

Transcript - Bruce Daisley - How to be happier in the modern world of work

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Host 00:03

Welcome to Future Talent Learning's in Conversation podcast series where we talk to business leaders and thinkers to uncover their perspectives about the changing world of work. This episode is hosted by Future Talent Learning's Mary Appleton.

Mary 00:19

Today I'm joined by Bruce Daisley who runs Twitter's business in Europe, Middle East and Africa and his team is responsible for the development of Twitter across these countries. Bruce talks about his feelings on the state of work, his own podcast series Eat Sleep Work Repeat, and his mission to help people be happier at work including his new work manifesto, which involves eight simple changes that anybody can make to make work better for them.

Mary 00:47

He also discusses his role at Twitter and the culture of the business, as well as his view on The Digital Revolution and how technology businesses can be more inclusive when it comes to talent. And he outlines his hopes for a more enlightened workplace of the future.

Mary 01:03

So Bruce, how's it feel being on the other side of a podcast microphone today?

Bruce 01:08

Yeah, the funny thing is when I started doing my podcast, the thing I used to say to people about them is that I could very comfortably say that some of them were quite good because I was barely in them.

Bruce 01:17

So I felt like I a spectator on these experts in the world of neuroscience or organisational behaviour and I was just merely sort of throwing them fish to sort get them to perform their tricks really.

Mary 01:32

Okay so you run a podcast called Eat Work Sleep Repeat. Yeah. Tell us a little bit about that, what's it about?

Bruce 01:38

So what happened was about a year and a half ago I, was sitting and, I think look you know, the candid thing is that a lot of people find themselves confronted with the fact that there's no easy jobs anymore right? And whether you romanticize about your old job or whether you look at the job that your parents used to do. And they seem to have like these manageable levels of demands upon them and then you look out your own job now and you go man I don't want to let on to anyone, but I feel absolutely exhausted and broken by this.

Bruce 02:12

Yeah, and I think it's a universal condition now. Jobs seem a lot harder. Objectively and subjectively, jobs seem a lot harder than they were a few years ago. And I found myself in that situation where I was thinking, you know, looking around me, people looked more exhausted than ever before, and I didn't know what to do.

Bruce 02:29

You know I candidly had found myself in a situation where people used to visit our office, Twitter office in London. They used say, oh, the culture here is fantastic. And then I used look around going, man, you scratch below the surface and and I don't think we're doing it anywhere near as well as we should.

Bruce 02:47

So I started it more out of a sense of self-learning, thinking if I can speak to a few people who are experts and give myself the excuse to contact them, then maybe I'll learn how to improve culture here.

Mary 03:04

Ah, okay. So you talk to people who kind of experts in the field of the world of work to uncover different perspectives on what's happening. Can you talk about maybe a couple of interviews that you've done that you really learned something

from?

Bruce 03:20

The thing I've been really overwhelmed and sort of completely bewitched by is the way, in the same way our mobile phones have transformed in last 10, 15 years, so has the capability of other technology.

Bruce 03:35

So there's something called people meters that a group of people at the the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have created. And if you imagine the little lanyard badges that you hang around your neck to get into most offices, they've effectively put the sort of the workings of mobile phones inside those badges.

Bruce 03:52

Right, so far so interesting. So all they are, they're people meters, and what they allow you to do is see who in the office is near someone else, who's spoken to someone else and interactions they have had.

Bruce 04:04

And so what that's allowed the people at MIT to do is try and diagnose little patterns of behaviour. So you've effectively got heat maps. So some offices, you see people sitting silently. And I suspect we all recognise the new modern environment, which is people sit and get desks with headphones on.

Bruce 04:22

We all recognise that because as an attempt to escape open plan offices a lot of people now, irrespective of their age, are putting headphones on to try to remove some of the distractions. So what they did is their people meters looked to some offices you can see that pattern.

Bruce 04:37

Some offices, you can see more interactions and the fascinating thing for me is that the guy who originated the work, a guy called Sandy Pentland said that you basically look and the offices that are the most creative are the ones that there's more chat in them.

Bruce 04:52

Okay. Yeah, right. Okay, because I guess intuitively any of us who are maybe experienced enough to to listen to this podcast will recognise there was a time when people used to chat more in the office and whether that was just coming into the offices and asking each other what was on last night's TV or just you know casual chitchat about what you're doing tonight but there used be more chatter in the office and I don't think it's a generational reflection but more a reflection of the increasing amount of demands upon us that chats been squeezed out of offices.

