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. 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. Every fortnight I put a comms practitioner, author or academic in my podcast hot seat. And together, we tease out ways to make an organisation's primary audience – its employees – feel more energised, involved, connected, and motivated at work.

Katie 01:17
This week, we welcome back a very special guest. Bruce Daisley is one of the world's leading voices on workplace culture and wellbeing. Bruce is the author of the best-selling book, The Joy of Work, which we discussed way back when, in episode eight of this show. Bruce's own podcast, Eat, Sleep, Work, Repeat, is one of the world's top rated business podcasts. But in this conversation, we dive into his latest book called Fortitude: The Myth of Resilience and the Secrets of Inner Strength. Now, it seems these days that everyone is talking about the 'r' word resilience, that ability to bounce back from misfortune or adversity.

Katie 02:09
But there's something inherently wrong, says Bruce, with what he calls the resilience orthodoxy. The idea that it's not really what happens to you that matters, but your attitude or your mindset around what's happened. This so often leads to victim blaming, says Bruce, or the idea that a colleague suffering from burnout or stress, for example, needs a resilience workshop, when the real answer lies not with them at all as individuals, but in their unreasonable or stressful working conditions or culture.

Katie 02:47
Now, what Bruce's book reveals is that as internal comms professionals, we have a role to play. We can actually help build resilience in the workplace. Because here's the key finding: resilience is a collective strength. It's the strength we draw on from each other. It's about a shared experience, shared understanding, uniting together as one community. And because Bruce is a guru on what makes us productive and happy at work, I couldn't resist asking him: If he suddenly became CEO of a workforce of several thousand, what would be his first step to building a strong, healthy culture? Bruce is a goldmine of information and insight. I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did.

Katie 03:45
So, Bruce, what a pleasure to invite you back on the Internal Comms Podcast. Thank you for being here in person as well.

Bruce 03:54
I'm thrilled to be here, and it's lovely to do it in person, you get a better connection.

Katie 04:01
Now, you have written a book that is all about resilience, but very deliberately, you have not used the 'r' word in the title. I'm guessing thereby hangs the tale in itself. Can you explain why the book is called Fortitude?

Bruce 04:18
Yeah, I found that the resilience word was haunting us and following us everywhere. And I'll give you a couple of specific examples. A friend of mine during the pandemic got sent on a resilience course. She did that thing that I think a lot of us were feeling like we could be honest and vulnerable. She said to her boss she was feeling burnt out. And her boss said, 'Great, I'm gonna send you on this resilience course.' Throughout the course she said, I don't feel any different. Now I'm scared to tell my boss because my boss will say, 'Oh, well, you've been on the course. There must be something wrong with you."

Bruce 04:53
Similar story to another friend of mine who works in an NHS hospital and she said during the pandemic, they were frazzled. They were at the edge of collapse. And someone pinned a notice on a notice board saying 'Resilience webinar on Thursday'. And she said, if you mentioned resilience round here, people will thump you. Effectively, both of those stories are taking something that's happened to someone and somehow suggesting it's their fault. Rather than suggesting that we've created a toxic environment here, or the demands of the moment are such that everyone's feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Actually, it suggests, 'Oh, are you not resilient? Don't worry, we've got a course for you.' I said, I felt it was a bit stigmatised, really, you know that some people have found themselves thinking, actually, maybe resilience is an attempt to silence me, or an attempt to diminish what the system is doing to me and make me own responsibility for it. So I was really intrigued with that. So the books called the 'Myth of Resilience and the Secret to Inner Strength – Fortitude, is the main title, but that's the subtitle – specifically to try and get into the heart of what resilience really is. And when do we find it?

Katie 06:18
I think that's such a smart idea. And also, when a word gets used and just becomes so commonplace, I think we use it in a lazy way. I feel that way about authenticity, vulnerability. In our world, there's lots of those kinds of words, employee engagement, I would say would be another one, we do ourselves a much better service. If we pause for a moment and think, what do we really mean?

Katie 06:46

The second chapter of your book is called 'What doesn't kill you, brackets almost kills you...' And I think that is a study that you mentioned there, that goes to the heart of your argument. And this the ACE study. So this is a study about adverse childhood experiences. Can you explain that what this study tells us about the role of trauma in our lives?

Bruce 07:11
So the way that I got into this was specifically, there was a piece of research about British Olympians, fascinating piece of work. UK Sport did this work where they wanted to try and understand who ended up winning gold medals. So they would think it like an investment opportunity. Where do we put our money? We're thinking about the Paris Olympics, or maybe the US Olympics after that, where do we put our money to get the best result? That's exactly what they were thinking and they commissioned some psychologists look into it. Psychologists came back, they studied 16 gold medal winning athletes and 16 athletes who'd had the same funding in the same sport the same time, but hadn't won gold. And what they found was that the difference was that 100% of the gold medal winning athletes had had a significant moment of childhood trauma. You might superficially then say, 'Oh, right, OK, does trauma leads to winning gold medals?' And so that's why I wanted to go into explore this, because the story is far more complicated than that.

Bruce 08:17
What you find is that trauma typically is experienced as shame, it's experienced... you know, it's inexplicable why someone like Mo Farah who was sold into modern slavery. Why would he experience that as shame? You know, 'We would want to give him a hug and say, look, you know, actually, you should be proud.' But people who go through trauma experience it as shame. And what you find is that, in the vast majority of cases, people who suffer from trauma get into this recursive loop of they keep playing the trauma back in their head, and one of the things that ameliorates it for them, in the data, is addiction – substance addiction, drink addiction, people tend to go into these behaviours that sort of stopped the noise in their head. What you find in these elite athletes is they're in a recursive loop as well. They're in this addictive behaviour. But generally, because they're so supreme at sport, they direct their addiction into the sport. So you sees things like Andy Murray, who was victim of or a survivor of Dunblane, or Kelly Holmes, who said sport became my identity. Andy Murray said he can train and train and train beyond the stage where anyone else is exhausted, he can keep going. There's something about it for him that takes all the noise and frustration away from he carries on.

Bruce 09:42
So I was really fascinated. The ACE index is something that tries to categorise trauma. It's this really simple index that tries to just take a snapshot, in a very sort of reductive way, but a snapshot of what your own childhood experiences are. So, did you live with someone who went to jail? Did you live with someone who had addiction issues? Were you ever physically, psychologically or sexually abused. And it just gives you a tick list that you can use and say, 'Alright, I've got, I've got a score of four.' In my case, I've got a score of four. And so you don't have to tell anyone which four you ticked, but it enables you to almost take a snapshot. For example, some of them are far less serious than others ('Did your parents separate?') But actually, parental divorce correlates in a lot of cases with compulsive eating. And the more

we understand these things helps us unpack our own experiences and sort of try and dissect and self-diagnose what we went through.

