The World Changers podcast
Ep.7 A beta experience

Elle Bradley-Cox 00:08
Welcome to World Changers, a podcast exploring the trends making an enduring mark on our world of work, and how business leaders, HR teams and internal communicators can stay one step ahead.

Elle Bradley-Cox 00:25
All hail digital, the saviour of remote working. When the world turned upside down, we embraced digital fast, too fast! Many organisations didn't deliver it well. And now digital has a real image problem. But if we look at digital as an experience, instead of just another set of channels, it has the potential to revolutionise how we network and collaborate at work. Or head of digital Tony Stewart chose this theme as his World Changer for 2022 report. Of course, he did! Later in this episode, we chat with Rob Fawkes, Head of Sales and Marketing at Community Engagement agency Standing on Giants, about the parallels of internal and external communities and what great looks like. But before that, I spoke with Tony and our head of product delivery Lydia Edwards-Massey, to find out what's going down in the digital space, and how we can move from a beta to a better online experience.

Elle Bradley-Cox 01:25
Welcome to the podcast, Lydia, and Tony! Tony, when you wrote this piece at the end of 2021, the world was still reeling from the adjustments that COVID forced us into. As we sit here today, what are you observing about the post pandemic workplace?

Tony Stewart 01:40
This is going to sound overly harsh, but some of y'all don't have digital internal comms strategies - and it's showing. And that does sound harsh, because I know that we've been in survival mode for a very long time now. We've been trying to keep our employees informed, we've been trying to flex and roll with changes, that either a Prime Minister or local authorities are making when it comes to health and safety and making sure that we're safe and secure. We've been juggling with hybrid messaging and people coming in and out of the office and all that malarkey. So, having a break to sit down and say: "What are we doing with our digital channels? How can they best serve us and best serve our employees?" is probably a bit of a tall ask. It's more than we have the time, the energy, sometimes the capability to do, however, that said, it is showing. I'm looking at some of the channel audits we've done recently, or the conversations I'm having with clients and new prospects, and they're struggling. They're struggling to get value out of their Office365 investments, they're struggling to see the value that they promised their leaders with Workplace. They've convinced people to pay money for these platforms, but they're not seeing the behavioural change. They're not seeing the outcomes, the collaboration benefits, that they were pinning their hopes on. And 9 times out of 10 that's simply because they haven't had the chance, or haven't gifted themselves the chance, to sit down and think about what they are trying to do with these platforms and how can they best serve their employees. So, that was the

case during COVID. I hope that now we're emerging out of that, and things are "coming back to normal", people will give themselves time to think about that and to acknowledge that it's an important piece of work for any internal communication practitioner.

Elle Bradley-Cox 03:26
It's just so easy to get busy, busy, busy in our world, isn't it? Having that time and that brain space to sit down with somebody like you Tony, who is enthusiastic about this, and can see the vision that we sold into leaders when we bought those expensive platforms, and actually remembers why it's a good thing. It's like the Wild West on the world of something like Yammer, and it can be a scary place unless you start to think "no, what was his purpose? What did we set out to do and achieve?"

Tony Stewart 03:55
Yeah, and sometimes that work hasn't happened as well. Again, not to not to shame anyone. But sometimes there are budgets that need spending. So, we introduce Workplace but without much thought as to why. Or we've been bought in by the marketing of Poppulo or Yammer. And they've said yes, it's going to be whizzy and bangy and amazing and community led, but that comes not with just turning it on, but considering what it is that would make that community thrive in the organisation that you're working at. So again, not to shame anyone, but sometimes we introduce these platforms expecting the best and then wonder why they didn't turn out the way that we expected. When I say that brain space, and Elle, you quite rightly mentioned, like just having a conversation. I'm not talking over weeks or months. I'm literally talking over a couple of hours, literally give yourself two to three hours to sit down, have a structured conversation about what you want your employees to do and how it can best be achieved by digital platforms. And you will absolutely come out of those two hours with a clear idea of how you want Yammer, Workplace or Poppulo Mobile to sweat and serve your people better. It really doesn't take a lot. You've just got to give yourself the time.

Elle Bradley-Cox 05:05
What a relief. I can't bear long meetings! Now, Lydia, you've been working with British Transport Police on a project to launch Yammer. What are the reasons for that channel beam? What were the priorities and goals?

