

## Transcript - In Conversation with Tracey Groves - Purpose, trust and the #MeToo movement

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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 Tom Ritchie.

Tom 00:19

Today, I'm joined by Tracey Groves, CEO and founder of Intelligent Ethics. Tracey is passionate about helping leaders define and embrace what doing the right thing means to their business and as an expert in helping them embed their business's purpose into their day-to-day decisions.

Tom 00:34

She has previously worked for PwC as a partner, leading corporate governance, risk and compliance projects for clients. In this podcast, I asked Tracey what leaders can do to close the gap between what they say and what they do.

Tom 00:47

The reaction of business to the Me Too movement and the role of technology as an agent in rebuilding trust within organisations and society at large. Hi Tracey, thanks for speaking with us today. I thought we could start by you just giving us a brief overview of your career.

Tom 01:04

Why did you find Intelligent Ethics and what is the purpose of the business?

Tracey 01:08

Thank you, Tom. I had a fantastic career at PwC. I was there for just over 26 years, travelled the world working with some amazing clients in the field of change management consultancy and more laterally forensic services.

Tracey 01:21

I built a passion for helping organisations develop what doing the right thing means for them. So corporate conduct and ethics are very much at the heart of what I do. I decided that actually it was time to break out on my own and to even create a bigger impact outside of the firm.

Tracey 01:38

So intelligent ethics was born. And what I do is I help organisations develop a sense of integrity and a culture that is built on trust and respect.

Tom 01:48

And so one of the greatest challenges for leaders, and I'm sure that this is something that you've done a lot of work with with your clients, is clearly explaining their business's purpose. So how can leaders build the gap between what they say and what it is they actually do on a day-to-day basis?

Tracey 02:06

So you're making the assumption that there is a gap, and I don't disagree with you there. And actually what we're finding is that gap needs to be filled with a level of trustworthiness that comes through being trusted.

Tracey 02:18

So what does it mean to be trustworthy? So that talks about behaviors which are built on moral principles of honesty, of integrity, and fairness. And that's not an easy thing to do. In the world that we live in today, which is fast paced, overloaded with data, and very, very networked, leaders need to be very agile and grapple with this.

Tracey 02:38

So they need to be high integrity politicians, for example, navigating change, but at the same time retaining their character. They need to be very global in what they do and how they do it, but at the same time, in touch with local and very much the cultures within which they are touching at that point in time.

Tracey 02:55

So this is about how they can be authentic and how they can engage at a level which is beyond the transactional, but much more around transformation.

Tom 03:05

So do you think that articulating a business's purpose has become more important in recent years?

Tracey 03:13

I don't think it's become merely just more important. I think it's become absolutely critical in the world that we live in today, where people are seeking clarity about what they stand for, what value they bring, and the meaning they have in their day-to-day lives.

Tracey 03:27

And I think it's not this clarity just coming from individuals in terms of talent and leadership. It's also coming from society and wider stakeholder groups who are demanding much more from business in terms of what is your impact on the world, what is your legacy, and how can you sustain and create a legacy that is going to be something that is built on purpose and is a positive contribution to the world.

Tom 03:53

And it's said that a large section of society is said to have lost their trust in institutions, be it government, their workplaces or the media. How important is trust to leadership in business and also society as a whole?

Tracey 04:06

You know, Tom, every single year Edelman produces its annual barometer on trust around the world. And it tells us that there is a growing trust deficit between trust and society, between business and society.

Tracey 04:19

And my question is, do we actually have a crisis of trust or do we more have a crisis of leadership? And why would anybody want to be led by you if you are not trustworthy? So let me give you an example.

Tracey 04:32

If you're in a relationship with another individual, whether that's business or personal, and that person constantly lets you down, they don't say what they're going to, they don't do what they're going to say.

Tracey 04:43

They say one thing, they do another, and they don't fulfill their commitments or obligations to you. In a personal world, all things being equal, you'd walk away from that relationship, you'd recognise it's not working.