Bruce 10:52
So one of the things we know is an ACE score of four correlates with doubling of your chance of getting heart disease, doubling your chance of getting cancer. It's about a fourfold increase in your likelihood of having addiction issues. Now, what your discovery is, the more that people understand those things, actually, the more they're able to mitigate them. So what you find these that the people who study this thing, they say, 'Actually, it's far from a life sentence. If you know, how your experience is impacting the instincts side of you, actually that's the first step to overcoming those things.'

Bruce 11:28
So all of it is I mean, so fascinating. I think in terms of self-diagnosis, self-analysis, get to the heart of those things, it helps us interpret some of the things that we do. One of the things you find is that childhood trauma correlates with adult anger. So one of the things that's come from this is ACE-informed policing, right. If you know that the cause of someone's anger often has an origin in some of their childhood experiences, it might not solve it in the moment, but it helps you understand what you're witnessing. So for example, the vast majority of people who commit murders have experienced personal humiliation as a kid. And so actually, it becomes a fascinating dissection of the, you know, the people who go into gangs, the people who go into go on to be murderous, often, there's some degree of humiliation they've experienced, that produces this restless and insatiable urge to try and redeem the image of themselves. And so look, you know, critical thing is that these things are complicated. But as a route to analyse ourselves or other people, actually understanding that methodology can be a helpful first step, actually.

Katie 12:52
Am I right in thinking that what you're actually saying is there is almost a Goldilocks zone, for want of a better phrase, were a certain amount of trauma, maybe that's the wrong word, but there are some things that can happen to us that are negative, which we are able to bounce back from. But that it is not true, that people with terribly traumatic experiences should be more resilient because that experience should have taught them something about themselves. Is that right? There's this middle zone,

Bruce 13:23
I think, exactly. A Goldilocks zone, which is some bumps in the road aren't necessarily harmful. If it rises to the level of trauma, then you know, I think it's best to avoid it, if at all possible. You see some examples. Professional footballers, are 10 times more likely to have divorced parents and so there's something along the way there that seems to have played a part in their upbringing and their experiences. So it's complicated. I think there's definitely a Goldilocks zone. What you find is that people who have had no adversity at all find life when it presents challenges to them – they find it hard to take that on. But people who have had an overwhelming amount of stress, it leaves leads to bad light outcomes, not good outcomes.

Katie 14:14

Now your book challenges what you call the resilience orthodoxy. This is looking at the work of people like Carol Dweck, Angela Duckworth, and Martin Seligman. Can you talk to us about this resilience orthodoxy? I think people will know about some of this.

Bruce 14:31

So at the heart of things like growth mindset, is this idea that the only thing that's holding you back is you – the only thing that's holding you back is your attitude. Big thing, right? So what you find is that and that goes to the heart of resilience, really. You know, the idea that 'Oh, my friend who needed the resilience course, but that was because there was something wrong with her that needed to be corrected by someone showing her slides for half an hour. And at the end of that she'll be in a zone where finally she's overcome her own weaknesses and she's better.' Now, all of that is pretty consistent with the idea that resilience is something that some of us have, and some of us don't have, that someone can knock some sense into you and get you on a good foot.

Bruce 15:17

The origin of that thing is so potent, that people set about saying, 'I can offer you a resilience course.' And their biggest customer of that in the world is the US military. The US military spent a billion dollars commissioning and delivering a resilience course by Martin Seligman. And this course – the great news is that when someone spends a billion dollars, it produces loads of evidence, loads of opportunity for us to research it. So the great news is people have gone in said, 'Let's test how good it is.' Because if this is working, then teach everyone. Let's not keep it for combat soldiers. They've gone in and tested it, and their conclusion is: this has had zero impact. Zero.

Bruce 16:04

In addition, the same work has been done in schools. So anyone who's witnessed someone who's gone through the schooling system will know that across most schools now, posters about resilience, posters about growth mindset – in fact I found myself for a couple of days straight, searching school websites, trying to find examples that didn't include growth mindset or resilience. It's everywhere. It's everywhere Eton to comprehensive schools, from infant goes to sixth form colleges – resilience and growth mindset is everywhere. Suggesting to kids that the thing that's holding them back is them, that they've got the wrong attitude, right. We know that that score methodology has been tested. And the school methodology is said it has had zero impact on the people who've gone through. To summarise that: A guy who came around my house, and he fixed my wi-fi. And he said to me: 'Never in the history of calming down has someone calmed down by being told to calm down.' Nice, yeah, I like it. Resilience is simpler. Never in the history of resilience, whether you're the US Army, whether your school programmes, has someone been resilient by someone telling them to be more resilient. They're not going to be more resilient by going on a webinar, by going on a training programme, you are not going to be. So it begs the question. Well, we do know that resilience exists – we witness these people who do incredible things! – so how are they accessing resilience?

Bruce 17:35

What you find is – and I always think right now of people in Ukraine – what you find is that resilience is a collective thing. It's a strength we draw from each other. It's the fact that we feel connected to the people around us. We think we're all in this together. We think, 'Okay, we might be going through a hard time, but actually, so is This person.' We're all feeling like were emboldened by the support for people around us. And as soon as you notice that, you notice resilience is everywhere, and always.

Bruce 18:08

We've just been surrounded with the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. And so people gives us some reflecting on the Troubles. But there's a really intriguing piece of research about the Troubles, which was the one stage it was it was estimated that half of the population knew someone who had been affected, and about a fifth and witnessed a killing. I mean, horrible trauma. But when people looked at it, that didn't seem to be the extent of post-traumatic stress that you might expect. We've seen something similar in Kosovo and places like that, where a fifth of the population died in the Kosovan War. And yet, the people who came out of it said, 'Oh, yeah, it was a, it was a difficult time. But we felt the support of people around us, we felt it was a time of connection, a time of support.' What you found of the people who went through the Troubles is that people who said that they identified with their community found that they were not getting into... There's no increase in suicides. There was no increase in depression. People felt their connection to the community was what got them through it. And so it's this really strange thing: the more that we feel connected to people around us, it seems to be enriching and uplifting.

Bruce 19:27

So I'll give you another example. What you find is that when people have been hospitalised and whether they're hospitalised for depression, or heart illness, or whatever it might be, the biggest predictor of how they're going to be in five years or in two years, is how many social groups they report feeling part of. Now, why on earth would that have an impact? Why on earth if you just had open heart surgery, why on earth would something unrelated to that, have such a bearing? But it's far more predictive than whether they smoke, whether they drink, it's far more predictive than anything else. The biggest thing that can help us understand what their health is going to be in two years or five years, is how many social groups they report being a part of?