Lydia Edwards-Massie 05:19
Leading on from what Tony said, the client that we were working with - BTP - were fantastic. They really gave themselves the time to think about the channels that they had. They'd obviously made a huge investment had Office365 and they were like, okay, we're quite a disparate workforce (They've got police forces on the streets, they've got them in railway stations across the country) and they were like, "it's really hard to feel like one force." They are the only national police force in its entirety. So, it was hard to feel as one. They'd made this big investment. They had Office365 and the team at BTP were like: what have we already got? What can we use that's going to be awesome, that can hopefully resolve some of those issues and have an area where everyone can talk to each other and have an opportunity to share learnings, have more leadership visibility and speak to those guys and see what our strategy is? What do we want? What does our business want from us? So, it was an opportunity to have a platform and a channel that people could all connect to and have one place to talk to each other. And luckily, they did that thinking. They slowed down, they saw the big picture got in touch with us. And that's kind of the end of the story. We did a great campaign and got some amazing feedback from it.

Elle Bradley-Cox 06:33

Oh, nice. That's always lovely to hear. I know it's not just a place for cat memes, right? But also, the one thing that can bring us all together as cat memes! Tony, you've just produced a video about the seven pillars of digital transformation. I'm glad that you've kept it to a memorable number. Tell me a bit more about it.

Tony Stewart 06:50
So yeah, the seven pillars. So, in a nutshell, the seven pillars are something of a navigational device to help you roll out a new digital platform in your organisation for your employees. The pillars themselves cover a range of topics as you'd imagine, the first pillar being 'vision'. So, understanding what it is that you're trying to do with the platform, how that tie into your business goals and objectives, how that ties into what your employees are trying to do, and is the most important pillar. The other six are a combination of things like governance and leadership, education, advocacy, content, and launching, you know, making sure that you've got a good launch plan in place. So, I recorded a video recently about the seven pillars because it's such an important part of the work that I do, and the work that our clients are doing as well when it comes to digital employee performs. So, if you want to check it out, I'm sure the team will be linking to the seven digital pillars video on the website, worth checking out. And I think is a fantastic foundation for anything "digital platform."

Elle Bradley-Cox 07:55
Do you know what, Tony? I think I'm the world's biggest luddite, but every time I listen to you, I just get excited about digital because you make it easy and make me understand it. I think that's the biggest barrier - those digital sounds so complicated, and so techy and like it's not for me. But, when you paint that picture of that vision the organisation needs to have, you can really see all those potential things that you can do with that platform. How exciting! What a world of opportunity! Speaking of brilliant things, I really want to talk about community. And I think it's something we can all talk about in the wake of hybrid working. Plenty of us have been told that we will find that community back in the office, does that play out in your experience? And you know, differing views are very welcome on this podcast. We don't have to agree with each other!

Lydia Edwards-Massie 08:49
I mean, the whole world changed, right. And, the project we did with BTP, just to go back to that one. Luckily had nothing to do with COVID and hybrid working. They weren't creating a channel because everything felt a bit weird after coming back into the office. They genuinely did it because they were wanting to do that anyway. They wanted everyone to feel like one team. I find that sometimes it's felt a bit forced. So BTP is a great example where it wasn't forced. It was a genuine part of their vision. But others are like, "oh, we need to bring back the sizzle we had before. How are we going to do that? Let's all do a quiz online. When we get back into the office let's all have a fuddle." It's like, let's not force the fun too much! I love forced fun. I love a quiz. I love all that. But let's not push it too far. It can feel weird. So, I think we really need to take the step back and hear what people want. Ask them first. Test the water. Don't put the pressure on too much. Tone, what do you think? Are you for or against?

