Transcript for S12, E2 - Anticipating 2025 - Shifts, Shocks, and Background Noise with Rohit Talwar

Cathryn Barnard (00:42)

Hello and welcome to the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I'm Cat Barnard and I'm here as ever with Jen Sproul and Dominic Walters. Today we have a brilliant guest at the start of 2025 to come and chat with us about all things future gazing. For those of you who were in the UK last summer and fortunate enough to have attended the IoIC Festival, you will recognise Rohit Talwar as one of our keynote speakers who gave a very compelling talk on the future of business back then. Well, he's very generously agreed to join us today. I invited him to come and chat with us about some of the trends he's tracking and what lies in store, what could lie in store for business in 2025.

Obviously there is a lot going on. I don't think there's many of us who haven't hurtled into the new year without feeling somewhat slam dunked. So I think this is going to be an illuminating conversation and hopefully we'll have some little golden nuggets for those working in internal communication and indeed, the world of HR as well as we look at what lies in store for business in the coming year so Rohit thank you very much for joining us again.

Rohit Talwar (02:09)

My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Cathryn Barnard (02:11)

We haven't frightened you off after the festival you weren't deterred after spending that time with us last summer.

Rohit Talwar (02:18)

Not at all, not at all, I'm back, I'm back.

Cathryn Barnard (02:21)

You're back, back for more. Just to introduce you Rohit, for those people that aren't familiar with Rohit, he is a global futurist, award-winning keynote speaker, author of several books and the chief executive of Fast Future, which is a foresight agency that has a primary focus on helping businesses explore and prepare for future shifts and uncertainties.

I guess the gist of your work is that you help clients develop ready for anything leadership mindsets and capabilities so as to better understand and respond to the critical forces and developments shaping the future. I think as we veer towards more and more global uncertainty and instability, it seems to me to be ever more of an imperative that our business leaders should be equipped with agile and adaptive resilient mindsets. So hopefully there's going to be something in what we discuss today for absolutely everybody. I'd like to kick off because we were talking just before we came on

air at the increasing number of individuals who use their social media platforms to predict the future and I really wanted to dive into you've been doing this a long time, what does the futurist do?

Rohit Talwar (03:53

So there are many different people calling themselves futurists now. I'm in the sort of category of people who like to explore the forces, the trends, the ideas, the developments, and the sort of shifts, possible shocks that could shape the future. So rather than predicting, we're exploring what might be coming, what's already visible, and how they might combine to create different scenarios. And then what do you do within your organisations to help you navigate a complex, fast-changing world in an uncertain future. Then there's sort of all sorts of bits in between and then you get to the prediction end of the marketplace. And predictions are fun, but they're a bit of a circus act. They're there for show and entertainment. You don't want to base your business strategy on a bunch of predictions because they're either right or wrong. You need to think more about the themes and the shifts that are happening and how you're developing your organisation in response to that rather than just focusing on one particular thing.

So right now everyone's predicting that AI is the future. Well that's not really very helpful. You need to think more about what is AI doing? How is it evolving? What could that mean? And then how do you prepare for not just AI but what comes after that? How do you develop the mindset that can deal with it? So predictions are fun, they're entertaining, but I wouldn't want to base my business on them. And so what we do is we take that stuff we use it to inform business and governments, NGOs, and we do that through speaking, through executive education, through research projects, consultancy, and writing those books that you mentioned. So that's kind of the mix of what we do and have a lot of fun doing it.

Cathryn Barnard (05:54)

And so that's really interesting because I think what I've understood you to have said is that there's a clear distinction between helping businesses and business leaders develop the right mindset to be able to roll with the inevitable punches that increasing complexity and ambiguity presents. And that is a shift away from this year, these things are going to happen with a degree of full certainty. So when you think about the work that you do in business, I know this is a really hard question to answer, but if you were to give marks out of 10 at the moment in terms of your perception of how prepared businesses are for the future. Do you feel that most businesses are prepared or is there more, a lot more work to be done?

