Building a culture of inclusivity? Begin with trust.

Speakers: Advita Patel, Greg Stortz, Priya Bates

**Greg Stortz** 00:51

Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening, depending on where you're joining us today in the world. It's such a pleasure to be here and even more of a pleasure to be able to introduce two wonderful human beings to today's webinar.

You're probably joining us to learn a little bit how you can help employees feel more welcomed, valued and secure that your DE&I strategy within your organization is not just a checkbox. How do we build trust within an organization and help employees feel more connected to their brand to their employer to the managers and those who they work with on a day-to-day basis.

So today, I have the pleasure of introducing authors of 'Building a culture of inclusivity: Effective internal communication for diversity, equity and inclusion', Priya Bates and Advita Patel, and they're going to give us some key elements today on the trust equation, which is super exciting. And we can take that back literally instantly today and start working towards strengthening trust within your organization right away, which is super exciting.

Before we dive in, and I actually bring them to the virtual stage, I do want to just cover some housekeeping because we are using this platform called BigMarker and we love it. And it has some really nice bells and whistles that allow you to participate in today's webinar. So, if you do have a question, feel free to move over to the q&a tab and ask all your burning questions there. If you don't have a question, that's perfectly fine, because you can also use this tab to look at other people's questions and upvote the ones that are important to you.

We will be recording today's webinar and you will get a copy of it. So, that is our number one question that we do get. Now, to test out the chat and we want you to we encourage you to use it as often as possible. You can start by telling us where you're dialling in from, where in the world are you are you here, and maybe a little bit about why you're here, what you're hoping to get out of this.

But with that, I do also want to talk about the cool brand that I work for. So, we are Interact. And we are an intranet service provider. And we have many customers where we've helped build and strategize their employee engagement strategy through the use of some of the wonderful tools that the software Interact provides. We are a bunch of very passionate, passionate internal communicators and strategists and designers that help you take your project of dreams and turn it into a reality. So, if you're looking to up your game and your digital workspace Interact might be something you'd be looking at. Visit us at Interact software.com To learn more or stay tuned for other ways at the end of this webinar to connect with us if that's interesting.

But we're here to learn more from Advita and Priya and I just want to tell you a little bit about them before we bring them to the stage Advita worked in internal communications and change management for more than 19 years and in 2020, she founded CommsRebel internal communications employee experience and experience consultancy. And she's done that to help organize and create inclusive cultures where colleagues belong and understand their values. So, thank you for that, we love this.

And Priya is joining us as an award-winning professional communicator. She's also the president and owner of inner strength communication and co-host of 'A Leader Like Me Podcast'. Her clients include organizations and leaders across technology, retail, finance, government, and education sectors. She's an accredited business communicator, so ABC, and was one of the first certified Strategic Communication Management Professionals globally. This is amazing, and she's based in Toronto, Canada, so shout out to all the Canadians on the webinar as well as myself. She's also an International Association of Business communicators, so IABC fellow, which is a global lifetime achievement for her award and her contribution to the profession that she works in. So welcome! Thank you so much for taking the time today to talk to us a little bit about trust and what we can be doing in our organization I will hand you the floor and Uh, and allow you to take it from here.

**Priya Bates** 05:04

Hello, everyone. So, who's gonna speak first? I'm just following all of the places people are from, like South Africa and, you know, North America and Canada, US, representing from this part of the world. But we see a lot of people from Europe, as well. It's wonderful to see you all coming together because we always say the internal communication community globally is very giving, where we want to share our knowledge, we want to change our profession. And we do it all for the employees.

**Advita Patel** 05:43

And I'm just seeing all the Northwest folks as well. So, when I see Manchester, Liverpool, Wirral, all those local towns to me as well. So hello, everybody, we are delighted to be here today to talk to you all about trust, as Greg said, and we want this session to be as interactive as we can possibly make it on a virtual scale. So, as you would have seen that Priya and I shared our LinkedIn URLs as well. So, please feel free to share yours with each other because it's important that you connect because as you'll see, throughout our session today, we this work is not to do alone is to do it together and to get support from each other as well. And you'll see us talk about that throughout our discussion.

**Priya Bates** 06:27

Great. So today, we're talking about trust. And when it comes to trust, the one piece of work and research that I really pay attention to on an annual basis is the Edelman Trust Barometer. How many of you read the Trust Barometer on a regular basis? I'd be curious about that. It is it has been fascinating to see the change in trust over the last few years, you know, and really the themes, they come up with it, they pull globally, they pull the public. So, it's what how the public is feeling. And they're the reason we need to care about trust is where trust is in danger right now. And you know, and it's determined by a lot of factors, not only what's going on in your organization, but outside your organization in people's lives.

