

How to Build Trust in the Hybrid Workplace through Managing ...

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SPEAKERS

Ginny Bianco-Mathis, Mitch Simon, Ket Patel

M Mitch Simon 00:10

Welcome to another episode of Team anywhere where CEOs, leaders and experts are building teams, companies, organizations and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co host on the East Coast, Judy Bianca Mathis, and I'm your co host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us team anywhere. The pandemic threw all of us into a situation where we needed to adapt to new technology, new processes, and new ways of connecting with our teammates. The upside has been that we were forced into becoming more creative, more open to risk and more flexible than ever. On today's podcast, ket Patel, president of KDP Consulting Group Limited in the UK, and global master change agent, enlightens us on how empathy and connectedness are the greatest tools to create massive change. Welcome to another episode of Team anywhere. I'm your co host, Dr. Virginia, Bianca Mathis on the East Coast. And I'm here with my fabulous co host, Mitch Simon on the West Coast. And today we have a wonderful guest kept Patel, all the way from England. We love those English accents, and kept describes himself as a change Asian Prophet tour,

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 01:48

and co host of his own podcast, the changed chair. He also describes himself as a pragmatist optimist, which we will explore a little bit. He's president of his own company KDP Consulting Group in England, helping organizations and individuals be adaptive and resilient with no blaming. And before this Kip managed and facilitated change impact at EY also in England, however, before that, he was at MSCI financial services in New York. Welcome, Kat.

K Ket Patel 02:25

Thank you. Thanks. Thanks for having me. Yeah, this is a delight. Hey, hey, it's a little intimidating because you've got you've got your own your own podcast. I hope that's not intimidating ask it's great meeting other other podcasters I was what can I say? I thought it was

quite a lonely space to start with. There weren't very many people podcasting about business change the pretty niche subject, or at least I thought it was, until I realized there's probably a few others just Yeah, your podcasts do? Well, just what I didn't realize is that they're out there, but the promotion of them is a really difficult aspect, right. Like, we don't have many followers, I'll be brutally honest. I'm okay with okay. But you know, like that, building that momentum, getting people interested, you know, learning about others appearing on them, you know, sharing kind of good podcasts, all that kind of stuff. That's, that is, you know, another another circle and networking that's required. So, yeah, it's, it's good to be on thank you for inviting me. Thanks for listening to us. It All?

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 03:39

Well, let's get into something you you shared with me earlier about all of this, with the hybrid and the virtual, is demonstrating the stark reality of a movement that leaders and managers have to navigate, they always had to going from the expert to a manager, you know, that's everything change agents have had to deal with. But now, it is incredibly, even more important on the people side. Could you share what you mean by that?

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Ket Patel 04:21

Yeah, I mean, I know what it's been like, for you, for you in your career and Mitch for you and yours, but when I was sort of developing my own sort of knowledge of change management, I was also responsible for looking after people. So I mean, I guess I when I first started out, I got I progressed, based on my knowledge of change management, less so on my people that was kind of part of the day job and I kind of did that. And so as generally speaking, as people progress in in most of their roles, their function lead progressing based on a functional skill, like they're progressing because they're getting better and better You know, being a lawyer being a doctor, whatever the function is, but what they're not really there, but they're placed in charge of more and more people. And actually, no one is necessarily always focusing equally on how good are you at keeping your people aligned and motivated and engaged, we go through this whole in the UK, we go through this whole kind of like, year end review process, you know, feedback, all that kind of stuff, and it feels a bit turn the handle, it's a bit process driven, you know, what are your goals for the year, cool, let's check in how did you do all of that kind of stuff. That was hard before the pandemic, that was hard to have that have a manager manage that plus their functional responsibility. But what made it easier when you had that is that often when I went into the office, I kind of almost had like this, I was putting on my manager, my my employee, kind of, you know, persona, and I could shut out my home world, you know, because it's not there, it's not surrounding me. So I could focus on, you know, what people needed, and what the next thing for us to do is, as a team was, and as soon as the kind of pandemic here, there was this kind of merging of everything, there was no physical wall between, you know, work and home, it was all just mixed in. So that, that, that kind of ability to have to not just now think of your people, the work you do, and your own personal life, they all mashed into one. And I think now we're kind of in this hybrid world, what I've noticed is managers have to work very, very, very, very hard on that people side of their role. And if you weren't already good at when you're going into the office, or you didn't necessarily pay attention to it, then actually, being remote from it, it's just giving you an easy way out of not doing more of it, you're it's actually twice as hard. Yeah, for some, it's become twice as hard. For those people that were really good at it, I think they've they've doubled down because they know that this is critical to

