employee and the line manager would create an action plan. So if you know if one of your motivators was expert, for example, but your satisfaction score was, you know, middling seven, six or something, you would have a conversation around, you know, what can the individual do to boost that intrinsic motivation? Well they could do online courses, they could do a LinkedIn course. Or they could shadow somebody at work, possibly, if they're a junior colleague. Then walk in the line manager do, they could seek to find a mentor for this person, they could look for courses that they could go on to. And what can the wider department or organisation do? You know, work on these action plans, with the very, very obvious aim being that if these things happen and come to fruition, this will boost the employee's satisfaction with their intrinsic motivator, therefore, they'll be happier, they'll be healthier, and they should be more productive.

Katie 43:37

I love it. And I think that you can absolutely draw up action plans, and they're going to be so much more meaningful because as you say, they're built on your intrinsic personal motivation. But I can imagine just teams being, as you say, more effective and more harmonious simply because everyone has a different level of understanding, hopefully a deeper level of understanding about all the people and the personalities within the team. It just goes to that next level, I suppose, of connection.

Nicholas 44:09

Unfortunately, Mojo isn't free. It gets very, very inexpensive, by the way, we know a couple of high street cups of coffee per employee per month, which is almost nothing. But yes, so part of it is personalising the employee experience, you're investing in the employee, so they understand about themselves. But also yes, absolutely on a team level that other than that, it's important to, to know and understand each other and respect each other. And we're, you know, talking about, you know, bring it bring your whole self to work. Well, that's fine, isn't it? Isn't it great to bring your whole self to work? And having people acknowledge you for that?

Nicholas 44:09

I mean, we've seen organisations have their results, printed out and put on the wall. And quite often in I suppose light jest. People kind of say things like, "oh, Nicholas, he's the star isn't he? Blah, blah, blah." It's recognition for what this person's intrinsic motivator is so you can build some kind of camaraderie about these things as well. And some of the results are quite often fascinating.

Nicholas 45:11

One of the things that we are finding, actually, quite often is almost everybody expects the most senior person in the team, who has been mapped to be director, you know, responsibility, control, power, these kind of things. But increasingly, we're seeing that's not the case. And quite often leaders of teams, their intrinsic motivation for director is pretty low. Now, some of that is, I mean, there's been a lot more of movement towards things, servant leadership. Yeah. And also, an important point to make is, is just because you're not necessarily highly intrinsically motivated by something, it doesn't mean you can't do it.



Katie 45:56

Exactly.

Nicholas 45:57

You know, someone may not someone, unlike me, may not have star high. But it doesn't mean that they can't get up on stage and talk, it doesn't mean that they can't appear on a podcast or a video or something. They may just not be as comfortable as intrinsically motivated by it.

Katie 46:15

I think that's a really good point, actually. Because, as as much as it's helpful to have these, and I will use the word labels, but in a way, it's also important, you're right, not for anyone shouldn't feel limited by them shouldn't feel constrained by them. So I like that. The other thought I have is, and adjust your view on this. Is it possible that over time and motivations could change?

Nicholas 46:41

Well, absolutely. Great point. Well, that's what I was just about to come onto actually, I was just thinking, I was about to say, "if I may..."

Nicholas 46:48

We recommend tracking your motivation quarterly, very much moving away from the annual surveys through to polled surveys you know every three to four months, etc, etc. So that way, you can, you know, you can track motivation levels and potentially make any, any changes quite, quite swiftly. I mean, you know, the pandemic changed a lot of people's motivations, we saw defender coming up much more highly, um, it kind of- overall, defenders normally kind of expect to see seventh, maybe six or seventh, in terms of the most popular within teams, it went up during the pandemic, because it's all about survival. Think Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? All about safety first, I just want to keep my job, I want to keep my family safe, I don't want to worry about all this other stuff. So defender went high. And it you know, if you think if someone's line manager changes, it could be a good thing. You might not like your line manager, so could be getting close to be a bad thing you see motivation could go two ways.

Nicholas 47:53

Things from your personal life, you know, if you're you wanting to get a mortgage for a house, or get married and have children, builder, the one that's related to money, material things and goal setting as well, that may well get higher.