There's a lot of economic anxieties right now, people are you know, that optimism is collapsing around the world and people are seeing all-time lows, a lot of the conversations that are happening, wherever you are in the world, are all about the fact that people are worried. They're worried about their jobs, they're worried about their families, many are worried about getting food on the table and shelter. So, there are you know, when we talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people are really concerned, and that comes into the workplace.

There's that institutional imbalance that one of the things that I've been watching over the last few years that has been really fascinating, is the loss of trust in media, the loss of trust in government, in around the world, but the maintenance, you know, business is now the sole institution seen as competent and ethical. And, as much as that concerns you from a loss of trust perspective, I see it as an opportunity for us who work in organizations and work in businesses, where our leaders are the most trusted. So we're starting to see businesses play a bigger role in terms of issues and, and trying to decide where they stand so they can actually move economies and move social justice issues, because they're leading the way and that is such a huge opportunity.

This idea of the mass class divide, there's, you know, that divide is widening. And when you think about it, from your organization perspective, think about the mass class divide in your organization, the people at the top of the organization and those who are serving your customers, chances are there's a lot of rhetoric and a lot of conversation going on, about the differences in in what people earn at the top of the organization versus at the bottom of the organization, and why should we trust those leaders who are out for their own pockets. So, it's a real issue right now. And then finally, that battle for the truth, you know, the shared media environment, there's echo chambers, we're in places where we're hearing from people who believe the same as we do. And when we think of DEI, we really need to open up our ears and our eyes to hear different perspectives, and that's such a great opportunity for internal communication practitioners as well. But there is a lot going on that is impacting our people, and we need to be aware of it and that's why we need to care about trust.

**Advita Patel** 09:55

So, when Priya and I were deciding on what chapters we should include in our book, 'Building a culture of inclusivity'. One of the big items we knew we had to talk about was - what does trustworthiness look like in organizations? And what does it look like individually on a personal level? But what does it look like when we're working with leaders and peers and colleagues as well. And then we decided to include the trust equation, it'd be really interesting if anybody in the comments if you could share, if you've come across the trust equation. The trust equation was developed by Charles H. Green and his colleagues at the Trust Equation Institute and it's a really simple way of understanding what trust means because it's really subjective, trust to an extent, and we will all have different behaviours and actions behind what trust means to us. And what trust means to other people.

The trust equation is, they call it the trust quota, so, it's a bit like IQ and EQ, as well. And what they talk about is, these are the attributes that create trustworthiness, one of which is credibility. Now, credibility is to do with the words that we speak. So, in a sentence, we may say, can I trust them with what they are saying? Are they credible on that subject? Are they somebody that has done their due diligence? Are they somebody who can come and tell us that they're doing the right thing? Or, the wrong thing? How credible are they? So, that's one attribute of trust. The second attribute of trust is the being reliable. So, this has got to do with actions. So, we might say, will they deliver that product tomorrow? Will they deliver that service tomorrow, will they do what they say they're going to do?

Now, if you think back to your organization and workplaces, you may have certain individuals in your organization that are really good people, they know what they're doing, they're credible. But when it comes to them delivering on their promise, they often under deliver, and that can cause mistrust, it can cause distrust, and it can cause us to distance ourselves from them as well. So, being reliable is a big part of the trust equation.

And then you've got intimacy. Now, intimacy is about the safety and security of when we feel that we trust somebody with our information. So, we might say, I can trust them, I can share this information with them. I trust them. I know they won't use it against me. I know they will vouch for me in confidence. And that's really important. And we don't really give enough credit to that behavior of intimacy, and we sometimes look at we may look at credibility and being reliable.

But then we need to be thinking about can people few people see me as a trusted source, and that's individually as communication professionals, but also how others may see leaders now credibility and being reliable measures that you can probably track, so they're quite rational, and I can track them through evidence, intimacy, and self-orientation, and emotion, and this will be subjective and very dependent on the individual. And the reason self-orientation is the divide underneath that is because this refers to how people focus. So, this is about whether the focus is on ourselves. Are we doing it because it helps us, or are we doing it because it helps the other person?