successful performance. So it's almost like it's polarized, their hybrid working has polarized, or made it more extreme, you're either sort of not great, and therefore in a virtual environment, not slightly worse, and, and in some respects, you were really good at it, and you doubled down on it, because you knew how critical it was. And I think for us in the UK, and certainly kind of organizations is that. That was probably where the biggest challenge was when we went to hybrid working, it wasn't accepting the tools, it wasn't, you know, getting power being productive, or things like that. It was about keeping those human connections, those relationships, those, you know, the the motivation of individuals and understanding what was going on with them that that was actually a lot harder to understand.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 08:05

Okay, right. I know where you're coming from. And you even said that there are some folks you saw that realized they just can't do it.

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Ket Patel 08:17

Yeah, I mean, I think what the and that there's a really important point in that they that they realized they couldn't do that there's a way there's a self awareness. So I think one of the things around kind of managing is that isn't talked to you is that you have to be quite self aware, you have to be about you're aware of your impact on other people, right, not just the work you do, but the impact you have on other people and how they respond to you. And if you aren't aware of that to start with, then you don't realize the ripple effect you have on other people as well. So I think, you know, there was a level of manager who was very good at functioning, what they did, they were quite good as a as a manager in the office. But when they went to hybrid working, they really struggled because they didn't have the tools, but they were aware they were struggling to support their teams well enough. And that's, you know, that's really that's humility and action, right, as a leader, knowing that you'll have some area where you aren't as good and you can actually step back and say, Look, this isn't me, maybe we need to do something different. Maybe someone else in the team can hold kind of like checking sessions, you know, whatever it is, but recognizing the gap. And I think I don't I don't know how prevalent that was, I felt more it was like people over just went, you know, I need to get people back to the office as quick as possible, because that's my sweet spot. Oh, I don't have to do any heavy lifting. So I don't have to deal with this change. I don't have to figure out what and why I'm not work why this isn't working as effectively for me. All right. Well, so give us an example. Because you were you're dealing with folks right now with that. Give us example, please of someone who realized

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 10:00

That, who either was good at it or jumped into it, and now is creating that same kind of energy that we think of as being a good manager face to face, but now needing to be that good people manager in a virtual environment.

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Ket Patel 10:20

Yeah. I mean. I think there's a number of good examples on from from kind of people I follow on

