Katie 00:04
Hello, and welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay. This is a show all about improving the way we communicate with each other at work. One of the delights of hosting this show is that I can legitimately reach out to complete strangers miles away and ask if they'll have an in depth meaningful conversation with me. I did exactly that with today's guest, Bob Watanabe, after hearing him speak on Adam Grant's podcast Work Life. this was quite a short segment, but Bob spoke with such insight and eloquence about how we create a sense of belonging at work, I contacted him to see if he'd be open to a deeper, more wide ranging conversation. And I'm absolutely delighted to say he said yes.

Katie 01:03
Bob has worked in the HR technology field for more than 20 years, and has amassed a wealth of knowledge in ethical AI design, change management system implementation, and specific to this conversation, how equity, inclusion and accessibility can enhance both company cultures and business outcomes. Originally from rural Maine in the USA, Bob now lives with his family in Seattle. He is a keen musician, and also finds time to be the guitarist in the Seattle rock band, Love and Fury. And I want to give a special shout out here to the work that he does at SMASH the Seattle musicians access to sustainable health care organisation.

Katie 01:55
Now, many, many organisations tell us that they want their employees to bring their whole selves to work. But how do we actually make that happen? Bob speaks from personal experience of being the one and only in the room, and has spent many years making workplaces more inclusive and equitable. We talk in this conversation about seeing and celebrating, shining and shielding. And above all, the role of kindness in the workplace. I asked him several rather tricky questions in this conversation about the trouble and strife we are seeing in the world at the moment. But throughout what you'll hear is Bob's thoughtful, considered, and highly practical advice for how we can all be better humans in the workplace. So with that, it is my absolute pleasure to bring you Bob Watanabe. So, Bob, welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast. It's a real pleasure to have you here.

Bob Watanabe 03:07
Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

Katie 03:09

I think possibly a good place to start might be near the beginning. Growing up, what shaped your understanding of diversity and belonging?

Bob Watanabe 03:20
So one, I grew up in a small town in Maine in the United States, and it was a small rural town. We were the only Asian family of Japanese descent, my mom is blonde hair, blue eyes, my dad emigrated from Japan in the late '50s, early '60s. And we grew up in this town where, again, we were the one and only that were there. And so I dealt with some pieces of being the only one in the room, being the quiet one, being put aside, if you will. In addition to that, I also experienced a lot of great advocacy and allyship within that. There's a great population there of other immigrants, of Jewish population of Lebanese population that came in earlier. And those folks were really inclusive and welcoming to our family.

Bob Watanabe 04:04
Now, I grew up with a tonne of privilege. My father was an orthopaedic surgeon, operated in half the town. So he knew folks. One story I always like to share is he was a good athlete and ended up operating on a lot of athletes and was a team doctor for a lot of the high schools. And one of my friends who was on the football team, American football team, riding on the bus back from a game, and a kid on the bus said something very disparaging about my father and our family. And the captains of the team piped in and said, "Hey, if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be playing," and laid into the kid and really made him think about this. And I wasn't there. My father wasn't there. None of us were there. They could have said nothing, but they didn't. And that showed me having that voice in the room for you, is key. And so oftentimes being the one and only or being the first in the room, I'll always look out for the folks: who is the person who's quiet in the room? The other thing is, I'm the youngest of three and my brother and sister are both very Type A, so they are they're super brilliant, very articulate and a few years older, so I was the quiet one, and then my parents even at the dinner table would be very much, "Okay, Bob, what do you think about this?" So it was making sure to make space for that, the loudest voice doesn't always win. So I've always been mindful of that.

Bob Watanabe 05:18
So when I'm working with customers, or others who's being quiet in the room? And who I know has something to say, but just doesn't feel comfortable saying it yet? Or they've been trying to say something and then getting talked over. And you'll see it now in a Zoom meeting where someone takes himself off mute, but then someone else says something instead, and then they put themselves back on or cower back. So it's always just being mindful of that room, whether it's a virtual room or a real room.

Bob Watanabe 05:38

The other piece growing up is my father with orthopaedic surgery, actually my brother ends up being a physician, my sister's an attorney, they look at those as positions of service rather than status. My sister worked closely with a lot of indigenous tribes in the United States, looking at their fishing rights and land rights. And my brother's a critical care pulmonologist. We got the doctor, the lawyer, so the pressure was off me. So I was studying music and getting into software. But even within that, it was always doing something to make someone's life better, in some meaningful way. This is one of the things that I'll give my parents a tonne of credit for, is sometimes the best thing you can do for place is to pick up a shovel and dig a ditch. And that is of service. And actually our town flooded when I was in high school., and there was a big cleanup crew. And that was what the ice hockey team like we were out there doing that. And that was, yeah, it was terrible work, but it was meaningful for the town because there was so much to pick up. And it just helped doing that. So there's all these incremental pieces that come up that have this cumulative effect of being in service to others, being in service to a larger community, how can you help the individuals in the room, etc. So all of those have shaped, me from the great friends I've had growing up, the advocates and allies that they've been for me with the workspace and my family is really where that starts with the home of what I was seeing and witnessing every day.

Katie 06:58
Thank you, that's really a massively helpful backdrop to this conversation. Before we get into the detail of how we create truly inclusive workplaces, I wonder whether a nice place to start would be your vision. If I gave you that magic wand, and I said you can make the workplace as it should be... Paint a picture of what's happening inside those workplaces where people can truly be and feel themselves.

Bob Watanabe 07:26
Really, it comes into understanding that they have the support and the space and the grace to be who they are and to develop in meaningful ways. I was very fortunate to work with Ultimate Software, and they are always on the best places to work lists no matter what size as they grew. So from, I started there was about 700 employees and pre merger was about 6000. Honestly, I saw firsthand how this can scale. And it really comes from the leadership and if I can name drop Scott Scherr and Viv Maza, they were the CEO and Chief People Officer, they led the way on this. And it was like you walk the talk. And I saw that and I went in sceptical I'll be very candid, I went in there I had, I come from an organisation that had pretty much everything terrible about corporate America rolled into it and so I was cynical, it was kind of path of least resistance I came in, and seeing how people interacted with each other, how folks took care of each other, and it didn't matter what the relationship was. Any of that power structure that you see from a manager, director and the individual contributors, there was a care and a support that I witnessed and felt firsthand all the way

through. And it's really the ability to come in, know that you can really be your best self through this organisation. You don't have this fear or cloud over your head.