Tony Stewart 09:46
It's funny because there were so many of these conversations around "the sizzle", which we're now calling it and I must ask myself, "did you have the sizzle beforehand?" You know? Were your communities in your organisation really sizzling as much as you think they were? And that's a wider conversation around culture and engagement and connectivity between people and employees in organisations. It kind of felt like then we tried to create a sizzle that wasn't already there. And what I love about a lot of the digital tools that we have is that what we do to enhance that already exists. So, if you've got genuine sizzle between your HR and marketing teams, and they're constantly going out

they're going on away days, and they're forming communities themselves, not through work, but because they're going to the pub afterwards and doing those quizzes, that's also the community that's ripe for an online presence that has an online place to interact on the day-to-day, if physically they can't always be with each other. So, I feel like sometimes, again, digital got a bit of a tough rap in that we can't recreate the sizzle anymore, but the sizzle never existed. So, don't blame digital. Don't blame Yammer and Workplace for that. And, look truly where your sizzle is. And if you don't have sizzle in your organisation, that's a cultural conversation. What are the barriers to sizzle? And where does sizzle naturally exist? And where can it be like turned up a notch?

Elle Bradley-Cox 09:53
I really want to talk about culture and community because I want to talk about that Instagram video from Adam Mosseri. Now we've got a swift U turn that's just followed. But for context Tone, do you want to fill us in a little bit? And then let's talk about what we learned and how we can apply that to our own company channels.

Tony Stewart 11:26
So Adam, head of Instagram, decided to do a video talking to Instagram people that use his channel to say, "Hey, guys, so we know that you're complaining a lot. And I've seen some memes moving around the internet that basically says, 'make Instagram 'Instagram' again'. Well, I'm here to tell you, we're not going to do that in the nicest possible way. If you'd liked photos, great, we're still going to do photos, but we're not going to enhance them anymore. But if you love video, which we see a growing use of, then great because there's going to be more video on Instagram. Don't you love that, folks?" He was really trying to sell the mistakes that Instagram were making as positives to the community. But really, quite frankly, we're sick of the changes. I've had this conversation with Lyds already. And many other people. If I go onto Instagram now, I don't see my friends. I see adverts or suggested posts and stuff I don't want to see. As a photographer and someone who creates content on my photography account, I'm not getting any engagement with my photos. I took some honestly beautiful photos of Bali when I was there a few weeks ago, and the dribbles of interactivity I'm getting on all those photos that would have absolutely done well, say, a year ago, is really disarming as a content creator. And yet I'm told that if I do a Reel every single day for two months, then I'll start to get my engagement back. I don't want to do reels. My photographs stand up on their own. So, Adam is trying to sell things that benefit his business and his platform as a way for the community to engage. And of course, that's the absolute arse around tit - can I say about on the podcast? - way of doing things. It's the wrong way round. Essentially, it's the wrong way around. Instead of looking at what your community is doing and enhancing what they want to do, because it's interesting, he used the phrase for photography "continuing to support", which to me really sounds like "tolerating", We're tolerating the fact that you guys want to share photos on a platform that was birthed out of photo sharing, and they haven't enhanced the resolution of photos. Photos are still cropped square, or 4:3. So, as a photographer, I'm already limited by the tool. And yet you're adding all these extra platforms and extra functionality for stuff that isn't photo, even though it's a photo app. So yeah, I could run on for ages on this because Adam's also stolen stories from Snapchat. And that's one they copy and pasted from Snapchat, and it did great because everyone's using stories now. And so now they're trying to copy and paste TikTok thing, but they didn't copy and paste it as well as they did with stories. And now it's creating a backlash. You know, if Kim Kardashian is complaining about your social media platform, then that's a big red flag for the future of whatever it is that you're trying to achieve. What I'm getting out of this really is Adam isn't looking at the community behaviour. He's not looking at how those people are connecting, where they're finding value, and how he can enhance that. Sure, he has stakeholders who need to make some money out of it. But I do think that these things can come together in a better way than just forcing Reels on people. It's got to the point now where I hate those so much and I'm sick of being forced them for I'm looking for another platform. Where else can I share my photography where I can create a community around my photography

where people can admire them, but also give me critique, give me feedback, and we go on a shared journey together? So yeah, it's a real shame, because a lot of people are saying it's the death of Instagram. I think a lot of us who create communities online needs to take heed. The thing is Adam at Instagram has one thing right, and that is the increased consumption of video and people's affinity to consuming short form. And it's very important that I've emphasized short form video. So if there is a capacity in your organisation to record and share short form video and stories in your organisation, that is something that Instagram has got right through stories, and something I would definitely like to see replicated in internal communications communities as well.