Bruce 20:16

That's the strength we draw from each other. And actually, it's just strange, because it's so evident in all of the data but it seems to be like this mystery to us, really. Schools aren't teaching kids, 'Okay, it's all about your friendship groups. It's all about hanging with your friends face to face. It's all about feeling connected.' The kids who are in sports teams seem to do better than the kids who aren't in sports. And yet, it's so obvious, none of this feels like a sort of a massive insight. And yet, we sort of lose sight of it when it comes to a lot of the ways that we behave.

Katie 20:53

There's another powerful example in your book, which I think is particularly powerful, because there's an example of people going through the same trauma, but having different

experiences or results for the end. And that's 9/11. Yeah, because you talk about the people have gone through the same kinds of trauma, but had totally different reactions afterwards. And that's sort of the emergency services versus the office workers. Can you talk us through that example as well, because that's particularly powerful.

Bruce 21:20
The really interesting thing about that is that, firstly, it was fascinating to look at the experience of 9/11, it gives gave us a lot of different excursions into the evidence. For example, the people who experienced 9/11l and where they're, generally there were around other people. People describe having a chat with strangers, describe walking across bridges, and having a beer with complete strangers... these moments of connection. If we compare those people who experienced it, with the people who watched it on TV. The people who watched it on TV, reported much higher anxiety, much higher stress levels. People who experienced it, of course they were knocked sideways by it, but they said there was a calm, there was a connection, there was there was an immediate grief, but it was shared amongst people there. That goes even further.

Bruce 22:09
So just a constant reminder, as soon as you see the evidence of this, resilience is the strength we draw from each other, you find the evidence for it comes at you from every angle, and it makes it so confounding then.

Bruce 22:09
The police officers who served that day or the fire officers who serve that day, aside from the fact that, you know, sometimes they were really ill from smoke inhalation or what happened to them. But people who were there that day, quite often in the research that was done, they were a year on reported to be showing no long-term impact. There was no post-traumatic stress, they were being regarded as fully recovered. People who experienced it alone. So there's a lot of office workers who were there in the buildings that day, they recovered, they escaped. Because their subsequent experience was isolation, they were sort of playing through the loop of what they went through. But their families had heard of this a thousand times and they didn't want to keep hearing the same stories. People who went through it alone, tended to go into far worse situations – they reported, finding the trauma of the moment, the post-traumatic stress of it inescapable. And you know, there's a couple of really sad episodes of some people who report falling into drink, reported falling into addiction. In contrast to those police officers, or firefighters who had experienced it, and probably talked about it laughed about it. cried about it together. That connection seemed to be what got them through it.

Bruce 23:45
Look, let's think of direct implications for this. Let's think about companies right now. Think about organisations. If any of us knew that the way for our team members or employees to feel supported, to feel less stressed, burnt out, anxious, was them to feel a connection to each other, especially in an era maybe where we're working from home a few days a week. if we knew that connection was the most important thing, we might engineer work in slightly different way. You might think about, 'Okay, that team lunch that we've not got around to

or the team dinner, that, you know, people are saying that, you know, they're not around for it, actually maybe would do something to lunch in work hours.' Everyone can do it. Let's make sure that we're setting time aside for it. That sort of prioritise it. Stuff that probably when we're building team strategy, you wouldn't say 'OK, team connection is a big part of our strategy.' It would feel like it's a nice to have, but wouldn't feel... it's touchy feely it's it? It feels like the sort of thing if you haven't got time for it won't get around to it. It makes you realise actually that those things play a much bigger part in the experience to work for people than sometimes we give them credit for, I think.

Katie 24:06
Am I right in thinking that also plays into one of your arguments in the Joy of Work, that actually having at least one friend at work has a huge impact on how much we enjoy your work.

Bruce 25:23
the biggest predictor of whether people are engaged with their job is whether you've got a best friend at work. And look, one interesting detail about that: people who work hybrid are less likely to say they have a best friend at work. So it's not to say we can't have them. But I think we all recognise a bit that our connection with work has changed a little bit, it doesn't feel exactly the same.

Bruce 25:50
In the grand scheme of things, that might not be a bad thing. You know, if you quite enjoy going to the local shops near your house, you've got to know the baker or the butcher, or you know that you've got to know people that never knew before, because you were dashing on a seven o'clock train to town. Now you've got to know those parts of the community – that in the grand scheme of things isn't a bad thing. But if you've replaced the connections you had at work with nothing, which is for a lot of people, what they've done, they've replaced the connections they had at work with working silently at home on Mondays and Fridays, then it's possibly a sign that work and life have become a bit lonely. And I think, look, it shows then for leaders, for managers for internal communications experts, thinking about how you can build those connections is an important part of understanding how we can create that magic of culture that sometimes just creates itself. Probably we've worked out we need to spend a bit more effort in in building and fostering in the future.

Katie 27:00
I heard you talking about hybrid work at one stage, and I'm sure you use the analogy of the difference between work being a bit like school and now being a bit more like college and the relationship. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Bruce 27:15
Did you agree with it?

Katie M 27:17
I did. And it was a lightbulb moment,

Bruce 27:19

Good! Okay. And look, you know, by all means, I a welcome people disagreeing. There's an interesting thing. Think about our relationships at school. They were tightly knit. The people you were with at school, you'll remember their names for the rest of your life, whether you like them, whether you hated them. You were so totally enmeshed in those communities. And work was a bit like that, you know, the people you sat next to, they were a part of your life, whether you found them annoying, or whether you'd liked them. And what we've done now is we've migrated from that version of work, which was like school, into something where work is a bit more like college. What I mean by that, specifically, is that people you run a course with at college, almost certainly, if they weren't the people, you spend all weekend with – you might go for a drink with them, you might chat with them, you might have one or two people who did transcend into your friendship groups – but more often your friendships at college were someone who someone knew, someone who was a friend of someone's from a sports team, a housemate of someone whose friends they were. The relationship with your course was more semi-detached. So you know, there could be people you loved, we just didn't spend all the time with them. And works become a bit more like that. Our relationships have become a bit more arm's length. We're spending a bit less time with them. But the way we see this semi-detached change is that we've seen resignation rates go up for most firms. You know, most firms are saying,' We've got higher quit right now than we've ever had. And it doesn't seem to be going down. And we can't quite work out why. You know, we expected post pandemic, that there was going to be a bump because we had a year where no one resigned, but it went up and then it never went down again. And we're trying to work out What's changed.'