Bob Watanabe 08:48
A litmus test for me, if I'm going to go into an organisation... so I was doing implementations with customers, walked into several 100s of customer sites. And the first litmus test for me is going to be the first person and I get this comes from my parents, but my dad was in private practice for a number of years and my mom helped run the office, she was a nurse and also ran the office. And she was very adamant about the first person a patient sees is the most important, because that sets the tone. If you go into an office and it's a little discombobulated at front, or they don't know who you are, it carries over. What is the the kindness that you feel when you walk into a room? Am I might being eyed as an enemy or as a threat? Or am I being eyed as "Hey, here's someone that can come in and maybe they're a customer, maybe you're a new employee, maybe you're a better vendor," and I've seen how customers treat vendors as a direct relation to how they treat their employees. No matter what they say, no matter what their website says that's what I've that's what I've seen.

Bob Watanabe 09:38
And it's funny if I can... a good friend of mine works in the insurance industry and he would go to a lot of restaurants. And the first thing he'd always do is go use the restroom. The restroom is he said without exception, maybe one and there's decades of doing this. The restroom is very much indicative how the kitchen is. So don't mean to terrify some of your listeners, but that is really the litmus test, and I've seen this within organisations: how you feel when you walk the halls is how employees are feel, and it'll be exponentially good or bad. The few degrees worse than how you feel.

Katie 10:13
The put on a show. Yeah. You talked about working for an organisation that was the worst of corporate America. And then your experience at Ultimate Software. What do you think when it boils down to it made the biggest difference between those two cultures, do you think? the

Bob Watanabe 10:32
The awareness, kindness, and if I can even said the word love, in this context from the leadership teams. And yeah, when I showed up there, and this was over 15 years ago, and people had been there for 10 or 15 years, and I... that was beyond me. Because this was a time when folks... it used to be there was a span of time where if someone had bounced jobs every two or three years, you're like, oh, what's wrong with them? And then you then it was if they didn't bounce jobs every two or three years, oh, what's wrong with them? It's always in that middle spot. I was like, "why are these folks all here?" And I realised is because they had

all these opportunities for personal growth, there was this life/work balance and life came first then work, right, it's not work, life is life, work balance. So seeing, witnessing all these pieces, so it really came down from Scott and Viv. And Bill Hicks is a great leader and mentor, he's actually written a book on it, if I can plug that for him. These are people that really cared and they weren't in the abstract. You saw them, like when you were places you would see them; they were very approachable. It wasn't this crazy hierarchy, right? It wasn't like a military leader on deck and you have to... So it was more of a familial feel that you would have. And I will say one of the things, these are all these little things that would stick out when I went to orientation, Scott was talking about we have this number of employees, which supports this number of family members. Right? So we have 700 employees that supports 2000 family members. And there's like, okay, so you're thinking beyond just "what is the work I'm doing? What are we doing support our customers?" It's "the person next to me, the work that I'm doing is helping support them and their family." And you put it into this different context.

Katie 12:09
Where does that leave us if we are not working for leaders like that? Because I suppose the big question is, are those leaders born or made? Is there any chance that we can support a leader in becoming that much kinder, more understanding empathetic person? Or are just there, yeah, there's easier ways to make a living and try to make that happen?

Bob Watanabe 12:35
It is one of those pieces, where, what's the joke? You get the heroes you deserve? Right? Yeah, leaders. So I feel that some folks have an inherent kindness to them. And then that gets nurtured and whatever behaviours are rewarded, and incentivised will continue. So if you're in Financials, and you were incentivising very shady behaviour, you're gonna get things like the collapse we had in 2008. If you are incentivising the right pieces for leadership, then those things will be amplified and going through.

Bob Watanabe 13:10
So if you have someone who has some of that self awareness, and has that ability to to nurture others and not be threatened by others, that's what you'll see with leaders, right? Are they feeling threatened? Or are they feeling supported? And are they supporting you? And I, again, I was very fortunate to have a lot of servant leaders and that servant leadership was that key point. And I think that has to come from early on in the organisation, and then just... that kindness begets kindness, and going through. And that can erode really quickly.

Bob Watanabe 13:41

So there has to be this intention within the leadership team, within the development teams, within all of these pieces of being able to build and reward and amplify those areas of kindness, of support. And it doesn't mean being a pushover and saying okay to everything, it really is about sometimes being candid, saying maybe this isn't the right role for you. This is one of those other pieces about sometimes helping someone to be their authentic self. Sometimes you can see their strengths and weaknesses better than they can. And as a leader, it is helping guide them. So there's a lot of that strength building and going through from there. So it isn't an easy thing. Right? Living the life is not an easy thing. You have to have all these pieces of components. I'm enough of an optimist that I would say that you can create this and I've seen it firsthand. And it's going to be really a lot of my work moving forward will be continuing that, of how can I be able to nurture this within an organisation, not coddle but nurture this with an organisation and people to make sure that their folks are taken care of and feel that they can be productive in these ways for the organisation and for themselves.

Katie 14:49

You said there for the organisation. Let's dig into that a little bit because I think morally ethically, this is just the right thing to do. But we also know that being able to bring your whole self to work, your best self to work, must have commercial benefits as well. Can you share what you've seen in that space in terms of the business benefits and this approach?

Bob Watanabe 15:10

Very much. There's always this talk of, "oh, we want you to be your best self, we want the best out of you." Okay, how can you get the best out of someone, if they can't be their true authentic self? That could be something if they have passion pursuits outside of work, being able to say something, it's yes, go do that. Because that is going to, that's going to be nourishing in a different way than work is going to be right. So what's gonna give you energy, we're gonna take energy away. I have a dear friend at a CHRO organisation, and they do manufacturing, and he's awesome. He'll say to folks, "look, this work is not going to be the most rewarding work, this is doing assembly line work. But I want to make sure you're working with friends next to you. I want to make sure that if your child has some support, or has a sport, or other thing, that you can go to it and not feel guilty about it and other folks are supportive and the work will get done." And you know, it's just being able to do that.

Bob Watanabe 15:59

And so this can happen at all levels. It's not just professional services. I'll see this, I'm in Seattle, we have a great music community here. And the support of that, we'll see folks who were able to go on tour, and not have to quit their job to be off for a couple of weeks and come back. So when that employee comes back, they are grateful, they're going to work hard, they have a better relationship, trusting relationship. For the employer, they don't

have to retrain somebody and the cost of retraining and backfilling. They have someone who they know that they can ask a little extra from. Not that it has to be too transactional, but there is this... Sometimes, and I'll say this to folks, when folks reporting to mewant to look at salary, it's, "Hey, sometimes I'm going to need you to work really hard. And sometimes not. So it's okay to take those times and relax and recharge. And, and small increments of leaving a little earlier, taking a Friday off or having an extra long weekend because the work's done right?" The work doesn't always have to be within a certain temporal or physical confines, and actually just get this worked on and go from there. Again, all these, that flexibility, those things for folks to be able to take care of their family in meaningful ways, all of these things. And what that does is it mitigates any of the resentment people have for you taking up their time.