Nicholas 48:08

To give the example which was kind of logging in my brain, which I was hoping to shoehorn somehow into the conversation was the fact that you know, I had somebody in my team, who is terrific, at what they did, absolutely terrific. But they perhaps there, they didn't focus that much on their own PR. The people who knew them in the team knew they did a great job, knew they were really nice person, perhaps outside of the table, wider Department, people perhaps didn't know quite so much of about who they are. They wanted to move on

with their career, they wanted to get promotion, they wanted a bit more responsibility. So you know, so I worked basic, I worked on this style intrinsic motivator. So we did things like having them first off speaking in in team meetings and speaking in department meetings, then going out to the rest of the business to kind of talk about what the what our team, IC EE and EX team did. And they're becoming more and more comfortable with it. And it went from being the ninth most important to them intrinsic motivator, which is the last one, there's nine of them. About six months later, I think was either six or seven. So it's never never likely to be their top. But they became a lot more comfortable with it. And they could see it was important to them for the sake of their career. They've now gone on to a much bigger job in another organisation so it's great. I'm not saying it's all down today 'intervention from Nicholas.' But you know, it's an example of you can pull in other things where you think if people are perhaps missing something or not focusing on it enough, we can draw something else in and yes, motivation can absolutely change over time, or in some cases it can change in a heartbeat.

Nicholas 49:54

It personality. They notice that you know, one isn't better than the other but You know, people tend to do you know, Myers Briggs and her desk and the colours warm and all those kinds of things. And absolutely, there is absolutely 100% a place for those, but your personality wants to reach mature adulthood doesn't tend to change, unless you have a life changing event it's pretty much going to be the same. And also, you know, it impacts upon, you know, your well being and things are there as well. If people have low motivation levels, that can potentially start to impact upon their well being as well, which if are being a bit kind of brutal about it, thinking from a senior leader's point of view, you know, if that then person goes off sick there has a cost attached to it. As well as the human cost as, obviously rather focus on the human costs. But we've been talking about, you know, business cases and things like that, you know, there is also the financial cost of that as well.

Katie 50:53

I want to put something else in people's toolkit when it comes to thinking about the employee experience. And that is your eight stages in the employee lifecycle, which begins with 'find me' and then 'hire me', obviously. And then right at the end of this employee lifecycle, 'offboard me' and 'remember me'.

Katie 51:16

I'm particularly drawn to the 'remember me' one because as an aside, I've often thought that organisations don't pay enough attention to their alumni, but I think could be quite an interesting ambassadorial network potentially, but they tend to be a little bit forgotten about. And then overlaid on top of those eight stages in the employee cycle, your book, and you've touched on this already, mentions moments that matter, but also rescued moments. And I just thought it would be really interesting for people, if you could just give us some examples of both of those. And how have you, how you've seen people improve either of those to improve their overall employee experience.

Nicholas 52:03

When we work with organisations, again, from the people, for the people, we say to them, you create your own stages of the employee lifecycle. It doesn't have to be eight, there could be seven, there could be... You know, not loads of them, but we've— create your own and create it in your language. That's what we kind of say to them. Obviously, in the book, we had to give an example.

Nicholas 52:22

So once you've defined your employee lifecycle stages, the eight, nine, 10, whatever it is, from there, in each of those stages, you would then focus on identifying the moments that matter. Now, the moments that matter is not necessarily a moment, it's more of a bucket, I suppose. It could be a series of activities, it could be a day, it could be a week. But again, it's yours. It's your organisation, it's what's important to you. This is what I say, from the people, for the people, I can come up with these things, but I don't work for your organisation, I don't know the culture like you do. I don't know what's important to your organisation like you do. So, you know, from the people for the people.

Nicholas 53:00

So out of that comes the moments that matter. And then for each of those, you know, you in effect, you interrogate those. You would bring in archetypes, empathy maps, stop, start, change, continue. You'd worked to improve them, you track it, you measure them, and hopefully over time, people satisfaction with these moments should increase.

