



Transcript for S10 E6 Why Sustainability is a Community Effort with Adam Bastock

Cat Barnard (00:43)

Welcome to a new episode of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I'm your co-host Cat Barnard and as ever I'm joined by Dominic Walters and Jen Sproul. Today we've got a really fascinating guest for you all. As you will probably know, the Institute of Internal Communication has prioritised the topic of sustainability as one of four key areas where Internal Communicators can add strategic value to their organisations. And as we are undoubtedly in a race to decarbonise now, the role that internal communication will play in this massive transformation is not to be underestimated. So with that in mind, I am delighted to welcome Adam Bastock onto the podcast. For those who don't know Adam, he's a bit of a mover and a shaker, certainly here in the UK. He set up Small99 several years ago, specifically to help small businesses - 99% of the British economy, to take positive action to reduce their carbon footprints and become more sustainable and also profitable.

So the business Small99 provides practical support, tools and community gatherings to start one million small businesses on their path to net zero by 2025. And one of the things that Adam has done, which I'm completely blown away by is to kickstart the People Planet Pint movement, which is ostensibly - well, it's grown exponentially, it's become a nationwide network of local meetups for people who are interested in wanting to take climate action, both at an individual level, but also at an organisational level, at a business level. It's an opportunity for those people to meet in informal settings and get together, share ideas and discuss sustainability topics. So, Adam is nothing short of a meta community organiser and I'm sure he's going to share a lot with us about that today. But Adam, first and foremost, thank you so much for agreeing to come and chat with us today. I really, really appreciate it.

Adam Bastock (03:14)

Thank you and what an intro. It's a big intro to live up to. So excited for the episode.

Cat Barnard (03:19)

There you go. I'm always available for hire for sexy intros, but I don't think I'm going to really do - I know you and I have talked in the past about, you know, what led you here, but I'm certainly not going to be able to do that justice. So I wondered if you could share with our audience, with our listeners, a little bit about your backstory - and also what led you to set up Small99 and a bit more about what your goals are for the business.



Adam Bastock (03:48)

Yeah. So my background originally was in digital marketing. So I used to do a lot of SEO and kind of Google ads stuff for smaller businesses. And a lot of that was around helping them understand their customer audience and understand how they can kind of reach them. And started to notice really that sustainability was coming through as this big shift that's going to be needed in one way or another in terms of the economy and in terms of just society and thought, actually, how do we get involved with that? How do we do something around this and what role does - what skills can we bring to it? And I think there's a lot of parallels really between sustainability and digital marketing, where typically it's very simple. There's a lot of simple actions you can take that get over complicated by industry figures to make it seem more difficult than it really is.

So I wanted Small99 to one - really be something that scales and helps those small businesses take, take action and be able to actually have a real positive impact, but also to cut through the noise and make sure they're being empowered with the right advice and knowing what the right next step to take is because I was just seeing so much noise and not enough action. And that's where really the Small99 kind of brand came from was this idea of how do we get a million businesses to take action? And I'm slightly regretting picking a million because it's a very big number as we approach 2025 and 2025 was not that far away, it turns out. But yeah, it's been really good to see that the growth of it, like People Planet Pint has been a great demonstrator really of how local communities can solve this, which I'm sure we'll get into.

Cat Barnard (05:12)

I think what's really interesting about what you've described and the approach you've taken and the mission that you're on is that my observation is that almost all literature that is written about business and business change and I guess to some level societal transformation is geared towards big, it's just not geared towards small. So we have the celebrated business magazines we have HBR, we have MIT slow management review, we have management today - we have all of these entities that are full of advice and educational executive education on the topic of business transformation but by and large they fail to address the realities the lived experience of small organisations and you know, how many organisations exist in the UK economy today that are, for instance, under 250 staff in headcount. I mean, massive right?