Rohit Talwar (06:55)

I think it varies quite dramatically. So if you look at the SME community and the entrepreneur driven one, then I think quite a lot of those really do have their radars focused on what's coming next. They're not looking at five years, but they're certainly looking at the next one or two. And I see quite a lot really looking at their organisational model, their operating system, their talent, their roots to market and trying to sort of make sure they're future-proofed and that they've got that radar working as to what might be changing because they're small, they can't afford to be complacent and

they can't afford to make the wrong moves. So they're very conscious of that. You get to the sort of large organisations, the biggest corporations, then they're doing the work of thinking about the future. They're doing the experiments, they're trialing AI, they're looking at different organisational models, but they're very big ships. They're inherently conservative because that stops you doing things that put the ship at risk. And so they do have checks and balances and they have a lot of people who've invested a lot of time and effort to get to this point in their career.

And these shifts and shocks can be quite threatening if you don't understand them. AI is a classic example. So there is a tendency to slow things down. And that's why you get all these statistics about the proportion of corporate transformation projects that fail or big tech projects that fail. Now, it's not normally the tech that's at fault.

Rohit Talwar (08:33)

It's the fact that people don't use it the way it's intended or you have internal turf wars about what we want to do and who's going to do it and do we want to work the way that the tech would require us to. So there's all sorts of human factors that come in that stop organisations truly embracing the future. And you very rarely see any CEO stand up or chief financial officer at their annual general meeting and say, we've achieved what we've achieved in this last year because we had better foresight or even because we made good investments in technology. They sometimes explain why their profits are lower because of technology write-offs but they don't generally accredit their performance to thinking more clearly and more broadly about the future but it's it is shifting there is that recognition. But then if you've got 10,000, 20,000 employees, getting that mindset shift to say we need to be learning continuously about what's changing, we need to have the ability to experiment and innovate quite quickly when we do see opportunities for change. We need to be building foresight in to test our assumptions on a regular basis.

And we need to be doing that transformational thinking that allows us to say, well, what if we were to just stop this process or how will we do this if we were starting again? And really challenging the norms of the organisation, having those four, the learning, the innovation, the foresight and the transformational thinking. It takes a while to develop that way of thinking and recognise that those are the things that are going to navigate you through rather than another big programme that's got three years in its timeline and inevitably fills out a date about six months into the programme.

Cathryn Barnard (10:30)

As you're speaking, I'm thinking, gosh, it's more than just change management. It's more than transformation. You know, it's the end of a set way of doing things and the start of organising ourselves at grassroots very, differently. It feels almost I don't think it's an understatement to say it's almost a paradigm shift that we are collectively staring at.

Rohit Talwar (11:00)

Absolutely and there's sort of a number of things contributing to that. So one is the technology. AI worked very early on in kind of what AI could do but we're moving very fast so it wouldn't surprise

me if this year you see people claiming that their offering has artificial general intelligence i.e. that is as smart as humans or even that it's artificial super intelligence and it's smarter than humans. To be honest I would say most of the Gen AI tools now Perplexity, Gemini, ChatGPT, they're smarter than most people I know in most things. No one I know could turn out a marketing plan as quickly as they can. No one I know could analyse spreadsheets as fast as they can or assemble data or do all the things they do at the speed they can do it or the comprehensive nature of what they pull together. They're not necessarily as creative as humans yet but that's debatable in some regards as well.

(12:03)

We're moving that far. So one is AI. I think it is a big thing. The second thing is changing attitudes of individuals and what they want from work and what work means to them. And we're seeing some quite big shifts there about the role that work plays for people. And there's a growing portion of people who don't necessarily see work as being how they define themselves. It's an enabler of what they are and who they want to be.

And then the third, I think this is something that the Trump election highlights, but there's this broader shift going on towards the right, towards nationalism, towards a kind of small c-conservativism, the rise of the whole kind of manosphere incel culture.

Rohit Talwar (12:54)

There's a shift going on which organisations are struggling with dealing with. We've seen a lot of corporations in the US basically fall in line with the Trump Musk agenda and offer to support the chunks inauguration, ball and everything. And so you can see that there's a shift going on.