So, sometimes you may have somebody who's got all three of those attributes, credibility, being reliable having intimacy, but they may be a little selfish, or they may be doing it for their own gain. And it's and that's where sometimes that trust can be broken between individuals. So that said, it’s a simple equation to be aware of. And it's also something for you to think about when you are deciding or whether you should trust that leader, or you should trust yourself and what do you need to do in yourself to build your trustworthiness and help leaders build their trustworthiness because none of this work will happen if there's no trust in what the leader is saying, or whether or what communications teams are saying as well.

**Priya Bates** 14:15

So, one of the things we talk about in the book is the role of internal communication in advising and guiding leaders. So, we talked about the trustworthiness of our leaders, but are we the trusted advisors to our leaders so we can have impact and influence for them.

And we talk about these three areas. First, it's, listen, we have an opportunity from an internal communication perspective, to actively listen to what the leaders care about. You know, I always think, you know, what keeps you up at night. Being able to have that conversation with leaders on what is it that they're really concerned about? What are they afraid that people don't understand? What do they get frustrated with, and listening to those questions, we have access to the channels that connect those leaders to our employees. We observe as well.

And you know, we often have this opportunity to be the have the point of view of the employees, I don't think they're, as much of HR is there doing that usually in a lot of the organizations I've worked with. HR is transactional, and they've got the numbers, but we can actually observe and connect with people so that we can say, here's what people are talking about, and here's what they care about. And then we're paying attention to closing the loop on that actioning, and really listening to employees and leaders and bringing that all together.

**Advita Patel** 15:42

And a big part of our role as internal communication professionals, our communication professionals is learning. So, checking in on a frequent basis, how often do we check in with our leadership team? And how often do we check in with our peers? And how often do we check in with our colleagues? And what are they saving, and this links in with that active listening again. We know, Priya and I have worked in this industry for many decades. And we know that we are often under resourced and under fortitude as well, in terms of when it comes to money. We've normally have a to do list as long as our arm which is continuous. But we have to have these check ins and reflection moments before we can take any action. Otherwise, we could be going down the wrong path and not really listening to what our people are doing.

We also encourage asking questions and being curious, you know what sometimes the communication professionals we speak with feel like they need to know the answers to everything before they can lean into a conversation, because they want their leader to understand the credibility side of who they are. But there's also lots of meaning, as I said before, around that intimacy, and intimacy is gained through asking curious questions, getting to know people on a personal level, thinking about what what is it that I'm hearing? Where do I sit on my learning? pathway here? What do I need to unlearn as well, because our biases can play a big part in how we ask questions.

So, if you look around your communication team or your immediate team, do you have representation in that team that that is representative of the publics that you serve? And if you not, if you don't, then how can you adjust your questions? And how can you build your community to allow you to ask some of those richer questions. Then analysis is a big part of the role that we do as well. So, all this information that you gather through the check ins and the questions, what is that data and information telling you and how you are analyzing that information that will give you the trustworthiness and some of those leadership teams when you do manage to get into in front of them all you get that seat around that table? And, when you do receive that the invite? What are you sharing with those individuals in terms of the data that you've collected? How do you analyze that information to tell you what your people and your demographics are telling you that you can feed back into your leadership team and influencers and decision makers in your organization.

And then the fourth point is connection. So, our role as internal communication business leaders ourselves is to build those connections. So, what are what are people saying in terms of in different divisions and departments? And how can we bring them together to build that community, the work of inclusive cultures, and building a diverse network isn't a role for one individual or one team or one function? It's a role of everybody working together. And, we need to understand our role as connectors and communicators. How do we bring these people together and make sure the right people are talking to the right things delivered against the objectives that have been set at the strategic level?

**Priya Bates** 18:49

And then finally, lean in. You know, one of the things as we've had these conversations I've been doing, focused on internal communication for about 30 years, and the conversation about the seat at the table, and why don't we get any respect has been going on for a long time. And, and I think that what we're realizing is this, this 'Lean In' piece, that we need the courage and the confidence to step up into the power that we do have, and we can, that we have to be able to influence those leaders and influence their words and their actions.

We need to provide them with regular updates, so that they can see changes they can see when things are going down and when they're going up that we need to be able to have those difficult conversations with them. We need to give them honest advice and that you will get more trust when you can give them advice that is followed upon too. And sometimes when you're building that relationship, it maybe they don't listen the first time but I've always for my entire career I always thought I'm always going to tell them what I think. Here's what I'm afraid is going to happen if we do it this way, and this is what the impact of that is going to be, I always included that in the conversation. And you know, nine times out of ten when that happened, they listen more closely the next time.