Bruce 05:26

And so it is fascinating that when you look at the expert, Sandy Pentland, why says that chat correlates with creativity. Well, most of us know that in the next 10, 15 years, as automation comes along and algorithms do a lot of the other stuff that has previously been done by humans, creativity's gonna be the thing that we rely upon.

Bruce 05:47

Creativity's the human payoff. And so, if we're looking and we say the things that are crushing chat in an office are actually crushing creativity, then you realise, okay, you probably need to change something about the way that work is constructed.

Bruce 06:03

So I think that for me has been, of all the podcasts I've done, and I have actually chatted to another guy called Ben Waba, whose firm has turned that word from MIT into a business. But of the people I chat to, they're the people who I'm most inspired by because I thought, okay, they're using technology to show us the way to improve work and to fix work.

Mary 06:28

Okay and you've come up with a new work manifesto haven't you? Has that come out of the podcast that you've been doing?

Bruce 06:34

Yeah so what happened was myself and a friend colleague who she's the CEO of Magnetic who do the marketing for magazines and we were both presented with sort of, the work that had been doing, she'd been on a couple of podcasts and

we're both thinking there must be a way to sort of espouse a desire to improve work.

Bruce 06:58

And actually my belief, and Sue firmly shares it, is that the way we are going to fix work is by taking stuff out of it. Which is counter to maybe what a lot of people believe. I see I'm exposed to the work of our HR department and they'll say we do work to introduce new 360s.

Bruce 07:19

And we've got this new programme we're introducing here and over-delaying this. Yeah. We're adding all these things to people. And effectively, when you're looking at improving the way that work gets the best out of people, I'm strongly of the opinion that we need to be taking stuff out-of-work.

Bruce 07:38

Leaving space for autonomy, leaving space for invention, for creativity, for chats, for making people's workloads feel less. Specifically, the average British person spends 16 hours a week in meetings, and the average Brits exec, so like our manager, spends 23 hours in meetings.

Bruce 08:01

So then if you overlay that with, you know, the best guess is that the average person in the workforce gets about 140 emails a day. So you overlay those things and actually already you've crammed so much into the jar.

Bruce 08:16

There's not enough, there's not a lot of room for air or water. There is not lot a space. And so my perspective is we need to massively size down the number of meetings we're doing. We need to really optimise offices so that they don't communicate on email as much as possible.

Bruce 08:33

And we to give space for people to have casual almost incidental seeming chat because it's through those little moments of interaction where ideas come. So the manifesto really sets about doing that.

Bruce 08:47

So let me give you a perspective. I mean, the, the Manifesto we put live, it's just a little website at newworkmanifesto.org and there's eight changes in there. And they're remarkably trivial. And like you, anyone who looks at them would say, okay, well these, there is nothing revolutionary here.

Bruce 09:03

One of the most important things we believe in is the importance of taking a lunch break. Yeah. And, and you know, you might think that there no revolution in that, but Brits and Americans are so used to now spending our lunch breaks, working, eating at our desk.

Bruce 09:17

Yeah, that's right. And you know, you sit in there with a sandwich and you've just been out, but it was a dash to the sandwich shop and you queued in the line in boots. You come back to your desk, you eat your sandwich, doing emails.

Bruce 09:30

And there's really strong evidence that that not only reduces your effectiveness in afternoon, it reduces creativity, and it leads to a feeling of exhaustion that we're increasingly seeing at work. So the changes are really, really simple, taking a lunch break, not doing emails at the weekend, you know, recognising that 40 hours is enough to get a good volume of work done.

Bruce 09:54

So they're trivial changes, very much with the intention of trying to reduce the pressures of work so that work is actually more sustainable really.

Mary 10:04

Yeah. And are all these eight changes things that individuals can do themselves?

Bruce 10:08

Yeah, mainly they are. I'm really fascinated. My start point was thinking about work culture, and what I've begun to realise, and maybe I'll sort of relate to this, that to a large extent the idea of a single monoculture that exists across tens and hundreds and thousands of people of organisations is a nice idea, but it's slightly illusory.

Bruce 10:34

And what you tend to get when you try and have consistent culture across big organisations is your number one, don't respect the fact that people are either introverts and extroverts, and broadly the population splits into 50-50.