Yeah, I mean, I think there's a number of good examples on from from kind of people I follow on LinkedIn. But actually one of the one of the best ones is probably a team I'm working with at the moment. And, of course, I would praise them because I think they've adjusted to hybrid working really well. But the person that came, it was sort of just a few months before we were all locked down, there was a new team manager, right, and this person had come from an operations background had been the other side of the fence of the change we were trying to make and kind of come into kind of support, didn't know the team knew often but not to know, name to face to face. Sorry, no, you know, person to person. They were learning the structure of the projects, they had the functional knowledge of what we were trying to do, but not the project or the people. And, you know, two months later, we're in a pandemic. And actually, we can't all meet up right, as a team at 20. Lee, new to the team, new to the program, one of the most important things they did was they kind of went, I could do two things here, I could immerse myself in that detail, right? I could immerse myself in all the documents, I could read everything I could go to every meeting, they did the flip, they kind of went on, look, I don't need to I don't need to read all of this stuff. If I go and speak to people, they'll tell me the most important things. If I speak to enough people, I'll get a good enough picture. And what I'll be able to do is pick, I'll get, I'll get a kind of holistic view different viewpoints, I'll be able to understand the context of where we're at what we're doing. If I've got things that kind of contradict one another, I can kind of pick into that a little bit. So immediately, before going down to their functional knowledge of what they knew, to kind of pick out what their role would be, they went nope, not doing that. I'm going to go and find out what people know, I'm going to find out what people need of me. And I'm actually going to do it because it also helps me check in with how people are figuring out this hybrid working. And we hear a lot about psychological safety, right? Like imagine a new leader coming in, and then two months, everyone being, you know, remote from everybody else, right? How do you create that environment where everyone feels safe to say, what's on their mind and come together? Well, you need to trust the person that is leading you. And nothing creates a level of trust and more than being able to have a one to one conversation with someone and get to know one another. You know, and I think what? Critically, she spotted that immediately coming into the team and the situation made time to get to know people one to one and when we came together called on some of the the information she'd learned from others around the table. So she's like, Oh, I was speaking to John and John had said this about some of the work you're doing right. That's really great. You want to talk about it here. Right? Do you know like, creating a community virtually by bringing people in? Like it was just it's really, it's almost like a sleight of hand that you can't, there was nothing that stands strong, natural. Yes. You know, I mean, there's nothing structural she did apart from just be human, and go and talk to people. And it was it, you know, she would have done well anyway. But to have the pandemic and a virtual world and no one having ever worked for this length of time in this way to zero in on that. I thought that was that's pretty of just I don't know, I don't know what you're right. Right. Right. Amazing. Magic. Well, as you said, however, it's it's, you can't leave it to magic, but when you do it, um, it works. So she immediately put herself in the frame of let me go to the people first. Absolutely not. What's on the docket? Who knows what, right. And then I love how you brought the reality of it. She's there on this, let's say zoom, Google Doc, whatever. And they are. She's talking to them as it's just the most natural thing. Well, you know, Bob and I were talking and then kept did Yes, all of a sudden it became a new norm. Absolutely. Yeah, that's, that's, that is a really good natural example. It's ahead. Sorry, I was just gonna say to me, that's it. It's one of the best examples of sort of being intuitively a good people leader, right? Like it's, I'm not here to like one of the one of the common things you see when a new person comes into a role is They look above and they say, What are your biggest problems? Right, I'm going to I'm going to address those where who's shouting loudest, and they get a deluge of things thrown at them, and they drown really quickly, right? And this and you know, this lady turn around and turn it kind of slightly on its

head. I mean, it helped them, in some respects that the pandemic was the deluge of or everyone was dealing with. But it just kind of went, I know, you guys are busy, and you've got loads of stuff for me up above my seniors. But let me let me just, I need to focus on my team, I really need to understand what's on their, you know, their agenda. And give me a couple of weeks, give me a couple of months. And then we get my head around all of this, and I'm here, I'm supporting that top down. But that that is a very, that in itself is a really different approach, right to not focus on who's put you in place and what they need, but to focus on the people you're leading for the person who's put you in place. But it would be also interesting to talk to someone

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 16:00

and say to them, or here's the situation, here's the situation she was in, what it what would it take for you to first go to the people side? As opposed to jumping in and wanting to dig into the technical side? What, what would it take, and a lot of managers probably would say something like a leap of faith, because I don't have faith in that people side, because I haven't nourished that. Yeah. Well, there is no a whole new requirement on top of all this with virtual and that's technology. And and you speak to that a bit, if you will, yeah, what's necessary there with the technology?

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Ket Patel 16:42

You know, like I spent most of my you know, most of my work is around technology implementation. It's it's working with organizations to replace an existing or outdated technology to leverage a new technology that will help deliver new products, technology is sort of like the thing for what a lot of them forget is, how are people going to use it? So that's, that's my role. How do you get people engaged in the technology and to use it? And one of the one of the things I think the pandemic has kind of highlighted for me is that when pushed into sort of corners of like, inability to do your job as it was, and technology being a potential answer, people are willing to experiment a little bit more, they're certainly willing to experiment with technology, when you are saying to them, Hey, you know, what, what's the worst that can happen, because we already can't perform our day job. So let's try and get back to doing what we can as quickly as possible, leveraging the technology, the means we have. And what we would normally say in what is normally done in most change projects, when technology is involved, is you wouldn't ever remove the current system, right? Until people are really comfortable with the new system. Because you need that continuity of business, that continuity of service. But what the pandemic, to some extent show is that create that sense of urgency in people by switching off the old take the business risk. And actually people will experiment, people will try to get back to where they were before as quickly as they can create a community and a space for people to talk about their experiences around that technology. And people will learn more quickly. And that's what happens, right? Like, I will volunteer for an organization called the Change Management Institute. And we are so used to when we meet meeting physically because you know, we're all surrounded by email, we do not want another email exchange system right to deal with. So we were never as volunteers, we were always about meeting trying to meet face to face and they were generally through live events. And so the pandemic just shut that down. And we immediately went, you know, what we've got, we've got teams, let's let's just we've got no rules, we don't know how teams work. We're not 100% sure what it can do for us. But let's just start meeting once a week or once every two weeks, on