And, then as Advita talked about, you know, understanding measurements, understanding numbers, those leaders understand numbers, they use it in any other transaction and conversation at the leadership table, you need to be prepared to bring those numbers with you as well.

**Advita Patel** 20:30

And I know some of the questions that some of you may have is around how do I build that influence and the honest advice, and one of the best pieces of advice that I had shared with me is talking about consequences. It's what are the consequences of not doing this? Well, as Priya said, you know, what, what would happen if we don't follow through with this action? What's the impact is going to have on our colleague population, and ask the leaders to feed back to you on what they believe the consequences are, because we can say that we think is X, Y, and Z, but they will just think that we are either exaggerating the impact, or we are going up from nothing.

But if you can, ask them the question, what are the consequences? What do you think the consequences could be if we went ahead and did this statement, or make this change, or had a conversation around this, and work on it a bit like a coaching level and get them to come up with the answers. And if they say nothing, and that's where you would nudge them? And say, well, this scenario could play up here. Here's what we've learned from this external case study that I've read and heard, and this is how it can make a difference in our organization. And that's what will help you build your trust as well. Because at that point, leaders will start listening to what you're saying, because you're bringing in evidence and data points around that analysis and measurement as well to backup your opinion on that other data pieces.

**Priya Bates** 21:56

Great, and I think what we're going to go through some trust pitfalls, and there's a lot of pitfalls, some of them may resonate with you. We're going to bring up a poll right now, for you to tell us out of these pitfalls, what is your biggest challenge? I think that our friends from Interact are going to get the poll running for all of you to, to answer and then based on your feedback, we'll we're gonna go through as many of those pitfalls as we can, there we go.

**Advita Patel** 22:31

And we'll make it a little bit difficult, because we're asking you to just pick one. Obviously, there'll be overlap on many of these in our experience, as well. And we will get through as many as we can. But we want to talk about your biggest challenges first, and give you some tips and techniques on how you can address that in your organization if you're struggling with any of these pitfalls.

**Priya Bates** 22:55

Give them a few minutes Yeah. Answer the poll.

**Advita Patel** 22:59

At the moment, the most popular one is not coaching line managers in communication skills, is it?

**Priya Bates** 23:07

Yes, you're right, though. Oh, wait a minute, limited representative, it's changing. So, give them a few minutes.

**Advita Patel** 23:13

I know it's not in rank order, that's why. We've got not coaching line managers and communication skills is up there at the moment, as is no opportunity for feedback as well. So, they're, they're lined together.

**Priya Bates** 23:30

So, here's the order, if either based on what I'm seeing, so the number one, and maybe I'll get you to talk to each of them. Number one is not coaching line managers in communication skills. Do you want to talk about that?

**Advita Patel** 23:46

So, one of the challenges that we often find is the line manager population is a sticky population. And it's often a conversation that we are involved in on a daily basis on how do we get these line managers involved in conversations around inclusion, equity, diversity, as well. And you've got the leadership team who are obviously delivering or writing the strategy and helping to drive direction in that and then you've got the colleague population and deliver, but the line manager population are the critical, crucial population for you to manage and coach.

And the reason we talk about coaching with them is that because they do have a lot of pressure on them, and sometimes we can be not as forgiving with this population when they're not working with us, and they're being a little bit reluctant. And what I found in my research and studying is when I'm working with the population is that they often feel a bit lost, and they don't know where to start. They don't know what kind of conversations to have. They're uncertain about the direction they need to be taking the conversation. And coaching leaders and line managers specifically is a key skill that we can offer as communication professionals and we can sometimes be quite heavy handed with the detail and the information that we want these leaders to communicate without actually explaining the why, or giving them opportunities to learn alongside us in what we're expecting them to do with this information, and what outcomes, most importantly, they're expected to see, we don't often talk about outcomes.

So, when we're sending out information, we also want to talk about, this is what we would expect to see when you communicate this bit of information. And if you don't see this outcome, then let's have a conversation, how we can get you to that outcome as well. And that's where that coaching comes into it. It's not about telling them what to do, and many don't like that approach. It's about coaching them, and understanding on a personal level, what is it that's causing them the challenge, and how can we support them with effective communication skills, to get them to where we need them to be.

And what I would suggest when you have a whole host of leaders and line managers is to break it down into these guys, these folks are okay, and they're doing good work. And we can leave them alone, these folks are in the middle, and we need to get to them in a bit, so this is your kind of stakeholder management, but these are where the performance issues are, where the retention issues are, where the where the absence and recruitment issues are with the engagement is a bit low. And I would work on that environment first to help them understand what they need from you to get them to the level of the middle and the top tier as well.