Katie 17:25
Right?

Bob Watanabe 17:25
So if you think of this. I scheduled a doctor's appointment for my child or my parent months in advance, and we've known this I've had it on my calendar, and then now you're telling me I need to cancel this and take care of this for something that isn't really that important that couldn't wait. So it's that that sometimes sweating too much of the small stuff. That's where people start getting in this "Okay, now, this is transactional. You're taking time away from these things that are there, you're not respecting my time. You're asking more than you're giving." And so that psychological contract between employer or employee is always in that delicate balance.

Katie 18:01
A quick word from our sponsor. AB is the world's most experienced internal comms agency. For 60 years, our brilliant consultants and fearless creatives have been helping organisations around the world inform, inspire and enthuse their employees, building great organisations from the inside out.

Katie 18:29
There is a lot of pressure on internal comms folks just now. To help you plan, prioritise and deliver astonishingly effective communications, arrange a friendly, informal chat with us today. Simply email hello@abcomm.co.uk. And if you do I look forward to meeting you.

Katie 19:00
There were two terms that you use that I had not heard before. That just shows you how little I know. You talked about 'shining and shielding' as two important ways to create this equitable culture. Can you just explain what you mean by shining and shielding?

Bob Watanabe 19:15

Sure. So and as a leader to servant leader, you're really starting with the shield, when you put something around your employees, your folks, so they can learn, so that they have that space to make mistakes.

Bob Watanabe 19:28

And the analogy I'll use here, for a couple seasons, I would actually work up at a ski area. And we were teaching skiing to little kids. And the first thing I would always do is have them get on the ground and get back up because you're gonna fall. Yeah, so the ability to fall and get back up is the first thing to learn when you're skiing or ice skating or other. And there's a concept of finding your edges. So with employees and new skills, I really love to give folks the space where they can find their edges. Because you want people to expand you want people to learn and there's so much talk about this growth mindset. It's really putting that into action and giving people that space and grace to do that. So once they have that, they found their edges. And again, using the analogy with teaching these kids to ski, once they're doing that, then you show to the parents, like, "Hey, look at all these great things." They're gonna fall, they're gonna do this, they're fine, they're getting back up. And then you let them take that credit. And a lot of the things that I would say, again, having some great leaders, they will take all the blame, and protect folks. So you knew that you can make mistakes now, not super egregious ones, right? Within reason. But it's allowing that so you're not operating in fear. And it allows you to keep going and moving forward. And that's how you make this progress. Right?

Bob Watanabe 20:41

There's a lot of, you'll see this in technology, there's a concept of failing fast. So having the space to be able to do that, and know that it doesn't need to be perfect in this first iteration allows for so much different innovation and growth within an organisation, within an individual, but then a product space within a solution space, etc. So that's what we'll take a look at, is really just protecting folks to make sure they feel that they have that space and grace to learn, to make some mistakes along the way, and stumble here and there. And then really be able to give them the credit they deserve. I'm sure many folks have experienced this where you've had this great idea you've gone through someone else took it. Yes, terrible, or leader has been propped up propping themselves up from the work from others, and taking credit for that. And that just doesn't build, you know, to free those small steps. And those those those hours and miles of putting in for building a culture. Those are those things that erode it. So it's really making sure that you have that clarity of giving the space, and then also giving the reward whatever rewards or structure but giving that giving that acknowledgement, yeah, in some meaningful way, for showing that growth. And sometimes we have to shine that light for the employee. There's some folks that are so

heads down, that they don't realise they're like, Oh, I'm feeling like, hey, look, this is something you didn't even know about three months ago, and look how much you're doing right now. So you come this far. So think about how much further you can go here. It's really being able to shine that light for others. And for that individual as well.

Bob Watanabe 20:41
Yeah, it's interesting, because I think internal comms folk can do so much to do that shining, finding those stories, as you say, encouraging people to share their stories, because often they think it was just part of the job, or is anyone else gonna be interested? There's always a story and the way that you tell it, you can make it interesting. Lots of training now, awareness training, that people can go on in the DE&I space. I just wonder from your experience, are there any specific interventions or programmes that you've seen that really do make the biggest difference do you think?

Bob Watanabe 22:08
In my experience so far, over the last 15, 18 years in the space has really been, the places I've seen do this the best have those baked into their overall leadership development training, So, you know, a decade and a half ago, going through leadership training, things around unconscious bias, looking at servant leadership, understanding, meeting people where they are. Looking at some of the... people talk a lot about empathy. And I would even put that a step further into compassion, understand everybody's lived experience, or have shared in everybody's lived experience. But understanding that and having compassion for that, and again, space and grace, you'll hear me say this a lot. It really comes down to having that over the long term is the other piece. One of the things I've been seeing a lot of areas in this happen, and in the US when we're having to Covid and there's a lot of racial strife and violence within the US, a lot of organisations had to respond to it in some way. And I'm glad that they did. There are some places that we're starting to see now that that's cooling a little bit, some would argue that we're seeing a little bit of the pendulum swinging a little bit the other way here. The folks that were doing this 10 years ago, are still going to be doing it, and they're going to have this meaningful conversation about it. Some of the folks that started it really realised the benefit and will continue and lean in this. Some of the folks that just put it as an appendage, it was a lot easier to remove, right, it's like a sixth finger, that they can get away easily as opposed to it having really been part of their circulatory system, and really being in there. So those are the things that I've seen.

Bob Watanabe 24:23
I've heard you use the analogy of a mixing board for sound when you explain how to connect with true diversity in a workforce. Can you just explain what you mean by that analogy?