Elle Bradley-Cox 15:38
I completely agree with you, I bloody love an Instagram story, 15 seconds of joy, a little peek into the creator's background.

Lydia Edwards-Massie 15:45
I have no I have no attention span, so it just works so nicely, doesn't it? Oh, I've got what I needed. And then off on to the next thing. Perfect.

Tony Stewart 15:46
The combination of video and text - often there's like an overlay of text. So, you can get a lot of information. In those 15 seconds. You can get context, location, feeling, empathy. It's a great bundle of news. I'd love to see more people doing it.

Lydia Edwards-Massie 16:11
Yeah, it's way more accessible as well. People that have any accessibility issues, it's just tailored to them as well. It's good.

Elle Bradley-Cox 16:19
Totally. And you're so right about news. Some of the people that I've seen doing it really, well: The Guardian does stories well, the New York Times does stories really well. If you think about how, you could package that up for your internal channels, you're onto a winner. Now, I want to talk a little bit about project delivery. Clearly, it's your specialism. How can you apply to a superb digital experience? Tell me about some of the pitfalls that you might think about when you're launching channels and how you shore up projects up for success.

Lydia Edwards-Massie 16:50
I think one of the main things we need to look at is to take that strategic pause, take that step back and see what else is going on in the business at that time. It's all about planning, planning, planning. There is nothing worse than releasing a new channel or you want to get something out of your workforce when it's company results, or there's a big change happening in the business, and it's just timed badly. So, the seven pillars that Tony spoke about are so crucial, because in that planning process, we need to think about, "do you want to do a soft launch or pilot launch with your team of advocates? Who are they? When are they going to be most available to be able to interact with this tool? Have they got maybe they're kind of people on the shop floor? Maybe they're people on oil rigs. Where are these people that have a lot of trust and have a lot of influence, but what's going on in their working world at that time?" So, it's all about planning. Obviously, you want to have as much time as possible, but it needs to all be done for the right reasons. And so that clear, "when is it going to sit in the diary?" is so important. That is why project delivery managers like me, we want to make sure that we're really taking that step back and thinking of the big picture. And some of the pitfalls, mainly, again, timing. Budget can

come into it. But I've mainly seen things haven't gone so well, just because they've just not been launched at the right time. And that is what success is - it's planning well in advance.

Elle Bradley-Cox 18:12
Isn't it interesting on timing because what will happen is when you do get it wrong, because it's an online community, and it's two-way feedback, you will bloody well hear about it!

Lydia Edwards-Massie 18:24
Yeah, absolutely. I mean, that's the whole point with this BTP project we did - Sorry to keep going on about it! But it worked so well because they found that they timed it perfectly, because everyone was gagging for a platform to talk to each other and learn from each other and be able to have conversations with someone in the South when they're in the North. And they've never had that experience before. So timing was everything. And it worked just fantastically.

Elle Bradley-Cox 18:46
Just to build on that even more, for those content creators out there who are looking for stories. It's an absolute goldmine and there's some neat and interesting stuff that you would never hear about before, if you start going into some of those more interesting communities where people are sharing that on your social platforms. So, harvest and make connections would be my huge recommendation. Tony, just to pick your digital brain just a little bit more before I let you go. Have you got any sniffs of new features or platforms that are really exciting you and making you feel excited?

Tony Stewart 19:26
Yes or no. What's lovely is to see - and I can't believe I'm using the word 'lovely' to describe Microsoft products, but here we are. What's lovely to see is Microsoft are really learning from the use of their platform. We're constantly seeing evolution in Teams. SharePoint is a functional paradise these days. People are really speaking up to a platform that has notoriously been bad mouthed, by myself I will admit, for many years now. But there is lots of new whizzy stuff out there. But one of my concerns about the internal comms industry is that we often future gaze, and we don't look at the awesome platforms that we've literally got on the shelves right now. Workplace is fantastic. Poppulo Mobile is fantastic, Yammer, obviously, 365. They're fantastic tools that will absolutely multiply your ability to do good internal comms. And we're looking at drones. We're looking at AI, and we're looking at the future stuff, which is sexy. And if you've got the budget and time to implement those things into your organisation, happy days, but if not, can you just do Yammer well? Or could we just explore what Workplace can do for your employee resource groups? And can we just explore what SharePoint can be doing for the people that are trying to collaborate on documents in your organisation? Can we get a good basic framework and, to loop it back to the beginning of our conversation, a decent enough digital strategy, so that we can identify whatever platforms out there now that you can literally switch on, sometimes even incumbently in your organisation, that we can do awesome things with. And then if you want to talk about AI and drones later, sure, hit me up. But that's kind of my thoughts and feelings on the telecommunications industry and employee engagement when it comes to digital tools now.