**Priya Bates** 26:25

And you'll notice all these trust pitfalls, where we're talking about it from a DEI context. But the truth is there from every context, any change management programs, any internal communication programs, they are things that when we fix those challenges and those issues, it actually helps lift all of the programs up. So, number two, is lack of action fatigue.

**Advita Patel** 26:51

So this is a question that comes up time and time again, in terms of people are tired, people are tired people are exhausted people have too much to do, we're putting too much pressure on them. I worked with a client recently, and I did lots of interviews with their senior management team and board directors. And their big piece of feedback to me was there's just so much information, and people are a little bit tired of it all, especially when it comes to wellbeing and inclusion, which really surprised me because that isn't reality. When you speak to people in the kind of the frontline, if you want to kind of call them our people who are actually delivering the work, they're tired because they don't see action. So, they tired because they don't feel that they are connected with the work that's taking place.

They're tired, because they are not feeling the value that they are bringing, what you would find in an organization is despite the level of change that might be happening, if you're involving colleagues in the conversation, and you're listening actively to what they are saying, and you're delivering against those actions, you don't often see action fatigue, you will see people who are energized, inspired and empowered to make a difference. And I would be very cautious when leaders say or people are a bit tired, or a little bit exhausted, I would try and get to the root cause of why they are tired, what is happening. And often we will put the blame on the initiatives, but not rather on what we're expecting from them, when we're sending these initiatives out and how meaningless they are. And what is the why.

You know, so I know we can fall into the trap of setting up lots of awareness days, for example, because we don't want to exclude anybody. But I would highly recommend that you think about what is the purpose of sending this information out? What do we expect people to hear this information. And critically, what have we done since last year, that has made great impact on this area of work.

So right now we're in Pride Month. And people are sharing stories around Pride Month and talking about why Pride Month is important. But what has your organization done since in the last 12 months to help the community within the LGBTQI+, perform and get promoted and get the support that they need in a space in your work in your work, but organization. So, think about your outcomes and what you have and what you have done. If you haven't done anything, and you just doing performative actions, then I would highly consider you to really think about how you can take those actions seriously and work with leaders to establish real outcomes and real opportunities for individuals rather than just looking good on paper.

**Priya Bates** 29:31

The third one is limited representation. And this is something that we're seeing a lot of representation is one of the DEI whys we talked about in the book and the truth is that when you look at your employees, especially those that are serving your customers, if you're looking at your communities where you do business, if you're looking at the customers that you serve, or is your leadership representative and is your communication team or HR team representative of them. Because without that representation, it's a real trust pitfall that how, why do we trust you to make decisions on our behalf when you do not represent us, either. So, it's really something that we need to think about. So, as we look at for more diversity in our profession, it really should be representative of those communities, colleagues and customers that you serve.

**Advita Patel** 30:27

And if you don't, you know, we acknowledge that teams can be small, and it can be difficult to get that representation at times. So, then we would highly encourage you to look at the people that are in your community. So, who are the people that you regularly connect with? Who are the people that you regularly ask advice from? Who are the people that you may ask curious questions on. And if they all are very similar to you have similar backgrounds you have similar education to you come from the same area as you, then we would recommend that you expand your network a little bit more, which is why we said at the start of this talk today that you share your LinkedIn with each other, and expand your community outside of your own space, outside of the echo chambers that we can often find ourselves in, and information bubbles as well, because that is going to enrich us more if we can talk to people who are very different to us and our background. And this is what this is beyond race as well, we're not only talking about color, we're talking about all areas of the protected characteristics.

**Priya Bates** 31:24

And I think the final one we can talk to because we could get lost in this is lack of information Advita. So, do you want to talk a little bit about that as a trust pitfall?

**Advita Patel** 31:34

So one of the pitfalls that we often see in organizations is no real thought given out in why that information has gone out. So, it's, it's almost a half the story. So, we can sometimes forget that a conversation has already taken place behind closed doors about a certain initiative, or a certain change program. And then when we go out into the organization and share that out wider, we often don't tell them the full story about the why what happened, what was the purpose behind it, which can limit trust from our colleagues and cause mistrust from what we're sharing. And this is because sometimes leaders will say we can't share that yet, or we're not able to say anything yet, or we're not quite certain what we're trying to do with this yet. But they still want us to communicate because they've heard that silence is not acceptable, which we completely agree with silence is not the right answer.