And these forces coming together could change the kind of culture in organisations, could make them harder, could make anything that sort of sounds woke, where woke seems to be anything that's different to the past, is going to get challenged. My personal view is, we'll see all the diversity and inclusion initiatives gradually move down the agenda, even though we're kind of confronted by the direct impacts of climate change. I think we'll see a lot of the environmental stuff slip down the agenda. And we'll move into this kind of arena of what I would call flexible absolutes, where people make these absolute commitments about women in senior leadership, about diversity, about net zero, but they'll become much more flexible about when they're actually gonna achieve that and they'll slide back. Despite all the evidence of what's going on, they'll be watching and being shocked by the fires in Los Angeles, but at the same time be scaling back their environmental protections or their environmental commitments. You know, you'll see that. And so I think we're entering a really interesting sort of period for business where business leaders are not trained for this. No one is trained for the world we're moving into.

It's an unprecedented set of circumstances coming together and everyone's going to be making up as they go along largely. And of course they'll be paying the consultants millions to come in and write the strategies and then to kind of rub the name of one company's name off the strategy and give it to the next one. I'm being slightly cynical, but, they don't know. It doesn't matter who they are. No one knows that what they're saying is going to work because we're in such uncharted territory. There are so many unknown unknowns out there, the black swans. We could see a new pandemic. We could see massive attempts to manipulate share prices using GenAI now. So you could do literally a million pieces of disinformation pumped out into the marketplace designed to detract from company X and challenge them on all sorts of things and tank their share price because

you've shorted that company, you've made a commitment to buy their shares at a very low price. So you could see all sorts of things like that happening that we currently have no ability to prevent and no ability right now to act with any certainty. So no one is really going to put in place all the mechanisms for dealing with the next pandemic. Just not going to do it. It's too expensive, too complex and we're sort of a fix of as-failed culture. So we're more likely to do it last minute or just after that.

Dom (16:19)

Rohit, one of the things that we try and do in this podcast is to equip internal communicators to have intelligent conversations with their senior leaders. And I'd be fascinated hearing what you've said about some of the things that are going to shape the next year and beyond. You talk about the rise of anti-woke or a different approach to political thought, changing agendas. You've talked about gen AI, course. You've talked about the attitude of people to work. So if I could ask you very difficult question. I take your point about predictions, they're great pantomime but not necessarily the foundations for business strategy. But I guess we could look at some of the key trends that are going to influence how organisations work.

And if I were to say to you from your experience, and I know will vary from company to company, but broadly speaking, what are the three key things, the three key trends that if you were a senior internal communicator, you'd be thinking about and helping your companies to deal with? That's a tough question, sorry about that.

Rohit Talwar (17:16)

No, well let's start with artificial intelligence. You can't avoid it. It's moving at a pace. There's still a lot of people trying to find reasons to not engage the regulator or we can't trust it. But right now, generative AI is able to do a huge amount of things that could make us much more efficient in our organisations, much faster and free up people's time.

Whether you choose to use that time to be more creative and come up with innovative new ideas and products or release people back into the community is going to be an organisational choice. But right now there seems to be no alternative than to learn about how to use this technology. Two years ago, after ChatGPT was launched, I would speak at events where out of, let's say, 100 people in the room, maybe one or two in the first couple of months had tried it. To now, there's a kind of 70, 80 % raising of hands when people say they've tried it or they're using it. What you discover is they're using it in a very basic way, not much more advanced than doing a Google search. But actually investing the time, and people realising they've got to invest that time to learn how to write good prompts and therefore get really valuable output, is going to be a big shift this year just recognising that from the top down if we learn how to use this tech correctly we're going to get a lot out of it but we'll also develop our understanding of what might be coming next and what is coming next now this isn't a prediction it's kind of just what you see being launched is this idea of AI agents or agentic technology which is basically the easiest way I would explain it is the idea of having a whole bunch of super smart interns around you where you can give them data about what we've done in the past you can give them a goal and they'll go and work out how to do it and they'll learn and they'll get better and better. So from planning to project management to customer service, to

