



## The Internal Comms Podcast – Season 11

### Episode 98 – *How to build a powerful personal brand*

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**Katie** 00:04

Welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay. This is a show devoted to informing, energising and genuinely inspiring those of us responsible for communication inside our organisations. Every fortnight my aim is to bring you insights, strategies and success stories from influential thinkers in our field. Comms practitioners, authors, academics and consultants. This episode hinges on a very specific and interesting question. What do people say about you when you're not in the room? That's how my guest today defines our personal brand or professional reputation. And he should know, because he is the personal brand expert, Chris Ducker.

**Katie** 01:00

Now, I've long wanted to interview Chris for some time, because I believe we live in an age when I think we all need to think about our professional reputations. Whether we're an employee working in house, for an agency or as an independent consultant, the right reputation helps us unlock new opportunities, connects us with like minded people, and positions us for work that really matters to us, that aligns with our talents and interests.

**Katie** 01:32

Several friends in internal comms have mentioned the transformative impact of Chris's coaching and mentoring sessions. And it's obvious why. He really does walk the talk. He's a serial entrepreneur, best selling author, and a very successful keynote speaker. He's the author of *Virtual Freedom* and more recently, *Rise of the You-preneur*, the *Definitive Guide to Becoming the Go-to Leader in your Industry* and *Building a Future-proof Business*. Now, I want to stress, I think the advice and insight that Chris shares in this conversation is relevant if you are an employee, or if you're an independent consultant. We talk about the importance of identifying your unique point of difference, how to create a social media presence not solely built on what Chris calls 'rented land', and how to craft the right kind of content for your particular audience. And we get personal too. We talk about burnouts, legacy, and the importance of realising we are not, after all, invincible. So without further ado, I bring you what I hope you'll find is a very thought provoking conversation with Chris Ducker. So, Chris, welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast. It's a pleasure to have you here.

**Chris** 03:06

It's my pleasure to be here. Thanks for having me.

**Katie** 03:09



I'm going to start in a slightly strange place if that's okay. If I've done my, sounds ominous already, if my research is correct, there is a backstory Chris, and there's a pun intended here. I think we both have shared a common experience around some pretty evasive spinal surgery. Yes, yeah. I'm just wondering, am I barking up the right tree? Did that experience in any way shape, influence your thinking professionally, in particular?

**Chris** 03:42

I think it's had a bit of a knock-on effect across the board really more than anything else. Not just business, but also life stuff too. The back surgery came about, it was the tail end of a burnout for me, I burned out at the very end of 2009. And then recovered from that, and 2010 hired a whole bunch of people, all that good stuff. But what had happened was in the run up to that burnout, I'd been sat on my chair 14 hours a day crushing my lower spine, and ultimately had disc problems. And then one day, my son decided to jump on me like Superman, and that was that. And so it was kind of like, you know, if you've gone through it, you know how painful it is, you know how debilitating it can be. I was young enough to hopefully go through that surgery at the time – we're talking about maybe 12 years or so ago – and recover relatively quickly from it.

**Chris** 04:36

So I decided to go ahead and have the surgery. I'm glad I did because it fixed the problem. I haven't had any problem since and if anything, it catapulted me into the mindset of "Holy crap. I'm not unstoppable. I'm not unbreakable. And if I want to play a longer game, in business, in life, then I need to start looking after myself properly." That was really the catalyst for me to I start getting more serious about my health, my diet, my sleep. I didn't do the whole biohacking thing or anything like that. But like supplementation and understanding the importance of having a proper physical every year, scans every year, hiring a nutritionist to clean up my diet, I got all these things that you really don't think all that much about. But then once you start running blood tests and whatnot, you're like, "Okay, I'm actually not in great shape. There's a lot I can be doing here. If I want to act and lead in a way that is ambitious for myself, but also inspiring for other people who decide to follow my work, then I need to lead by example." And that's what I'm, not to mention the fact obviously, that I've got four kids, and you know, they need to see me doing the right things to be around long term for them, as well. And so it's drastically changed everything in terms of the way that I work and keep my energy levels high. But also from a personal perspective, if you'd have asked me 15 years ago, if I'd be doing yoga three times a week I would've called you mad, but here I am, on the mat three times a week.

**Katie** 06:09

Are you seeing more burnout? Do you think amongst the people that you train and coach?



