Katie 00:00

Katie, hello and welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast with me, Katie Macaulay, I'm on a mission to make communication at work work. How can we better connect, converse and collaborate with each other inside our organizations? For years, internal comms technology was not on our side. It was, let's say, underwhelming at best. Intranet sites felt like clunky libraries of outdated documents. Email, while useful, has been and often still is overused, and while some organizations have built thriving social channels, many still struggle to get these off the ground. Now today, the technology has improved, but we now face a new challenge. How do we choose the right platform for our business and for our people? How do we build a coherent, connected suite of channels> To help me navigate all this, I'm joined today by tech entrepreneur and comms leader Pinaki Kathiari. Now, Pinaki has a rare passion for both the sciences and the arts. He has a unique way of blending technology, design, psychology and employee experience. He is the CEO of Local Wisdom, an agency that helps everyone, from Fortune 500 companies to start ups, launch, manage and scale their communications.

Katie 01:51

Today, he shares with me Local Wisdom's story, which, like all great tech stories, starts in a basement. Together, we explore how technology has evolved in the IC space, his advice for building an effective channel suite and the smart questions to ask your IT partners. Pinaki also shares with us his internal comms team maturity model inspired by open world video games. This model sets out a clear road map for how I see teams can look to boost their influence and impact by moving up the stages of a maturity model. And we tackle a crucial question Pinaki explores in his own podcast: why does it feel so wrong to be human at work?

Katie 02:49

This is a fun, insight packed conversation. We don't just talk about technology. We talk about the importance of honesty. We talk about how to get in the flow doing work that feels right in the moment, and we talk about how it's important to question some of the practices that we've inherited from a previous Industrial Age. Without further ado, I bring you Pinaki Kathiari. Pinaki, welcome to The Internal Comms Podcast. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Pinaki 03:28

Thank you. Thank you so much for having me, Katie. Fan of your work, a fan of the podcast. So super excited to be joining you.

Katie 03:35
Thank you. When we spoke in preparation for this show, you said you've always had an equal passion for the sciences and the arts. So I wondered whether that was a good place to start. How have these two quite contrasting disciplines influenced you and your career?

Pinaki 03:56
Great question to start off with. Very true. I've had this inner conflict or inner feud or inner co collaboration between technical and artistry sides, and I love the idea of mashing up things together. Not sure if you knew, but in my spare time, I'm a DJ, and I do this on this side. I'm more of a bedroom DJ trying to get better and get out there. My style of DJing is blending, mixing and mashing different genres together. I think that's where it comes from. The idea of, like, what can I take from here and there and bring it together? Growing up, I always wanted to be an engineer, because my dad was an engineer. Loved LEGOs and building things. And then somehow, in high school, this creative side came to me, even before high school and Grammar School. It started because someone told me they could draw better than me. And I was like, "no." But it just kind of spawned this kind of like artistry side.

Pinaki 04:50
In high school, I wanted to be a designer, a writer, a poet. I was on the debate team, but also on the football team and things like that. So it just mashed up different things. But my dad was like, "No, you're gonna go into engineering." Even when I got into engineering, I ended up in computer science and then psychology and communications. So I guess the one thing that I've done is just follow things that I'm really passionate about and then just finding ways to mash that together. So yeah, I'm not sure if there are two contrasting things. Maybe we're taught that they are, but I just like the idea of drawing from different spaces and combining them to make something really cool.

Katie 05:28
I love that. That's where true innovation comes from, I think, that intersection of different ideas and disciplines, I love that. I believe you started Local Wisdom in a basement more than 20 years ago. Is it a rule that all technology organizations have to start either in a garage or a basement?

Pinaki 05:48
Yeah, exactly. I just love that. Exactly. It's not a true startup story if there's no basement or garage, I always joke about that. In California, that's what I said, "All startups are created in a garage, but in New Jersey, it's colder, so we started in the basement!"

Katie 06:09

Tell me about that journey. I mean, how did it transpire that you created Local Wisdom, and today, what are your specific areas of expertise as a firm?

Pinaki 06:21

Yeah, absolutely. It's wild to say this, but in like 2025 we'll be celebrating 25 years of Local Wisdom, which is wild to think and say out loud. The journey literally started where myself and a few colleagues were in computer science, and that's where we met, and I graduated computer science and psychology, and I graduated just about when that first tech bubble burst, late 90s, early 2000s. We all found ourselves in jobs that weren't our favourites, and so I met up with some of the friends that I had in college. We saw a void in the market, and I was interested in learning more design, because at the time, the world wasn't ready for someone to do computer science and design at the same time, so they didn't really offer that. Today, it's just computer science and user experience just comes hand in hand. But back then, it didn't. So I was interested in learning more what was going to be user experience design, because it wasn't invented at that point.