Bruce 10:48

And if you chat to introvert, the idea that they're going to espouse certain sort of personality traits by the fact that have joined a company is scary to them. We've seen all the figures about people putting on a mask and not being them real selves at work.

Bruce 11:04

One of the consequences of these corporate cultures is that the introverted people feel like they need to adopt a false persona. So look, my feeling is, that actually, well, the idea of work culture is a nice thing.

Bruce 11:18

Actually building dynamic teams and teams where people can feel an affinity with the people who work closest to them is most important. And so all of these changes are individual actions rather than big corporate actions.

Bruce 11:34

I mean, the number one thing that anyone can do, it's not actually in the eight, but the No. 1 thing anyone could do to be happier at work is to turn the badge off their email, saying how many emails they've got.

Bruce 11:46

And the guy who did that work, it was a bit of work by a Microsoft researcher last year, And when he was originally trying to do it, he couldn't get a big enough group of people to commit to turning off notifications for a week.

Bruce 12:00

So he asked them to it for day, and two years later, half of all the people who turned it off for the day had still turned their notifications off. So you know, it's the biggest thing that anyone can do.

Bruce 12:12

Turn the notifications of your email. And at the moment you do, you start realising in the morning, that routine that you've got of checking all your message apps and checking your social media. And you realise email drops to the back of the queue because there's no immediate reminder to do it And I think actually actually that's a really good thing for our own sanity and around sort of Mental headspace really.

Mary 12:33

Yeah, I mean in principle sounds like a great idea. What would be your message to people who kind of say do you know what? That's just not possible for me. Is that their own fear just prohibiting them doing that?

Bruce 12:43

Yeah the best thing on that I think, is some brilliant work by one called Leslie Perlow, who did some work with the Boston Consulting Group. The Boston Consulting Group, like all consultants, they work their consultants immensely hard because they charge a big premium price.

Bruce 13:00

And one of the things that they always, the people who work there feel is that they need to give 24-7 mental availability. They're always contactable. And so Leslie Perlow did two pieces of work. But one where she said to people at BCG, tell your clients one day of the week that they can't contact you.

Bruce 13:20

And another one, where people BCGs volunteered not to do emails one evening per week. So not work one even per week. And both of them, the one where they weren't available during the day, they said, their clients adapted to it immediately.

Bruce 13:37

Because as soon as you'd laid down the ground rules, I'm not available. And then you give people other routes to contact other members of your team people work around it. It's like remarkably easy people work around it.

Bruce 13:48

The other one in the evenings they found that not only did they all feel the immediate benefit of not working ,one evening a week but they found there was a benefit to their productivity, to the level of energy, their family felt happier and generally, I think what Leslie Perlow has indicated is that every time we push back against email, everytime we assert control on it, it actually yields far more than we think.

Bruce 14:17

But there's this learned helplessness that effectively, because there is like a deluge of email. There's constant stream of emails that we feel we're inundated with it and we feel like we can't resolve it.

Bruce 14:29

And in fact, we CAN, but we just need to be more resolute. So I think, you know, I would say that the BCG examples are probably as good as any examples because those people are under hot demand. So my feeling is email will yield far more than we think.

Bruce 14:45

I saw this brilliant thing. I interviewed a guy called Rory Sutherland who's like an advertising legend and he said he was going to a client meeting in Geneva and set off to Geneva and from his house it's sort of like a six or seven hour journey.

Bruce 14:59

And when he got to Geneva, he landed in Geneva and he was just pulling out of the airport in a cab. And he looked at his phone and there was an email, it got on data, there's an e-mail saying the meeting's cancelled and he had to do two airports to get there on a train and he contacted the office and his PA said, oh well he emailed you and And he said, how crazy is it that we've got a device that rings when something's urgent?

Bruce 15:30

Someone could have phoned me and spoken to me instantly rather than waiting till I was connected, but we don't use it. And I think that's the challenge, is that actually we're in such a state of learned helplessness about email.

Bruce 15:42

We're not even using the other things that are available to us. So very easily, if someone feels like they can't push a get back against email, What you find is that if you put on your out of office or you put a message saying, you want to contact me urgently, I always answer my phone.

Bruce 15:57

Yeah. However, if you're okay to wait, then I'll be responding to emails. And I think actually there's far more routes for us to control the way it works. The challenges are, when you ask people whether their boss is doing a good job, the number one thing that they report is whether they're boss answers their email quickly.