**Chris** 06:16

Yes, it's scary, quite frankly. I've certainly seen a lot more of it over the pandemic periods. I've always said that burnout is inevitable for an entrepreneur, it's not a matter of if, it's just a matter of when, right? Unless they get smart about the way that they look after themselves and run their business. So that's everything from delegating a certain amount, to staying in your zone of genius and not trying to be the jack of all trades, and all kinds of stuff. But I've seen a lot more of it over the last four or five years or so. I think that the pandemic was good and bad. In that regard it was good, because it showed us actually life is pretty short. I don't know about you, but I lost a couple of people to COVID in the early days. And you know, it taught us that life is short, and that there's a heck of a lot that we have zero control over. But equally, it showed us that we do have a certain amount of control over everything that we do day to day as well. And leaders in general, even if you're not running a business, if you are in a position of leadership, that kind of hustle culture has taught us to chase it down and to go for the easy money and all these kinds of things. And that's a problem. But yes, I've seen more of it. And I'm still seeing it. And it's scary.

**Katie** 07:32

You are famous, you're most famous for personal branding, helping people discover who they really are, and present that to the world. Yes. I thought we should start with a definition. Now what is the personal brand? How do you define it?

**Chris** 07:49

At the core of it, it's your reputation. That's basically what a personal brand is. So you don't need to be an entrepreneur to build a personal brand to understand the power of a personal brand. Anybody that wants to do well in their career has got a personal brand. That's your reputation. But I like to sum it up in one sentence. And that is: your personal brand is what people say about you when you're not around. Because that gets people thinking a little bit deeper about it. So if you're not at that conference, or at that dinner party or at that coffee meeting, and your name pops up in conversation, what is it you're known for? What is it that people are saying about you? And that's your personal brand. So it's kind of important. You know, it's about as important as it comes, I guess

**Katie** 08:37

Yes. I just want to hone in on that because I think we're gonna have listeners who are probably independent consultants in the comms space, but we're also going to have a lot of listeners who are inhouse comms practitioners. And I'm guessing, as you say, a lot of this applies if you just want a good professional reputation.

**Chris** 08:57

Totally, absolutely. Yeah, in terms of strategies of building a personal brand, monetising a personal brand, etc, etc. There's certain things that would not apply to somebody who is an internal employee in the business, but still wants to build a strong personal brand and reputation within A) that company and B) the industry as a wider net. But also there's certain things obviously, if you do want to be more entrepreneurial about things, if you're a consultant, or a freelancer or a speaker or an author, there are definitely strategies that you can build up and act upon that will help you monetise the expertise that you've got a lot better. Ultimately, I'd say pretty much about 75% of what I teach and what I advocate is good for everyone. The other 25% is only relevant for those that are really out on their own and want to build that six, multi-six, seven-figure business based around what it is that they do and what they're known for. And I think a lot of people say, wait a minute, did you just say multi-six, seven figures like as an expert? Oh, yeah, definitely, I just said that. There are a lot of personal brand entrepreneurs out there with very small teams, no more than three or four people working for them that are doing half a million, quarter, quarter million, half a million pounds, a million dollars plus, based around their expertise. You look at anybody who's got a decent book, a decent speaking career, a decent coaching or consulting career, they all have the ability to do that kind of money should they want to. And one of my clients just recently at the beginning of this year, we were at a retreat for our round table mastermind. And this particular person had been a member of my group for about four years. And she's grown and grown and grown and grown. And she's plateaued at around about the 600,000 turnover mark over the last couple of years. And I said to her, how do you feel about this? And she said to me, actually, I feel very good about this. I don't feel like I need to go any further in terms of revenue. But where I do want to grow is internally and with the impact that I have in the people that I'm serving. So she is realised actually, she's okay, doing half a mil, 600k a year. She doesn't have any aspirations to grow that any further, but she wants to do deeper work with the people that are hiring her. And that's a really strong person that's got that kind of self awareness. That's gold. Yeah. That's, that's worth a million pounds. That self awareness, right?

**Katie** 11:39

I would also think she's going to learn more over the long term just because she's going to be able to sustain that level of revenue, rather than, as you say, burn yourself out or something, hit the end of the road.

**Chris** 11:47

Absolutely. When the team is lean and mean like that, as well, her margins are 65, 75%. Who do you know, that's getting 65 75% on half a million a year, that's a big profit margin.

**Katie** 12:03



So for anyone who's listening to this thinking, "Gosh, I need one of these, I need one of these personal brands," whether they're in house, whether they're thinking one day, I'd like to throw myself into the outside world and be an independent practitioner, and really be attractive to a certain set of clients... I don't want you to give all your secrets away, but give me an idea of where I start. How do I begin this journey of building a personal brand?