Pinaki 07:22

We saw, when joining the team and starting in the basement, that there were companies that did good design and companies that did good technology, but none that did both really well. That was our start. We were naturally good problem solvers, so we just started creating services, looking for problems to solve, and then created more services around that. Our expertise at Local Wisdom, we help companies and organizations to launch, manage and scale their communication capabilities. Coming with design and technology, we just worked mostly with communicators, both external and internal communicators, and we created services so that if you know you need help getting something off the ground, we can help you from comms strategy all the way from launching a digital solution. If you need help managing the everyday communication requests and writing, we can help you with all that tactical execution. And if clients need help scaling their communications, we could actually onboard like a mini Local Wisdom onto their company to really raise production volume. So we do a lot.

Katie 08:30

Tell me about the name, though Local Wisdom, I'm guessing there's a story behind that?

Pinaki 08:35

Yeah, yeah, it's Local Wisdom, the term, is used to describe wisdom that's passed down from generation to generation in an indigenous tribe, right? It's how knowledge and wisdom transcends generations, and that's what we kind of thought of. It's like that's what we are to

the different expertise and disciplines we're a part of, that's what we are for communications, digital or technology and designs. So we're trying to span wisdom across generations, across disciplines, across locations, right? And so that fits with the core value. At Local Wisdom one of our core values is to learn from doing and share that wisdom. That's what we love doing, and so also, thank you for allowing me to be on your podcast even share whatever we can to help others out.

Katie 09:29
Yeah I love that so much, because our clients talk a lot about inherent corporate knowledge and corporate wisdom, and how important it is for that knowledge to be retained within an organization, especially in an aging population, where older people have it and new people come in, that cross fertilisation of ideas and knowledge gets a bit harder when people are working in a more hybrid or remote ways. So yeah, it becomes even more important, I'm guessing, actually, and it's super important.

Pinaki 10:00
In both ways, right? Not not only for like an older generation to younger generation, but I think we could all learn from a younger generation as well. So it's that crossing in different directions as well.

Katie 10:11
It comes back to that cross fertilisation and blending. Over the years, internal comms teams have struggled with, not just sort of outdated tools, almost no tools at all. How have you seen technology evolve in this space, and what improvements do you think over the years have had the biggest impact?

Pinaki 10:33
Yeah, I guess you know, I feel like being slightly younger than a dinosaur, I feel like I can answer that question. Yeah. If it surprises me though, to still find certain companies, there's not many, but there's certain companies that are still on Microsoft SharePoint 2013 or something like that, or companies that are still even hacking marketing and external comms tools to be able to use internally. It's wild how much that's still happening. However, there has been some considerable tech evolutions in this space, right? I remember from intranet tools. When I first was working on intranets, we were hand coding intranets from the beginning, all straight, HTML type stuff, even email delivery tools, we were using HTML and Outlook. Some are still using it today, but there's so many more tools that are available to do this well. And I remember even enterprise social tools. It's wild, because way back when we actually had to fight, raise a stink, to be able to use instant messenger in a corporate environment, right? Even digital signage is funny, because I remember a story now that it's all the cloud based and things like that, I remember a story someone once told me that how

they had to climb into an elevator shaft to be able to update the video server in order to put digital signage in the office space to work.

Pinaki 11:53

So many things have evolved over the years. Glad we don't have to hard code stuff or climb into an elevator shaft anymore, but there's so many more tools to help and so many tech companies that have come out, we're thankful to them. We partner with a lot of them. A few or any of your listeners are ready to evolve tech, please reach out and we might be able to get some kind of discounts. And now, right we have the nuclear energy coming in from AI. It's sweeping into everything we're doing, and it's so early in the AI life, but it's already creating the biggest impact I've ever seen in all types of technology. This is so much more to come, and it kind of really begs to, where is this going? And no matter what, I think internal comms and communications. It's in a constant adapting mode. What's happening, what can we do with it, and adapting to it and trying to find the best usage of these technologies.

Katie 12:51

It is crazy, isn't it, to think how far we've come. It doesn't feel that long ago that I was trying to convince leadership teams that people needed to access the web. We should allow people to access. "No, we can't do that. They're all going to sit there and watch cat videos!" I remember one client saying to me, "Well, yes, we can play videos internally, just not with sound."