Bruce 16:18

So like we've got into this state now and you must know it yourself when you WhatsApp someone, if you don't get two blue ticks straight away like what's going on? Why aren't I getting two Blue ticks?

Bruce 16:28

You've got this sense that you know constant availability is the sign of a good person and I think the more that we can push back against it that's the only way we're gonna get a bit of mental escape I think.

Mary 16:42

And it goes back to what you were saying earlier in terms of you, know I've certainly observed in in in several different organisations, you'll have two people sitting next to each other, but they'll email each and have a conversation, whereas actually just stopping and chatting over the desk would probably be much more productive and healthy.

Bruce 16:59

Yeah, that's what Sandy Pentland said. Sandy Pendant effectively looked at the genesis of an idea and he said, the way an ideas forms is that I come over to you and I say something and you wince, and there's a micro expression that is such that

when I go over and then say the same thing to Graham.

Bruce 17:18

I adapt it slightly and I change it slightly, and now Graham is actually sort of, you know, he's slightly more in agreement. Yeah. And I'm thinking, okay, so I've tweaked it and ideas don't come out about these these epiphanies, they're not Eureka moments.

Bruce 17:33

Ideas are normally sort pieces of plasticine that we adapt and we adjust based on the reactions of 20 people. So they don't tend to get born fully formed but more we sort of improve them as time goes on and that's what chat does.

Bruce 17:49

Chat just allows you to knock the rough edges off things

Mary 17:52

Yeah, okay. Great so the The new work manifesto then that you have how much do you role model or embody that within your your personal interactions and work life?

Bruce 18:03

Yes So the number one thing we put on the new word manifesto is presume permission and that was directly formed by someone who works at Twitter coming to me and saying I don't know what I'm allowed to do. And what we've really seen in the last 15 years, since email arrived on everyone's phone, the average working day has gone up from seven and a half hours a day to nine and half hour a day.

Bruce 18:24

I always think of Bob Crow, you know, the Tube Union worker who, anytime that you did anything that changed the terms and conditions of Tube union workers, he would go and strike. And all of us took a 27% increase in our working days with no additional pay and actually with the end result that we feel exhausted all the time.

Bruce 18:42

So you know so anyone who feels like work hasn't changed and things used to be different in my era is forgetting the fact that the working day has gone up by this big substantial amount and the and what normally happens is that every office is filled with and all of us are filled with what someone described to me as an 18th century milo.

Bruce 19:07

Now this guy who who runs Unbound, who's the, they're sort of like a sort of publish, that they are like a Kickstarter for publishing. So, you know, you take a book idea to them and they try and fund it.

Bruce 19:20

But he said this brilliant thing to me. He said inside of him and he hates it, he's an 18th century mill owner because every time he looks out across the floor at his office, if he can't see everyone at their desks, everyone effectively at there, their loom for the mill, he thinks people aren't working and forgetting the fact that now all of us are on our phones and like all our homes have got the same connectivity as the office and you know forgetting all that and so he says you know he hates himself for it but he knows it happened.

Bruce 19:52

For him and for that read every office. Every office has got people who are checking what we're doing, every offices got sort of people you've got an opinion whether we are coming and going and so the big thing for me was someone came to me and said what have we got permission to do? Now we don't run a an overt work from home scheme here so you know but she was basically saying if I've got a big presentation to can I go at two hours early to do it at home and my feeling was you known the reason why we put the very start the manifesto, I presume permission, is because my feeling was, yeah, look work on the basis that until I tell you otherwise you've got permission to do these things.

Bruce 20:39

So yeah it really does inform what happens here and you know we try and give people the autonomy to decide those things.

Mary 20:48

Okay and so your role at Twitter then if we if we move on to that can you tell us a little bit about about what you do, kind of

how you you've got to where you are now and what your remit is.

Bruce 20:58

Yeah, so I joined Twitter, so like my background had been in radio and then magazines and I went to work at YouTube, part of Google for four years. Yeah. And then came to Twitter when we had about, there was sort of around 10 or so people in the office in a small sort of office down in Great Titchfield Street.

Bruce 21:24

And there were a few of us there. It was brilliant for culture actually because you know the floor was falling apart there was mice there sort of very sort very start-up feel in the course of the time I've been at Twitter, I'd been a Twitter about six years, I was running the UK and now my job is to look after Europe. What that means really is that you know we've got people in France, in London, in Dubai, in Germany and more than anything I know that they want to get on with running their job.