Bob Watanabe 24:23

I wish I could tell you oh, just take this one class, like do this one LinkedIn learning and you're fine. It's not as simple as that. What that means in different organisations is going to be different. You know, this is one of the things that can be challenged at a macro level is is not just this one size fits all across, and not even within, definitely not within geographic regions, right. So what this looks like in the US is going to be different than what it looks like in India, the UK, Europe. There's different laws around pieces from an employee standpoint, employee, you have different social aspects, social, cultural aspects that go through. So all those things have to be taken into consideration as you go through. And then even within a single company within the same country, you have different departments, right? If you have engineering mindsets, versus a creative mindset versus the sales team, etc. So all of these organisations are going to have different motivators, different triggers for how they learn different and how they process and what their experience is going to be like through that. And so when we look at this to improve the efficacy of it, always asking that question from a learning standpoint is okay, what is this employee really going to get out of this? Right? There's always that what's in it for me? What is the selfish question someone's going to ask? So that they're gonna want to actually do this for themselves. And folks have different motivators, right? For the sales team, right? They want to make sure that they can close deals, they can build relationships, so anything that's going to put them closer to their customer in some way. We want to make sure that when the sales team walks in, and depending on the organisation, that there's representation on that sales team of what that looks like, right? You can have a bunch of middle aged white men walk into a space where that's not what's across the table. And you want to have that representation, you don't want to always be the only one in the room, you don't want people to feel that way. You want to...there is that bias that will come in, unconscious bias that comes in, and you can sometimes use those in your favour, right? And bias isn't always a bad thing. There are certain biases that you'll have for for protection and care. I think it's just building that awareness and capability. And really, it comes down to, I would say having it baked in not just an appendix to the learning. And then really the biggest inflection point I've seen is leaders walking that talk, leading by example. Put all these things out there and you can put training, if leaders, you know, if there's a learning path that's out there capability building, and the leaders don't reinforce it, then it's just done right? You'll see there's compliance training, right? That's a great, you'll see this as an example where everyone kind of clicks through their sexual harassment training. If there's a financial compliance pieces, rather, you have to show that this has been done. Okay, here you. Okay, what's being reinforced? If you do this financial compliance, but then you still have folks that are really acting dodgy through their practices, or if you do sexual harassment, one, and then you have folks that are really acting dodgy at the company party, who's calling the accountability, I think holding leadership accountable on a lot of these is a big piece. And it's really depending on the structure of the org and how they operate, it's finding those folks that can help leadership be held accountable.

Bob Watanabe 27:09

Within a mixing board, you'll have these levers and faders that will turn up, say, the bass or the drums or the guitar or the keyboard or the vocal. And so within that you're trying to find this right mix and amplifying either the instrument, the voice or other to come through. Within this, if you look at this, some people say they just levers you can pull, you have all of these resources and tools. And if you built in the capabilities you've built in this knowledge within your teams, when you're going through, you can amplify certain pieces of those within discussion within your communications. But within the interactions that you have, I just really look at it as here is this baseline of knowledge of tools that one has. And then when do you amplify it? When do you sometimes tone this down? Because it could be, sometimes one of the most important buttons on a mixing board is the mute button. And I will often make a point when I'm talking to folks to make sure that I'm on mute as they're talking, that I want to increase some of that friction for myself to speak. You know, this is one of the first pieces of communication is really listening, active listening, and not just waiting for your turn to speak. So it's really creating that, again, creating that space to go through in that conversation.

Katie 28:47

And it also means I guess, from a communications point of view, because you can use that analogy also to think about diversity in all its forms, what's happening in your editorial calendar for the year when you might want to dial up certain stories about certain things. And then you can also look at, are we being truly representative, not just in terms of race and gender, but it could be anything really, but it should be whatever the organisation is into, right? Their passions, their hobbies, their loves. I think that's a really nice idea.

Bob Watanabe 29:22

Very much so, and there will be months of celebration, right? So we're just wrapping up Black History Month in the US. May is Asian Pacific Islander month, we'll have a Women's Day and others coming up. So there's all these different areas of celebration. And one of the things I'm always mindful of is to not have that be the only thing within and organisation. We just had the Lunar New Year so there's a lot of common celebrations that you've seen. It's great to celebrate those pieces, but it's not just that, right? Because that starts to become a little bit of tokenism and almost patronising. So you want to just be be mindful of those pieces. But there is really understanding, so when we're talking earlier about the nuance from geographic regions and other, in dealing with India, India has a great movement for their corporate social responsibility, and women in leadership and women and tech coming through. So those are areas that you can amplify. You're not going to be able to amplify different racial identities. And so there's going to be some bigger pieces on there. India's also making a bigger move for the LGBTQ community. And so that's one,

again, very nuanced and going through. And it's going to be a little bit different conversation than you might have in the States. And some other areas of the world. It's evolving and moving, it's just understanding that awareness of how much do you actually really how much do you put that lever up? Put that fader up in these different areas?

Katie 30:44

This might be a really unfair question, but I cannot help asking it, considering what's going on in the world at the moment, particularly with say, for example, Gaza and Israel, in that conflict, whose side are you more likely to stand for? How do organisations deal with that kind of complexity? We can all have views and opinions even if we don't necessarily come from those regions? Yeah. Any advice there?

Bob Watanabe 31:11

So, way to pick a nice light question. No, no, no, it's a very fair question. I think we have to look at this because this is part of the world human condition. Now, there are things that you can do as an individual and thoughts, discussions you can have on an individual level of where you're sitting, social, political, etc. Organisations have a little bit of a different responsibility within that, because not every organisation needs to be an activist organisation. Now, you want to be a little bit mindful about where you're putting your money within that space.

Bob Watanabe 31:44

When we look at this, and full disclosure, a good friend of mine is the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League. Jonathan's brilliant, he actually wrote a book on really the the rise of antisemitic hate. Now, in my personal opinion, hate is hate, nd Jonathan says this a lot as well. Hate is hate, it doesn't matter on the community, we want to be really mindful about stopping this at all levels. And when there was an increase of hate against Asian Pacific Islanders in the United States, the Jewish community and black community other came in support of that. When George Floyd was killed, it was very much the Asian community came in because it was very reminiscent of Vincent Chen's death back in the 80s.

Bob Watanabe 32:28

You want to be really careful about the language that's used. And you want to be careful about taking these binary sides within this, because if there's this sort of right or wrong, or 0 and 1, it gets very difficult. For most organisations, I don't think you have to avoid it 100%. But I do feel you want to be careful about "we are taking this side or this stance."

Katie 32:47

I agree.

Bob Watanabe 32:48

You can take the side of making sure that your Muslim community within your workspace feel safe showing up to work, and that your Jewish population feels safe. We would have these conversations a lot. But we would have these panel discussions and talk about things that you don't normally talk about at work, just to give some folks some space, and allowing people to learn more about these different sides and cultures and the impact. I'll tell you about a woman that worked for me, she's Ukrainian. And unfortunately, she lost her father, within the war in the last couple years, and it's heartbreaking. And we've also had folks from Russia, who are working in this space, and having their conversations and understanding, you know, this is terrible on all fronts, and being able to take care and support the individual within this. Again, individuals and organisations have some different roles and responsibilities within this narrative.