almost everything that any of us does, breaking it down and saying, okay, what are the distinct tasks within that? Let's hand that to an agent to perform that task. And so we'll see that coming in and all the big tech companies are offering suites of agents as part of co-pilot and other things where you can perform those tasks and also offering tools where you can effectively write the script and say to the agent, okay, here are the steps you need to go through. So I think that's going to be a big thing and the companies that embrace it, you will see they're pulling away from their colleagues who are trying to find reasons not to do it. I think there'll also be a broader understanding that AGI is coming, the artificial general intelligence or people saying it's AGI, we might not be able to tell the difference between real AGI and being told it is. But the mindset shift required to work with technology that's as smart as us, that can solve problems in a way that we couldn't, that requires a massive mindset shift. And that's part of a bigger mindset shift. So I think the second one is just getting that mindset shift in the organisation to say that we need the capabilities to navigate an uncertain future and be ready for anything. So it is complex, it is fast changing and then what's coming next is uncertain. So you can't have a plan for everything. What you need is people who can learn continuously and who can learn quickly and that's where the AI tools come in again. That you can jump on a GEN AI tool and any term you've not heard of or anything, you can get in there and get some basic information in seconds or minutes.

Dom (21:29)

Sorry to interrupt you there, but we've talked a lot on these podcasts about conversation and about the value of internal communicators prompting good conversation. I think what you've just said has raised that again in my mind, the fact that in order for me to use any aspect of AI properly and do what you say, which is prepare an organisation so they can adapt to the changing applications, you need to be able to ask questions. You need to feel free and able to say you don't know stuff. You need to be able to get things wrong and learn from it and I think all that is down to the culture obviously that an organisation develops. I think we can help establish an atmosphere where people can have conversations, can ask people questions, can raise issues, can put forward alternatives. So I thought it was interesting you said that because it's reinforced a big theme.

Rohit Talwar (21:54

And it is another part of the learning agenda, which is that there are a bunch of things that everyone nods and says they're a really good idea, but we don't necessarily, even if we train people, we don't enforce or create the conditions where they have to put those things in practice. So we've been talking for a long time about how to ask good questions and how to structure questions. And actually the generative AI tools are showing us how we can get real value out of asking good questions and structuring questions well. But there's other things like non-violent communication. In a world that's becoming so tense and with so much friction, being able to communicate in a safer manner, in a manner that doesn't feel aggressive, feels really important.

But it may be that this isn't the time to introduce that because there's going to be a harder edge to business. And the other is radical honesty that people have known about that since Brad Blanton started talking about it about 30 years ago. But suddenly we're beginning to realise that being able

to say what we see rather than the story we're seeing. So I can look right now and I can say, I see you're wearing glasses Dom.

That's the only fact I've got. But in my head, I'm telling a whole story about why you might be wearing glasses. You might be short-sighted, you might be long-sighted, you might be wearing them as a fashion item. But they're all stories. But we tend to, when we communicate, bring all of that out and say that that's what we're seeing as though that's the truth. And getting good at saying, no, what I see is this.

And what I'm making up that to mean is something else. And getting really good at distinguishing can really help people move faster if they're trained in these things because you get much cleaner communication. So there's a whole bunch of these things, as well as just good storytelling that become important and they aid the learning journey in organisations. And this would be a great time to be focusing on those things if it weren't for some of the other pressures we talked about which means that we could even see internal communications and training budgets and all sorts of being cut, being part under pressure in the next year as people are worried about what could be happening. FDs worried about new companies coming along and chipping away at the edges because they're using AI and smart ways to take bits of our market, being worried about the impact of potential track tariffs and trade wars, being worried about the growing risk of cyber attack and AI generated cyber attack or market manipulation and just building up a war chest. And then the other side of it is also having to build up a war chest because if you really want to use AI, then you need massive amounts of computing power, massive amounts of data storage and massive energy consumption right now to fuel all of that. All of that's expensive.