Nicholas 53:17

And to come back to the exact question that you've asked. So in terms of the moments that matter, I suppose to follow on with with the alumni example. So take someone's you know, last day, last week, however it's identified. That will be a moment that matters. So it's very, very important how people are offboarded, you know, both from a human level, and also as we've been discussing they're potential customers in the future. So if they have, you know, if they leave the organisation thinking, "You know, I really enjoyed my time there, it was a great send off." All of this is putting all the staple things in place in ordinary there's a presentation, you get them a gift, how can you enrol them into the alumni, you know, are you going to sit down and talk with them about their experience? That could you know, if you're looking at a little bit cynically, that could then lend itself to things like positive Glassdoor reviews, which of course you want for talent attraction, and potentially, them continuing to be a customer. So that's an example of moments that mattered and say you do this all along the lifecycle.

Nicholas 54:23

And it doesn't cost anything to create them, right. You do it with your own people, it doesn't cost money to create these. I mean, yes, with some of them, you may wish to bring in certain tools, and that may cost money, but then you build the business case. But a lot of it's just the human side of things, isn't it? So an example of a rescue moment, let's just say an internal comms team had just delivered a big event, you know, 300, 400 people leadership event etc, etc. Ordinarily, the IC director or head of doesn't get involved in the day to day but at this event, they've been receiving all of the praise and at the end, they you know, go to their team "Well done team!" Such and such he was set as great as it was right there. So it was

great as the team are saying "yeah, you know, it's been a really good event, we're really pleased. But we're so tired. We are all just gonna go home. And we're just gonna go and go to bed." Why now? "Because we're just absolutely shattered after doing all this work." And then the director, head of whatever says, "ah, yeah, take the morning off. Take the morning off everybody. You did such a good job. Take it off there." All right. Okay, thank you. At that moment, they're sort of quite grateful. But when they kind of think about it, they would know it was an off the cuff kind of rescue moment. It's a recognition rescue moment, isn't it. But what should have happened is right at the very start, there should have been some kind of, you know, protocol or whatever, the if you work all these extra hours, you get all this time off in lieu. So a better approach would have been after receiving all this praise, the senior person comes to the team and says, "Thank you for doing all this kind of things. So tell me how you're going to use all this time off in lieu, what are you doing?" and someone could then take the time off or leave on a Friday to have a bigger weekend to go somewhere with their family, and things like that. So that's the difference between bringing in a moment that matters rather than just a rescue.

Katie 56:11

You reminded me, I was actually there at the time because he was a client. But his work he had worked for the organisation, I think, for 20 years, this was a long service moment. And after our meeting, he went back to his desk, and literally underneath his keyboard was the letter from the managing director saying, "Thank you so much for your 25 year service." It was a letter, standard letter, not even delivered in person, just under a keyboard and I saw—and this guy was actually really, had worked hard for this organisation and was an advocate of it. And I could see his face fall. So that was a moment that clearly

Nicholas 56:54

Yea, terrible, isn't it? When I had, one of the things, again, one of the things I mentioned quite a lot, because I like this example. And people can feel free to steal this one. Because I think you know, I know the employee experience starts with you. And you could, but all these things, you can just, you don't have to wait for having a big employee experience thing. You can just start these things today. So one one example we've suggested before, and we put it in the book as well, is when somebody is joining, somebody's first day, so obviously the hiring manager has conversations with them, hopefully they try to find out what they like in their personal life. So someone could be you know a fan of whatever pop group, whatever animals, whatever... it doesn't matter, whatever they're a fan of. Wouldn't be wonderful on their first day. I know a lot of people work virtually now but let's just go with this example. Wouldn't it be wonderful on their first day, if on their desk was a gift related to that thing? So if this person was a big fan of Ferraris, wonderful, there's a Ferrari in the carpark for them, but you know, a Ferrari mug, or something will be wonderful. How did you know? You mentioned it during interview, Oh wonderful wouldn't that make you feel welcome? There may be a welcome card from the team, rather than just doing these things at the end when they're leaving, you know, great that you're joining us and things like that. Now, there's loads of those kinds of things that can just get people's hearts a bit of a lift, all along, as I say that don't cost much more. They don't take much time, there's just one human being being a good human being to another for an awful lot of them.



Katie 58:18

And that feeling of being seen, being heard, being understood, as you say not being treated just like another resource, a number, an FTE, but actually as a as a whole human being.

Katie 58:32

Do you have time for those quick fire questions for me?

Nicholas 58:35

Absolutely.