Adam Bastock (06:15)

It's about five and a half million off the top of my head. That might be slightly out of date, but yeah, so roughly the kind of UK economy breaks down. It's about five and a half millions that are less than a kind of 250 employees. And then sort of under nine employees is something like kind of two or three million is a huge wedge of the economy that is like, well, actually if they all moved one step, you suddenly see a shift that is needed for that kind of dramatic carbon reduction that we need to do. So that was really the driver behind it of everyone's focusing on this 1% of big businesses, which do have a space and do have the ability to move but they can't move quickly. And this is something I learned when I was doing digital marketing work is, you know, decisions were made within hours or days rather than sort of months and years. And if we're looking at a race to net zero, which is ostensibly what we are trying to do is move as quickly as possible, why we're leaving the people who can move the quickest behind and how do we get them moving?

Jen Sproul (07:13)

I think there's so much that you said, Adam, that resonates with me as a business, because I'm a small business. So I sit here with IoIC. We are probably should be part of Small99, because we certainly fit in that criteria. And a lot of what you say resonates with me as a small business as well, because, yes we are a not-for-profit and we have our board. But in terms of the way we run, there is not a huge chain to get through a decision or a huge group of people to convince us to come along on that journey with us and to talk to them about it and I guess make it feel human and make it feel actionable. And then on the flip side, if you like, our membership audience and the people that we look after working the big. So I sit here as a small organisation trying to help the large organisations when you talk to them about the topic of climate action and sustainability, the things that you've described come up as how do we get through the noise with so much? The bigger the organisations, how do we get one message to one side and create the behaviour?

So I sit here with someone that - because I think sometimes in a small business it can feel, it's not simple but it can feel simpler because there isn't that bureaucracy that sits with it and perhaps this is an opportunity for the large organisations to listen to the smaller organisations, as opposed to the other way around. And I know at IoIC, I'm really passionate about what we're doing as an organisation and as part of that journey. And I guess from my own learning as a small person, but also thinking about the larger organisations and where our members sit and what they can take from the small to the large and that simplification. What have you noticed about how small businesses are approaching sustainability and carbon reduction?



Adam Bastock (08:56)

Well, I think it's quite divisive. My answer to this has probably changed over the past 12 months, or perhaps even six months, so we started roughly around COP26. So when that was happening in Glasgow was really when I was getting into the space and starting to absorb and get momentum, I guess, behind us. And then the mood was very much, we can do this. It was much more positive. There was a real sort of desire from small businesses to be more sustainable. I think since then, due to various sort of global factors and national factors, politically - geopolitical and economically, the focus has waned slightly. So I think there's a bit more of a split now within the small business audience where you've got very passionate people who are willing to throw everything at this and really make kind of quite, I wouldn't say drastic changes, but they can move quickly. They believe in it and therefore they will do it. And then you sort of have everybody else. And I think that the challenge is there's a lot of people who will answer surveys and will respond to reports and say, yes, this is very important. And then as soon as you put an invoice for them, even for a small amount of money for training workshops, whatever it might be, the answer comes back as sustainability is not our top priority right now. And I think that's where the gap is. And this is where I think communication is obviously such the biggest part of it, because there's a real, it's not a lack of knowledge - It's not a gap in knowledge. It's kind of a gap in inspiration, as far as I'm concerned, where it's actually going you're missing the bigger picture here of how this is going to win and solve some of your other problems in terms of winning more contracts and in terms of winning more customers and retaining clients and, you know, keeping staff on side and getting more motivated people into the business.

All of those things, having a really ambitious carbon reduction plan or whatever you want to call it, will answer those. And there are studies that back that up and especially with the large corporates and that they're looking at this and going, this is a really big problem that we need to solve and we can't do it alone. And they're looking deep into their supply chains going we need you guys to come with us on this journey because the legislations that hitting those large companies. And therefore there is a gap there in terms of, I think people quite haven't realised that. And there's a delay here. So I think while some of the nice positive energy may have waned, I think we're now into the more practical now of it of going actually, why do you need to care about this? And some people are waking up and realising that quite quickly. Others perhaps are being rudely woken by it and having water thrown over them, and other people still just have no idea about this. And that's really where I think that is the communication piece that is missing. And that comes back from my digital marketing kind of background as well in seeing those patterns and those gaps.