Bruce 27:41

It's this slightly more semi-detached relationship that people have got. So it's so fascinating to try and get to the heart of this. Anyone who's interested in internal communications is interested in that magic that will sometimes observe – which is, great cultures can feel like the secret weapon. If you can get the culture right, and everyone pointing in the same direction, there's almost like a tangible burst. Good culture if you get it right. Yeah, that's what we're all seeking. And trying to work out the components of that I think is the holy grail. How can we get to that place where everyone feels, aligned, excited, inspired, connected.

Bruce 30:06

We've worked through a version now where our jobs don't feel as connected. And the challenge for any of us then is: are there any tricks that even if we're not together all the time, the idea that we're going to be together on Friday, I think people will fight you for... the, you know, it's, it's so fascinating, I quite often come into town on Fridays, because you can guarantee that you can go to any restaurant. You can go anywhere, you can go to any shop you want, and it'll be half as busy as old as Sunday. it's so quiet. So the idea that we're going to be back in the office five days a week, I think people will, they'll do whatever they can to avoid that. So we're never going to go back to precisely the way it was. But can we create something that feels as cohesive, as that via a different route? I think that's the challenge of the moment. The best organisations are going to be thinking if there is there a way that I can forge that connection but with slightly different components? It's the really

inspiring challenge for When leaders right now, can I build a culture that feels different to our competitors, but with using some of the same ingredients?

Katie 31:21

Based on people getting to know each other, feeling a sense of community, togetherness, genuine friendship. You just making me reflect because we're doing a lot of work on EVPs, you know, employee value propositions, and they get terribly strategic, and they must be aligned to the business strategy and all the rest of it. And I can imagine talking about community and connection and friendship, and as you say, it being thought of as fluffy. But actually, maybe that is the value we need to find.

Bruce 31:51

I remember one of my jobs in tech, and I joined this organisation, and I was really interested in seeing what we could do to improve culture. Because the culture didn't seem great, actually. I remember going to this Harvard educated business supremo, big leader. He said, what are your goals for next year? I said, I'd love to work on whether we could improve the culture here. Are there any ways that we can improve the culture? And he just, I think, looked at it like it was this trivial irrelevance. It wasn't strategic, it didn't have a business impact. Show me why that matters, it's not going to move the dial on our results. And I think culture can end up there. It's the challenge of anyone in internal communications Do the senior leadership buy in to how important this is? Because a lot of us know that the big thing about culture is this notion of discretionary effort. That there's a certain amount of effort we need to do to keep our jobs. But we know that when we're really excited about a project, and we're really motivated to work on it, we know that we can put a bit more into it, we can make sure something happens. We know that we can go above and beyond. And that's the holy grail of culture right. So can you unlock that? But not that it's a trick – you haven't tricked someone into working harder, but you've inspired them, excited them that they really want to make this work.

Bruce 33:24

I think that's the critical thing about this moment we're in – the pillars of culture have changed a little bit. The pillars of culture, are often not the things we think they are, the pillars of culture, quite often, are the things we take for granted. So one example of a pillar of culture was the office. You went there five days a week, you sat next to people, the same people every day, and five days a week, if one of your friends said to you, I've got a new job, you wouldn't say 'Oh, where would you be doing it?' It was like the place they were interviewed from nine o'clock till six o'clock, five days a week. And that was a pillar we didn't even recognise was there. Other pillars we don't recognise or play a big part in culture. Calendars. Communication tools, so email or Slack or Teams. We don't think it but I remember hiring someone and it was a really specific job and we wanted them to make a big impact. And I remember chatting to them three, six months in and she said, 'I get so many emails. I'm in so many meetings. I feel like I've done nothing on it at all.' I thought, wow. Right, it's true. We've given her a day job, which is managing emails – a day job, which is doing the average British person to 16 hours a week of meetings and I suspect a lot of people feel they do more than that. And, of course, she feels like she's getting the thing I'm asking her to do done in the gaps between all of the other things. We don't see that

calendars are probably the biggest thing that creates a workplace culture. And yet, so for most organisations, it creates an identical culture. I worked in two tech firms, the culture in tech firms is far more similar to working anywhere else than you might imagine. Right? You know, because your calendar allows anyone to put a to do list item in your agenda for the day. So if they look at your calendar, and they see that you've got nothing on at three o'clock, they can send you a to do list item, that you're going to be spending half an hour talking to me. And yet we Don't see that as a part of culture. We Don't recognise that that plays a part in the chemistry. I love. There's a wonderful bit of work done last year into meeting three days. Yes, correct. One day a week where people Don't have a meeting. Most organisations when you mentioned it to them, they say wouldn't work here, we couldn't have a day without meetings, you know, the stress of having a day without meetings. But the mechanics of it's really fascinating. If you search meeting free days, you'll find some stuff funny mechanics, or this was it was a day a week, where could be a day that you're in the office together or a day that you're not in the office together, it was day a week where no one could put a meeting on your calendar except you. So you can still go for a coffee with someone, you can still have lunch with someone in like a bygone era, you can still spend some time maybe huddling around tables in the office chatting. You can you can still spend time with other people. But no one could put it into your calendar except you. When you have a look at the research people say either. I got so much done that day. Or I loved that day Because I made progress on three projects I've been working on. And I didn't have to try and schedule a time in three weeks on Tuesday. I could just wander around someone's desk. It reminded me of a different time, a different era of work, but they say massively increased people's connection with their jobs. People felt their energy went up. Yeah, that's really simple. Yeah, all you've done. Yeah, he's you've untethered yourself a bit from electronic calendars. Yeah, it just reminds you that culture is determined by those things, calendars, and teams and email far more than, than you might imagine. In fact,

Bruce 34:53

Calendars are probably the biggest thing that creates a workplace culture. And yet, for most organisations, it creates an identical culture. I worked in two tech firms. The culture in tech firms is far more similar to working anywhere else than you might imagine. You know, because your calendar allows anyone to put a to do list item in your agenda for the day. So if they look at your calendar, and they see that you've got nothing on at three o'clock, they can send you a to do list item, that you're going to be spending half an hour talking to me. And yet we don't see that as a part of culture. We don't recognise that that plays a part in the chemistry.