Elle Bradley-Cox 21:16
I think you've won the poll quote of the season, Tony. When I first joined scarlettabbott, about four years ago, Connor, - who's one of the writers - said to me, "I'm in SharePoint-based purgatory". You just described it as a "functional paradise". And I agree. And I'm shocked!

Tony Stewart 21:38
None of us had that on our bingo card for 2022. But here we are.

Elle Bradley-Cox 21:44
Lydia, Tony. Thank you for an awesome podcast. I really, really enjoy chatting with you. And I hope our listeners got as much out of it as I did. Thank you.

Tony Stewart 21:52
Thanks so much. Thank you

Elle Bradley-Cox 21:55
A stellar community experience doesn't always happen organically. It takes a little nudge here and a prompt there from enthusiastic advocates. It starts to snowball engagement, magic happens. Rob Fawkes, Head of Sales and Marketing and Standing on Giants is one such advocate. I caught up with Rob to help me get in the community spirit. Rob, welcome to World Changers.

Rob Fawkes 22:24
Thank you very much. Great to be here.

Elle Bradley-Cox 22:26
Oh, it's so nice to meet you. Now it's Standing on Giants' work has historically involved external customer communities. But it's recently started to shift into internal ones. Talk to me about that.

Rob Fawkes 22:37
I'll start with the story, which is, if I take you back to 2010, if you can remember that time before Facebook, before Instagram, and a retired glider pilot got into his car. And he spent his weekend driving up and down the M1 motorway. And every mile he'd pull over and he'd get out of the car. And he'd taken with him three phones. On each phone, he'd try and call someone, try and text, and then he'd record the results - whether he was successful - in a spreadsheet that he'd created, and he'd get back in his car drive another mile, pullover. (It was before smart motorways, in case anyone's worried for the man's safety. There was a hard shoulder.) Pulled over, another mile, did the same thing. One phone, two phones, three phones, and then got back in the car, drove another mile. What on earth was he doing? Well, he was a member of GiffGaff's online community, which is where the Standing On Giant's story starts. And this was about six months into GiffGaff launching. And the network had gone down and the engineers couldn't find the problem. So a customer and their community of customers took it upon themselves to find the problem in the network. So that's what he was doing; recording data, sent it to Vincent, one of our co-founders who was the head of community at GiffGaff at the time, and who sent it to the engineers. And then from that data, they were able to triangulate the problem in the network and find the error and fix it. I always like to tell that story as a kind of context setting thing of our founders really discovering the power of community at GiffGaff. Three years later, they founded Standing on Giants. And we're an agency that help businesses to build online communities and as you say, mostly external so we work with Airbnb, for example, on their host community, Lenovo on their Legion Gaming community. But, since the pandemic, it won't be any surprise that the pandemic has been a catalyst for this, businesses have more and more look to community and community building and community engagement to achieve their internal communications goals. I would say, as we're all distributed, even if you are going into the office, you're often not there in the same time as your team in the office, even if you are and so I'd say, businesses are desperate to foster, internal engagement, employee engagement, and they're looking to these community tactics which have been present in the external consumer world for the last 10+ years to see if it works, and I'm pleased to say that our first few clients that we've been doing this with, the results have been really, really impressive,

Elle Bradley-Cox 25:10

Incredible. I love that story and the power of community. It just goes to show that when somebody has the motivation, which doesn't seem to be whether it was financial motivation, it seems to be more about doing a really good job and some people have got that in them, when you find those advocates in your community, the power that you can lever is incredible.