Katie 33:42

I'm now tempted to ask you another slightly philosophical question. I got down a massive rabbit hole at the weekend trying to prepare for this show. And I came across a very recent TED Talk by somebody called Coleman Hughes. And he was putting forward a case for colour blindness, which made me smile to a degree because I'm very old. So I was born at the right at the end of the '60s, so grew up through the '70s when actually that was really a thing. The idea was that the colour of your skin didn't matter at all, what we should care about was the quality of your character, and your personal traits. Coleman Hughes has had massive backlash for saying there's a case for colour blindness but I just wanted. Yeah, I just wondered on what your idea of Utopia is. If we get to a point where we don't even need this training, because we all just get it. What does it actually look like? What would be utopia?

Bob Watanabe 34:41

So I would argue, just in response for the colour blindness piece is, I don't feel that colour blindness is really the solution for this. I understand about the intention there. One of the things that I've loved and engaged in throughout my life, is what are the differences? And I don't view a difference as a threat or an enemy, but looking at that difference as something else to learn, as understanding another culture, another human life experience, etc. So I would argue that it's okay to see colour, it's what your action is, from that. And to his point, the one of the things that would work on with recruiting software and AI machine learning and this putting that putting some ethics into that and into those algorithms, is removing those things that trigger bias. So does this name sound female? Does the name sound too ethnic? Are they from a certain area code? I need those things that might trigger bias conscious or unconscious, and then that way, you have that first filter of removing that. So that that is kind of looking at that that colour and gender blindness through that through that piece of you're looking really at that skills hire, so yes, I will agree on that point. When you get to the individual level of talking to someone, if someone is of a different skin tone to

yours or has English as a second language or other, you really want to have these conversations about learning, learning more, seeing and celebrating is really what this comes down to, rather than trying to not look.

Katie 36:21
Yeah, pretending it's not there.

Bob Watanabe 36:22
I'll be perfectly candid to the point of being vulnerable. Sometimes when I hear folks say about colour blindness, there's some dog whistle language within that. And I'm always a little bit wary to hear that from from some folks. But again, I kind of get where that's from. And you and I are of the same generation of looking at, you know, not judging someone by their skin, which you shouldn't right? I fully get that piece of the colour blindness. It's the seeing and celebrating, is really the piece from there that I would take. Yeah, that would be my argument against that.

Katie 37:01
Yeah. And it makes life so much more rich and interesting that variation and diversity.

Bob Watanabe 37:08
Very much. I had a great friend who we're still dear friends to this day. And anytime he came over to our house, he would ask for like, the craziest food we had. We had all this like Japanese dried fish and all there and octopus and other pieces. "I want to try the Japanese food!" like well, here we just call it food. But yes. So it was great. So that was him being, that is a growth mindset, right? That's the growth mindset in action. Trying a different dish of trying a different way of doing something. So always look at that. It's a great example.

Katie 37:43
There's also a lot of research that shows the more diverse a group is the more likely they're kind of going to come up with a brighter better solution. Groupthink, for example, not being a good thing. And you'll get groupthink with a more homogeneous group. That's another argument for your seeing and celebrating differences as well.

Bob Watanabe 38:01
100% and that those differences come not just on the surface, right? There's there's no diversity within this. Yes. And there are a multitude of different those personality tests, and you really will look at what does the team look like the team makeup, right. So you'll see things like HPDI and Myers Briggs and other. And sometimes again, you don't want them to be gospel on everything you want to be, you don't want them to be too prescriptive for items, but it does kind of give you a nice layout of saying, Okay, I know that working with

this person, they're going to be way more analytical. So I need to make sure I have bullet points, they're not going to want to read through a long narrative, they just want to have give me the facts through. And this is where a lot of the communication and communication style comes in. And I'll give you one example, a director that I had, who I'm still dear friends with to this day. I might have had a propensity for verbosity, in my some of my emails of doing write ups. And then he gave me this coaching, he said, Okay, I need one or two sentences, because if I see paragraphs, I'm not gonna read it. So I would give them the TLDR version at the top and a couple of bullet points, and then something just need the rest of the context if because if it gets escalated, rather, so it'd be very mindful and then also putting out of what is the ask, right, and then I'm realising for him. I might be seeing 100 emails a day he was seeing 300. So that is an inclusive behaviour, understanding meeting people where they are of going through and having that mindset because not everybody's going to process information the same way I do. I work with learning and development teams, you have to have a multitude of different formats and media, right? Some are going for experiential learners, some are going to be more visual, some are just going to be put it on the page, they're going to get it. So it's different styles throughout.

Katie 39:44

I can't I guess not ask you about the impact of hybrid working, but when we talked about this before you said you've been working in a remote way for years and years. So for you this is nothing new. But I'm just wondering because I think one of the things that certainly my clients are grappling with is how do we create and foster and maintain the right kind of culture, when instead of one workspace, we now have hundreds or 1000s of different workspaces with so many people, at least part of the time working at home. I just wondered what your reflections on hybrid working are?

Bob Watanabe 40:17

So a couple of things, if I can explain a little bit. So one, starting in the late '90s, early 2000s, I was actually at Amazon at the time. And I kind of refer to it as the Bronze Age of telecommuting, right, so I remember going from a 28k to a 56k modem. And it was that time where you would send an email, it was gonna take a little while for a file or other to go across. So you could actually load up the dishwasher or fold some clothes or do something. Those days are gone. Now, right now, I tried to send you a file. And I'd probably be sitting here getting impatient if it wasn't there in 10 seconds, and you're 1000s of miles away, across the pond entirely. So it's this funny evolution that we've seen from that with the technology. That was technically a hybrid, I was working from home a couple days, going in a couple days.