Bruce 35:38

There's a wonderful bit of work done last year into meeting-free days. One day a week where people don't have a meeting. Most organisations when you mentioned it to them, they say it wouldn't work here, we couldn't have a day without meetings – the stress of having a day without meetings. But the mechanics of it's really fascinating. If you search meeting free days, you'll find some stuff on it. The mechanics of this was it was a day a week, where could be a day that you're in the office together or a day that you're not in the office together, it was day a week where no one could put a meeting on your calendar except you. So you can still go for a coffee with someone, you can still have lunch with

someone in like a bygone era, you can still spend some time maybe huddling around tables in the office chatting. You can you can still spend time with other people. But no one could put it into your calendar except you. When you have a look at the research people say either: I got so much done that day, or I loved that day because I made progress on three projects I've been working on and I didn't have to try and schedule a time in three weeks on Tuesday, I could just wander around someone's desk and it reminded me of a different time, a different era of work. So they say massively increased people's connection with their jobs. People felt their energy went up. That's really simple. All you've done is untethered yourself a bit from electronic calendars. It just reminds you that culture is determined by those things, calendars, and Teams and email far more than, than you might imagine.

Katie 37:18
I love that I'm always telling colleagues never forget your inbox is somebody else's to do lists. Your work is rarely in your inbox. That leads me slightly into the whole topic of autonomy and control because am I right in thinking your book also identifies the importance, in terms of resilience, a feeling in control, a feeling a degree of autonomy in your work, particularly would that be fair?

Bruce 37:44
Yeah, that's it. Most workers say they feel no control of their job, they feel like they're in a team, and they don't have any input into the decisions that are made. And pretty much the biggest thing that influences our sense of wellbeing is having a sense of control. To think about it the opposite way, and it becomes evident. The opposite of control is helplessness. So when we feel a sense of helplessness, that's when you get into those panicky spirals of anxiety where it might be in your home life, it might be in your work life. In your in your home life, if you feel like events are slipping out of your control or you know, circumstances are beyond your grasp, then produces a panic and anxiety. Your work life, it might be the thing, we just said that you've got back-to-back meetings all day. And you know, someone sends you an email saying, can you get back to me by five o'clock? How? When? You find yourself shouting at your desk or shouting in your kitchen? When am I meant to do that. And that absence control, it's really interesting the impact it has.

Bruce 38:54
When we look at school bullies, quite often, the thing that determines whether someone's a school bully, is whether they've got a domineering parent – it's normally a father. And often it comes from their parent has no control in their job. So, school bullies often have parents whose jobs are quite autocratic, but they have no control in them. Wow. I mean, firstly, the domino effect, the butterfly wing effect of unexpected things. But it makes you realise that, you know, the controlling parent comes from a controlled parent, and that in it in its turn, lead to someone who tries to control others. Makes you realise that one of these things have consequences beyond what we might even imagine, right? They have big ripple effects. So look, you know, if any of your friends if you yourself, if your teammates are feeling overwhelmed by their jobs, often it's about thinking: Can I give them some control? Can I tell them that meeting, let's cancel that meeting. Let's clear your space on Wednesday and Thursday mornings where you've got an hour where you don't have to have meetings. Tiny little interventions that can give new people a sense of control.

Katie 40:17

Or asking them when they'd like to set the deadline, or what's appropriate, when they can get something done. But am I right in thinking though, in reading your book, that you think that we're losing control and autonomy in our jobs that we're actually it's something we're losing rather than gaining as time's going on?

Bruce 40:34

Yeah, that's right. I was reading something last week; it was the notion of whether people feel like they're able to make decisions or break rules at work. We've all been in the zone where I've sat here on the train, just now my original train got cancelled. And I'm all I'm thinking is, I've got a train ticket for a certain time. And all I'm thinking is, the person who comes down the carriage and answers this dispute, I'm either going to be in a stressful negotiation, because they're going to say, you're not booked on this train. So you're the whim in the mercy of presuming they're gonna show some common sense. But also knowing that we're confronted with a lot of people who in their jobs are not allowed to show common sense. You need to move your plane ticket; you need to change the time on something. And all you're thinking is, well, if this person is able to make a decision, then they'll help me. If they're not then we've all been in a zone where the computer says 'No'. And we think, oh come on, please help me out.

Bruce 41:34

A lot of jobs, put workers in a computer says 'No' situation, where the worker might think, 'Look I'd help you for can, but I can't.' And what you find is that when workers are allowed to make decisions, it transforms their experience with the job. Someone told me that anyone who works in Subway is allowed to give any customer 10% off, no questions asked. It might feel like a really trivial thing. Or anyone that works in Pret., once or twice a day is allowed to gift the items to a customer for free. So that might be they see a customer looks stressed, or customers payment isn't working. And without anyone's permission, then I'd say hey, you have it on us. That simple act is being able to make a decision, it transforms their job. So rather than them thinking, I've got to hold the company line here. Actually, I'm allowed to make a couple of decisions myself. It might seem like a really silly, trivial thing. But it plays a really big bearing. So most of us find ourselves in jobs where we don't have the autonomy to make decisions. But small acts of autonomy, small acts of control seem to have a disproportionate impact. In our experience.

Katie 42:47

So fascinating because it's making me think about trust. I'm sure there's a line from Tim Ferriss, which is something like, 'Tell someone you trust them and watch their IQ go up'. As soon as you say you're in control, you can decide. Yeah, interesting thought very interesting. So I'm going to ask you a really tough question. I'm sure this is unfair. But given your podcast, your books, given all the people you've interviewed, if I put you in charge of an organisation, with many thousands of employees, and you had to create great communications, but great culture as well, where would you even start?

Bruce 43:37

First thing to know is that culture tends to exist in smaller groups. And that's largely because of relationships and connectivity. So some things you'll find are... this wonderful psychologist called Robin Dunbar says, 'Look, you know, humans can only trust in total 150 people.' But he sees it as concentric circles getting to that 150. So, most women have got two best friends, most men have got one best friend. Women have got slightly bigger friendship circles, but he goes to a one or two, then five, then 15, then 40. The biggest thing that influences those circles is how much time you spend with people, right? So broadly, it's estimated to go into someone's best friends, you need to be spending 10 to 15 hours with someone. So you're never going to become one of someone's 10 best friends or 15 best friends if you're not spending time with people chatting to them all the time. So that seems to be something that's the dividend of time spent has an impact on our relationships. So what I would say is for anyone, it's about making teams feel empowered. Making teams feel like they've got responsibilities that they can make decisions about.