Rob Fawkes 25:33
Exactly. People want to help. I think the most critical element was that man, Andy Zero was his name, his username, he knew he'd be listened to. He knew if he went out and did that, that the team would take what he had done and take it to the right people. He knew it would count; you know. I think so often, both in internal communications and external communications brands are kind of this faceless broadcaster megaphone. And people don't bother getting in touch back because they just see a kind of faceless thing that's not going to listen to them.

Elle Bradley-Cox 26:09
Can we talk about the power of active listening, I had a bit of an epiphany once with a guy who, basically he was proving a little bit of a thorn in the side of the client that I was working with. He was a massive detractor because he didn't understand what they were doing. They tried to explain it once, he got a bit aggie, tried to explain it again. And then they gave up. And I didn't, because I knew that this was a man that needed to be listened to. And so I didn't book half an hour in his diary, I said, "Let's go out for a coffee and talk to me and tell me what it is". And I actively listened to that man. I listened for three hours. And he turned into one of our biggest advocates, because I gave him space. It makes such a difference, doesn't it? And we'd so often we talk about comms exactly to your point and broadcast. And, the power of really active listening is a great skill, I think, in this job.

Rob Fawkes 27:06
Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. It reminds me of another great story, which I'm going to tell you, which is a shorter one. Again, from the GiffGaff days of the business. There was a man who was being troublesome on the community, being borderline abusive, to some members, which is a real problem. And Toby, who still works for Standing on Giants to this day, was the original Community Manager at GiffGaff, did exactly what you did with that difficult person. He took him offline, as it were, into the DMs private messages, and started talking to him, understood a bit more about him. And in the end, what they ended up doing was maximising that member's potential by allowing him to help them build the swear filter of the community. Because he was using lots of swear words, in these messages in the community, they engaged him to come up with a list of swear words that we should put in our swear filter? Toby says he was quite flummoxed by the extent of this list that came back. Some of the words that he'd never heard. But yeah, there we go. There's the basis of the Standing on Giants swear filter is a difficult member, but again, like you say, that completely turned around. That member who clearly, you know, you can make too many assumptions I think about people in the rest of their lives, but people put on armor and develop defense mechanisms. And if they're a person who's used to not being listened to, then it can very easily turn aggie, even aggressive and it's the most disarming thing is to listen to them and engage them in something useful.

Elle Bradley-Cox 28:50
I wanted to talk a little bit about the similarities and differences. And I'm guessing, that is clearly a similarity in that realm. But I guess the line you tread in employee engagement - Is there much more potential consequences than to, for example, a Twitter troll? But tell me a bit more about what you think there's similarities and differences are.

Rob Fawkes 29:07

The big similarity, I would say is whenever you're building a community, you are trying to play to people's intrinsic motivation, first and foremost. Now, I think, this is almost a similarity and a difference because I think the intrinsic motivations that you play to in an employee community versus a customer community are very different. With a customer community it's more likely to be matching with your members interests and hobbies, the point of which kind of the hobby overlaps the brand and try and start building around that whereas with an employee community, obviously the intrinsic motivations are more around "I want to be good at my job", "I want to progress in my work". "I want to be seen to be doing a good job." "I want to feel valued". "I want to be feel validated". Those final two things I said though, I think valued and validated, can apply across all communities. I think that those are intrinsic motivations that we have in every walk of our life. So that's a big one - intrinsic motivation is a big one.

Rob Fawkes 29:08
What's a good reward mechanism for being valued and that validation?

Rob Fawkes 30:14
Oh, great, well this could be a whole podcast by itself! So, reward and gamification, as it often gets called in the community industry, they are different things. So, there are several different ways you can reward people. You can reward them financially, you can reward them with status, you can reward them with access, you can reward them just simply with validation or being featured. We tend to value the kind of non-transactional rewards, actually, when it comes to community building, simply because we find that financial reward, whatever that might be, getting some sort of incentive elsewhere, it's great for achieving certain goals, like if you need customer service goals to be hit, giving people some money off their bill, or some money in their pocket is a good way to do it. But if you're wanting people to do something slightly more like help other people create content around what they're interested in, that matches your brand, if we're in an employee community, and it's about learning and development, if you want people to form pods, where they reinforce each other's learning, you know, saying, "and if you do this, you'll get 10 pounds at the end of the month" is not going to do it. So, we find that both public and private positive reinforcement and validation is hugely powerful. And in fact, I've got a one-year-old. I don't know whether you have children, but anyone with children knows the power of positive reinforcement. Or a dog for that matter. The power of positive reinforcement is huge. I spoke recently on a panel with a psychologist who said that when you're learning a new behaviour, adopting the behaviour is 80% down to being positively reinforced and only 20% down to you having learned the new skill. So that's so important. And it's actually very easy. Like if you're doing internal community building, someone answering someone's question about something, just simply the community manager sending them a private message and going "oh, thank you for answering that member's question that was really wonderful". That increases the probability of them doing that by about factor 80. Right, compared to if it just goes unnoticed,