**Chris** 12:29

I think the really big question that a lot of people skip over here, when at the beginning of their journey, is they think about what they know, and who they can help. And they attach those two things together. And they think that's what my personal brand is going to be. But actually, I think you need to reverse engineer it a little bit. And you need to think about three, five years down the line. What is it that I am known for in my industry? What is it that I am known for? And actually, you probably already know what it is that you can be known for? It is what people come to you for, for answers on for help on a consistent basis already. So if you look back at the whole, "Hey, Katie, Can I can I pick your brains?" moments, if you go back on those for the last 12 to 18 months, and all the coffee conversations you've had in a quick Zoom catch ups and the FaceTimes and the texts and all the rest of it. If you look at all the discussions, you've had the probably there's a very big probability that three or four things in terms of themes or topics or subjects pop up quite regularly. That's what your personal brand is ultimately going to become, right there. It's how you can affect the most change and provide the most solutions to people's problems in terms of stitching those two things together.

**Chris** 13:54

So I think a lot of people overthink it. If you look at where you want to be three years from now, and then reverse engineer it back, the answer will probably smack you around the face pretty heavily. And the other beautiful thing with a personal brand is, and I often say this, it's the last pivot career wise that you will ever make. Because what happens is when you're known for one specific thing or a set of things, ultimately over a period of time, and it doesn't take very long, just a couple of years, most of the time, you become known for that thing, and you become somebody's favourite when it comes to that thing. And that's what we should all be aiming to do. As personal brands we should be aiming to become somebody's favourite. So somebody's favourite director, somebody's favourite leader, somebody's favourite Operations Manager, somebody's favourite podcaster or live streamer or email newsletter host. Whatever it is, if you become somebody's favourite that then swings open doors of opportunities, but more importantly here, as your own interests morph and change over the period, bit of time, because you're somebody's favourite, and they're following you because of you, first and foremost, and then what it is that you talk about. Secondly, they will more likely stick with you as you pivot and change your focus a little bit in the future. So if you think about it, it's not like a regular business where you set up



a brand-based business, you build it up, and then if you want to change, holy moly, now, I've got to start from scratch all over again, new promises, new clients, new options, new marketing, etc, etc. But if you are at the very core of everything that you do, it's a lot easier to build a pivot and change based on your own interests.

**Katie** 15:39

Yeah, that makes perfect sense. All of that said, if I open up, say, for example, LinkedIn these days, it seems quite a crowded marketplace in terms of individuals selling their expertise, their knowledge, etc. It would appear that content is key here. Would I be right? In kind of really getting sticky with that personal brand and bringing people to you? Yeah. How important is content in the mix of all this in establishing your brand?

**Chris** 16:11

Content has always been important, right, let's not lose track of that fact. It's always been important, particularly when we talk about building a personal brand online. I got active, even though I've been building businesses and websites since the mid 90s, but I really got active online in 2008 when I started a blog, and then I started podcasting in 2010. And then I got a book deal in 2012, the book came out 2014, and it's just snowballed from there. But content's always been important. What's changed a lot over the years, though, is that how we create and publish that content has changed a lot. And more importantly, how we consume that content has changed a lot as well. 10 years ago, it was all about blogging and podcasting. Now you never hear people talking about blogging. Podcasting, yes, but blogging has basically fallen by the wayside. What's happened over the last 7, 8, 9 years or so has been this huge boom of social media content. And now, and this is both good, and really, really, really, really, really bad. Right? I hope I accentuated the word really, because I feel quite opinionated about this. What is good about social media, is the fact that we can utilise all these platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram or Facebook and Tik Tok and everything else that's out there, we can utilise these platforms to be able to spread our message and to attract ultimately new audience and community members into our ecosystems. That's great. Can't take anything away from that fact. But what's really bad about this? Is that A) man it's noisy out there, right? Everybody's doing it right, first and foremost. And secondly, what's really bad about it, is that you don't own any of those platforms. So what you're ultimately doing, if you rely on LinkedIn, if you rely on YouTube, if you rely on Instagram to build that following, you are building your home on rented land. Yes. Right. And so that's a very dangerous situation to be in. And we've seen it before, people have huge Facebook groups, and then no fault to themselves. But somebody in the group posts something that's against Facebook's T&Cs, and the group gets shut down. And then there goes your prospecting group, right there, it's finished. People have got millions of subscribers, hundreds of 1000s subscribers on YouTube, they do one thing, and they get a copyright strike, that happens again, and Bosh, they've lost a YouTube channel, right. And



I've seen it over and over again, ad campaign ad accounts on Facebook, as well, you rely too much on just spending money to attract people into your ecosystem, and before you know what's happening, your ad account gets disabled, there's 1000s of humans that work for Facebook, but you can't get ahold of a single one of them. And your ad account gets shut down and you can't run ads on generate leads and get new business anymore. So it's a really bad problem as well.