Katie 58:37

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

Nicholas 58:45

I don't know about success. But it is genuinely true that my team comes first. So my one to one, you know, I've always had a one to one with my team every week, is protected time, and the only time that I would cancel that meeting would be if there's a genuine crisis, doesn't matter what work I've got on doesn't matter who I need to meet, that's protective time, they come first and then they can go on with it. And I find if you do that they can go on with our working week then, get up towards the start of the week, they need to keep asking questions, they set that protected half an hour, an hour, whatever. Let's get everything thrashed out, you can get on, I'm not blocking anything, you can then get on with it. And also from a you know, a human being point of view as well. So I would definitely say that team time comes first.

Katie 59:31

Thank you. How would you complete this sentence: world class employee experience is...?

Nicholas 59:39

I could answer this many ways. But to follow on from much of the conversation we've had today. I would say designed from the people for the people.

Katie 59:49

If you had to make one recommendation of a book, or it could be something else if you wanted to, a report podcast, to our listeners, what would it be?

Nicholas 1:00:00

I suppose springs to mind is obviously 'From Cascade to Conversation' [by Katie Macaulay] was the belt matters. But yes, it's. But if I could pick a second, I would definitely recommend Fusion by Denise Lee Yohn brilliant, brilliant woman. She's just written many books but Fusion's great, because that talks about EX and CX and how they are two sides of the same coin and things like that. And, and I know you've had this on a recent podcast as well, but you know, great brands are created from the inside out. I don't know who created that line. It was from Denise that I heard it the first, it may have been someone else, I don't know. But



yeah I highly recommended Denise and following her on LinkedIn, she's amazing. She's my work hero.

Katie 1:00:42

Thank you for that, because I don't know her or her books so that's brilliant, thank you. Finally, then we give you a billboard a metaphorical billboard for millions to see. And you can put on that any message you like, what's you going to put on your billboard?

Nicholas 1:00:59

I would have, no no real surprisingly for someone with star as an intrinsic motivator, I wouldn't have it about me. And I did, I did think about about that. I would have "I don't want to live in a box." And I'd work with a great design agency to have all sorts of wonderful pictures. Because I feel very strongly that I don't think a single aspect of a human being should define them. So to explain that, really, I don't think the fact that somebody is in a wheelchair should define them. Because quite often we kind of see disabled leader, visually impaired MP, and it's almost like this single thing about this person is up front, you read about that first before we then read about a human being, so yeah, I don't want to live in a box.

Katie 1:01:50

I love that. I've got a phrase that I overuse, which is something like, "as soon as we put someone in a pigeon hole, they fly straight out of it." But that is what you discover, particularly when you do qualitative research, interestingly, because you think, Oh, this is going to be an interesting thing about this person, some trait or characteristic. And as soon as you start talking to them about it, you're like, oh, yeah, that's, that's something about me. But actually, it's this thing over here that I'm really passionate about or interested in. They're flown straight out of the pigeon hole you put them in. So I love that. Thank you so much for your time and your insight, Nicholas, it's been great.

Nicholas 1:02:26

My pleasure, Katie, thank you very much again for inviting me. As you know, I'm intrinsically motivated by being a star. So I love doing these kinds of things.

Katie 1:02:33

I also want to say for listeners that all the way through this conversation, you have been wearing a t shirt that says Mojo on it, very clearly.

Nicholas 1:02:42

Yes, I know it's a podcast, but even so, I like to stay on brand.

Katie 1:02:49

Well, thanks so much.

Katie 1:02:55

So that is a wrap for this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. For the show notes and a full transcript head over to AB's website. That's abcomm.co.uk/podcasts.

**Katie 1:03:13**

If you did find this episode helpful, I would be immensely grateful if you could give us a review on Apple Podcasts, that would just give the algorithms a little nudge and help other IC pros out there find our show. Thank you to Nicholas, my producer, John Phillips, sound engineer Stuart Rolls, and the lovely people back at AB, who keep this show on the road. And 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, what you want less of, I genuinely want the show to be as helpful as possible to you.

Katie 1:03:56

So until we meet again, lovely listeners stay safe and well. And remember, it's what's inside that counts.

Katie 1:04:06

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 subscriber 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 signup page again abcomm.co.uk/Friday. And if you do choose to be a subscriber, I look forward to being in touch.