Bruce 21:56

So my job really sort of to give them the autonomy to do that, to give the scope that I feel they can get on with doing it, but whenever they're running into problems or they feel like you know a bit of extra energy or a bit extra, someone shouting on their behalf would help, then I step in to do that.

Bruce 22:19

So I'm a bit like, it's a bit, like when sort of someone brings their dad along to add a bit of support, you know, I add moral support but try not to loom too much over their shoulders, really. And I guess, you, know we, Twitter, we've had a really good year and probably the reason why we had a good year is we probably got far clearer about what Twitter is.

Bruce 22:44

So, most people I think open and about five apps on their phone normally. And the question we had to ask ourselves is, why do people open the Twitter app? Now, it might be you open certain apps because you wanna connect with your friends, certain app because your wanna message people, why'd you opened Twitter?

Bruce 23:03

And I think what we've got better at in the last two years to say, you're opening because of news. It might be news because you worried about trains being delayed, or it may be news because want to see what people are saying about Celebrity Love Island, or it might be news about Brexit or American politics, but whatever your interest is, Twitter's about the latest breaking news on those things.

Bruce 23:25

So we're not really about friends, to the same extent that other social networks are. We're more about sort of connecting people with news. So my job is that we having big success with that in France, we'll get having fantastic success with out in the Middle East.

Bruce 23:42

Great you know UK has always been really strong for us and my aim really is to make sure the people who work in all those countries feel like someone's got their back really.

Mary 23:52

Okay and so how's the, so you talked about you know when there was just ten people and the office and everything it's obviously grown exponentially since then how would you describe the way that the culture has evolved as the business has evolves?

Bruce 24:04

Yeah I think you know there's a magical size of any company so when a company sort of 30 to 60 people is just a delight because you don't have to have meetings, you have emails, you can just scurry over to someone's desk, pull up a chair, and there's a magic to that, that I think anything that gets bigger than that struggles to fully replicate.

Bruce 24:28

So that was a magical time, and they were a couple of human things that happened at the time that made us a really closely bonded team at the time. And then, but as time's gone on, I think it's become bigger and there's a few hundred here now.

Bruce 24:48

But so what you tend to find there is that people aren't involved in every hiring decision or there a broader group of people. The thing we find that is most effective is we have a Friday afternoon meeting at 4 .30, What would you call tea time?

Bruce 25:06

And you could largely say it's apropos nothing. It's meeting about all we do really is we talk about what someone in the office does. So there's no direct agenda. We occasionally have announcements about Twitter's doing, but not every week.

Bruce 25:28

It more get to know you about the people who work in and around the Office, and then we always end with a story about the way that Twitter has been used to some extent in the news that week. So you might say, well, okay, this doesn't feel like burning pressing issues.

Bruce 25:43

But I think what that meeting does is it gives people the opportunity just to connect with each other. And what you tend to find is just by getting people in that room with, you know, a slice of pizza or a soft drink or glass of wine, people tend have other discussions there.

Bruce 26:01

And so you tend to find that room, he's filled with chatter before, filled the chatter afterwards. And even though the content of the meeting itself, you might say, all right, okay, I don't see how that's driving the agenda of company.

Bruce 26:14

It's sort of what I think of as a moment of synchronization, people sorta coming together and getting connected to each other. So actually that is one of the most powerful things we do to drive the culture actually.

Mary 26:27

Yeah, and creating that affinity between colleagues. Yeah. Yeah

Bruce 26:30

There's an interesting one. And I chatted to someone who works at an advertising agency called Young& Rubicon, and she said, one of the most effective things they do is on Thursdays, and you'd be embarrassed to put it down and write it down, but they have something called Crisp Thursday.

Bruce 26:47

And every Thursday, one of their receptionist buys a selection of different crisps and they're laid out on a table at 4 .30. And if she's been traveling around the world, she'll bring back this from Bolivia.

Bruce 27:01

And if she's been, if it's Halloween, she'll have Halloween-related crisps, and there'll be a theme to it, and they're all laid out on a table, and people just come along and grab a drink and chat and then go back to their desk.

Bruce 27:15

She said, most people are there for 10, 15 minutes, but she says, the place is buzzing, everyone always goes to, people feel annoyed if there's a meeting scheduled over it. And she said if you asked anyone to write down the effect of that on our business, we'd be embarrassed to put it down, but if you watch what it does to the building, and there are teams about 130 people, it energizes the whole interaction with people and my feeling is that those things have got far more value than we ever admit, you know those forced bits of interaction where they seem so innocuous that people are happy to participate in them, have far more value then sometimes the scheduled called four-hour sync meetings where people are going through bullet points.