Jen Sproul (11:22)

Yeah, I think it's really interesting. And I think that point around inspiration is really interesting - is it feeling just really heavy as opposed to something that's kind of, it feels a very heavy weight on our shoulders as small businesses and as human beings. And it doesn't feel like sometimes there's a way through that. Just as a small business person as well, getting in there, and I wonder, I think communications will come onto that as really important and that part of that inspiration piece. But I wonder - and I will say this as a small business as well, how do we create more pressure points for change? I mean, I think for me as a small business, one of the things, because our client base are large organisations, and I think one of the things that's really becoming quite clear is the procurement world is massively shifting. And it's that procurement world is therefore then creating that change and that need to be there, as well as the talent and employment world. And I just wonder from your conversations within your networks, with the small businesses, yes, the inspiration is gone, but is there any new pressures or is that pressure still - is that waning, whereas procurement isn't there - what are those things that are making them leap into action?

Adam Bastock (12:29)

Procurement is the only thing as far as I'm sort of concerned at the minute is I think that's where we're seeing a lot of people responding and that's when they go, okay, I can now see a financial figure on this. I will now start doing it. Whereas before it was always a, well, it's important, but it's not that important. And then suddenly you get an invoice through that says, or not an invoice - you get requirements through that says, you know, you need to have a net zero strategy in place and you need to demonstrate to your carbon footprint. And they'll then pick up the phone and go, right, how do we do this? How do we address this problem because now there is a direct figure to make the problem go away versus the reward of making the problem go away. I think that's what's missing at the minute. It's a really interesting piece as well. We spent May just doing a little research into government stuff of what legislation is coming, what are the requirements out there, what's procurement happening, what's the characteristic.

And the answer was there's not really a stick of small businesses coming apart from procurement. And that's where the carrot comes in. So I think that's the real angle that we're seeing in how it's deploying practically is that businesses are going. We now realise that this is either something that is going to set us aside from a marketing point of view, and is going to be a story that we tell that makes us win more customers with our target audience. Or we've been asked for this, and we don't know what to do and we're panicking. And there's probably more nuance within that, but it's a very blunt categorisation, that's how I go for it.



Cat Barnard (13:49)

Can I chip in? Because this is so interesting. And I know Dom's got a question that he's going to ask. But when I think about behaviour change and I think about the drivers of behaviour change, several years ago as a boffin, I did a distance learning A level in psychology because I've always been really interested in how people behave and what drives behaviour. And so one of the things that I remember studying was kind of social conformity and how people change. And one of the points being that if people are asked to change and they haven't emotionally bought into that change, then what you get is a form of compliance.

And when you were talking about the procurement requirements for change there, that struck me that actually at this point in time, what we're seeing are conformance-based responses to the climate crisis, whereas what is actually required is a deeper, more heartfelt behaviour change because the blunt reality is that we all have to start living within the confines of the planet. And the other blunt reality is that we don't need half the crap that we are told we need by society, which is underpinned by capitalism slash extreme capitalism. So for me, there seems to be, you know, it's a really interesting time to be talking about this, because you've got levels of behaviour change, but the most like the most durable - the most likely to last behaviour change is when the change in behaviour is internalised. You know, I come to live and believe and breathe the change that I want to affect in the world and everything else is a bit window dressing-y. I'm probably not making a huge amount of coherent sense, but it feels like we're moving in the right direction, but until we get more hearts and minds behind the reality of what our futures will look like if we continue with the behavioural patterns that we see in society today, we're just tweaking around the edges a little bit, aren't we?