But it's important to if you don't know the answers, and you're not certain of that, then to tell them, to say to people, we don't know the answer to this yet, but we want you to come out and speak to you and let you know that we are thinking about this. Or work walk through the employee experience journey of what that person is experiencing when you communicate with them. So, we're big fans of personas. So do a persona of some of the demographics in your organization and do a walkthrough with your leader who's responsible for that change to make sure that you're not missing any gaps, because lack of information in our communication. And we can sometimes convince ourselves that you know, there's too much information we're limited to streamline it, which is true. But is it actually saying anything? Or is it just a load of words on a document that you could just tick off to say that you've sent it out on an email? So have a have a real think about your latest comms that you sent out. And what actually, were you telling people and what was the call to action? And again, what outcomes were you expecting from that piece of information to go out.

**Priya Bates** 33:29

And remember, you know, the big opportunity from an internal communication perspective, is that we focus on the conversation, not the campaign. And it's those everyday conversations that build against an initiative or program, that that really are meaningful. So, you get those bite sized chunks of information when you're ready for them. And that they take you on the journey so that when the big news comes, you're not as surprised that a lot of the things you know, the big change efforts should be expected because of a conversation you're continuing to have on the ups and downs and you know, things going sideways with your organization that you're having on a regular basis with your employees. We're going to I'm going to actually move now one of the things you should know is that in our book, The there's an entire chapter on trust, and all of these trust pitfalls are discussed in there.

**Advita Patel** 34:26

So, we often have conversations, again, with individuals who don't really know where they sit when it comes to inclusion in their organization, and what that actually means for their people and their colleagues and their leaders. So, in our book, we've created the DEI evolution assessment. And we have worked with a data scientist to help us create a very short assessment which is about 90 seconds, which will give you access to where you sit on these six evolution scales. And you can see we're not going to go into ETL on this because it's quite, it's quite detailed. But when you fill in the assessment, if you go to a leaderlikeme.com, it's on the top section, if you click on the link there, you can fill in the assessment and you'll get your email results/ results are emailed to you.

What we would encourage you to also do is share that link with HR leaders, DEI leaders, leaders in general in your organization to see if your results marry up. Because what we often find is that certain leaders believe that they may be in the 'Engage' phase, where it's in fact, when other people do the assessment, they're in 'Enter', or 'Educate'. And if you're not marrying up, if you're not aligned, on the same page, when it comes to this inclusive work, then it's going to cause again, mistrust and distrust in the organization. So get when you've done the survey and you get your results, ask other people who have influencing decision making ability in your business to undertake the survey, but also maybe a couple of your ESG or community groups as well to see where they think the organization sits when it comes to inclusive cultures. And it'll be really interesting to hear from you when you do those results to see if it aligned or married up with what you believe, as well. And there is more detail on the other email that you'll receive about each of these steps.

**Priya Bates** 36:16

Now, I think with that, we'll be able to, oh, well, we have to talk about the book. Yeah. So we have, you know, our book is now available, it has launched officially in the UK, in Europe, available wherever you buy books online, but we do have a special offer and code through Koganpage.com, that gives you a discount. So, pay attention to that. And I think that's going to be available in the offers here as well. And just making sure that, you know, take a read, we've, we've put a lot of effort. And we really want to teach you what we've learned through through the work that we've done. And we're learning together. And we did a lot of research. It's been published by Kogan Page, and it by the way, it will launch in North America next week. So June 27, is the official launch date in this part of the world.

**Advita Patel** 37:16

And the book is in two parts as well, just to make that clear. So, the part one is if you're struggling to articulate your mind, and the organization about why we need to pay attention to inclusion, then part one is all about the why I'm talking about trust, we're talking about the why, we talk about inclusion when it comes to internal communication. And then part two is all about the how and the models or frameworks and guidance and tips and reflective questions as well. So, we will split the book into so it's hopefully a guide that you can carry around with you when you're working in your organization.

**Greg Stortz** 37:47

Fantastic. I have to thank you both for putting your heart, love, and energy into creating such a resource for all of us. I'm very excited about this book, I'm very excited to hear that you this will be launching in North America very shortly. So, congratulations to you both and getting this published and out there. We all need to take a few pages from this, even if we are the best we can still learn and continue to evolve as time goes on. So, thank you for sharing some of this with us today.

There has been some questions pouring in while you've been presenting, and I wanted to just shine some light on some of them. So, anybody who hasn't asked a question, feel free to go to the q&a tab and you can still vote upvote anything that you would love to have answered right now we do have a few minutes to take some questions. So I'll start with the first of the list. And I'll just maximize this. So, this question. I don't have a name for this person anonymous. But that's okay. How effective are metrics when building trust and inclusion with employees? Any tips? How to effectively tackle this? I love this question.