**Chris** 19:16

So I think what's going to happen here over the next 12 months, and I'm already starting to see this shift, both in the work that I do as well as my clients, more and more people are going to be utilising live video on social platforms. I think what's happened is there was a big boom a few years ago and then everybody went to reels and to short form content, which has now just become completely flooded. Right, right. And super noisy. And so I think what's going to happen is people are going to spend less time planning content for social media like they do right now with all the editing and the graphics and everything else, and they're going to be more raw about their content creation again, they're gonna go live again with good old fashioned bullet points on post it notes and go live for 15 minutes talking about these four things, or five things or whatever it is, and what's going to happen is, then that's going to free up time from their day to day marketing activities, that they can then focus on their email list more, right? Because that's another issue that I've seen people do, they do what they need to do to get people on the list, create great opt-in offers, or, you know, spend a lot of money on paid advertising to get people on that list. But then what happens is, they don't nurture the list, they don't allow the people on their list to get to know them properly, in order to be able to then go into a position of being able to make a buying decision at some point down the line. And so what's going to happen is less time on social, when you do go on social, it's going to be raw, unplugged, and somewhat personal, and very unique because of that reason. And then, because you've got all that extra time left over, I think email is going to become more and more important. This isn't just one man's opinion here. Like I'm doing this myself. But also my clients are doing this. And we're already starting to see results from it, already. Yeah. So that's my stance on it right now. Very long winded answer. But I hope it was useful.

**Chris** 19:38

Really interesting, because I had recently an experience of doing a live q&a on LinkedIn. And what I loved about it was that instant reaction from the audience, I got a sense of the questions they wanted to ask me and all the rest of it. So that's another wonderful thing about what you're describing is that instant reaction from the audience.

**Chris** 21:39





You didn't need to spend any time at all prepping for that call. No, right? No, like you spent two three days working on a slide deck to do a webinar. It was raw, it was unplugged. It was personal and you connected with everybody that was live, you made an actual genuine connection, a true touch point. And we need six or seven of those before we're gonna make a buying decision or bridge. So you did the right thing.

**Katie** 22:04

Yeah it was fun. It was nerve wracking, but fun.

**Katie** 22:10

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. 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](mailto:hello@abcomm.co.uk). And if you do, I look forward to meeting you.

**Katie** 23:09

But when it comes to what we are putting out into the world, and however it is we're putting that out, I think you have some rules around this content in terms of what it should be doing for the audience. Can you just share with us the strategy for this content?

**Chris** 23:26

So an overarching strategy is to have what I call a media company mindset, even if you're just a single person. And that's important, because if you think about a media company, you are thinking about written word, you're thinking about visuals, like graphics, infographics, carousel posts on social, pull quotes, stuff like that. You're also thinking about video, definitely thinking about video, and you're thinking about audio as well. So that mixed media approach to building up content based around your expertise, that's what I call that media company mindset, super important. But the general rule of thumb is that with every piece of content that you create, you need to educate, you need to inspire, and you need to entertain. You've got to do one of those three things in every piece of content that you create. If you can do all three, then you've created something very special every time, but you've got to do at least one of those three things on each piece of content that you create. And the reason why it's so important is every time you create a piece of content, and you publish that on the internet, it becomes an instant business asset, an instant personal brand asset. And unless it's like a story type of post, say on Instagram, which disappears 24 hours later, it'll be around for a long time. If it is a blog post or an article of some variety or it is a video or podcast that's hosted on your site, whatever it is, that is an instant piece of content





that is published immediately, and will, for as long as it's up there, continue to bring in opportunities and leads and things like that right now. I can pull up the top 10 pages, in terms of visitors on my website at [chrisducker.com](http://chrisducker.com) right now on Google Analytics, and I can probably say that about 50% of those top 10 pages are probably content that I wrote years ago, or published years ago, because they're still relevant. Everything I try and create is evergreen, in my mind. From time to time, it'll be a little more kind of news-jacking approach or jumping on a trend or becoming more relevant in the time. But ultimately, I try and be as evergreen as I possibly can be, because I want that asset to be around as long as possible.

**Katie** 25:54

I'm just saying, because I need to, that whoever's listening to this, those rules apply, if you are creating content for employees, those rules 100% still apply.

**Chris** 26:04

I always have done. And I always will do. It's really that simple.