Adam Bastock (16:16)

This is really the challenge because there's two things here. One, humans are fundamentally illogical when it comes to making decisions. So talking about science and data never ever works. And I think that's where sustainability as a movement has failed over the past 30 years, is that it's only really engaged on those terms. And if we look at the growth from Small99 side, People Planet Pint versus other more logical things that we've done around like workshops or free tools online, People Planet Pint has outstripped them by genuinely about a hundred fold. The reason why is it's an emotional release mechanism. Essentially it's people going to the pub and meeting people like them. And therefore it is an emotional cell, not a logical one, which means it's much easier. A good example of this is that I was reading yesterday around SUVs have caused 20% rise in emissions from transport over the past year or five years – I can't remember the exact window.



And this bunch of studies over the past few years have done that around the increasing size of the vehicles, meaning that actually emissions have gone up despite the fact that electric vehicles have also taken off. And there's a whole can of worms there to open around the size of electric vehicles and batteries, et cetera. But fundamentally, that would still be reducing the emissions down generated from transport in our local cities. It will be reducing pollution if we had more electric vehicles on our streets now. That has not happened. Pollution has increased because of SUVs. And the reason why people are buying SUVs is because I assume it makes them feel better, it's a status symbol. Most people I think would also logically say, we know this is probably going to cost us more money than if we bought a Hyundai i10 or something like a really small car that does the same job. So I think there's one is that logical emotional piece that needs to be ratified and really understood when discussing this. And I think the challenge is people who are maybe on the inside of climate don't think in that way. And therefore, there's a massive disconnect in that communication piece where they're not actually talking about sustainability in a way that people are making decisions or care about.

The second thing I would say is that we do a lot of workshops and training. So typically, we've trained about 3000 businesses over the past two years through net zero and climate stuff, carbon reduction planning, et cetera. And it's been a really interesting piece with how businesses that are typically early adopters who are coming to these workshops are then responding to that knowledge where there's a genuine pushback and fear, I think, around responsibility. And this is with small businesses who might be - they're very keen to do the right thing and they're very keen to put their money where that matters. So it's that they're more bought in than most. However, when you start explaining to them that their supply chain is part of their emissions. They're not directly responsible for, but they are influential in that decision-making process and they need to take some responsibility for it. The response that we have in that training is normally people try and get out of it and go, well, isn't that double counting in terms of our emissions? If our supply is counting and then we're counting those emissions, why are we responsible for this? We can't control how people are shipping things around. And that's coming from a place, I think, quite often of not denialism or a lack of willing to change, because they normally are in other ways, it's coming from a place of fear and overwhelm, I think, of going, this problem is so big, and for us to reduce our emissions down that much is going to take, as you were saying Cat, that kind of systematic change of the system that suddenly feels very overwhelming. And it's much easier to go, I can't do that, that's not fair, I'm not responsible, than it is to go - this is actually way bigger than I thought it was.

And I think that's the challenge and why I think inspiration is a really key piece here in the education is often what people say that we need more of. Education is often just overwhelming and paralysing. Where I think inspiration is more mobilising and can move people to do better. If people are willing to be inspired by a large polluting vehicle like an SUV, then surely we can inspire them into a better future that's the alternative. And that's



where I think the danger is and I think personally, personal opinion - but the Guardian's quite bad at this in that the Guardian used coverage on climate is excellent, but it's also incredibly overwhelming to the point where even I started dialing back on it because all I end up seeing is incredibly negative, incredibly harrowing kind of images and footage and stuff and all the time. And that just grinds you down, you need some of that, but you need inspirational stuff of action happening as well, which they do do some of granted, but not to the same level, I don't think of action that is happening to then go, well, actually here's what's going on in local communities. And here's how we then mobilise people into action.

And for me, just to bring this slight ramble together, this is where People Planet Pint comes in, I think. And that's the key word where we did some research on what people were responding to is they said 'hope'. It was the fact that we're going to local People Planet Pint events and they were meeting people who are also doing stuff in that area and where they felt incredibly isolated and alone beforehand, they were then coming into this environment and going, there's like 10 other people locally, or there's 100 of the people locally who are also doing this stuff. Maybe we can do this together and maybe stuff is happening more than we realised. And I think that's the challenge

here in terms of the scale of the problem and the gap that is there.