And you need the skills which are expensive so you'll see organisations diverting resources to deal with all of that and that money is going to have to come from somewhere if you're going to keep the shareholders happy rather than reduce their dividends. So we're in a very interesting space right now where there's a lot of things that we think we should and could be doing but then there's the sort of reality of how organisations are likely to behave. That is an increasingly uncertain and complex environment.

Dom (25:37)

So I guess it's about how are we actually going to use Gen I? We've talked a lot about it, but how are we going to use it? You made a very interesting point there, basically, and pulling it down to nothing. It's about enhancing creativity or enhancing efficiency or a mixture of both. How are we going to do that? But the next stage, so getting people ready to be able to use all the changes. And then third, there's an issue about money. It's a big issue about how are going to fund all this in a time when budgets and costs are going to be even more constrained?

Rohit Talwar (26:03)

Absolutely, and on GenAI, the most common question I get asked after the emails I get or the WhatsApp or LinkedIn messages I get after presentations now are, Rohit, can you give us that prompt you talked about for using GenAI to teach us how to use GenAI? So basically saying to GenAI look, here's my role, here are my priorities in my business, here are the things that I think I don't

understand about GenAI or I'm a complete novice. I'm willing to give 15 minutes a day for the next 10 days. Please create a course for me, showing me what topic I'm going to cover each day and what prompts to use to ask you to teach me what I need to know on each day.

And basically you then get your course delivered in about two minutes or you get the structure and then you go and look. That's become something that people who said they knew all about it are clamouring for so they can use the tools to teach them how to use the tools. And that's the situation we're in now where, yes, there are a bunch of people who know how to use the tools well, but the vast majority don't. And if you're not using that, then it becomes much harder to do the other things.

Jen Sproul (27:19)

Just been listening and I've made so many notes of all these things that are going on around us and also picking up on what you just said and also what Dom's been talking about. There's this triangle where you've got certain points where you've got human challenges, tech opportunities and financial pressures. And in the middle of that triangle, then there's all these other things that are happening around the world, whether that's been going back to what you're talking about earlier. From, we're going to see scaling back on climate change to scaling back or kind of a change perhaps in that kind of towards the right as you talked about and changing attitudes towards work. And all of these factors need to work in some kind of harmony to be able to navigate that complexity and that uncertainty. And at the very beginning as well, you talked about, not about predictions, but we need to understand the shifts that are around us. And there'll be different applications or different levels or different sort of barometers of those implications, depending on the context of our organisations and the roles that we do. I guess my question is, you talked about it very early on about the work that you do to help us think about the future.

So I guess my question is all of those things that you've just talked about, yes, we know it's really, really important for organisations to keep up with trends. Of course, I'm assuming that, but, I guess, the practical explanation, how would you advise an internal communicator to be an horizon scanner on why that's important? And how would they, you talked about scenario planning earlier on, and how would you use that bubble of information to help us become that more mindset to have continuous learning agility, but I encourage that cultural human challenge to react to that in our workplaces. Why is it so important? How do we effectively monitor trends and effectively plan for their implications?

Rohit Talwar (29:10)

So the first thing I'd say to internal communicators is this can all sound a little bleak and it might well be that for the next 12 to 18 months it feels that way but inevitably ignoring some of these things or scaling them back or cutting back on our climate commitments, cutting back on training. Those are all going to have a cost that will come through very clearly. I've never seen any organisation say we are doing better as an organisation because we're spending less on internal communications or we're spending less on training. Just never happens.

So I think 12 to 18 months time, we'll see the mood shift again. But in the next 12 to 18 months, I would say the first thing for internal communications is form the right alliances inside your organisation. Who are the people that are going to have most say in the next 12 to 18 months? Almost certainly the finance director, chief financial officer. So get alongside them, understand their agenda.Understand what they think are the key messages that need to be going into the organisation to meet what the FD is driving. So that's one piece. The second is, who's being given the power or the voice when it comes to revenue generation and growth? Is that strategy? Is that marketing? Is it sales? Get alongside whoever's doing that and what do they need to be hearing?