Mary 27:58

Yeah, through agenda, exactly. I'm gonna steal that idea, I think. It's fascinating. My team love crisps. Yeah yeah yeah.

Bruce 28:03

Oh, you know, I chatted to a guy, one of the founders, Richard Reed, one the founder of Innocence Smoothies, and he said like, when they were creating their company, they sort of wrote all of their values on the wall.

Bruce 28:14

And one, the values, there were all manner of things, whether they we're a dog company or a cat company. And he'd said, one of them was we were pro cheese and he said and the cheese club happens every month a Innocent, still he no longer works there, and it's one of the most actively participated things. Why? Because it sort of irrelevant but it allows people to come together in a really relaxed way. So I think those things even though would probably struggle to decide what the benefit is you know in the world obsessed with data and ROI would probably say there's no return on investment of this, but actually you know these things have far more impact than we ever think.

Mary 28:57

Those connections exactly. So you're a kind of digital company, do you find that the brand that you've built up over the years as Twitter helps you attract future talent easily?

Bruce 29:12

Yes I do, yes I think it's interesting these things have gone full circle really you know I remember when I first got into digital that to move into online and digital seemed geeky and you know and almost embarrassing and definitely now I I think it has a big appeal.

Bruce 29:39

I mean, it's worth saying that when I go on holiday, I never tell people where I work. Normally, because normally if you tell people that you work at Twitter, the next thing they say is they say I don't get Twitter.

Bruce 29:52

A lot, you know. I would think we'd accept that Twitter's not for everyone and some people are more interested in using it. But the last thing I want to be doing while I'm sort of on a holiday on the Costa Brava is trying to explain to someone who they should follow on Twitter.

Bruce 30:09

So I never tell people where I work. I normally say, I worked at the internet or I'll work at an internet firm. But yeah, it definitely helps. And I think, you know, over time there's a recognition that people, that the fabric that everything's constructed on now is of code.

Bruce 30:28

And so, there definitely, people feel they want to add to their skills by coming to work at a place like Twitter.

Mary 30:38

And when you're looking for future talent then, what are the kind of this key skills that you are looking for?

Bruce 30:43

Yeah I think the number one skill that anyone's looking is a sense of curiosity. So when one of our values at Twitter is to seek diverse perspectives, so albeit that everyone who works here needs a Twitter account.

Bruce 30:58

There's a lot of people who have come to at Twitter who didn't use Twitter before they came here. So it wasn't a discriminating factor. If you're not on Twitter, you could still work here, however, one of the things that we're interested in is people who've got an interest in different things.

Bruce 31:18

So if someone wasn't using Twitter we'd be keen to see that that's not that they've never got round to trying it, but more, to try it it was not for them, but they love Pinterest, or they actually they love woodwork, you know or that they love cooking or that they've got some sense of exploration and curiosity and I think that's because those people tend to do better here. You know someone who thinks that and I think this goes for everyone now, but someone thinks they have acquired all the skills they ever need by the age of 30 or 35 or 40 probably he's going to have a harder time coping with work in the next 20 years, than someone who is sort of ready to admit, I don't know anything yet and I've spent 10 years trying.

Bruce 32:07

So someone whose been on a process of constant learning but feels that in a face of the way that things are changing, they still don't know anything. Someone who's ready, ready accept that they haven't got all the answers is probably going to be

more willing to put time into learning than someone that thinks they know it all or they know everything they need to know.

Mary 32:26

Yeah okay so talking about the theme of learning and reskilling perhaps so one of the themes that we talk about is around digital inclusion so obviously you know at the moment there's a huge wave of technological change coming in and we're perhaps getting to a stage where we are going to end up with some sections of society left behind by this you, know particularly people who maybe been in the workforce for a long time who don't necessarily have the digital skills.

Mary 32:58

What's your opinion on what's the role of kind of business and employers to maybe help those people relearn or reskill in things like digital to make sure that they're not going to be left behind by this big revolution?