Dom (21:29)

Adam, let me just pick up on a few things you've said there because one of the things which really strikes me is we seem to go against all good change management communication practice when we talk about sustainability and the climate emergency and so on because of the reasons you mentioned. In short, we don't seem to talk about good news. And I know it's a very serious matter and we can't underestimate it, but it does seem to me that we need progress. We need evidence that what we're doing is working and that doesn't seem to be in existence. That doesn't seem to be something we have very often.

But also, leading on from what you said, we have a lot of small businesses of people who listen to this. We have agencies, we have consultancies, we have other small businesses related to communication and elsewhere. And I guess a number of people will be listening to what we've been talking about and saying, I love this. I love the whole idea of people, planets and pints. I love the whole idea of getting involved. So it'd be useful, first of all, to go through the practical steps that we need to take, Adam. How would we as leaders of small businesses get involved with you and start to do something constructive?



Adam Bastock (22:29)

Yeah, so I think there's two things in terms of what we do and stop me if this turns into a sales pitch, but there is a free pint there. So hopefully that's a small gift to kind of pay for it, courtesy of Krystal. So People Planet Pint is our local movement. We've got them all over the country. So just have a Google or it's all done through Eventbrite as well. So you should be able to find your local one there - head on down. It's not just sort of sustainability people. We see a segment across the board of everyone from local counsellors through to, small business owners, students etc. So go along and see because you'll probably have a good conversation. I don't know who you're going to meet. It's completely chaotic and random and that's why it works.

Secondly, and I think this is the important thing with small businesses and you mentioned their sort of marketing and agencies and to pick up on that as a theme. So we we're also running a lot of workshops across the country that we're just starting to ramp up which are called how to tell your sustainability story with confidence, carbon reduction workshops fundamentally to go what is your footprint, and how do you start reducing it?

And they're very short, they're high impact. It's like two hours will take you through training. You'll get a carbon footprint, you'll get a reduction plan, you'll get a story you can tell at the end of it. So one, please do go and Google that and kind of find a local one and try and attend that if you can. But two, I think the key thing that we've seen through that historically, so we've put about 150 businesses this year through it. And it is those smaller organisations who get caught up on the wrong things. And this is why we've been developing a lot of the tools that we have which are all free - is to provide this context because I think there's a frustration, to be honest with you, from my side, with some digital marketing agencies who will start worrying intensely about the small things and Cat, as you were saying, tweaking the dials a little bit of going, well, we're really concerned about the amount of carbon footprint from our emails that we're sending or from our website. Those things are important and they do have an impact. However, what is it you are selling for your clients? If you are working with a company that is selling SUVs or is selling flights or is selling fast fashion, that is where your impact lies. That is where you should be focusing every ounce of your effort. And frankly, I don't really care about if you've got one kilo or a hundred kilos of emissions from your emails, because the impact you can have is far greater through reducing, a hundred kilos is about 300 miles in a petrol car. So if you sell one car that then does 300 miles, that undoes all the good work you might do on your, on your digital carbon footprint.

So my challenge really to those communicators would be come along to the workshops, understand your, understand the context of your footprint and understand where your power lies. Cause this is the power of small businesses is that they can influence people really rapidly, really quickly. And that you're typically talking to other small businesses in your area, potentially competitors, potentially collaborators you can either work with or



share this with. And if you're not using your voice, then you're not doing enough. And that doesn't mean that you have to go out and start protesting. It means have you sent an email to the top three people you spent money with last year and said, what is your net zero policy? What is your sustainability policy? That sort of nudge effect, because if you have 100 people doing that, suddenly that's 300 emails that are being sent. And if they all start doing it, that's another three, that's 900. And suddenly you get to these numbers very quickly. So I think those are the main two things I would say to go and do. And then this is where the internal piece comes in, which is something we're still exploring is that internal workshop to help accelerate change where we've done this a couple of times for clients. And it's something we might be scaling up more because typically what we're seeing is when someone starts on the journey, there's a point where they go, we need to get our own house in order as well before we start influencing others or we've hit a point where we need to really transform the internal organisations. And this is much bigger than climate. This is a culture problem. This is a communication problem. This is a transformative piece. So yeah, I think don't think of this in isolation. This isn't just a tick box. This is a sort of thought process. That's why it's overwhelming. That's also why you have a lot of power here.