Bob Watanabe 41:03

So this is not a new work format for folks, this has been around for decades. So it really comes down to the work getting done. And what we're finding is, depending on the space, there are certain things that there is going to be a physical requirement of that space that you have to be there, if you're working in a warehouse, if you're working in manufacturing, if you're doing some other logistics things, you have to have physical bodies in the space to do that work, because you're physically moving one thing to another. When you get into some of these knowledge spaces where you don't have these physical requirements to be in the space, then you have to start really looking at is it the physical space that is creating the productivity outcomes and culture that you want? Or is it detracting from it? And looking at those spaces. Now there are and I can say firsthand, I've seen this when you look at say a call centre. Having that immersion, especially for folks earlier in their career, there's two aspects to it. One is you see by example of what's going on. And I'll just use a call centre as an example and kind of run with this one, where you'll overhear conversations that are calls that you may not have received yet, and you can have a little bit of a debrief after and you learn from that. The other thing that will happen in that space is and this was my experience, actually at Amazon working there, is, there was one person in the corner that everybody kept going to. They weren't on an org chart that I would see, they weren't on, I wasn't crossing paths with them in any way. They just happened to be sitting in the physical space. And you realise that this person was this expert in this area. And like, you know, why do you keep going over there? Like, oh, you know, she knows about this, and no one else really does. And so you go over there. And that's how you learn. And you know that, okay, this is the person instead of having to research all these things, they'll have that answer on the fingertips. And then now you have that knowledge. There's that learning piece, then there's also especially folks early in their career if they're new to town, having that space where they actually are meeting folks. And I'm still dear friends with a bunch of folks that I've worked with early in my career at a music company and Amazon, still dear friends because we worked so closely together and so we built those relationships and having that in place. On the flip side, I when I started at Ultimate Software, I was fully remote. There were people that I worked with that I didn't meet for years, physically weren't in the same room. Yeah, it was amazing. And it was really funny. Then there was one person, he and I were in the same orientation class so he worked remotely as well. So we'd run into each other at events all the time. And then it was about five years in that we actually ended up on a work project together. And I knew everything about this guy, about his family, what he does outside of work, all these other things, but we had actually never worked together. But when we came into this really heavy project, we knew what we did for work, we knew each other well, but we hadn't actually been in a room working together. So we're actually on the call go I think this is the first time I've talked to you about work, a project, and worked together on it. And then he and I were able to click like that and work in shorthand. So instead of having to be, you know, icebreakers and waiting and building up some trust, we had that trust already from our relationships of hanging out together. So there is this mix, there's a balance and a

nuance for getting people physically in the space together. And you have to make it meaningful, right? If you have folks that are driving in and they're just sitting on Teams calls or Zoom calls, and they're in their office all day. That's not meaningful interaction within that space. You'll see this, you know, bagels and coffee are not really enough for building that. And even with the spaces where you have folks that are working fully remote, we would intentionally fly people in for design thinking sessions, and for product development rather, and to your point of having that diversity of thought within a room and putting that physically in the space, reading people's body language. Putting the post-its on the wall doing those pieces you can get a tonne done, as opposed to hey, you're on mute, or other within the virtual again, you can do it, it just presents some different challenges through them.

Bob Watanabe 45:03
So I'm a huge appreciator of physically being able to work together when it's needed. And I should say within this, I do like that space to go out on my own and be able to work and have that autonomy and agency. The only other thing I'd add on this is the organisations, when they're doing this return to office, one of the things I put together with the facilities folks, when people were coming back into the office as Covid was starting to diminish a bit here and people were be able to open the doors again, and so much had changed, I was very much about don't welcome people back, welcome them forward, because this is a different change of items, right? This isn't how it used to be, it's going to be this different piece. And having some transparency and vulnerability as an organisation of we're going to cocreate this and work on this together, they could start to be divisive within the organisation. I do have some legacy folks who are able to work remotely and then everybody who's a new hire from this day forth has to come into the office, that can start to build some some resentment. And one of the things I'll give Amazon a tonne of credit, the ability to work from home was a privilege to do that, because you were trusted, you had done enough quality work to be trusted to do this. And then what happened is the benefit that they had as an organisation by having that flexibility is every now and again, you might get a message that they needed an all brains on deck because a queue lined up or something else, and people can hop in and hammer that, so that flexibility care and trust, and that psychological contract that wasn't being breached, allowed me to be incentivized to work harder for the organisation, when it was needed, and really shoulder into those pieces. So I just see that there's gonna be some times where you're working at 10 at night, so you don't have to work at 10 in the morning. So you can go see your kids do something at their school, or go for a doctor's appointment or take a parent to a doctor's appointment, those things.

Bob Watanabe 46:57
One other thing that I'm seeing more and more of is around the tools and technology as surveillance versus support. And this starts getting really dodgy right? It gets very quickly,

you can start to see what does this look like? And I love technology. And I always look at it through humanist lens of what are we doing in supporting folks, and at what point in time does that switch over to a surveillance piece. And then I think that's one of the things that to be really careful of if you are going to be an organisation that is looking to build trust and are proposing to be a people-first people-forward culture, you have to be really mindful of how you leveraging technology to support versus surveilling your people.

Katie 47:39
Yes, and I can absolutely see how this is going to happen. Because the way it's going to play out is that we're going to have these always on sentiment analysis for the sake of argument, there'll be much more sophisticated than that. And they're gonna get sold to organisations on the basis that we are going to track all this stuff and give you predictive information. So we'll be able to tell you when something's tracking off, and you can get in there early and stop something from going awry. So it will be sold in a very positive way as early intervention and a heads up, but what it will feel like goodness knows. Because you're absolutely right. There's a very dark side to this. Always on watching and monitoring isn't there?

Bob Watanabe 48:24
Very much.

Katie 48:25
Let's turn specifically to internal communication. I'm just wondering, you must have seen a lot of internal comms over the years. In your experience, in your view, what drives its effectiveness, what makes it truly effective?

Bob Watanabe 48:40
So for one is having the the contacts for the audience, just making sure that you're speaking to the audience in a way that they're going to absorb the information, process the information. And then the absolute biggest thing that I've seen over time is the action behind the words. You can say how inclusive you're being, how transparent you're being, if you're not, if you're not taking the actions, those actions will always speak louder than the communications, and it's that follow up.

Bob Watanabe 49:11
And one example giving you, you mentioned the engagement surveys, pulse surveys before, during Covid I was talking to folks and looking at the data, people would say everyone's got survey fatigue. And I would strongly push back and say I don't think people have survey fatigue they have lack of action fatigue. And if you look at the data with the health care providers, and the frontline workers, they were getting surveyed daily. What do you need? Do you have the personal care items? Do you have this? What are the oxygen levels looking

like? All of these pieces and what was happening is to the health care providers' credit they were providing those services and tools. I've talked to my brother firsthand about this as he was going through making sure that they had that they tooled up and they had everything they that the folks needed on the front line. Those folks were getting surveyed. Like, probably five to 10 times more than they normally would. Yeah. And they were getting 90 plus percent response rates on some of the data that I was seeing. So, yeah, if anyone's gonna have survey fatigue it's going to be these folks, because they're getting asked constantly, but they were like, "Hey, you're asking me, I'm telling you this and you're responding, I am going to keep responding." For anyone in communications, when you take some action, and you're communicating that action has been taken, and if it's in response to a survey versus a response to earlier questions, or its response to earlier communications, tie those together. Because it's very easy and we'll see this where folks will have a little bit of a cynical eyes, oh, they've been doing this, they haven't really made any changes, or why are we doing this change? And to say, we are doing this in response to these questions or this feedback. And understand that we may not get 100%, right the first time out of the gate, but we are going to have this. And one of the examples I'll give, when I was in the product development team, product management team, product development were not jiving as well as they should have been. And there was a lot of feedback from the developers of not understanding why they were building certain features. So we pulled them all together. And the first thing we said is, we're putting you all together based on this feedback. And we pulled up the survey data. Have you want to know more about this? This is what that and then everybody engaged like that. Because I could hear the rumblings like, why are we here? Why, who are you? And all these other stuff? So it's understanding why and what is happening and going through. But I, again, I can't overstate enough, the action behind the communications is going to be weighed, because it's going to tie in your efficacy of further communications. Yeah, right. Yeah. And if you ever see the Peanuts cartoon with Lucy and the football, American football of holding it and Charlie Brown is going to kick it, she keeps moving and he keeps falling. You got to be mindful. Like, how many times are people really going to fall for that before they just start tuning out?