Bruce 44:55
The experience of most organisations right now is you find yourself back-to-back meetings. And if someone said to you, how important is that meeting to you? You'd probably say it's not, but it's about finding what other teams are doing to keep other people in the loop. I saw something interesting... I've sort of said along the way that tech culture often over sells itself and isn't necessarily better than anywhere else. I saw something interesting at Amazon. When Amazon was first getting going, Jeff Bezos said he wanted to find a way to stop teams having to update each other. He wanted to reduce communication. Now, I love that because it's the opposite of what most organisations do. What most organisations do is they say, 'Have you socialised this? Have you told other teams, have you communicated up the chain what you're doing?' He was like, 'No no no. I want to stop all of that. Teams can communicate via API or by or update what they're doing. But I don't want anyone in meetings hearing on a weekly basis, what other teams are doing.' I love that, because it's the opposite of what we've been led to believe. So then anyone who's thinking about organisational health might think, 'Okay, so how can I sit teams up to focus on specific things may be updated quarterly or six monthly to each other? Or can communicate these the projects we're working on and as and when people can subscribe to that. And then as a result of that, enable teams to try and build their own culture and dynamic.' So what's the way that you can make this group of 10 people feel like, they're not just building the relationship with the boss, but we know each other really well, we feel like we understand each other really well. So it's all about autonomous units feeling like they're empowered to get the job done.

Katie 46:45
And that plays so nicely into another podcast guests we had, particularly around culture, that talked about the difference between having a value on a wall, and then a team getting together and saying, in terms, say, integrity, what are the expectations we have of each other in this team around our work? Which is going to be so wildly different depending on our work. So bringing it alive for the local team in that setting, and making it real

Bruce 47:15

I'm reading something really fascinating at the moment. Robin Dunbar written a book about religion. And the really interesting thing is his perspective is that religion got multiple benefits to it that enabled it to form. But one of the critical elements is that village size used to be 150. And that was like the most people you could trust. And as we went to cities, we kind of needed a framework, a culture and code that determined that people weren't going to suddenly descend into this dog eat dog, horrible conflict of winner takes all selfishness. And religion was like the code that enabled that. So religion created a widely understood code that established that people behave in this way, these norms and procedures. Now, that's not to say that the only people who can access moral ethics is if you're religious. But for a certain time and place it enabled and it gave structure to those things building.

Bruce 48:18

Company culture can be similar, right? You can enable teams, but they know that to get on here, here's what we reward, here's what we punish, here's what our roles are about these things. What are the... if any of us are making a decision, how should we set about making those decisions? It's a bit like trying to create the same software, these rules to enable people to understand what differentiates this place to somewhere else or work ? How should we make a decision here? I remember working in a place that one of the defining values was or the defining elements was that it was very entrepreneurial, very frugal. So if went anywhere, the chief exec trouble by second class train. When he got on a flight somewhere, he always travelled economy. It was very critical, whatever you can do to save money. Now he communicated that by people would see him standing at a bus stop. He also used to carry everything around in a carrier bag, really communicated this sense that he was saving the company money. But it meant that it was quite a big part of company law and mythology. You go, okay, well, if you're in any doubt, you're not booking first class, you're not booking a first-class train, you're booking something in economy, because that's what we do around here. So I think it's interesting lessons about that when it comes to company culture.

Katie 49:43

Yeah. And it's really important what you see not just what you read, but your actual lived experience, because that's how we pick so much of it up, actually watching people.

Katie 49:53

Before we head over to those quick-fire questions, I wouldn't mind asking you a question about Twitter if that's OK. Considering your time and experience there at very senior levels. I was really surprised by a comment I think you made on another podcast, so correct me if I'm wrong, that actually you saw the signs of tension and polarisation and general, let's use the word nastiness, on Twitter in the UK, actually long before maybe our American colleagues saw it. Would that be fair? Am I reading that right?

Bruce 50:30

Yes, that's user behaviour. Generally what you experienced on that which we saw two things... we saw the sort of hostility between sports fans - big part of it. Away fans and travelling fans don't really exist in the US the way they do here. You don't have a Leeds United and Man United rivalry. You don't have Chelsea vs. West Ham with people turning

up specifically before the match to fight each other. And we saw that travelled through to social media. So if a United player tweeted something, the response in the UK was a lot more abusive than it was in the US. We also saw it in other areas. We saw the responses to politicians was worse earlier, where you saw the responses to women in the public eye was worse. The UK was sort of in terms of toxicity, we witnessed it here before the US. What that meant though as a result, is that most of my job as – I was at Twitter for eight years – most of my time there was spent battling to try and get the US to pay attention to the bad experience that some people were having on social media.

Bruce 51:53
We saw prominent female tweeters here that were getting abuse. And it just seemed like it was destroying something that was beautiful. You know, a lot of women 2012, 2011, 2013, saying I'm loving Twitter, it's making me laugh all day, seeing so many funny women. You know, at the time, there were no women on panel shows. You could still get away someone in the public eye or a famous comedian saying there's no funny female comedians. You still get a bit now, but then they got a pass in saying something like that. And yet, Twitter was filled with these really funny voices. It was mobilising. There were so many people who said – Nigella Lawson said, 'This is the Radio 4 the internet, it's such a wonderful place where I'm seeing things, I would never see anywhere else.' It was lovely.

Bruce 52:46
Then what we saw was that a sort of misogyny and an underbelly started surfacing. My job working at Twitter – I was running the UK and then running Europe – my job is not to sort of toe the company line and say everything's great, it was to go into battle for those people and say: Okay, they were having a great experience before now they're getting horrible abuse, what can I do to make sure that they are being heard? And so, you know, that puts you in opposition with leadership, you know, they often might think, 'This guy in the UK is a troublemaker.' That's the job. Your job is to advocate for the people who are using the service, rather than the people who work here. But we witnessed that hostility, that toxicity, way before the US even recognised it.

Katie 53:38
What's your prediction? I don't know if you know, there's a book called The Cluetrain Manifesto, which had a huge impact on me. It was written very early in the era of the internet. And it suggested that this was going to be the marketplace for ideas. It was going to democratise communication. It was just a really wonderful positive viewpoint of what the internet was going to bring us. What's your prediction? Because we now seem to live in quite a polarised world where people are stuck in an echo chamber, hearing back their own ideas, but sometimes diametrically opposed to somebody else. We seem to have lost for some reason middle ground and debate. I'm not quite sure why. I'm just interested in what you think is next.

Bruce 54:24
The idea of an echo chamber is a really interesting one because one of the features that we introduced to Twitter was an attempt to show you the other side of the debate. So, you know, in your timeline, you might follow certain perspectives. And we thought, wouldn't it be

helpful if you saw a moderate perspective from the other side? It was by far the most unpopular thing we every did, people were furious about it. Most people subjectively think, 'I know how to curate my experience. I don't need you putting Andrew Neil or, you know, maybe a writer from the Spectator, I don't need you putting them in my timeline. I don't need you putting Owen Jones in my timeline. Get them out!' And so people were furious about it. So it's an interesting thing that will recognise echo chambers, but we don't think we're in one.