Elle Bradley-Cox 32:31
Because they feel completely valued, right? I agree. I've been learning piano for 4 years so I'm an adult learner. And the reason I pay my teacher money every week is because she tells me how good I am! And even if I've really messed up, it's just that she goes, "you played that bit excellently", or "I can see you've really tried there" or whatever. And it makes such a difference, particularly with adults, let alone kids.

Rob Fawkes 32:59
Yeah, completely. You're right. We don't lose that as adults.

Elle Bradley-Cox 33:04
We talked about measurement here endlessly. What does that look like in your world?

Rob Fawkes 33:09
I'm trying to think where to focus. Okay, at the very top level, in any community, you want to measure engagement, and you want to measure the vanity metrics. How many members are you getting? How many new members are you getting? What's the engagement rate? How many posts do you have? And all that stuff only tells you part of the story. Where we like to focus, if I go into internal employee communities now, for example, using Microsoft Teams, and Yammer, we use a platform called Swoop Analytics, which gives you some great stats to back up the behaviour that you want to see. So, the behaviour that we want to see and measure is people being actively engaged, active members. So, people who are not coming in to only solve one immediate problem and then leaving. People who will keep coming back. For example, in Teams, you can measure that in a Teams or Yammer community, you can measure the active members versus the total membership. And the higher that number, the better. And there are certain thresholds depending on the context where we'd say, "Yes, this is a healthy community" or not. Then we have activity per user. So, the average, again, how often and how much are members contributing? I think left unchecked, that number is normally very low as people come and contribute one thing and then leave. But if you manage the community, we've seen with one client, that number has gone up to as many as 16 activities a month, which is fantastic. And then the one that I really like and that we really focus on is reciprocal relationships. So, what you need to do in a community and again, this is a big mental shift for a lot of internal communications professionals, well communications professionals, full stop marketing, whatever. What you're putting into the community is not about broadcasting a piece of content, it's about giving people a jumping off point to connect with each other. So, measuring how many of your members have a relationship with each other, a reciprocal relationship is so important. And again, Swoop Analytics that we use in Teams gives you this number, which is awesome. Again, in this one particular client that we were working with recently, we managed to increase that number from the average, which was 14% across the whole company, across all the communities to 39%, which is awesome. So, we're getting towards nearly half of the members having a relationship with someone else in the community, which is exactly what you want.

Elle Bradley-Cox 35:43
And it's funny, isn't it. I wish we sort of almost didn't need measurement to prove the theory behind what we've been doing. But it's a great tool to show people what a difference they can make, and I suppose, motivate communicators that what they're doing is working in their community. So, we've talked about some of the good things, what about some of the pitfalls that you notice clients might fall into when they start setting up an online community?

Rob Fawkes 36:07
So community is a long-term play. And the first pitfall is that a community is set up as part of a short-term strategy or a short-term campaign or a short-term programme. And it's never going to achieve its full potential if you don't give it the time. So, the first one. It should be something that you're planning to implement over several years and the reward is there, tenfold, if you keep it there for longer. With some of our clients, we've worked with them for 10 years now, you know, or six years and Airbnb, for example, seven years this year. And they're now at the stage where they can bring in the host community into the very governance structure of the business because they've built that community. So, they've set up an advisory board made up of hosts that have a stake in their business. So that's the kind of value that they're getting by investing for the long-term. So, a long-term plan is number one. Number two, and this is in a way, even more important, I'd say, because even if you do ignore pitfall number one and you say, "I don't care, I'm going to have a short-term community," fine, this one, not having active community management, not putting a community manager into the community, is the most important pitfall to avoid. Because again, people setting up a community, the 'build it and

they will come' myth, essentially. Great, we've set up this community in Yammer or Teams, and this will allow people to talk to each other about this programme or about their work, but people don't do that. Think in your own life, how many things in your own life do you do without being asked? Or shown how to. So, it's really important to have active community management.