Pinaki 13:14

I was walking a former client to her last interview. We had a meeting, and then I was walking her to her exit interview as she was retiring, she tells me this story while we're walking out of how she had to convince the team to start using email as opposed to faxing documents back and forth. And there was so much hesitation, like, what's going to happen to my email? I don't trust it. Where is it going? Will it actually get there things like that, and it's just wild to think, yeah, it's a constant story that'll keep happening.

Katie 13:45

You touched on AI there, and it's kind of unfair question to say, Where are we going to be even next year, let alone five years? My worry is AI looks like a productivity tool for me, and I'm slightly worried that we are just going to pack more into our days thanks to AI, because we're going to get things done quicker, and that's not necessarily what we want, more things on the to do list, but yeah, just interested in your observation about where technology might be taking us.

Pinaki 14:13

You are right. It is right now a productivity tool, and how is that going to affect us later on? It's one of those weird things that we were grappling with technology for such a long time, even technologies that were used for such a long time, you start to realize there's this side effect happening. Even when social networks came out, there was this interesting thing that was great. You know, when the first Facebook came on, the way we were able to connect, and something shifted. Oh, you know, what is the social doing to our children and our way of thinking about ourselves, and then even mobile devices, right? Mobile phones and smartphones were amazing when they came out with hardware that's in the back of my pocket that could do just about anything I wanted. But then what does that do for our ability to function without it later on? Right?

Pinaki 14:58
So technology has always had a way of having this gift and curse, I think with humanity, from like the invention of fire, I guess, right? AI in particular is going to be interesting in how it connects the different things that are coming right? There's robotics, cybersecurity, neural networks and being able to tap right into our minds. That's far off right now, but we could already tap into our minds with sound and light. It's interesting what AI could do, bringing it all together, what that's going to transpire, and how we react to that is going to be very interesting in the next few years. Will we all be some form of a cyborg with an artificial intelligence augmenting us? How dependent will we be onto it? Where do we draw the line between what is an actual fact or a potential hallucination? And I've always found myself as a futurist, but this type of technology has kind of made me like, now stop and be like, Wait a minute. Like, how do we process this? Because I didn't see AI coming out this soon, this quickly in our humanity.

Katie 16:00
I completely agree with you. This episode of The Internal Comms Podcast is brought to you by the Internal Communication Masterclass. I've condensed more than 30 years of experience and expertise into this unique on demand learning experience, gain the capability, confidence and credibility to turbo charge your career. There are eight work streams in this program, which you can buy individually or as one comprehensive learning journey. Each work stream comes complete with a downloadable course book filled with yet more resources and some compelling homework tasks. Visit ICmasterclass.com. This is an entirely on demand program, so you can learn at your own pace, anytime, anywhere, plus there's no expiry date so you can revisit the content whenever you wish. That website address again ICmasterclass.com, and as a listener of this show, you enjoy a 20% discount on each work stream or the entire program. Simply use the code podcast20 at the checkout. Stand out from the crowd, gain that promotion and feel reenergized and inspired. ICmasterclass.com.

Katie 17:35

Let's talk about IC specifically. You have an internal comms maturity model, which is super smart. I've got a basic one which is sort of three levels, beginner, intermediate and advanced. I developed it because internal comms looks and feels so different inside every organization I've ever stepped into. I'm curious. Why did you develop your model, and can you give us an overview of it? Yeah,

Pinaki 18:01

Yeah, absolutely, it's funny, the inspiration of our internal communications team maturity model came while I was playing a video game back in like 2020 when we're kind of in lockdown, and I was playing an open world video game, and it's one of those video games where you're just plopped into this world and you have an objective, but you could approach it in so many different ways. And this video game in particular was called The Witcher series. It was a book first, and was written so well that the storyline was so interesting, I wanted to get the most out of the game, so I found myself going online to find a strategy guide to help me find the best way through the game. And while I'm like, looking at the strategy guide playing the game, it hit me that internal comms is like an open world video game, but there's no strategy guide. So it's like, how do I come up with a map? So in my mind, I don't know if you remember way back when Nintendo Power magazine and those things were out, but they used to give them maps of like, the of the level, and how do you traverse them? And so the first thought was like, How do I create a map that'll help people figure out where they are, where they want to go and get there, which started as an infographic, which then turned into an assessment and an actual strategy guide, and even more tools around it over the last four years. On a high level, the maturity model maps out any internal communications team across six levels, from just starting a few people pioneering into the team to a centralized organization or a centralized team supporting other local teams, and anywhere in the middle. We created the model with the idea that an organization could have, and probably should have, multiple comms teams, and they all could be at different levels, which is okay, because you don't necessarily need to get to level six depending on your scope. So essentially, we wanted to create a mature security model that could help any organization or any comms team figure out where they are, where they should go, and have a set of steps to get there.