Dom (26:18)

And I think one of the changes for me in listening to what you have to say, one of the realisations is - and these are my words - it's less about what we're doing as an organisation, as a small business. It's probably even more about the power we have as influencers. It's the comments we make. And I guess there's no point in - and I'm not being facetious, but in dialling our heating down a bit if we're facilitating companies selling more SUVs. I think that's something which is a balance which I hadn't quite thought through. So that's a very interesting take on it. So that leads to this whole area about community because I think what drives your approach seems to be, again, my words, community can help change things. So it'd be great, and obviously community is very important to us as communicators because that's what we do. We build communities within organisations. We influence people. We try and get people to understand things in different ways and what that means for them. So it'd be great to get your take on the role that community can have - and we've touched upon some of it - but can have in establishing behavioural change. So what's the main thrust, if you like, of how we can influence community to build behavioural change?

Adam Bastock (27:19)

There's a few thoughts going on here immediately. The main one is that it starts local. And I think no matter what reports say, this is what we're seeing, where local action always wins out because ultimately I can sit here and tell you about a really fabulous Glasgow based kind of Asian company that might be doing really sustainable things. That is not on a land as well



with you emotionally compared to if I say someone that's based in Bristol, for example, where you then know who they are, you'll be able to go and visit them and even though you might find both those stories interesting, there's one that is probably going to stick with you more memorably that you'll want to recommend to others because it's in your local vicinity. So I think don't underestimate the power of local. And this is where we've seen People Planet Pint take off in that we've gone from one city in Glasgow during COP26 is where it started. So that's about two and a half years ago now. We're now in about 120, 130 cities across the world. So we are in across a lot of the UK. We're starting to see a lot of small villages start to kind of take this on and run with it as well. And we're also then, you know, in Australia, Hawaii, Chicago, we had Delhi a few weeks ago and various other places.

So the reason why that is working is because it's happening at a local level. It is the classic phrase, which I can't remember exactly, but you know, it's the act local, think global type approach to that. I think that is truer than we might realise. And don't forget your sort of local high street, your local businesses that you walk past. And I think community also, it needs to go into your sort of, it's not a formal thing, it's a very informal thing. So it's your local friends, it's the relationships you have with your suppliers or other businesses and other people in your area. And that's what often gets overlooked in terms of this of going to start a conversation, just ask friends, family, what they think about certain news things.

And it's been interesting on my journey for the past three years, sort of into this space and seeing my own friend group come with me on that journey a little bit of going perhaps they knew that sustainability was important but didn't quite know what to do about it to then going - look there's some really cool seaweed projects that are happening off the Sussex coast and sharing that with me and I don't think that would have happened three years ago and that's just from having conversations with them and having that influence so community is, I think formal in terms of the local business community but also very informal in that it's the conversations you are having with people every day. And that's again, not to, it feels like a bang on the drum a little bit, but that internal communication piece is what is the challenge in that, the biggest challenges that we see with organisations who've come through our workshops is then instigating change in that organisation. They are then the passionate individual who is then trying to push water up a hill internally and they're falling down because they're not communicating that effectively. And I think that's the community piece again of going well, within your organisations arguably is that it's a community of people that are there - what do they care about? How are they making decisions? And how do you align sustainability to them?

Dom (30:07)

And I'm going to pass over to Jen in a second, but I think there's just something else to comment on that. It seems like it's, again, most frequent small bits of information. So small



changes, small activities, but frequent and local. And that's, I think, a good lesson for us as communicators and also as people trying to make some changes as well.