And then who has the big picture? Who has the voice of the CEO, the ear of the CEO and who is telling them what they need today to stay in business? And that in larger organisations is the general counsel. They're the person in the organisation more than strategy, more than CEO, more than anyone else that has to have a view across everything.

They are scanning what's coming. They're the ones who are learning fastest. They're the ones who are having to kind of guide on calculated risks. They're the person typically that has that perspective. And what does the organisation need to be most mindful of to get alongside them, get alongside those key players. And you're going to get a really good sense of what the organisation will need to be talking about. Obviously the CEO and people, but those three communities, I think, legal, finance, and whoever has the growth baton this year, get alongside them to understand the key messaging.

Jen Sproul (31:46)

Absolutely. And I think that, that's another thing that's come out many of these podcasts as well. If we're thinking about, in times where you'll feel like everything could be removed or changed around you talking about financial pressures as well. And it's like, in that time you need to keep proving, there's a conversation of proving your value to business and why what you do is so important. And I think there's many reasons in the things that you've talked about why communication is going to be pivotal to help organisations adapt and mix up mindsets and cultures and engender that in this changing environment. And I guess that is, and we've talked about it quite a lot, is relationships are fundamental, having alliances, knowing where we are. So in one sense, there's that opportunity that the AI or technology or whatever can present to us to help us think about why are we doing what we're doing? Do we need to do it? Could we do it more efficiently? Could we do it differently? So we can get on with this other work where we're looking at the bigger piece around our alliances, our influence but then how we can create the conditions and the cultural mindset and learning mindset transformations that are needed in organisations to adapt that agility and that ability to respond and flex when we can't necessarily predict as strongly as once we could. And I think that's an opportunity for internal communicators to really think about how am I plugged in to all of those conversations within our organisations and those relationships as well.

Rohit Talwar (34:08)

And it's spotting those as well. It's spotting those examples of mindset shift and sort of promoting those. So spotting where people are learning faster, if you like. The culture is that people are going out and talking to the outside world. They're bringing new ideas in. They're responding faster. Spotting areas where they're training more people in innovation.

Rohit Talwar (33:32)

And they're getting good at experimenting and turning new ideas around faster and creating user centric or customer centric solutions. So really emphasising that role of innovation, showing where people are using foresight well, either to challenge their assumptions or to spot opportunities and risks in the marketplace. And then really highlighting and celebrating those examples of transformational thinking where people have said, well, let's stop this process and say what if we were starting again how would we do it or how would we do this if we were a new entrant coming to this space so highlighting those examples of where people have fundamentally changed their thinking and highlighting those examples and mindset shift around learning innovation foresight and transformational thinking could again add value and then highlighting where people are using these GenAI tools to enhance the way they do what they do in business. So they turn stuff around fast, so they come up with more comprehensive plans, they spotted risks that they wouldn't have thought about previously, really showing how this stuff is adding value. I think all of those things would be good roles for internal communications inside the organisation, highlighting change for the good, highlighting how people are becoming more efficient, more effective, and how they're dealing with a more complex world. And then the other thing is sort of the big issues that are coming along, breaking them down and helping make sense of them. Just where are they coming from? Not taking a side, but for example, explaining why is America so concerned about Greenland? From a shipping perspective or whatever it is.

Trying to explain some of these big developments, explaining what AI is, explaining what agentic technology is, explaining what quantum computing is, but just playing that role of raising everyone's level of understanding in micro bytes of information, that general uplifting of the knowledge base, the awareness, the skill set, I think is a vital role.