Katie 20:10

Are there any particular actions or initiatives that make the biggest difference in helping an IC team move up the levels? Do you think?

Pinaki 20:21

Oh, got you. There's a lot of things. The model kind of maps out specifically and helps you approach it in a systematic order by which you kind of level up. But I think the biggest

difference helping an organization move in maturity is going to be two sides of it, one, a brave and supporting leadership team that prioritizes human experiences. I think it's really important to have someone who's almost ready to let go of what's normally compels them in business world, and really kind of be open to see what magic happens when you have a good culture behind you. And on the other side, I think, from an internal comms perspective, I need a good manager or leader to help really create the vision of what internal comms is at that organization, because there's so much change, we cannot take internal comms for what it is today. We're constantly, always trying to evolve, get better. Do it faster, more efficient with more results. I think leadership on both sides is crucial for leveling up.

Katie 21:28

And I'm guessing your maturity model looks at communication outputs, or at least business outcomes. As you move up the maturity levels, the impact that you can have inside your business changes. Can you talk us through that as well? How does that impact change?

Pinaki 21:45

In the model the way I couch business impact is relative to work volume. Essentially, we wanted to map out an ROI type of depiction. Earlier on in the maturity we are not affecting a high amount of business outcomes, because we first have to get our house in order and get all the systems in place, but then after you do, you start to see this correlation based on the work that we're doing, we are providing business outcomes. Measuring that is tough, and it's almost another job or a skill that's on the team. Based on the results from the assessment, measuring business outcomes, is probably the toughest thing that everyone who's filled out the assessment grapples with. It's probably the lowest scoring item for most teams, and a lot of times there's things about it that are intangible. Like, what does it mean for the business when you have people who really want to work for that organization, right? What does it mean for the business when they really enjoy what they do? And what does it mean for your customer satisfaction when clients see that. And it's not like measurable that the way they can contrive that type of correspondence or communication, right? Yeah, yeah. But I've heard a lot of good stories from the maturity model, from folks who are using the model to get buy in for the things that they need to say that. Look, this is what an aspiring communication team needs. Here's I've seen people use it to map out their progression in a systematic way. I've seen people use it to communicate with other departments to say, here's what we do, here's how we could set expectations amongst each other. And I've seen it create a basis of what's normal and acceptable in an organization that has never had internal comms before. Because if you've never had it, how do you know what good looks like?

Katie 23:45

I love the idea of showing a journey, of saying, this is where we are, this is where we need to get to. We're not going to get necessarily in one big jump. These are the steps you need to do to get there. So it sets out that journey.

Pinaki 23:58

It's only true you have a high probability of tripping up and moving backwards in a way too so, or redoing work, and we don't want that.

Katie 24:07

I'm noticing at the moment, a lot of our clients are struggling with too many channels, or certainly too many disconnected channels. People are talking about information overload. It's almost the flip side of what we had before. Now there's a vast array of channels, and often they can get switched on without much of a plan. There wasn't much of a blueprint, and I think COVID didn't help that all of a sudden we just switched something on and just hoped it was going to work. What's your view on how clients, organizations, in general, can develop a truly effective channel suite?

Pinaki 24:40

I look at a few factors. Look at what you have today, what's working, not working. To decide if there's something just not working, then you should start thinking about removing it or reintegrating it somewhere else. But I think your channel suite is highly dependent on your audience, and your audience could also be varied, right? You can have an organization that has desk workers, hybrid workers, manufacturing workers, you know, or frontline workers or field workers. So you're choosing your channel suite based on the way your audiences are working. So I always think about it in terms of, let's prioritize, because we can't launch all these channels at once if we're starting from scratch. Let's look at our biggest, most influential audience in the organization. What's the group of people in this organization that could most affect business results? Let's think about their needs and the channels that are going to help them next, and kind of figure that out. And then we go to the next group. In the next group, we also figure out what is the main hub and how does this transport to that newsletter, that digital signage, that Podcast, episode, things like that. I think what's important is you have a good and communicated understanding of who and what each channel is for.