teams. And let's just talk and maybe ideas will come and maybe we'll start playing around with it. And people did. We didn't set any guidelines with any rules, we just said, Look, you know what you need to do use teams as best you can for calls for collaboration space, if you find anything useful, share it with the group. And before we knew we were kind of just playing with different ideas, we would create new ideas for a start. So something I always used to do which is, you know, I'd always do an update or do a presentation pack every month as an update for everybody so that everyone had access to what we were doing. I stopped doing them and when I started, I did it but I did as I recorded a five minute video of me talking through it and I posted it on one of the chats and people could watch it instead of having to be there. And I just went you know what, like, I'm asking a lot of people Come and listen to me talk over slides. And I'm asking a lot of people to read the slides over email. So how can I make this more accessible to people? Slightly more interesting. Record, there's a record bar right next to it right next to the, you know, the icon in teams. So I went, Oh, that looks interesting. Let's just try and record it. And so I think, for me, technology is always about creating urgency to use it, because you'll always fall back to what you've got. Right? You. I'm even having right now. Yeah, sorry. I mean, go no, no, you're raising a very interesting issue, what the pandemic and needing to go to virtual, it created a community of creativity. Yeah, that if I go back 10 years and think about even five years about ri are changing from this system to that system. Hey, it's gonna be wonderful. We still resist it. Right? And then we kept it. All right, here's the check the switch off date. Here's

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 21:02

right, panic. We didn't have time for any of that shenanigans. Yeah, right. Exactly. We had to do it. And what did it do? It created groups, communities to say we have to make this work. I love that. I think. So you got to build that into the new norm.

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Ket Patel 21:22

Yeah, you have to build a level of processes, definitely the wrong word. But urgency, right, you have to build a level of urgency, right. And I think one of the challenges for most organizations is that they have so much invested in whatever the current system is, because it's their day to day operations, right? That to create that kind of urgency would be a business risk. Right? And so no one wants to even consider it. No one even wants to think about injecting that kind of risk, to accept a new way of working. But what they do want is they want the new way of working. Right? You, you can't have your cake and eat it right? You can't not. But you can. Yeah, you can. We can when the urgency puts us in that situation, we can jump into it, we can be creative, we can help each other. I think there's so one of the distinctions I sort of made between the pandemic and where we are now, when was about this urgency is we didn't have a choice. And we accepted the risk. And we you know, like the risk was there, whatever happened it all right. So it's not even a risk, it was an issue, right? Like we were dealing with the results of not being able to work the way we were working before. What most businesses now need to do is recognize that risk is there. Right? We don't really want it to materialize. So we really need to be really mindful of how do we reduce the chance of it happening whilst knowing full well that it could happen. So as an example, we could take a day out, again, extreme example, but like everyone's using a system to, you know, I don't know to process client orders. We could say, You know what, on this one day, sorry, no client orders today, not happening, everybody is going to jump on the new system, we are going to figure out every