Cat Barnard (30:24)

I was going to say, I'm just going to chime in there. Because what I'm hearing is that there's a vital piece here around the role that conversation plays, isn't there? And so Adam, if I was to ask you to kind of surmise, what role do you think communication slash conversation at work plays in this big transformation?

Adam Bastock (30:51)

I think it is just thinking of the impact of every decision you're making in that as an organisation, you're already making tens, if not hundreds of environmental decisions every day, but you're just not thinking about it in that way. And therefore, if you can go, well, are we buying the new envelopes that we're ordering to send out? Okay, it's probably quite a low carbon footprint to that in the grand scheme of things, but are they coming from recycled paper? Are they coming from FSC sources? Do you need to send the letters at all?

And I think this is the challenge of going, having that conversation every day. And it is that little and often approach to your point, Dom, of just going actually, where does this come through? Because as soon as you start doing that, you can move really quickly because you've then got, even if it's 20 people in an organisation or 10, that is then 10 people every day having a conversation once a day. That's 10 conversations a day maybe with people outside the organisation, that's certainly 70 decisions a week you're making potentially. And so you start seeing the amplification of impact.

So yeah, it is the small ledges internally and just thinking about every decision or every purchase that you make, where is it going? What are you doing with it? Because it might be that it's actually more impactful than you think.

Jen Sproul (32:03)

I think that's such a good thing to say. And I would say that again as a small business person that when we sit as a team every day we do think about the consequences of our decisions and what we're doing because obviously we're trying to role model that as well. And I think the thing that strikes me when I'm thinking about internal communicators and our members as you talk about this is about how do we write - because they're so, you know we talk about small, but they're so huge. But every huge has a pocket of small - if that makes any sense? And sometimes when we approach something like this and we want to use, you



know, you talked about it, the data, the science, the factual information, and just feel like, well, we need to make everyone aware, put out a newsletter. And those things are really, really important to keep the narrative going. And I think showing progress is really, really, really important. And I think something that's just striking me as well, as talking about those conversation pieces, in those kind of mass structures, organisations where there are small pockets. What are those small pockets of power and what do they exist and how does actually, you know, we keep talking about empowering employees more, empowering people to do more. So how do we understand where we can empower them? Because, you know, it might be that one team over here has a separate budget and uses a variety of supplies and I know procurement is coming along to change many, many things. But how can we then rise, I think that through a process of inspiration and of emotion to raise that consciousness in our everyday being to then make sure that when that happens - it's a bit sort of employee voice and feedback loops isn't it? - is to make sure that when that happens it feels like they have a place to enact that power as in I'm super conscious I'm in this department, I want to make this change or I'm thinking differently and I wonder if we've got so far along reporting that we haven't actually thought about how do we rise the consciousness and the power within our individuals and then to execute that and to help those small pockets of conversations that then in that kind of structure could like you say that one impact could then have a rollout. So I think that thing around thinking local and conversations but I also think the point of empowerment and actually making people feel like they have the power to make a decision or to make a change or to do something different because they feel emotionally inspired to do so because the topic matters.

I think there's so many pieces and tactics at play that we could be doing, and we could be doing differently, rather than just thinking about, well, let's put out the notice. Here's our plan. Here's the report. Here's the plan. Here's the report, which I think that there's just so many more things that we could do. And then as communicators, we are highly skilled at doing if we create our own power. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

Adam Bastock (34:44)

I think it's really key. And just quickly, to the point you made there about the reporting piece, I think it's really important to reference that is that a carbon footprint plan or carbon, whatever it might be, can feel quite a dry document. And it's important not to lose sight that that is actually quite a, that is a business plan, essentially. You know, these are things that are going to help make you more money and help you become more resilient to things like fuel crises. If you've got solar panels and electric bands that you're doing deliveries with locally, you are then basically taking back control of that sort of energy supply and you're no longer at the whimsy of global politics. So don't underestimate this from all directions in terms of the benefits it can have. And it can feel like a reporting task, but yeah, don't ignore the culture part of it as well, and the business part of it.