Katie 25:58

Yes, there is a purpose, a clear purpose to each channel. Because often people will say, Well, I don't know which one's effective, which one's not effective, but you can't measure effectiveness unless you've got an objective. Otherwise you're just measuring satisfaction, and satisfaction is not necessarily what you're going for. So yeah, I think that's really, helpful.

Pinaki 26:21

When you have too many choices, some objectives and focus help. I wouldn't fault anybody for having too many channels or too many things out there, because in the world of digital we're just trying to see what works and doesn't work. We can't not try, because that's the best research you could probably ever get. Let me try and see if it works. If it doesn't work, we'll move on. So I wouldn't fault anybody for trying. It's just constantly evaluating, like every digital product out there does, every app you use, they're constantly looking at it and saying, How can we make this better? Is it still working?

Katie 26:56

Is part of your work helping your clients evaluate different vendors? Do you come to it sometimes as a bit, sort of channel agnostic, and you'll say, Well, you clearly need something, a social channel, or whatever it is. Do you help your clients work that out what they actually need and review and evaluate those potential solutions?

Pinaki 27:16

Yeah absolutely. Yeah. Way back, way back when, even before there was all the tech products, we would kind of like build apps and everything like that from scratch. And that was a lot of fun, because I think we came from a product and tech background, so it was really cool. But now there's a bunch of apps and products that are just ready to go. We've partnered with all the top tier ones and whatnot, and we stay agnostic. We don't take any referral fees for anybody that way, we can recommend who we think is right for this scenario. And so yeah, we actually have a process by which we work with our clients to understand their needs from an internal comm standpoint, but also from a technical standpoint, a security standpoint, a legal standpoint, privacy standpoint, and then we'll evaluate and recommend, you know, a few partners for different deeds. We'd make the introductions and have them take it from there.

Katie 28:11

Anyone listening to this who's going through that process at the moment, is there any one particular factor, one particular element, at the end of the day, that's going to make a great tech partner. Is there one factor that you mustn't ever miss in your evaluation criteria?

Pinaki 28:28

Some of the things that I look out for, especially when engaging the teams in any kind of sales thing, I always like to hear when they're honest about we can't do this. Yes, I think that's important. If they say we can do this, and you're kind of a little skeptical about it, I always kind of like, well, can you show me how it works? Can I see how it works? Because it's really interesting about the pressure of sales and what that does to honesty. I want to make

sure that I'm keeping everyone honest. I think that's kind of what I look at when I look at the different teams, I just don't want to hear, Oh, yeah, we can do that. And if it is that, I want to see it and show me so what you're saying and I'm imagining are not two different things, yes,

Katie 29:14

Head of IT said to me the other day, what I don't want Katie is vaporware. And I hadn't heard that phrase before, but something that's promised that just disappears into thin air.

Pinaki 29:25

I remember, a long time ago, my partner and I were in a meeting with our client and the vendor. Our client brought us in to listen and give a recommendation. We were sitting in the meeting, listen to the clients, talk to the vendors, salespeople in the vendor team. Every answer was like, oh yeah, we can do that. Me and the tech folks in the room. We were partners, looking at each other, like...

Katie 29:48

Show me the money as it were. Show me the actual thing. Let me see how it works. What does it really look like? Our Microsoft partner to AB, brilliant agency. But they said that on average they reckon most clients are using about 30% of the features and function I've seen any particular platform that they're paying for. Is that your experience too? And if so, what is the best way to get the most out of the technology that organizations are probably paying for already?

Pinaki 30:21

Yeah, that's very true. As you said that I started thinking about how many features of Microsoft, like Outlook or Word that I actually use. It's even like in Photoshop, I don't use most of it. How do you get the most of it? I think one, I think, like, should always keep researching and looking what's coming up in the software that you already own, because they're getting updated constantly based on what they're hearing their users need. Something might have come out that wasn't available before that you should always be up like sometimes I think I'm not sure if, like everyone in Microsoft, knows everything about all the products in Microsoft, either, because it's so vast, constantly growing, right? Same thing with tools like Salesforce or all these, right? So, so keep an eye out. Also, how do I move faster in the in this thing, I'll find myself whenever using any type of software, do they have any shortcut keys to have anything that will make me faster? I always look at integrations. How easy it is to integrate or add automations, shortcuts, integrations, automations and things like that, is, are things that I look at as far as, how do I get the most of it? But it's tough. I have to acknowledge that, because it's constantly changing.