**Priya Bates** 38:52

Metrics are so important when you're talking to anyone. You know, the number of times I say because people have ideas based on the echo chambers they are in. So, they believe that everybody feels the exact same way they do. But my reaction always is, here's what the data tells us. You know, so you think that the business the organization is doing horribly Well, here are their actual results. Here's where we're doing well, and here's where we aren't, you know, you think that people aren't engaged? Well, guess what, here's what the actual results are. And here's how it compares from benchmark perspective around the world because people are surprised sometimes what good really is.

The number of people like I know, the conversations I have with communication professionals, when they say that, only 25% Read our feature stories. And we're like, well, that's actually a good number. They may be surprised, right? Like so know what the benchmarks are. And then and leaders especially are very surprised at what that should look like. What does a good engagement score look like? It's like 60 to 70%. People are expecting it to be 90. Right? So, the data is integral in creating knowledge educating, but also providing perspective.

**Greg Stortz** 40:14

Absolutely. And I think I think you've nailed that. Because one of the, in my experience, one of the biggest things, the biggest challenge as a communicator is actually breaking down the fact that yeah, everyone's striving for 100%. Of course, we want 100%. But the reality is, is that you need to design your own benchmarks, right? Even comparing yourself to another company is actually a bad idea. Because your culture is different than their culture and your diverse staff base may be different than their diverse staff base, and their needs are going to be different. So, comparing yourself to each other is I mean, it's great for good conversations. But you know, the numbers are actually in your own universe, which I think is important for leaders to understand as well. But we as communicators have to design this metric system for them, which is always a challenge. Absolutely.

**Advita Patel** 41:03

And, and don't fear asking your leadership team what they want to see as well in terms of metrics, you know, we often sit in our own little space and think about, we need to create this dashboard covering this, this and this, but often, we sometimes forget to go and ask the leadership team, you know, we want to share some metrics with you. What do you want to know, from our side when it comes to communication, and create the metrics that they want to know. And I completely agree with benchmarking, by the way, Greg, you know, I am not a fan of benchmarking externally, I think it can lead us up a different path and take us down a different road that we're intended to. I think it's important to read the reports that come out there, that the Gallagher report, I think they do a good intro that I know you folks do some, that Edelman all those kind of big, big items, it's really good to know what the what the direction, the world of communication is going. But when it comes to metrics, you have to personalize them to your organization and make sure that they're meaningful. And you can explain them not only to the leadership team, but the to the entire workforce so they can keep track of the milestone checkers as well.

**Greg Stortz** 42:11

I love that. I absolutely love that. This is great. Before we dive into the next question, I actually do want to give a quick shout out. So we are talking on a platform here called BigMarker. And they do have some capabilities for us to reach the audience who are maybe hearing impaired, or with other abilities and disabilities. We apologize if the closed captioning of this webinar is not available to you we are going to work with BigMarker to understand why that has happened. But we do know it's a functionality of this. And if you experience any issues, our sincere apologies to you who could not but what we do promise is the conversation will be had but also the recording of this webinar will come out with transcribed captions as well. So, everything will be will be handed out as soon as we can get that out there. So just wanted to shine light on that. So, our apologies for this. To dive into the next question here. This is from Darren, how do ERGs play in and (so employee resource groups) play a role in the trust equation? Are they still relevant today?

**Advita Patel** 43:21

There's a bit of there's a chapter in our book, which is a little bit controversial, where I've where I've kind of spoken about the impact of ERGs and organizations. And the challenge that we often have with employee resource groups is that we put a lot of pressure on these groups to deliver against our DEI objectives. And they're not they're often under resourced, and they're not supported. And Priya and I both have a bit of an issue with putting too much pressure on minority groups to fix the problem. And what often happens with these minority groups is that they can then be taken away from their day-to-day job and then then they're not given opportunities. Because then when we say to leaders, you need to be fair, you need to be equitable. And they are you know, they're comparing, like for like, in some instances, what tends to happen that those people are investing all that energy into ERG groups are discounted or excluded from the promotional opportunities because they haven't been delivering against their work objectives, or they're burnt out, which often happens.