Bruce 55:16
Separately, I think what seems to be a consistent experience of technology is that we start with optimism and moments of inspiration. Most tech products when they first come about … I remember I was a really excited, early adopter of Facebook. And you know, I was one of those frustrating people who are sending Facebook invite requests. I loved it so much. I was the connection it provided. I was an early adopter of Twitter and I loved that. What you often find is that the early experience is filled with hope and inspiration. And then we start learning of the downsides, the negative consequences, the people who exploit it or take advantage of it. I sort of remain pretty optimistic that you could solve these things. So my view was with Twitter was always let's just move the line of toxicity. Let's make sure that you can't call the stranger a swear word. Most people don't think they're the problem. So you might see someone who thinks it's their right to send a four-letter word or a swear word to Boris Johnson, and think it's alright to do that. And they don't realise that they are part of the problem. Sending abuse to anyone, just because it's someone you disagree with, but you think righteously disagree with, that's not Okay. But you can change it. If you send abuse to someone on TikTok, you get suspended really quickly. You send abuse to someone on Instagram to get suspended. So you can move the line. It's not your human rights to call, you know, to call Kier Starmer a C word. It's not your human rights to do that. And so you can move the line and you can say, 'Look, we're not going to allow that anymore.' And pretty quickly, you establish a norm where people realise, 'Okay, right. There's a degree of civility that's required here.' I don't think anyone's free speech is restricted in doing that. So you know, I'm an optimist. You can fix these things with a bit more support. In Germany, you're not allowed to tweet, Nazi imagery or anything in favour of Nazis. What you realise very quickly is if you tweet that you'll find that your tweet is suspended within about three or four minutes. So these things can be done. These things can be moderated. But I think we probably need a bit of regulation to enforce it.

Bruce 57:45
So look, I remain persistently optimistic. Twitter's a pretty miserable place right now, actually, because of some of the things that Elon Musk's done. But I'm optimistic that social platforms aren't inherently bad. They do have a tendency to get worse over time. TikTok's not as much fun now as it was three years ago. But it's not baked in, I think, the way these things work.

Katie 58:11
And the same with the world of work – after all these hours and hours of interviewing people about how to make work better, are you still optimistic about the future of work, too? And

despite, I guess, the change we've seen over the last three years, and us all being as you say, more apart than together.

Bruce 58:29
I think you're gonna find a big differentiator. So still now, if you've gone to Glassdoor, the place where people can review their employers, the thing that people say is most important to them is workplace culture – the connection with their colleagues is... they still regard it, and maybe good people have experienced bad cultures, but they still regard it as the most important thing for them. That shows you that these things do matter. And you know, when you join somewhere, and that feels like a good connection. When you join somewhere and you think 'I can't wait for these people to come my friend.' There is something mobilising and enriching, but for a lot of people, that isn't their experience at work. So I think long term probably work's going to be harder for a lot of people. You know, societal loneliness will play a bigger part, not a smaller part. But there will be pockets of groups practising good success.

Katie 59:24
Let's hop over to those quickfire questions if that's OK. Do you mind sharing with us one thing about you that people might be surprised to learn about you?

Bruce 59:36
I've really struggled with this. I spent a long time on this, but I'll tell you: I've never had COVID. Okay, most people I meet have had COVID, three or four times. I've been vaccinated six times. I've never had COVID. I got vaccinated right up front when we were allowed to have it here. And then I went – my partner's Lebanese American – and we went to the US and they were offering the other vaccine in the US, and I thought I'll have a couple of them. So I've done four by the end of 2021. And I've had a couple of boosters. Vaccinated six times, never had COVID. I'm surprised you've never had it as well. You meet so few people who've never had it by now.

Katie 1:00:18
What trait or characteristic? Do you possess that above all others do you think has most led to your success?

Bruce 1:00:26
I've got a really short attention? What that means is that normally, if I'm sitting somewhere and watching a presentation, my view is: 90% of the presentations are witness I think this is terrible, right. This is boring. Why would anyone care about this! Or you watch someone typing out slides, and then they go and deliver it. And you think that was awful. And surely you can see that's awful. They become so fixated on, I read all my words off the screen, that they lose sight of the fact that if they were witnessing someone else doing it, they'd probably be a bit harsher. But you know, my view was always, you need to focus... work on the basis that people are going to be bored. Now, what can you do to make them interested. And so as a result of that, you know, I used to go to conferences and sit there, and you turn up really filled with good intentions – I've got a new notepad, I've got some pens, I'm gonna take loads of notes today. Before you know it, you're playing Candy Crush or dealing with emails. What

happened is because people were so much focused on what the message they wanted to say, and not focused on the messages that was being received.

Bruce 1:01:36
So my boredom threshold has meant I'm always fixated on how I can make this more interesting. I'm doing a conference for teachers, for head teachers and I was really keen, the book had landed really well with teacher community, and so I contacted these teachers conference. And like, I have spent so long thinking, right, how can we be each step of the way, how can we be one minute or two minutes away from a laugh, or something really fascinating? So it's just meant that, you know, I'm constantly looking out for funny things – only need four or five of them in a 20-minute presentation. Or things that really land and people are like, 'Okay, that, that's really fascinating.' But it made me really be brutal about the construction of that presentation.

Katie 1:02:25
What's so interesting about that is, I think, in fact I said it today to a bunch of people who are walking in to see a client face to face for an annual review. Success is not us, reading every word of the slides of this presentation. Success is that feeling we want to create amongst the clients when we've walked out of the room that that was absolutely the best meeting of their week. They're feeling energised and excited. And it does seem like focusing on the end result is potentially the way to go. it's the output, not the input.

Bruce 1:02:59
Absolutely. The challenge of that is that sometimes people can appraise us for something that's not fair. Some people might say, 'Can you send the slides round?' And if you haven't gotten the slides, or if you haven't done the stuff, you need to get around that. So maybe the secret is, you say to people, 'Listen, just so you know, I'm going to send you a leave behind, or I've just emailed you full details of my thinking logic, but I just want to firstly, talk through what I'm thinking.' Occasionally I'd have candidates come and see me when I was interviewing people, and they'd bring loads of slides. And I'd say, 'Is it at all possible? You close the laptop? And you just tell me what was on the slides?' But normally, someone spent some time doing it, they know inside out what they're going to say. And I say, 'Look, you know, by all means, use the slides as prompts. Don't when you sit in here reading to me for 15 minutes if that's Okay.' Because you get much more of a sense of who they are.