Tracey 04:54

And why would business be any different? If I'm working with a leader where there is a lack of, or there is more ambiguity and a lack of consistency in terms of what they're saying and what they're doing, there comes a point in time where people start to question authenticity, and therefore the deficit comes through, the deficit of trust comes through the inability of that leader to actually do what they're going to say.

Tom 05:18

One thing that can lead to a real lack of trust is if there is a crisis and it's not been handled in a correct way. So again, use the example of the current state of British politics. So how can leaders react to a crisis that may have caused their people to have lost trust in them?

Tracey 05:40

Personally for me it's absolutely critical that leaders act with humility and they act with honesty through recognition that there have been mistakes made and that they need to re-engage and re-establish a level of trustworthiness through not just what they say but what they do this is how we then make progress in terms of that level of engagement.

Tracey 06:01

So leaders need to actually recognise that when under pressure under scrutiny there needs to be a humility be able to be transparent in terms of where they may have done things differently and recognise that actually there needs to be a consistency and consistency of their behaviors and their decisions.

Tom 06:21

What do you think has been the general reaction of business to the change in perspective on the issue of harassment?

Tracey 06:29

Personally, what I've observed is that the Me Too movement has highlighted some appalling incidents of sexual assault in the workplace. And you look at some of the reports that have come out. One recent one, over 100,000 people in the workplace were experiencing, 49% of those were experiencing some form of bullying and harassment.

Tracey 06:49

Now, the 49% figure is staggering, but what that tells me is what are the other 51% not doing? You know, do they feel compelled not to be able to say anything or are they simply choosing to look away?

Tracey 07:02

So for me, going back to your question, Tom, leaders need to accept that corporate culture can only be improved when leaders think and actually then action how they can nurture an environment of psychological safety in the workplace.

Tracey 07:15

And what does that mean? That means that people feel safe to question, they feel safe to be able to have a different point of view, and they have a voice in the workplace that is respected, and it's built on a level of trust.

Tracey 07:28

They know the repercussions of that will not do them any harm. And that, me, has to happen every single day, whether it's in the boardroom or in the shop floor. And Me Too, I think, is simply a manifestation of some of the fear that's been driven through over abuse, shall we call it, of rules and a compliance-led environment where people feel that unless they do what they're told to do, then ultimately, there will be consequences that they're fearful of.

Tom 07:55

And you touched on it briefly there, but I'd kind of like to go into a little bit more detail on how leaders can create a culture where their people feel respected and safe from bullying and harassment and possible, like you said, possibly sexual assault.

Tracey 08:10

I'm collaborating with a psychologist at the moment, actually, Dr. Claire Murray, who's done a lot of work on this. And she's developed her framework called the strategic relationships management framework, which is built on very fundamental blocks of four things in the workplace, but are so critical.

Tracey 08:25

And what we're doing is working together to build on the first block, which is respect. What do we mean by that? That is actually creating a we mindset. So we're in it together effectively. So collaborating through decision-making, engaging with people, consulting with your team.

Tracey 08:41

The second block is called rapport. So establishing a level of trust and engagement through connecting and being empathetic. So being sensitive to the impact of your decisions on others and recognising what that means.

Tracey 08:55

The third and fourth are about responsibility and about reflection. So taking responsibility means approaching challenges in the workplace with a problem-solving mindset. So instead of walking away and not being able to take responsibility for the consequences of what you're doing, to actually work through that in a way that is collaborative and is built on trust.

Tracey 09:15

And then finally, that reflection piece, which is being able to take a step back to reflect and to review in a way that is independent, but also cognizant of being able to potentially change a course of action.

Tracey 09:27

And these are all very practical and they don't require a huge amount of effort. People say, this is very intensive Tracey in terms of budget or resource. Actually, no, the most demand thing of it is it takes time.

Tracey 09:40

And people need to care. And I think that level of kindness and care in the workplace, we really need to work and focus on.

Tom 09:50

And so, just to kind of bring this back to more of a societal aspect, society's views on these issues has changed really tangibly over the last few years and over the last maybe generation of people who have come into the workplace.