**Katie** 26:08

In researching for this conversation, I came across your Business Breakthrough days. And they just sounded absolutely amazing. And then I got my business hat on for a moment because I think, again, as internal comms practitioners, as Rachel Miller would say, it's our business to know our business. When you look at businesses wanting to overcome some hurdle or obstacle, is there often a common issue that's holding them back? You must have seen so many different issues over the years? Do you often boil down to one or two things?

**Chris** 26:41

Yeah it does. It really does. And the first thing I think, is that a lot of entrepreneurs are quite type A individuals. And because of that their number one issue, the biggest mistake is that they're trying to do it all themselves. They don't delegate. And the people that I see, grow and scale and go further faster, in their business growth will always have a team around them. And a team doesn't need to be a massive, huge team with people spread out all around the world, it could end up like that. But even if you've just got two or three people helping you day to day, or even if you've just, if you just want to say be doing six figures a year, 100,000 pounds in turnover a year, you can totally do that, as a personal brand entrepreneur with just one employee. Hire yourself a virtual assistant that can manage your calendar, manage your social media, book your flights, your trains, your accommodation, and make sure that you're as productive as possible every day. And you can easily do six figures, easily. If somebody says, "Oh, that's impossible, I don't believe that." they're actually kidding themselves. Spend six months being mentored by me, and I'll get you to six figures, if you put the work in, no doubt in my mind about it, because I've done it hundreds of times.



**Chris** 28:04

And so I think that's the first thing is that they ultimately don't delegate. And because of that they become the bottleneck in their business. And that bottleneck is a term that's used for a very specific reason is that things get stuck halfway going down, and you can't get anything else into the bowl at the bottom. And because of that, obviously, they can't grow. And that's a big problem is becoming that bottleneck.

**Chris** 28:28

The other big thing that I see people doing is not diversifying their revenue streams. So they have one thing that works really well. Let's say one on one consulting, for example, that's not scalable. No, that's not scalable. There's only so many hours in the day that you can consult with individuals and companies. And so the only way you can make more money as a one on one consultant is to charge more. And that will work to a certain degree, you can jack the prices up several times over the course of two, three years of operation if you want to. But eventually you will hit a ceiling in your industry, where people say, "Oh, that's too much, it's mad, I'm not going to pay that kind of money." And because at that point, you're not going to grow any further, you will plateau, and the chances are you probably will start losing people as well, as clients. And so what I teach all my clients is the importance of diversifying their revenue streams. So yes, if you enjoy doing one on one, let's carry on doing it, but A) let's charge what's reasonable, and what's doable for everybody involved. But let's cut that right back to say 30% of your time. The rest of the time you're building up group offers, you're going from one to one to one to many with everything that you do. So you're creating group programmes and offers, you are developing more digital products where yes, you might have to work hard to create that product but once it's created, you can automate those sales and the marketing of that product and hopefully turn it into a passive income revenue. Write a book! Every expert should have a book with their name on the front cover, it's the easiest expert positioning strategy that there is. The reason why not everybody does it is because it's bloody hard to write a book, right? And so, but if you can, if you can push yourself out of your comfort zone, and be a little vulnerable, and work your way through that challenging part of writing the book, once that book comes out, it'll create more opportunities for you to consult at higher levels, more opportunities to speak, more opportunities to sell products and offers and services. And I, everybody that works with me, ends up publishing a book at some point, it's a non negotiable.

**Katie** 30:43

No, it makes perfect sense. You mentioned the word vulnerable there. And it just sparks another question in my mind about how much of your personal self you give away? What is appropriate? Brene Brown has made vulnerability very popular. But can we share too much?

**Chris 31:01**

There's never a really clear answer for this one. Because what you're comfortable sharing from a personal perspective is going to be different to me, it's going to be different to somebody else listening to this. I do feel though, in today's world, we do have to be relatively careful with not necessarily how much we share, but what we share in that context. So for example, I have been teaching an art class at my daughter's school recently, I'm somewhat of a frustrated watercolour artist. And so their art teacher got taken ill for a prolonged period of time, and my daughter just absolutely loves her art. And I know many of her classmates do. And I stepped up and said, I can do it. I'll pop in once a week and help out and teach the kids a few things. And so I shared the fact that I was doing that. But I would never show name of my daughter's school. No, right. I would never show any distinguishing logos, or marks or location information in that regards. And I only posted one photo with any of the children in it. And all of the other kids' faces that were in that photo other than myself and my daughter had little smiling emojis covering their faces, because they're not my children, right? And that's me being very conscious of what it is I'm sharing in the moment. Likewise, if I'm going to shoot an external video outside, on my property somewhere here in Cambridgeshire, I'm not going to show somebody my front door. So, you know, I think you've got to be relatively smart with what it is that you're sharing in terms of both from a security perspective, as well as obviously from a personal perspective, I know many people that have children that never share their children's faces online ever. Personally, I'm okay doing it, but I don't overdo it, it might be one out of 20 posts, you might see a shot of one of my kids online. And almost always when I do that, it's almost always a story. So it doesn't live on the internet forever. It's there. And it's there one day and gone the next kind of thing. But I think it's a personal thing, it's a personal thing. One of my clients many years ago, went through a battle with cancer. And he decided to do it personally, he didn't share it online. Whereas many people do share something like that, because it can help them to deal with the current situation. And it can also help other people become inspired and motivated to get themselves checked out, and all that kind of stuff. We're seeing it right now with His Majesty the King, right? And with Princess Kate as well. It's important for it to remain personal, but understand that for people to truly connect with you, you've got to show a certain amount of your self, because people do want to do business with other people. And it's called a personal brand for a reason.