Cathryn Barnard (35:44)

It's a massive shift just listening to you. Goodness me, the name of this podcast series is the future of internal communication. But just in the last 10 minutes, you've spelled out this absolute, yeah, paradigm shift of in terms of what internal communication has been up until now and what it has the potential to be and arguably needs to be as we look into the future. And a question that I have is, traditionally within organisations, it has been the case that an elite team, whether it's the strategy team or called something else, but an elite squad of individuals devise, define the strategy, the direction of travel for the business, what we're gonna do in the next 12, 24 months, five years, et cetera. And yet the layers of complexity now demand that as many internal stakeholders as possible are kind of future focused and thinking about what all of this or what all of these external factors mean for the organisation. So quick question, in as far as any of these can be quick answers. What can internal communicators do to help colleagues become and remain future-focused and future-ready? And I couch that in and you brought our attention to it earlier Rohit, obviously very shifting attitudes, you know towards work and what people want to get out of work. And I'm thinking about how internal communication can help people adjust their way of thinking so that they are continuously looking towards the future rather than, as the data has shown us to be endemically the case, just do what they believe is written on their job description, with this backdrop of quiet

quitting and doing the bare minimum to get by, if we want and need our internal stakeholders to become more future-focused, what role can internal communication play to help that happen?

Rohit Talwar (38:05)

Well, I guess we've talked about quite a few of them. It's kind of spotting these things that are shifting, making people aware of these shifts, getting alongside the key stakeholders to understand how they're seeing the world, asking good questions of them, and then communicating the critical insights back to the organisation about what's changing, but also why it needs to change, what's changing in the world around us that requires us to make these shifts inside the organisation. And constantly seeing ourselves in internal communications as being the people who can tell the stories that connect the employees with what's changing inside the organisation and what's changing in the world around us. And it's very easy to start to kind of assume that no internal communication organisation is doing that. But a lot are doing very, very good jobs at this and are playing a vital role in helping the workforce adapt to a changing world, helping leadership communicate with each other, helping leadership communicate with employees and helping employees communicate with leaders. So there's a lot of really good stuff going on. Part of it is finding those best practices and adopting them.

Part of it is experimenting and trying different things. And part of it is being brave enough to go back to the leadership team and say, well, what would you like us to do in the next year and a half, given this context in which we're operating and showing that you understand that context? And equally, being brave enough to have a private conversation about what would the impact be in our organisation if we didn't exist? What would be the cost of having no internal comms? Because my guess is there will be a lot of people who go well let's find out, let's just cut that line off the budget and see what happens. And if that helps us this year to deliver profits then that's a risk we're willing to take, we'll just send more emails.

Rohit Talwar (40:08)

There is that risk that people say, we can do ourselves. We know what we can do. We can generate videos now using Gen. AI. We'll push out what we need to when we need to. So for internal communications, it's very important that you don't assume that you're too important to be removed, but also to show in the way you operate that you're using these new tools to create communication content faster, that you're covering off the basis of the different groups you might be interested in. You're communicating in a multilingual way more easily. You're creating video content faster to push out. You're differentiating between the stuff that can be quick and dirty and the stuff that requires properly professionally made video and that sort of thing. That you're acting in a smart manner, forward-looking manner. You're showing that you're learning and you're doing all the things that you're trying to encourage the organisation to do. And there's always going be a negotiation as well between the people who think this is their job, in strategy and technology and change management in the CEO's office or wherever. There's always going to be people who think this is their role as well. So it's that constant engagement with stakeholders to negotiate where you sit. But it's those key allieships as well we talked about.

And I'm sort of more and more seeing that the general council is a really good one to be an ally of. They're the one who's advising the leadership team and the non-exec board of, one of the things we absolutely have to do to keep our license to trade tomorrow. And so they'll be highlighting those risks and shifts to the organisation on a regular basis or need the help of internal communications to do that in a positive manner.

Cathryn Barnard (42:00)

It's a quantum leap, isn't it? It is literally, that's how it feels to me as I'm listening to this. It's a quantum leap in terms of what internal communication as a function becomes.