Tom 10:06

What role do Gen Y or Millennials, what role does their perspective on the Me Too movement, what role has that played in changing attitudes in the workplace?

Tracey 10:18

I don't know if it's a particularly generational thing. If you think back to the history of Me Too, it actually started in 1997, by a lady called Tarana Burke, an African-American civil rights activist from New York.

Tracey 10:31

And Me Too, as we know it today, is not just about celebrities being abused on the casting couch, shall we say, and it's not just about predatory men with power in the film industry. It's actually a manifestation of how women have had to live their lives and the debasing misery of continuing gender equality.

Tracey 10:49

So it's been going on for generations. And what's new, what you're highlighting for me in terms of putting the spotlight on the generation piece, is how the internet and how social media has really accelerated and intensified the response to some of these cases and some of these allegations of inappropriate behavior.

Tracey 11:07

Because effectively, if you think about it, Me Too is a form of civil disobedience. It's women taking the law into their own hands and recognising the fact that actually enough is enough. And they are wanting to blow the whistle in terms of how they're being treated and really putting a spotlight on discrimination and inequality, not just within particular industries, but also across all of society as well.

Tracey 11:31

So whether it's within the corridors of Westminster, within the third sector of charities, or the fashion industry. So for me, personally, I genuinely think this is a timing issue. And technology, which I know we're going to probably touch on in a moment, has really invigorated that and been a pivotal catalyst, shall I say, in terms of making that much more vocal.

Tom 11:53

Yeah, so that we are going to touch on that right now, actually. So we spoke earlier about trust and the lack of trust in society at large. And one of the factors that I think has been driving that is technology in many ways is expedited bullying and harassment.

Tom 12:07

But it can also be used as a tool for building that trust and for facilitating movements such as Me Too. So what do you think is the positive way that we can use technology for building trust between separate locations or networks or people within organisations or just anyone really?

Tracey 12:25

I think it's a great question, because quite often technology is used in a negative way, as in it's destroying trust, but creating excitement about winning together, rather than a fear of losing face or reputation, is key to building a trustworthy culture.

Tracey 12:39

And I think technology can really help that. And a new trust paradigm, if I can call it that, is emerging, and it's fueled by the social, economic and technological forces that we're seeing today. And we are changing not only how we are trusted in the workplace, but also how we view trust.

Tracey 12:57

So let me give you a couple of examples. Look at how we are, for example, willing to rent a room in a house via an online platform. Look at how we are sharing cars in order to get from A to B, so no longer sitting in the back of a taxicab by ourselves.

Tracey 13:13

We are choosing our life partners through an online dating app, for example. So this is how technology is changing the way that we as humans are making decisions that affect our day-to-day health, our security, and also our long-term happiness as well.

Tracey 13:29

So for me, it's an incredible force that's being unleashed through technology. The challenge comes is how we make sure it's being used in the right way that is going to benefit us as a human race.

Tom 13:44

And to finish, more specifically, how can business leaders use technology to help them create an atmosphere where their people feel there's trust and respect?

Tracey 13:57

So this is where I was leading to in my previous response to you, Tom, which is actually, we need to place the human at the heart of the design of technology. So whatever it is that we are creating with new and emerging technology and artificial intelligence is very dominant at the moment in terms of the research that's taking place, whether it's around reducing poverty, combating climate change, eradicating disease, unless it is done with humanity at its heart, then there is a fear and the consequences of that may not be in line with what we hope for.

Tracey 14:28

And what do I mean by that in a practical way? I mean that it needs to be governed, built on ethical principles of honesty, transparency and those values which we hold dear. So technology needs to have to be accountable.

Tracey 14:41

It needs to be not so clever that it can't be explained. It needs to be held responsible for what it comes out with. So building those principles in right from the very start through a governance framework is really, really important.

Tracey 14:55

And leaders need to take responsibility for driving that and taking ownership and making sure that's at the heart of what they do in their strategy.

Tom 15:04

Tracey, thanks for speaking with us today.

Tracey 15:06

Thank you, Tom.

Host 15:12

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