tiny little nuance of what would break if we tried to use this as a live system. So for one day, or two days or a week, we're not using the old system, we're switching off and we are going to take the hit, we're going to explain to our clients that the process might be slow, okay, we're going to explain to our people that it's going to take a little bit more time, but we've got people there to support you, if you're issues, we're gonna we're going to mitigate the things that we expect to fall out. As opposed to go can't accept it can't have a Crime Complaint. Don't. Right, right. Right. Don't just jump to the can't do it can't do it. Yeah. I mean, take the drastic day, make it up. Again, mitigations. So like if I if you said to a client, hey, by the way, if you put your order in, or you're expecting a level of service, where we would answer your phone call in 30 minutes, for this week, we're it's gonna be maybe more like two hours, or we really apologize. And if it's really urgent, here's a phone line, you've mitigated their concern, right? You've you've said to them in advance, hey, this is the concern we're trying to, here's the benefit. We hoped we were operating in a new system, educated your stakeholders, educate stakeholders, but also we gave our people the space and capacity to try something new, because I knew that if a permit came in, they had the support above, right, because it was a coordinated effort. And that, to me is fundamental in making change. I love that and in a non pandemic, is you're trying to mitigate the risks of your existing business. So take what we learned from the pandemic, about what we are really capable of.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 24:55

And create the sense of whatever that was where our normal selves would say, Oh, no way, we can't do that. We can't stop serving the customer for a day. Starbucks does it though. I've gone up to Starbucks and say, Hey, we're all close today for x what they do they do it. And we go, Well, okay. All right.

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Ket Patel 25:25

I was just, I was just gonna say one more thing, I think people are amenable to change when you against very old adage, when people are more amenable to change, when they're kind of sited on it, they feel included in it. So if that's your, that's your employee, bringing them in helping them understand their role in it, you know, saying you've got their back and that we recognize the challenge, but it's gonna be all of those things are really important. And we recognize how important they were in the pandemic, create the right environment for people to try new stuff. And what we can't do is, we can't forget that they're still important where we go out of the pandemic, and we're trying to do change at breakneck speeds still. Right. And by the dress it we don't we? Yeah, unfortunately. And maybe this is something that upper management has learned through all of this is you can't just throw it over the fence. And I'll let them figure it out. Because I've heard that before, right? No, you have to address it. You have to say this is going to cause an upheaval for four hours for a day. And you all can step into this because we're supporting you. I really liked that. Yeah,

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Mitch Simon 26:34

yeah, I had a question. Because I really love though, the information you've given us in the year of building community, I'd like to know what what have some other companies done to build community? You mentioned that one, woman manager, who, who appreciated other

people's idea, no, I got all these ideas from all these other other people. What I'm seeing cat is that the key here is to build community before you, you try and change things. The pandemic basically said, Oh, whoops, we had to go build community because we didn't have that choice. Having said that, it sounds like if we wanted to make change going forward, we would want to build those communities ahead of time so that we're more able to take risk. So what would we do then? build communities within our companies?

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Ket Patel 27:19

Yeah, can I say that is such an amazing observation as well, right? Because I don't think companies recognize the power of the network of their people away from a hierarchy and structure, right, like the network of their people, we talk about kind of change agent networks in organizations and an organizational change. They are just like, I could go in and I can talk to an organization to say these are the things that should we should do. But who do they trust more me saying it or someone a manager has been there for five or six years knows a number of people has trusted relationships? So we're talking about leveraging trusted relationships. And that takes time to build as we said, you know, like, you can't build a trusted relationship, one on one with people overnight. So hat, I mean, how do you do that? I think you have to look at, you know, people wanting not first to get changed, done. But first to have people enjoy the work they do in the organization and be part of that community that is understanding what their role is, within other, you know, the wider organization. And, you know, managers, good, good managers, and leaders try to do that all the time throughout their work with their teams, right, they're trying to share with them, Hey, by the way, this is what you know, the executor saying this is the new thing that's coming. They're sharing information, they're trying to build trust, they're getting feedback, right. And it's often because we know that things are going to change at times. And at points, we'll need to push harder on people sometimes to get them to do things that we might not have expected them to do, or that we might not have expected for ourselves to do. And we need people to double down or work harder. And so I think it's about recognizing what people need as individuals, it's about building that trusted relationship with them. And then also empowering them to take decision, right between those three things. As a manager, if you can create that kind of environment, and you can support people you will gain incredible trust. And that's, that's amazingly powerful when it comes to kind of sort of change agent leading change, generating change agent networks. I mean, I'll give you a really silly example. And I think the reason I say it's silly is because it's not kind of an organizational example. But like my wife volunteers from a local school. And the person that used to run the voluntary network, she spent a lot of time kind of understanding and talking to moms around the school as kids drop off and things like that. But when it came to organizing things like for, like, events for the kids, she had had, everybody would throw their time in energy wise, you know, she could go up to anyone say, hey, look, I suppose you've got half an hour that you could quickly just do this. And people be like, yes, sure we're actually a bit busy this week, but I'm happy to do it, I can find time later in the week, half now, people were always amenable to doing things for her. And the reason that is so kind of obvious was that there was always like a vibe about the people that were involved, there was always an element of fun, that they would get together, they would go out for drinks, it wasn't just about getting stuff done as a voluntary team, it was about having a fun time, whilst volunteering. And I think for me, that was kind of What's critical is you try and create an environment where people are not just there to kind of get something done. getting something done is the outcome, having fun while they're doing it, getting to know other people learning about other people and what they're up to. That's the kind of foot that's the bit where you kind of getting something back. A lot of research just described, the woman who was heading that was building that every single time she talked to