Rohit Talwar (42:15)

It's not just internal communication, because if you were to give your podcast the full title it deserves, it's the future of internal communications inside businesses that are uncertain about what to do in a complex, fast changing and uncertain world. That would be the kind of full extent of your title. So it's no surprise that internal communications don't have all the answers because they're in businesses that don't have all the answers but it's recognising that you have to learn how to thrive in complexity and demonstrate the kind of skills you're talking about as being critical to navigating that, showing how you're using them. And again, with so many of the roles inside organisations, whatever you're doing, they're very task-orientated. Your job is to bring the next.

You know, when we need your opinion, we'll give it to you and we'll tell you what to do next. You're allowed to think creatively within quite narrow boxes. That's there in quite a lot of organisations. So now we're saying, no, blossom, use all your talents, do all your thinking, be brave enough to try and use stuff, go out and form different kinds of relationships. And that's not all going to happen in one go.

So it's breaking it down and saying, okay, let's have our plan for how we do this, but let's start with our own learning, making sure that we're getting mastery of this tech and using it. And not just saying I've been on the course, but actually saying I am using GenAI in everything I do to at least do the first pass and then working out where, okay, maybe I'm actually better doing it myself because it ends up being faster. But I would say there are very few complete tasks where you wouldn't speed it up by having your first pass of it with GenAI.

Cathryn Barnard (44:04)

I think, and I know Dom, you're itching to step in, but my takeaway from what you have just said would be, if you are waiting for permission or waiting for an invitation to deliver some value, it's going to be too late. You need to step in. What's that well-worn phrase? Beg for forgiveness afterwards,I think that's the gist though, that's what I'm taking from it. Dom, what do you think?

Dom (44:34)

Yes, you're right. There are lots of things I'm taking from it. So Rohit, I'm going to ask you in a second to help me through this because I've got relationships, I've got helping organisations understand what's going on in the world and why it's happening. I've got promoting conversations so that people can use the techniques that are available, the tools that are available more effectively. I've got the great point about managing your own learning and trying stuff out. So Rohit, I guess to bring us to the land, let me ask you an impossible question.

If there's one thing that you would like people listening to this to at least take away to start to work with, and I know it might vary from person to person, but from your point of view, what's the one thing you'd like people to take away?

Rohit Talwar (45:12)

It's really hard to say one thing, but I guess learning would be at the heart of it. Make sure that you've got that commitment to your own daily learning, to learning within your team and sharing what you're learning, using the tech to help you learn about stuff, using the tech to create the agendas of what you need to learn. Using whatever learning modes best work for you. So whether that's video, text, audio, participation, but just make sure that we are constantly learning because if we're not learning, we're not standing still, we're moving backwards. And that applies at every level in society. But people in a fast changing world, it's uncertain.

We expect corporations to be reigning back in on some of their spending and looking for areas to cut then we have to own our own destiny we have to be the know the captains of our own ships we have to be taking responsibility for our own learning because we're the only people who care as much about ourselves out there because no one who cares more about me and my future than me!

Rohit Talwar (46:24)

Why would anyone else care more about my personal future? It's very unlikely other than parents, but they're generally not going to manage your career for you. So in a business context, no one is going to worry more about your future than you are. So therefore you need to take control of that. You need to take control of your own learning and you need to take control of how you can be most effective inside the organisation and how you can add most value and that comes fromlearning. I've never seen people say I'm performing more badly now and my performance has dropped because I learned some new stuff. That has to be the centre of it all. It's an antidote to fear, it's an antidote to confusion and complexity and chaos. It's to break it down and start learning about the elements of it and how they interact and what's causing the complexity or the chaos and being able to communicate that to the organisation in a way that actually de-stresses people, I think is going to be really vital in organisations that don't want to be operating at crazy levels of stress for the next 18 months.

Jen Sproul (47:35)

I think that's a beautiful sentiment in which I think that you all agree to close this podcast is that and one we can't get behind and you know it is about learning and in this podcast today I have written so many notes and learned a lot so it just shows you by the value of giving up 45 minutes of your time what you can take away from that to inspire you or think differently. So Rohit thank you so much for your time today and I hope everyone listening has found some value in that and tune in for the next one.

Rohit Talwar (48:02)

Thank you, my pleasure.