Bruce 1:03:53
If someone's sitting there reading an autocue to you for 15 minutes, how on earth you meant to decide if they're good at this job or not? Things that really, we get captivated by, or whether people can excite us... whether they seem energised, enthusiastic, they seem committed or, or whether they seem in command of the brief. Those things are far more important than is some things are prepared earlier. So that's it, that short attention span has meant... I used to say, our job when at Twitter, we always thought we were much more than that rivals, Facebook, Google, like big tech firms that could be knocking on people's doors. And we've got to tell our story in a better way. Now, it's unfair to expect people to be superhuman, we've got to empower them to do it. We used to, number one, every week, we would circulate funny tweets. And so we call them deck starters. And so everyone had a

couple of funny things that might have happened that weekend. Here's something funny that happened. There's a funny tweet... Firstly it looked like, what when did you write this? That was yesterday, this is such a fresh presentation... making it look like this is a brand-new presentation. Secondly, we tried to set people up so that our goal was to be the most interesting meeting that someone had that week. If they're having six meetings a week, being the most interesting person that someone met that week, you've got to arm them to do it. So that was about, okay, how can you set people up so that they are able to succeed in that. How can we arm people to be the most interesting meeting of the week? And if you start with that as your objective, rather than how can someone go out and list 100 different things, doing page down page down to get to the end of it. If your objective is to be the most interesting meeting of the week then you start with a very different viewpoint of what the content of that meeting.

Katie 1:06:04
I love it. If you had to make one book recommendation to those who work in the field of communication, what would it be?

Bruce 1:06:13
A lot of things really informed my perspective. There was a book by a guy called [Alex] Pentland, that was called Social Physics. And it's really timely for the moment we're in. He talked about the dynamics of creative cultures, energised cultures, and how they seemed to be driven by face-to-face communication. And he was looking at organisational health. And he was saying, 'There seems to be something about face-to-face communication, that whether it's the candour of those conversations, whether it's the connectivity, and that's intriguing...' I read that about four or five years ago, weather it still holds up... it stayed with me for a long time. Because it makes you think, you know, a lot of us would describe our experience with going to the office, or sitting on video calls all day. And if you said Okay, our objective is to create maybe fewer days in the office, but those days to be shaped by face to face to create then your office looks very different. You might start with it's always meeting free Wednesday, but we're in the office on Wednesdays. You can meet clients on Wednesday, but you never meet internal people on Wednesday. That's a really interesting, different standpoint, right? If you're laying the train tracks of what your culture looks like, that's a very interesting, different standpoint. That book so Social Physics by Alex Pentland, and I did a podcast interview with him and it was brilliant get to the heart of that.

Bruce 1:07:39
 love the Good Job Strategy by Zeynep Ton. Yeah, she's about supermarkets initially... But what you realise is job design plays a big part in people's experience. So working in retail stores, there's a few things... retail like all jobs, it's organised chaos. And so there's a few decisions that influence what your job is like... how many products is the company does the store sell, because the more products you sell, the less likely you'll be able to give an opinion on the products. So a smaller range, people generally were able to deliver a better feel for what your philosophy is with regards to questions. So if you're working in retail, you're stacking shelves and you get interrupted by people all the time. Some stores have philosophy that you will walk the customer to where they've got to be or is your philosophy you point them – down there turn left there. Now you might not think those things matter.

But those decisions, those job design elements, play a big bearing on someone's work experience. You wouldn't have thought that. One of the biggest things, if you work in shift work is 'Can I swap shifts easily with other people?' So the mechanics of the job... All of these things play a part in job design. Yes, all of them are about retail. But actually they've got a direct parallel for any of our jobs. When a customer contacts your team and says I want to do this, do you say to them, 'We don't do that. But we do this.' If you turn up in IKEA and you say I want you to come to my house and assemble the furniture. That's not the business they're in. So they might connect you with people who do that. But in terms of job design, they're really clear what they're offering is and what they're offering isn't. And I think, for me, it was really instructive for... most of us get away without designing the jobs of the people we hire. And thinking about how you're going to design their jobs or allow them to design their jobs, it's a really interesting challenge for anyone. We get away without doing that legwork ourselves, and actually, it plays a really big part in the lived experience of our team members.

Katie 1:09:55
I think the future is in job design. But that's probably a whole another podcast. I can't even make a segue to this story. But I would love you to share it for the last question, if you remember it. But it's the story about why one particular supermarket queue was longer than any other but people were very happy to join it.

Bruce 1:10:15
Yeah, yeah, it's beautiful. I mean, that book is about supermarkets and supply chains. And, but in one store, in the US, they hired a couple of Down syndrome employees. And this one worker was asked, you know, 'What can you do to improve customer service?' And he'd written his thoughts today. And as he was bagging groceries for people, he'd added his thought for the day to the bottom of the bags. It makes me emotional. And the line for his checkout was longer. They were worried, you know? Or why people queueing for his and because people loved experience.

Bruce 1:10:15
It's just such an important reminder that, you know, for all of the mechanics actually, the things that really stay with us personal connections. And that means, you know... people were lit up by the fact that this guy had written his thought... wish for them. They were lit up by that sort of human experience.

Katie 1:11:25
But it's going back to everything we've talked about. It's what we are actually willing to trade for personal connection, isn't it? We're willing to try the longer queue it's absolutely fine because getting something really amazingly meaningful in return.

Katie 1:11:41
So finally, Bruce, how would you complete this sentence? 'World class company cultures are...'

Bruce 1:11:50

'Built on connection.'

Katie 1:11:51
Fantastic, the perfect ending and perfect summary. Bruce, thank you so much for your wisdom and your insight.

Bruce 1:11:59
What a lovely chat. Thank you so much.

Katie 1:12:03
So that is a wrap for another episode of the Internal Comms Podcasts. For the show notes and the links and the full transcript, head over to AB's website. That's abcomm.co.uk/podcasts. And indeed, you will find our entire back catalogue of over 80 episodes there, too.

Katie 1:12:27
If you did find this episode helpful, I would be very grateful. If you could give those algorithms a little nudge by giving us a rating on Apple podcasts or even a review. That would just help other IC pros out there find this show. My thanks to Bruce, my producer John Phillips, sound engineers Stuart, and my fabulous team back at AB. Thank you so much for keeping this show on the road.

Katie 1:12:56
Finally, my heartfelt thanks to you for choosing the Internal Comms Podcast. Please do 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. Until we meet again, lovely listeners do stay safe and well. And remember, it's what's inside that counts.