**Katie 33:59**

There's a person behind it. Curiosity has got the better of me, Chris, going back to your art group. Has that taught you anything?

**Chris 34:10**

Yes, not to underestimate a classroom of six year olds... It was it was an interesting situation actually, I love children. I've always loved being around kids. I used to teach basketball many

years ago to what they would call a peewee age group. Anything under teenagers. I've always loved kids. I've got four kids of my own. Like I said, I'm a big kid at heart. And so it's pretty easy for me to hang out the kids at birthday parties and all that kind of thing. And honestly, there's something about being able to get kids thinking about something specifically, that really inspires me. And as a result of this art class, I've actually started writing my first children's book as well, that I want to write and illustrate myself. So it's it was a very humbling experience to know that I'm actually having a bit of an influence on these kids at a very early stage in their life, even if it was for just a few weeks.

**Katie** 35:12

You mentioned a children's book there, but am I right in thinking there's a third business book in the offering? Tell it tell us about it, if you're allowed to tell us about it?

**Chris** 35:23

Yeah I can. I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna let you know what the title is or anything yet, because that's believe it or not finalised yet with the publisher. So I had this idea for this book probably about three years ago now. And it was initially going to be very strictly based around relationships in business. But as we've been going through the writing process, my team and I, my writing team, it's actually morphed into something a lot bigger, something a lot more impactful, I think. And it's now going to be aimed towards a very specific type of leader and not just business owners, but any kind of leadership role. And going more towards kind of like the midlife type of Avatar, and somebody that truly has already achieved a certain amount of success, and they want to go from where they are now, to where they want to get, but going from success to significance and what that means. And, more importantly, what that means over the long term. So there's a certain amount of kind of personal sustainability put in place and what it means to go the distance, so to speak, in work and in life. And I think, and I know a lot of people talk about their books when they're writing their books, when they're trying to promote their books, and they might say something similar, but I actually think this is probably likely to be the most important piece of work that I do in my career. Because we do we broach the subject of burnout, we broached the subject of having that longer mindset towards the work that we do, the impact that we have, the people that we serve, the people that we come into contact with. Yes, relationships is still part of the book. But I think there's something bigger at play here now. And I'm naturally chomping at the bit to finish it and get it out. But I'm not really in control of that, my publisher will decide when it comes out. But it's likely to be end of spring next year, I think.

**Chris** 35:29

I might be making this up. But this, is this about somebody who gets to a certain midpoint in their career, or just over the midpoint that starts to think I might actually quite like a legacy here?

**Chris** 37:23

Yes. But one chapter. The final chapter of the book, which actually was the first chapter that I wrote, is about leaving a legacy.

**Katie** 37:36

Right. Okay.

**Chris** 37:38

So, yes, I've reverse engineered the entire manuscript based on the fact that is the last part of the book. Yeah.

**Katie** 37:47

So I have another question for you about that. Because we are going to be living more of our lives working as we all can see that people either don't want to retire or they're going to need to retire later. Although you're saying this is for people at a midpoint in their career, we talked in the beginning about burnout. Do you think there's a need for people to start at the beginning. to think about pace, to think about legacy to think about sustainability in terms of their career? Would that be fair?