Elle Bradley-Cox 37:55
And that's a source of great content as well, because people are out there but not everybody is scrolling around on every single thread or part of that platform, but an active community manager will be all over that and will find you your very best content. Or, if it's not great content there, that's the person with the expertise to speak to help you create your content.

Rob Fawkes 38:16
Correct. I'll give you a real example in, again, one of our internal community clients, that was set up around a data project. So, it's cybersecurity professionals. And recently, someone was speaking to the community manager, "oh, we're doing these videos, and we're just having to get them some translated" and community managers suggested, "Why don't you ask the community if anyone knows how to translate it or check it?" And so, they did and this person was then able to say, we've just translated this into Chinese. Would anyone mind proofreading the Chinese? Straightaway someone from the other side of the world, who was part of this cybersecurity programme said, "yes, absolutely. I'm based in China, I speak Chinese, I'll proofread it for you". And not only that people were then volunteering, going "if you ever need Spanish or Portuguese, hit me up", that kind of thing. It wouldn't have happened without community management because that person would have never posted that and so the areas of value are limitless, really, when you actively manage the community.

Elle Bradley-Cox 39:26
I went to the Constructive Journalism Conference last year, and I met a man called Christian Erfurt, who is the CEO and co-founder of Be My Eyes. They are an amazing small, rooted business that's gone into a global presence. It's like an app that connects blind people with sighted volunteers and that gives them visual help through like video call. So, for example, like a blind person might go to their kitchen cupboard and take out two tins that look and feel exactly the same except the label on it, which they can't read. And they would hold up the soup can and say, "is it beans or soup?" to their sighted volunteer, which is amazing. But we've also heard from them that, you know, somebody held up their pregnancy test and said, you know, am I pregnant? Absolutely amazing cause and the whole purpose of that is that it's, it's come from the community, right?

Rob Fawkes 40:25
That sounds fantastic. Yeah, I'd love to look.

Elle Bradley-Cox 40:28
They realised that their community members would quickly turn off if they put advertising on it. And instead, they've worked with big brands, such as Microsoft, to kind of work with them, to install Be My Eyes to help their tech team, for example. So if there's a problem going on with their computer, Microsoft uses Be My Eyes software to work with the blind user to help figure out the problem. Really amazing community funded, and it's grown so much because of that community. But I feel like I've entirely stolen your thunder, Rob, because the next question I was going to ask you was, who is your World Changer?

Rob Fawkes 41:10

Oh, no, I wasn't going to pick that guy because I've not met him. But he sounds great! Well, I think I'm going to break the rules slightly, because I don't think it's fair to single out one of them, and again, it's a bit of recency bias, but my World Changers are the England Lionesses for winning the Euros. I think it's right that they get nominated as a team as well, because I think they showed the world what being a team is and showed the football world what can be achieved. I just think every single one of them is fantastic and inspirational. And I do think they have genuinely changed the world of sport in this country for women, so I'm really excited to see the legacy of that.

Elle Bradley-Cox 41:52
Me too! Thank you for picking them. And I don't care about the recency bias. I love that. Rob, it's been an absolute pleasure to meet you. Thank you for coming to the World Changers podcast and have great day.

Rob Fawkes 42:02
A pleasure. Thanks very much.

Elle Bradley-Cox 42:07
Huge thanks to Rob Fawkes. If you want to join the conversation on the digital world of work, do join us later this month for our webinar where you can put your questions to our expert panel. We'll share the details in the session notes and on our social channels. And don't forget to check out Tony's Seven Pillars video - we will drop the link in the episode description. Want to join the conversation in the meantime? Do come and chat to us over on Twitter @scarlettabbott or drop us an email at Hello@scarlettabbott.co.uk We'll see you next time for another dive into World Changers 2022. World Changers is a podcast by employee engagement consultancy scarlettabbott, hosted by Elle Bradley-Cox. Find out more at scarlettabbott.co.uk