Katie 31:37

And when you say integrations, you mean platforms and tools that employees might be using in their day to day work already, that if you integrated with the platform, would get more traction and more usage on the platform?

Pinaki 31:48

They make life easier. Like, how can I get this data that's been handled in this other system onto this system, just like you were saying earlier? There's so many systems I don't know where to go for what? So we could start bringing them together in one place that would make things faster, and you're making use out of both systems.

Katie 32:06

You must do lots of work for clients around adoption of these news channels when they're launched. How do you get that behavioural change? I think there are some people that say a bit, sort of Field of Dreams, you know, build it and they'll come. I'm not 100% sure that's true. I think I can give someone a brand new phone that's top of the range. They'll use the old one, because getting to know the new one, even though it's fancy, is hard work. What's your view on what makes the biggest difference in terms of getting that whole scale adoption?

Pinaki 32:38

Yeah, yeah, you're right. Change is difficult. It starts with the experience of the tool. When designing anything, we're trying to think about it in a way that it doesn't need much adoption or training comms. If I have to train you on how to use this as a user experience professional, I feel like I failed my job. So that's kind of where burst starts. At the core level, it has to be usable. It has to be valuable. And if, and bonus points, if it's somehow delightful to use, right? And then adoption also is, is part like change, right management, like, here's what we were doing before, here's what we're doing now. And and I think we, we have to look at them from like a audience perspective, like all right, this group of folks, where are you right now? What are you thinking and feeling? How can I support that? By trying to do one message to all it's probably going to be like, use it, or else we're going to shut down the old one. But if I help them, person by person or group by group, to start seeing the value and bringing them along. They start bringing others along with them, and then it starts to create this cycle.

Katie 33:18

And what you were saying earlier about how you use it and making sure it's intuitive. I had a designer once say to me, no door should really have a push or pull sign. It should be designed in such a way as when you walk up, you should know what to do, and most doors are like that, but not all. But I, you know, almost failed if you need an instruction manual. Is that

something that you've got to think about on top of the platform? Because actually, the platform's not going to solve that problem for you. That's about, course, the journey, that's about design, that's about navigation, and that's about content. Am I right?

Pinaki 34:24
Correct. The platform is giving you a canvas, so to speak, right, to put stuff on, and the picture that you want to paint is really dependent on who you're talking to and what they need. Structuring the platform, and that canvas is what we do. We look at it from the audience or user perspective. Look at it from what the business needs, and try to create that that match,

Katie 34:46
And creating those user personas so that you are targeting the individual, or at least the niche group, around what they're going to most benefit from. That makes perfect sense. You have your own podcast Piinaki, which I love the title, 'why does it feel so wrong to be human at work?' What was the motivation for launching that show?

Pinaki 35:11
Right on. Thank you. It's been a fun journey the 'Why does it feel so wrong to be human at work?' podcast. The motivation came from a few different things that collided together in my brain. I think I was reading Amy Edmondson's book on organizational psychology, or the psychological safe workplace, as well as a few other books on the topic. And at the same time, at Local Wisdom, every month, we have a all hands meeting, and one of the I suppose, ceremonies we have in the beginning of that meeting is called kudos, where everyone is allowed to thank someone else for something that they've done in that previous month. And it's a lot of fun, and it's really heartwarming. It could last about 20 to 30 minutes, but what I noticed month in, month out, is around 20 minutes in, people will have more to say, but then they'll start rushing it. I'm gonna have a few more, but I'll be quick. I'm sorry. They apologise for it. And I've repeatedly said, hey, you know what, if we spent this whole time thanking each other, that's a win in my book, because there's so much good that's coming out of it. And then once I found myself apologizing. So the question came up in my mind, why does it feel so wrong just to spend an hour thanking each other for what we've done for each other in the last month, fundamentally at work. Why does that feel wrong? If you were to take an hour today and do nothing but thank each other, you'd somehow feel wrong for that. That opened up other questions. Why does it feel so wrong? So I was talking to my now co host, Chris Lee, about this idea. And he was like, this is such a great idea. Pinaki, let's do a podcast about it. And I'm into crazy things. So yeah, he started talking about it, and we started putting things together. I remember when we were concepting it, I tell people before we even started recording, yeah, so I'm coming out with a podcast called Why does it feel so wrong to be human at work? And immediately we wouldn't even have to explain it, they'd be

like, Oh, you mean, like, Why does it feel so wrong to take the day off? Or why does it feel wrong? And then they just kind of fill in the blanks with whatever thought they had. And I'm just like, yes, exactly. And each whole bunch of those turned into episodes so similar to what you were saying before, as intuitive without having to explain it in that way.