**Chris** 38:16

Is there a need? Yes. Will it happen? Highly unlikely. Because I think when you're younger, you think you're pretty indestructible. I remember what I was like in my 20s and right the way through probably, realistically to my mid 30s or so, you pull the all nighter, you don't worry so much about jetlag. I didn't think about supplementation and diets and yoga when I was in my early 20s. It's a non negotiable for me now, to have a monthly chiropractic adjustment and has been for about eight years. Yeah. Why? Because I know how important it is for the way that I show up. Yeah, my energy levels. Yeah. But I think that Self Realisation, self awareness doesn't come to you until a little later on in life. But I think the more we talk about it, the more the younger generation, god I'm selling very old here... but I think I am 50. I'm the big five-oh, now, I can start talking like this. I think I know, right? I think that the younger folks out there that might be tuning into this might actually be saying, You know what? You're right. I haven't really thought that much about it. But the fact that you're telling me I probably should, possibly might force me into doing so. And I think it's important for us middle agers to start talking about this a little bit more. And that's where the vulnerability comes into play. Because when I talk about burning out, when I talk about invasive spine surgery, when I talk about depression and anxiety and all the things that I



went through, it comes from a place of genuineness that I think that, you know, some people might talk about that and you have sniff it you know, it's BS, or when I show my x-rays, yes, and I can see the hardware in my lower back, then it becomes pretty obvious that I'm not spinning a yarn, doesn't it?

**Katie** 40:04

Yeah, I show a similar MRI scan of where my, my spinal cord has been crushed by this lump that was on my thoracic spine. You can't...

**Chris** 40:14

I like to call it, the way I described that is that, "Yes. As you can look up here on my MRI, you'll see that my L5S1 disc is machete-ing its way through my sciatic nerve." You know.

**Katie** 40:25

Nice, nice.

**Chris** 40:27

And that's how it felt.

**Katie** 40:28

No, I can I can I'm with you all the way on this. Yeah. This might be a very unfair question to ask, but I'm going to ask it anyway, see where it leads. There are going to be a lot of people listening to this show who are responsible for guiding and advising leaders in terms of how they show up, how they communicate to others, etc, etc. If you are responsible for supporting, guiding advising a leader, knowing everything you know, how do I help that person? If that's my part of my job? What should I be saying? What should I be doing?

**Chris** 41:01

The doing is more important than the saying The doing is more important than the saying. Because you have to lead by example. Otherwise, you're just a hypocrite in my mind. And I mean, the people that we lead, they're watching man, they see everything. They see everything. And I think we often don't realise that, maybe because we are kind of focused on ourselves. And there's nothing wrong with being selfish like that. That's fine. Even in a role of leadership. You have to be selfish to a certain degree, but the people that we are leading the people that we are supposed to be educating and inspiring, they are watching us and they are listening to us. And as leaders, we need to be very aware of that. And we should not ever take the opportunity that we have to lead people for granted. We have to take that seriously.

**Katie** 41:52



Yeah. One question before we jump to those quickfire questions because I know we don't have long. You clearly get a lot done. You're clearly very driven. You have to be inspiring to so many people in so many different ways. What inspires you?

**Chris** 42:06

Yeah it's exhausting. It's exhausting, come to think of it. What inspires me? I think there's probably a few things I think. I think first things first is my kids. They inspire me, because I know they are watching me. And they are listening to me. My eldest daughter, Chloe, she's just about to turn 26. She's been working with a company straight out of university, five years now. And she has at the beginning of this year, she was promoted to our COO for You-preneur brand, and she is, she inspires me, and seeing her build her career... yes, okay, on the coattails of daddy a little bit, but she's taking it and she's running with it. And I am so very proud of her and what she does.

**Chris** 42:54

My oldest son is running his own media videography business. And my other two kids are at school and doing great, they inspire the heck out of me. My wife inspires the heck out of me. How she juggles continuing to support me and help me run our group of businesses, as well as wrangle the kids together regularly. And my clients inspire me. There's a theme here, right? It's the people that I surround myself with, yeah, my peers inspire me. One of my friends is a guy called Ali Abdol. He's based in London, and he's just had a Sunday Times book *Feel Good Productivity*, a big YouTube channel, Sunday Times, New York Times bestselling book, he's 28, 29 years old, he could be my kid. And he inspires the heck out of me. He's in a mastermind with me, a peer led mastermind with a few other different people as well. And so the overall message here is that I am inspired by the people that I spend the most time with. And I think that should be the way you live your life. It's tough to not be inspired if you look at it like that.

**Katie** 43:59

And there is that line isn't there about we are the average of the total five people we spend most time with or something like that, you've probably heard that. So that sort of falls into that.

**Katie** 44:12

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 bullet 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





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**Katie** 45:46

I'm conscious of time, I'm just going to ask you two quick fire questions to cut to the chase.

**Chris** 45:50

You can ask me, go on ask me as many as you want go on.

**Katie** 45:53

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

**Chris** 46:02

The ability to bring like minded people together ah, yeah, my masterminds, my live events, my coaching programmes, everything I've done has always been... that's the highest level of impact that you can have as a leader is bringing other people together, I believe.