Katie 51:56
Oh, completely. Once you've lost that credibility it's all over.

Bob Watanabe 52:00
Oh yeah. Here's another and I've seen people in sorry for the comms folks. But I've seen it where folks have had these auto tools into their inbox of like, okay, all this goes right here. And then I'll look at it later and not look at it, or someone says, I'll find it.

Katie 52:15

Proudly delete before opening. You've spent many years helping organisations implement new technology. From a comms perspective, this is quite a big area, actually, that the helping with that implementation, because we all know that actually, buying the software does not equate to success. Behaviours have to change. so often. Any insight you can give us around some of the common mistakes that organisations make around change communication?

Bob Watanabe 52:46

So the worst mistake you can make is not to communicate at all. There is an adage in the consulting world where it's all processes plus new technology equals expensive processes. So you want to be mindful of taking a look at those pieces. The other thing I will always tell the comms folks is to listen before talking, of pulling in the folks that are going to be impacted by this technology change and having those conversations. People don't want to hear about this through an email.

Bob Watanabe 53:17

So you can have these different methods, whether there's a stand up meeting, that organisation has that you can have this go through, the leaders can put this through, and say "Hey, you're going to see an email about this coming through, this is what this means..." so have a little bit of a preamble before those things go out and there's some there's some context of that. It does two things. One is it really preps the folks that something's going to come that's going to impact them. And then when you actually put that, that communication out, whether it's through email or other, they're going to read it, because "Oh, my my manager mentioned this, my director mentioned that this is going to come through."

Bob Watanabe 53:46

And then the other pieces to look through to really be successful is around the timelines, and having some clarity if there's any action that needs to be taken. And again, I'll see oftentimes, where the communications will be a frame of reference as an outline or a calendar, what's going to happen. And then you have these different communications as they go through. So you might have again, those stand up meetings, those other one on one check ins, make sure those are reminders. If you're working in the change management space, and you're looking to communications, finding those folks that are of influence with an organisation, the term influencer has gotten usurped, so I would say people of influence, people of impact within the space. And one thing I've found is sometimes the most powerful words they can say is like it's not that bad. Or something along those lines, it's okay. And then you have folks that will start to adopt these changes. So it's really finding the people that can help you communicate and amplify this messaging for these change management pieces. And then having an outlet. Really kind of a pressure release valve for folks that are

feeling a little bit strike for eggs around it to be able to air those in a meaningful constructive way. And then listening and taking through that and then addressing those in future columns as you go through it.

Katie 55:00

It sounds from what you're saying that opportunity for making this up now. So you can tell me I've got it wrong but fairly informal, face to face in person exchanges, without the script without the PowerPoint, where there's an actual conversation happening quite a lot of listening, that seems to me, like, crucial from what you're saying.

Bob Watanabe 55:21

Very much. It's a heavy dependency on the relationship that the leaders have with their teams. I've been able to help communicate what's coming down. And then you have the the communication that comes with the back end of that with more of the context and information, etc. And it also gives that opening and space for folks, again, if that leader has built that trust for the relationship, that people say, "Oh, I have concerns about this." People don't fear change, they fear loss. If we added another zero to your paycheck, would you be okay with that? That's a change, right? You're not scared of that. So it's not just change, per se, it's going to be loss. And it could be loss of the responsibility. It could be some other loss of their identity, what they do at work, etc.

Katie 56:00

You mentioned you are an optimist. So I think we can maybe guess how you're going to answer this. But thinking about AI thinking about increasing polarisation in America, in the UK, we've got elections coming up in both those territories, but just strife around the world generally and greater polarisation in general, are you optimistic or pessimistic at the end of the day?

Bob Watanabe 56:22

Well, I will always try to go to bed as an optimist. And so I will cycle through, and if you're reading through the news, and depending on what information you're getting, it can be really hard to stay on that positive path because there's so much that is going on. When I look at this, there are these macro pieces that are going on, we're seeing some of the divisiveness not just up, we're seeing tremendous divisiveness throughout the world, the US, we're gonna have an election year. So that differentiation of the parties is going to be widened as we go through.

Bob Watanabe 56:58

One of the things I found, and I'll use a recent example of we're talking through the diversity inclusive lens, and I had a gentleman who walked out of the discussion, didn't want it

crammed down his throat. So the leader approached me and said, "Would you be okay, talking to this person?" Absolutely. So I had started having discussions with this gentleman, and he had a lot of the talking points that I've heard from certain news organisations, and we kept talking and the more we were discussing, there's more common ground about where his moral compass was aligned for taking care of family, relationship to patriotism and country, what that really looks like, what an individual liberty really looks like. And you'll find it in the States, a lot of folks in our generation are socially very liberal, right from a live how you're going to live, love who you love, having body autonomy, and fiscal conservatism is across the board. So we're starting to see if the fever ever breaks on this. I have a lot of faith in the younger generations coming through. They're looking at from an inclusive and kindness lens. For me, kindness is such a key point of understanding someone else's lived experience and what you can learn from that.

Katie 58:13
And understanding that through kindness, you can find that common ground and there is always some common ground.

Katie 58:21
This episode of The Internal Comms Podcast is brought to you by my very own Friday Update. Would you like a short email from me never more than five, but it points long, giving you my take on the week's news from across the world of communications. This might be the latest reports, books, podcasts, conferences, campaigns that have caught my eye during the week. I always limit myself to just five nuggets of news. So you can read it in record time, but still feel a little bit more informed, hopefully a little uplifted as you end your week. Now, this is subscriber only content, which was initially intended just for AB 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. We just need your email address. And it's equally easy to unsubscribe at any time. So give it a go that sign up page again abcomm.co.uk/Friday. And if you do choose to be a subscriber, I'm very much look forward to being in touch.