Katie 37:23
What's going wrong, Pinaki, when we think about why it feels so wrong to be human at work? Organizations are just bunches of people at the end of the day. Are there any systemic failures or particular factors, practices that make it hard to be human, that you've identified through these conversations?

Pinaki 37:48
I think overall, what's coming to light as we're doing research and even as I'm gearing up for season two, is we've been dealing with workplace practices across multiple generations now. We've just been accustomed to things and not really questioning like, is this right still? Is this still cool? Think about it. The biggest revolutions came when the industrial era, it was a very factory assembly line driven environment where literally resources were resources, hands to build things, and that's where it all kind of started. When that type of practice happens to get successful at it, I think what happens is we look at successes of folks in the past and say, how do we replicate that? How do we turn into the best practice? How do we turn that into MBA programs and generations and generations and generations go by, and we've learned these things and We've enacted these things, and then you're at a place where, how do we get here? It takes someone to be like, Hey guys, certain facts that we understand. Let's stop and look at this. Why are we doing this? Throughout history, people have stopped to create things. Way back when there was like a common watering well where everybody used to go and take a ladle and drink water out of it. Was a community well, but they realized we're passing germs to one another. Let's stop doing that. We've been doing these things as part of tradition, or just the way we've been doing it. And maybe it's time to question it. Why does it feel so wrong?

Katie 39:17
It's funny. I don't know whether this is going to make much sense. I was re watching Downton Abbey. I don't know if it ever transitioned over to the US.

Pinaki 39:29
I watched through my wife, yep,

Katie 39:31
But at one point, a member of the working class, and as you know, in the UK, it's very used to be incredibly hierarchical by class. Back then the member of the working class says to

Maggie Smith, the great dame of the show, something about the weekend, and she turns around and says, What's a weekend? Then she wouldn't have a weekend because she didn't have a working week. She wouldn't have a weekend.

Pinaki 39:56

It was fascinating watching that show that's.

Katie 39:59

That is a classic example, but we've inherited all this from the industrial age. And you're making me think that we are obviously, there still are industries, and we mustn't forget that, but we are in a very different era and age. And you're right. It's just about stepping back and questioning how much of that is still relevant I guess.

Pinaki 40:20

We want to look at both sides of it, right? I don't want to just say what we've been doing in the past is totally wrong. It could be, but there's probably something valuable we could take. It's funny when you go into the history of things and even looking at the weekends, I think Henry Ford introduced the weekends so he could get people to buy more cars, because you found people were working too much and didn't have time to go car shopping.

Katie 40:47

I suppose the good news is, I don't know what your observation is, but my observation is that the newer generations, and I don't like stereotyping people by age, I don't think it's fair, but if you force me to do it. I think the newer generations, or maybe everyone now working, has a better understanding of the importance of mental health, of well being, than we ever did. And we are a more questioning society. I don't think there's so much deference that we would have to our boss or our boss's boss or the way things are. I think we are a more questioning open society, which is it was got to play into this has got to be a good thing. Would that be your observation as well?

Pinaki 41:30

It is. I would provoke us all to be a little bit more questioning and a little bit more critical behind things and looking beyond things. I've noticed, there's a lot of mental health programs in organizations, a lot of support for employees, for their mental health what begs the question for me is, why so many it makes you think, why do you need this? First of all, let's look at the core of it all. What are you doing that requires all of this mental health support? So I think there are remedies for the problem, but let's be a little bit more comprehensive and look at the problem. If we could look at that from the beginning. Yes.

Katie 42:14

Look at the cause of the problem, not just the remedies. Exactly perfect sense.

Katie 42:21

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 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, 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 very much look forward to being in touch.

Katie 43:54

Do you have time for those questions, Pinaki?

Pinaki 43:57

I always have time for you. Katie, thank you. Keep going. This is a lot of fun.

Katie 44:01

What personal trait or characteristic has most led to your career success?

Pinaki 44:08

This has been a really good turning point around honesty. For me about career success, one of the values that I've set for myself in the company is speak with sincerity and honesty, and when you do that, it creates great relationships. It takes the burden off of yourself, because you've already decided to be honest. So if you're even contemplating bending anything, you're just stopping yourself from the beginning, it makes you more mindful about what you're saying and why you're saying it, and why you feel what you feel when you're communicating that outside.

Katie 44:42

I really like that. Thank you. What's your favorite productivity hack for getting stuff done?