Dom (35:28)

Adam now, look, talking about more behaviour changes. Normally at this stage, I would say it's time for us to come into land, but I'm going to change the metaphor. So it's time for us to bring our electric train powered by renewable energy into this terminus. So look, I mean, two or three things we've been talking about, a number of things have hit me. One is this power of local conversation, I think, which is incredibly interesting. And I know something that Jen was saying earlier, we as an institute are looking to try and help communicators encourage conversations about a range of things, but this sort of topic is really powerful. I think you've spoken a lot about how we influence other people. And I hadn't thought about it quite in those terms, how small businesses have got the power to challenge other businesses. And a number of challenges build up to a point where people start to take notice. And I think also you've made the point about we have to make uncomfortable assessments of our own behaviour. Because yes, there are things which don't cost as much in terms of our personal lives, like changing our supplier for electricity, for example but there are things which maybe have even more importance, such as our choice of cars and our choice of clothes and our hobbies and lifestyles, which may be more uncomfortable to make, but we really should be doing, because they have even more of an impact. So I think that's been really helpful.

So I'm going to ask you a perhaps difficult question, which is, what one thing would you like the people who listen to this podcast, predominantly their internal communicators - what one thing would you like them to take from the conversation we've had?

Adam Bastock (36:46)

I think it probably would be that think about your influence and impact rather than just about your own sort of, I say carbon emissions because it's more tangible, but your own sort of lifestyle. I think it is obviously important to do individual actions. However, do look at the influence that you are having and not just the things that are within your control. So that is the, I can never remember the guy's name, which is really bad, but there's the circles of kind of control, influence and concern and those sort of three areas where there's things that you can control, which is typically where people focus all of their energy. And I think that's the most dangerous because actually that circle of influence is where you should be putting most of your sort of effort and energy. You've then got things that are kind of a concern that are outside of your control and influence. And this is that sort of news article and doom scrolling of kind of climate news where I think it's important to have a little bit of it. Ideally you'd want like, you know, 5% in that top category, 85% in influence and then maybe 15% or whatever the maths works out as - 10% in the control of it, doing live maths on a podcast was not a good idea, but yeah, I think there is this case of your organisations might have



quite a small footprint in that if you are a small business that is a Communication agency. It's quite likely your footprint is going to be relatively minimal.

The power that you have is in that influence of going. Yes, but what are you selling? What is it that you are actually doing with others? What are you through your influence, are you enabling others to do that might be environmentally negative? And hold that as a slightly uncomfortable question in everyday conversations, write it on a whiteboard at work if you really want to, because I think that would be quite a good one just to challenge every decision by. That is where we're going to see the rapid decarbonisation, and that is what is going to make you stand out against your competitors and help you win more contracts and help you retain staff in that sort of bundle of just, this isn't just a good thing to do for the planet, it is going to make your business more money as well.

Cat Barnard (38:38)

Adam, what a joy to chat with you and I already with my planning hat on can foresee, bringing you back perhaps next year to revisit this because it's such a live molten topic and it would be really interesting, wouldn't it, to regroup and see where we're all at in 12 months-time, where you're at with Small99, where our membership community is at in terms of getting more embedded into the sustainability, business transformation initiatives. But honestly, thank you so much for coming and chatting with us today. And I hope you as listeners are able to draw a huge amount of inspiration actually from this podcast, because that is it in a nutshell. I remember Rob Hopkins, who is the pioneer of the transition towns movement, writing a book, a whole book on the topic of a lack of imagination. And yet if we take a step back, it's not hard to get creative and inspired. And we all have these amazing, well, internal communicators, right? Your amazing power and potential to influence and small ripples, it all starts with small ripples.

So thank you, thank you, and look forward to chatting to you again at some point down the line.

Adam Bastock (40:02)

Thank you very much. It's been really, really enjoyable.

Jen Sproul (40:05)

Thanks, Adam.