Katie 59:52
If you've got time, I'd love to ask you these quickfire questions. What's the best piece of careers advice you've ever been given?

Bob Watanabe 1:00:05
I had a great leader, who told me to just get in the room and be yourself, and things will work out the way they're supposed to.

Katie 1:00:14

That's quite philosophical, isn't it?

Bob Watanabe 1:00:18

And one of the nice things with that, because being of Asian descent, there's the model minority myth. There's been a little bit quiet... I'm a terrible self promoter. And he said, "Well look as your sponsor, I'll get you in the room. So just get in the room and be yourself and then things will work out." And then some of the things that you might think you want on paper are not really the things you want. And I've talked to some folks who've had Securitas career paths, and it really becomes an attrition path of like, "Oh, I really want to do this. Nope, no, I don't know I do this. Yeah, I'm gonna do this. And now maybe I don't." Just embracing that. And again, being true to yourself within that and having that space.

Bob Watanabe 1:00:53

And again, the first time you're the room, be quiet, listen, and go through. And then once you're asked and going through things up, that came from a device standpoint, and also as a mentor, and shifting into that sponsorship range of helping me get in the room. And I would argue for folks that are leaders on this call of helping folks get into the room, so they can see and size up what needs to be done. And going from there.

Katie 1:01:16

I love that. That kind of neatly brings me to the next one. What's one practical thing listeners can do tomorrow to make their workplaces more inclusive?

Bob Watanabe 1:01:26

I will always break it down because people want to look at these binary responses, right? And so if you really have to break it down, are you being inclusive or exclusive in your actions and words? So just to have a little bit of that filter. Are you welcoming to somebody? And is it somebody that's new to the organisation? Is there somebody that you've worked with for years, but you'd never talked to? One of the things we would constantly do is don't let someone eat lunch alone, unless they want to be left alone. But you know, ask like, Hey, is it okay if I join you, do want to be left alone? Especially for newer hires, and making sure, and that's how you start these conversations. Again, are you inclusive, or you exclusive in your in your behaviours and actions? And that's usually kind of the first question to ask.

Katie 1:02:10

This is gonna sound like a really random comment to what you've just said, but I can't not just help make the connection. So many of the clients that I've worked with over the years want to, quote unquote, break down the silos of their organisations. But what you've just described, which is just making sure that somebody is not eating their lunch alone, that everyone has the opportunity to eat lunch with someone else, oh, my Goodness me. There

you go. There's a way of breaking down silos. That doesn't sound very strategic. But by golly, it would work.

Bob Watanabe 1:02:39
One of the best questions you can ask in a engagement survey, and I've talked to some buddies, who are some of the CHRO's, I've talked to are as cynical as they come, right, some CFOs are cynical as they are on these engagement surveys. They look at a lot of the stuff as fluff, but the question they'll always look at is, do you have a friend at work? And that is a huge one. If you have somebody that you look forward to seeing and they look forward to seeing you, makes a huge difference. Because I will say, life's too long or too short to dread going into where you're going and working with jerks.

Katie 1:03:13
And that comes back to allowing people to be themselves so that they can make friends and be a friend as well. What's one trait or characteristic, do you think, that has most led to your career success?

Bob Watanabe 1:03:28
Leading with kindness. And I may not have always been that way. I'm sure some people out there listening to this have worked in the earlier my career would say he wasn't that kind! And kindness doesn't mean being a pushover, and being agreeable to everything, right? There's this whole piece around candour as kindness. This is kind of an odd example but if someone, I was eating lunch with someone, and they have a herb on their tooth or something, right, that would be embarrassing to them, and I tell them, that's not an, I'm not meaning that to embarrass them, it's meaning that exactly like them from embarrassment. So it's one of those simple things. Yes. Right. So that that to me is being kind, I'm not laughing and pointing at them, it's like, Hey, you have something here. Just really being okay to work with, so someon'es not dreading when you walk into the room. Again, I haven't always been this way. And I don't always do this perfectly. But that is one of the things I'll strive for. Again, earlier, you know, life's too long, too short to work with a bunch of jerks. Yeah, I usually share more on that one. But yes.

Katie 1:04:23
We get the message, we get the message. Finally, the message is yours because we give you a billboard for millions to see, a bit of a metaphorical billboard, really, you can put on that billboard, anything you like, what's your message going to be?

Bob Watanabe 1:04:36
So one is going to be my own and one's going to be from... So for my self, it'll be the 'gratitude in action is greater than contrition.'

Katie 1:04:45

Gratitude in action is greater than contrition. Yes.

Bob Watanabe 1:04:48

So you can say you're sorry as much as you want. But if you don't actually have some level of action behind that, it doesn't matter. So it's always looking at that. And then I'm very much about, for example, if being late on something, I'd rather thank someone for being patient than being too apologetic because there's a respect for that time. So that's something that's been ingrained of just having that that gratitude of someone's space and grace, and then taking action for your own behaviours, rather than just being sorry all the time.

Katie 1:05:15

I'm gonna have to think about that one. Okay, you've just, I've never thought of it that way before. So when you're late, you don't say Sorry, I'm late. You say, sorry, I've taken up more of your time. So you've had to wait for me.

Bob Watanabe 1:05:26

So there could be some examples where yes, contrition is going to be the absolute right. For your patience with my delayed response, and it's coming through of there's some reason that I may have been late, I had a sick child. So thanks for your patience, I had to take care of my daughter to urgent care. So here's that piece. And then again, that that action is always going to be better than the contrition. One is from my wife's grandmother, who I adored, and she was a bit of a stoic and philosophical sense. And it was really 'Be kind to each other, it's later than you think.' A little bit more that stoic of you're gonna die. So you might as well be kind along the way and make it more pleasant for yourself and others.

Katie 1:06:09

It's always later than we think. Thank you so much for your time. I've loved this conversation.

Bob Watanabe 1:06:16

Thank you. I hope it's not a one and done, we'll talk more.

Katie 1:06:17

No, not at all. I want to come out to Seattle. Yes, that sounds lovely.

Katie 1:06:28

So that is a wrap for this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. You'll find everything you need about the show, the links, the show notes and the transcript on our website. That's abcomm.co.uk/podcast. My thanks to Bob, my producer John, sound engineer Stuart, and

content manager, Madi. And last but far from least, my heartfelt thanks to you for choosing to listen to The Internal Comms Podcast. If you did enjoy this episode, I have a small favour to ask you. Please could you rate like or even subscribe to the show? That way you are helping your fellow comms practitioners find it. So until we meet again, lovely listeners. Stay safe and well. And remember, it's what's inside that counts.