Pinaki 44:51

Lately, I've been really enjoying the concept of being in a flow state, so if you're doing the work you feel like doing when you're working. Right? It's been really powerful for me. You know? I'm not really feeling that right now, and I will actually not do it, believing that there

will be a time between now and then when I will feel like doing it and I'll flow better in that period versus right now, when I'm not in that mode. Yeah, if anybody's ever thinking about that, I always think, if you're not feeling like doing it, and constantly not feeling like working, then you really need to think about what you're doing. Good point.

Katie 45:27
But is there any particular well being practice that you have that's become a routine that you wouldn't live without?

Pinaki 45:38
There's a lot. I don't have certain routines, like, really, like chunks and like, at five o'clock every day, I do this or something like that. But there's some practices that I that I call upon definitely when needed, like, I definitely try to get to the gym three or four times a week that helps keep energy moving and everything like that. And I think it helps with stress. Yes, I definitely do breathing exercises if I'm getting stressed, I definitely take time to just sit and think, because I think we need time to do that, down to even eating practices and just a relationship with hunger have been really interesting things that I've been looking into this past year. I listened to a few lectures in Ayurveda and Ayurveda construction, that's the ancient Indian science of life. It's where yoga and meditation came from, and it's very interesting, not that I practice everything in Ayurvedic but start somewhere by picking a few habits and integrating them into the routine.

Katie 46:35
We will ask you for some links so that we can put that in the show notes Pinaki, yes, okay, listeners are curious. Thank you. Absolutely. What's one piece of bad advice or unhelpful thinking that you think has consistently dogged the communications profession?

Pinaki 46:56
In particular internal communications, the unhelpful thinking that a team of one is okay. I don't think it's okay to be a team of one in internal communications. I don't think it'll be really successful. First of all, a team of one is not a team, yeah, you know, and if you're like, totally rely upon one person. I think there's so many potentials for things going wrong and mental health issues and things like that. Even at Local Wisdom, I create a culture where no one should feel alone, because everyone backs each other up. Everyone has someone looking out for their back. That's the way people should feel in that organization, especially in internal comms, because you're asking internal comms folks to let the company know that we're in this together. No one has internal comms person's back. How are they going to extrude that message to everybody if they're not feeling it? Yeah, there's so many other things I could say about that, but yeah.

Katie 47:55

No, it's a very, very good point. Finally, we give you a billboard for millions to see, and you really put on that metaphorical billboard, any message you like. What message would you like on your billboard?

Pinaki 48:14

The first thing that comes into my mind is the word love, because I think it's what we need more than anything else right now and at all times.

Katie 48:22

yes, yes. That works perfectly for me. I do have one secret off piste question that I shouldn't really be asking you, but now I know you're a DJ, what would be your outro music to this show? Oh, man,

Pinaki 48:35

That's a tough one. I am a really big Wu Tang Clan fan. If you look at my wall, I have some autographed albums. So anything there I'd take but narrowing a down a song is a is a tough one. Anything Wu Tang Clan will work for me.

Katie 48:51

That sounds great. Pinaki, this has been so much fun. Thank you so much.

Pinaki 48:57

Thank you so much. Katie always enjoyed chatting with you, and we could do this for days.

Katie 49:02

Exactly. Thanks Pinaki.

Pinaki 49:04

Thank you.

Katie 49:07

And that is a wrap for this episode of The Internal Comms Podcast. As always, you can find all the links from today's show, including a full transcript on our website that's at abcomm.co.uk/podcast. If you did enjoy this episode and found it helpful, I have a small favour to ask please. Could you take a moment to like, rate or even review the show on your favorite podcast platform, this helps the algorithms work their magic, making it easier for other internal comms pros around the world to find our show. If you'd like to hear more insightful conversations from some of the smartest minds in our field, please do. Hit that subscribe button today. A huge thank you to Pinaki for his brilliant insights today. And as

always, a big shout out to the dream team behind the scenes. My producer, John, sound engineer, Stuart, Content Manager, Madi, designer Rob and the rest of the amazing crew at AB who keep this show on the road. And of course, my deepest gratitude to you listeners for choosing The Internal Comms Podcast. I do love to hear what you think of each show. Please continue to reach out to me on LinkedIn. I'm always thrilled to connect and a special thank you to those who have shared their favorite episodes with me in recent months, your encouragement, your endorsement, means the world to me. So lovely listeners. Until next time, stay safe and well and remember, it's what's inside that counts.