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 35:47

oh, that's so great. And, and, and, and as we all have seen working in change management, it comes back around, because now you've got the community, you have the people enjoying it, you're showing empathy. They're more apart, and they're involved. The dollars do come the so when you're dealing with that naysayer, well, I can't do that. I've got to go in there. I got to create the schedule, I have to hit them hard with this. You have to say, Well, what's your goal? Yeah. And all the way around to the goal with your education and your child. The goal was not to replicate school. It was the goal was to learn. Now, how can we do that in this new way?

K Ket Patel 36:39

Yeah. And I think one, you know, like, one of the things for me in all of this is that people think change, management slows down the delivery of benefits, because they seek benefits as the thing being done the outcome. Whereas when you create an experience, right, and you get people involved, it slows down the stop. But it actually accelerates the benefits, because people want to see the results. And nuts, as you were saying, right, like it is full circle. But the big challenge in the UK, I think is that we I myself often get brought in when we're already experiencing challenges with the projects. And therefore we're on firefighting mode. So we're just doing what we need to do in order to kind of get everyone pointing in the same direction again, and trying to get you know, the benefits realized that in the frame, we'd expect it to. And we need to then reinforce that on the next one and the next one and the next one, and then you become sort of slightly more as a mature organization. But it's not always the path that companies follow, they get over that immediate hurdle. And they go back to that, oh, we'll just do the next project. Because, again, moving away from function is really difficult. Moving away from outcome is really difficult, because there's no tap, immediately, there's no tangible thing you're getting from it. And then when you try to link back, you know, you're empathetic environment you're creating and the community you're building to an ROI. It's less clear through the value stream of a project, right. But anecdotally, every practitioner I've ever spoken to, would argue that the earlier you bring change in the more likely it is your benefits get realized, either to the time you expected or if not sooner. And it's so sweet. That's yeah, yeah. They just starting the change, just starting to talk about it.

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 38:36

Is the change has begun. So I love it. A summary for us, Mr. Simon? Yes, yes.

M Mitch Simon 38:48

Dr. Bianca, Mathis, this has been really, really interesting. I love your, your viewpoint on this cat, where it's all about, you know, we just got to go be go back and be human again. You know, put people first build communities, and really take advantage of teams to say, hey, you know, over the last two years, you guys have really gone through so much change generally well, and so let's take some risk here to try some other things. Because we know that people are capable for it. And it goes back to, you know, I think even before the pandemic was, it was always, you know, take advantage of a crisis. This is this is really one of the most it was the, the biggest crisis we've ever had. And it's basically shown that people are very adaptable. And now we've got to really find ways you know, as, as we, as we develop this podcast was really to

find ways for people to to, to express themselves and to be creative and to be productive in this new environment. And so, let's find new ways to do that and be big okay with it. So Ken, thank you so much for joining us today from the UK. And again, thank you so much. And thank you to Dr. Virginia, Bianco Mathis, and thanks to our listeners. And please share these insights and this knowledge with your with your friends and your colleagues. And we look forward to seeing you next time on our next episode of Team anywhere