Bruce 33:11

Yeah I think you know the responsibilities for business goes at both sides so you know I spend a lot of time and we have a lot of organisations coming in here to try and be more inclusive when it comes to coding, so we do girls who code, we spend a lot of time you know there's quite a few of us here do speakers for schools. Which is going to state schools and speaking to kids there and trying to ensure that you, know the the impact of technology hits all socio-economic groups and all geographies. And yeah, and absolutely there's a responsibility to try and reach digital into sort of bigger parts of society and you're completely right because while we're all swept away with the power it gives us to book flight tickets from our phone, that means that the ability to book flights tickets for people who don't have technology at all becomes incrementally harder every year.

Bruce 34:14

So absolutely, we work with quite a few organisations who do that. We had Age UK in here last week with a group of people trying to sort of bring that inclusivity to maybe people. Obviously, the challenge for those things is that is it hard to do them at scale?

Bruce 34:33

Right. You know, to teach a 70 year old or an 80 year old, or a 90 year, old how to use the Internet is a one on one experience. and so it requires investment and help and support.

Mary 34:44

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so future expectations then kind of, wonder if you can have a look in your crystal ball and tell me, what do you think the future of work's going to look like? We've covered a lot of subjects today.

Mary 34:59

What are your hopes or ambitions for the future?

Bruce 35:01

Yeah. I think, you know, work is gonna be really twin track because I think in the same, you know, my feeling it, and as I said at the outset here, but enlightened work and creative and sustainable work is gonna be about taking stuff out of work.

Bruce 35:20

It's gonna to be, we've all got this frictionless ability now to create a meeting. I can send you an email now that creates an hour long meeting with zero cost to me. The idea that I used to have to walk up with a paper diary and there was an act of negotiation and justification for meeting, is long gone.

Bruce 35:37

Now I send an email, and so consequently, meetings are created, they spawn each other and they generate, and that combined with a sort of an excessive ASAP mentality, everything has to be done urgently, means that work for a lot of people is gonna be exhausting and, you know, cortisol drenched it's going to be sort of this this very stressful thing.

Bruce 36:04

I think some organisations will move to a more enlightened position and and a more progressive take on work but there's gonna be a split of those two things. The alarming thing for me is that if you look at the projections of the future work and let's work on the basis that the projections are probably wrong in the short term and right in a long term but when you looking at like the idea of automation and the idea of sort of algorithms and machine learning taking aspects of work that even if they weren't impact a lot of people in the next 10 years they probably will in this subsequent 10 year and the one

thing that's really clear about that is that anything that routine or straightforward probably will be easily taken by computers.

Bruce 36:49

One forecaster is anyone who earns less than 30 pound an hour which let's be clear it's really sort of you know it is not a tiny amount. Anyone who earns... their job will be automated so right okay so there's a lot of jobs that are going to be stolen by computers and the thing that computers will never do in the short term is be able to create construct things put ideas together. Where I work on this sort of the theory that all our jobs are creative because often the creativity is how we can improve this by doing that we could improve these like slight tweaks so we need to give people the capacity to be more creative in their jobs we're only going to do that by reducing the amount of ridiculous emails yeah and so I'm optimistic that anyone can improve their job, if they kill the 18th century mill owner that lives inside them, anyone can sort of improve work, but we need to take steps to do it.

Bruce 37:56

It's not going to happen on its own.

Mary 37:58

Okay. And so with that in mind then, what would be your final message or piece of advice to the listeners who are listening today?

Bruce 38:05

Yeah. I mean, you know, the reason why we put the new work manifesto together is I think anyone can improve their job with really simple steps and like, so we've put in the a new work manifesto, Eight Changes, and I chatted to a brilliant woman called Laura Archer who was espousing the idea of taking a lunch break.

Bruce 38:23

She said she started from the perspective, I'm gonna take two lunch breaks a week, and she found on the day she took a lunch break, she wasn't going home and having wine, she wasn't going and eating cake, she wasn't sort of indulging in the caffeine, carbs, and booze that we all fall into the trap of doing after an exhausting day of work.

Bruce 38:40

She was no longer going at home and looking at travel websites. So she didn't have this wanderlust, she just felt happier by taking a lunch break. Well look, we can all do that. We can actually just block out an hour in our diary and go and sit in the park or go for a walk or do something.

Bruce 38:56

So I think actually all of us got the ability to improve our life in their confines of work, but they're just these small steps that we need to do. So it's all about sort of taking back control and trying to improve what we do in work.

Mary 39:10

Okay, fantastic. Well we're approaching lunchtime, I think I'm gonna pop and get myself a sandwich. Thank you. Thank You,

Host 39:20

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