**Katie** 46:24

And what is that, though? Is that being able to see in others that they have a common issue, cause, characteristic and knowing that if you bring them together in the right way and create the right environment, they will feed off each other and just blossom and grow?

**Chris** 46:39

That's exactly what it is. Yeah, that's exactly what it is. And and knowing full well that you're going to be the one that they remember, that started it all off. That huge, because they'll never talk badly about you in that case, you know?

**Katie** 46:52

Yeah, I love that. How would you complete this statement? A world class personal brand is...

**Chris** 47:01

Blimey, world class personal brand is as unique as the person that it surrounds?

**Katie** 47:09

Yes, yes. Lovely. Yeah.

**Chris** 47:11

We really want to lean into our uniqueness. Actually, I keynoted an event a couple of weeks ago at the NEC in Birmingham. And one other person came up to me after and they said that this is a very crowded niche. It was the accounting space, very crowded niche. There's a lot of people that have been in it for as long as I have, if not longer. How do I position myself to be seen as somebody who's better than everybody else, and stand out? And I said, that's the problem right there. You're trying to be better than your competitors. What you need to do is shift that mindset and start figuring out what it is that you do that makes you different to your competitors. How can you be different? Because being different is better than being better. Yes. Always. Yes. Yeah. Always. And he was standing right there next to me. And he's got these beautifully bright red framed glasses. We're talking like fuchsia, bright lipstick-red glasses, this guy and a bald head. And I said to him, Have you ever thought about using your head and your red glasses, and your branding and then your messaging? And he was like, No, never. And I said go away and start thinking about that. Absolutely. There's about 1000 people here. And no one else here has got as shiny as a head. You know, surrounded by those beautiful red glasses, as you do. Utilise something like that.

**Katie** 48:32

Finally, Chris, this is what we do. Every podcast guests, we give them a billboard for millions to see. And you can put on that billboard any message you like, we do sometimes mock them up as well so this could become real. What message would you like? Well,

**Chris** 48:49

Where will I see the billboards, that's the most important, marking up doesn't work for me, I need bloody I need bloody... I want to be in the middle of Leicester Square. You might be out to get a deal.

**Katie** 48:59

Maybe Maybe.

**Chris** 49:01

So what would I put on a billboard? Message? Oh, this is an easy one for me. So it is something that I've been quoted on over and over again for probably a decade now. It came out as an ad lib on stage in Las Vegas when I was keynoting a conference over there years ago. And it was at the end of my speech, and I don't know why but it popped into my head. And it's just stayed there. And now it's been like a stable part of my focus. And if you've read the book, Rise of the You-preneur, you would have seen it in there. And it is 'charge what you're worth and don't apologise.' That fits on a billboard really well, I think as well.



**Katie** 49:43

But a lot of people come to me and say, Oh, I don't know if I can charge that amount, I'm only doing one day or half an hour. You're not. You're doing 35 years and one day, because that's just what someone's buying. They're buying a lot of experience for that one hour. So charge appropriately. Yes.

**Chris** 49:59

And we know we got a mutual friend, somebody that you know, I won't say her name now. But she's also in my roundtable group. And when she started working with me, she was charging, we'll say, X, she's now charging Y. And she has quadrupled her daily rate since we've started working with each other, and she literally can't keep up with bookings. She's making four times as much money as she was before. And that's not because the market has changed or anything like that at all. It's not because she's become more relevant, because she's not necessarily. It's because she wasn't charging what she was worth originally. And now she is.

**Katie** 50:47

yes. Thank you so much for your time. This has been an absolute inspiration. So yes, thank you.

**Chris** 50:54

It's been a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**Katie** 50:58

So that is a wrap for this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. For the show notes and a transcript of our conversation, head over to our website, That's [abcomm.co.uk](http://abcomm.co.uk). You will also find our entire back catalogue of nearly 100 episodes. If you did enjoy this episode, I have one small favour to ask in return. Please, could you help your fellow comms colleagues find our show? The simplest way to do this is to give us a rating or a review on Apple Podcasts, or subscribe to the show on your favourite podcast platform. My thanks to Chris, our producer John Phillips, sound engineer Stuart Rolls and Content Manager, Madi Bruce, and last but definitely not least, my heartfelt thanks to you for tuning in. And especially to those of you who share your favourite episodes on LinkedIn and Twitter and to reach out to me directly to say how much you enjoy the show. Your feedback means the world to me and I do try to respond to every comment. So until we meet again, lovely listeners stay safe and well. And remember, it's what's inside that counts.