So, ERGs do play a role when it comes to trust. I think they are a trusted resource as long as they are treated respectfully in your organization. And what I mean by that is that you pay for their time, you are making sure that you're not taking up their energy to fix the issues. They have the sponsorship that's needed, they are being developed in the right way. It is acknowledged that this is an addition to the work that they do in the organization, and then you give them training as well. I think we underestimate how challenging it is to chair a group ERG s and what that entails. And that's something to kind of consider. They are relevant in sense of creating a safe community for those who may feel excluded from some of the bigger conversations. But potentially, are they there to fix your EDI issues know, the there shouldn't be, it should not be to the minority groups do that for you. You should be using that as a guide or giving them the airtime that they need to kind of contribute to some of the conversations, but the pressure should not be on them.

**Greg Stortz** 45:34

That's great advice. And I think, when we were talking about the one of the pitfalls being a visible, you know, relationship between who I am and who's in leadership roles. This came to mind actually where I was, you know, hoping that any leader who's, you know, trying to make a decision for an entire group of people, if you do have ERG s, you know, these are great to peek in and just, you know, see what, what kind of decisions we can make as a sounding board. But you're absolutely right. We have a lot of customers who run these in a lot of effective, you know, ERG programmes, and I think they are quite successful. You know, but I think you said it's a safe place. And I think this is more of the focus of these as giving unique groups a safe place to be themselves, you know, to focus on allyship and, you know, create these experiences that they need to help them feel they belong or that they've you know, connected to this, this organization on a greater scale. So,

**Advita Patel** 46:35

And many are successful because the driven by passion, right, so people who are in those ERG groups want to see a difference and they want to make sure that people are included in the conversations. And I always believe that if an organization is truly inclusive, and is truly supportive, and is putting in place putting the budgets and the resources behind it, then the hope of having a separate group is no longer required. Because everyone feels safe enough to speak in the way they need to speak without having to go separately, if you know what I mean. And I completely understand the need for them right now. They're needed. They're a safe space, where people have opportunity. But I would hope in the future with a future generation, we don't have to have them because the organization itself should be safe enough for everybody to belong.

**Greg Stortz** 47:19

I love that. Absolutely. Goals, Goals. This is good. Alright, let's do one more question here. This one's from Trevor maximize this, what advice do you have for communicators who are trying to be more inclusive, but our leadership is being too conservative? And doesn't want to mention DEI, for fear of staff retaliating? Quite a question.

**Priya Bates** 47:45

What one of the things that we talk about in the book, there's several chapters of it. The first chapter is the DEI why. And what we need to have, even though you know, there's a conversation that's going on in social media that says, we shouldn't worry about what this means to the business, we should just talk about this is the right thing to do. But as strategic internal communication professionals, Advita and I have always talked business, right, we that's what how we get the attention, we need to understand what this means for business. So, we talk about a number of things. We talk about representation, we talk about recruitment, we talk about retention, we talk about recognition, we talk about reputation, we talk about results. The data is there and when you think about what the data means for your own organization, what you need to do is create a business case. And that's something that I'm like toying with a client that's just asked for some support. And it's like, you know, how do we create that business case using words that those leaders understand, so that they don't only realize why they, they should step into the space because it's the right thing to do. But why they have to step in this into the space because they don't want to leave be left behind, or they don't want to alienate the people that they're trying to attract to drive the innovation and results in your organization.

And then the other piece that we talk a lot about is DEI is a huge change initiative. Right? So, when you approach it as change management, because it is it's not only professional, it's personal. So that extra little, you know, personal piece that we're all saying what does this mean for me? Think about the change process, think about Kubler Ross, it's whenever something new is happening, we start with shock, anger, resistance. It is normal. So, when staff are retaliating, they're reacting to change. And what we need to do is have conversations that drive them to acceptance and maintenance. Right. So that's Do you want to say anything Advita to add to that?

**Advita Patel** 49:55

I was just gonna say that we also need to understand that our leaders will be really fearful. They're scared. You know, social media has not helped in this space when people are being, you know, when people do share, and there's so much extreme views, you know, there's lots of extreme views for all areas of this space. And a lot of leaders who are who are in this space are scared, and they're fearful. So, my big advice is to have a real conversation with each one of them. And ask them what their biggest fears are, what are the barriers? What are the blockers? What is it that they want to see, because ultimately, in our experience, 90% of leaders are really supportive of these incentives and inclusion and want to make sure that they have harmony in the business, because it only helps business profit, you know, there's loads of research and studies, we don't need to go through them all.

They're all out there that demonstrates that when you have a diverse colleague network, you know, that people are going to thrive, people are going to perform better people are going to connect, and the business is going to do much better leaders know this, you know, these leaders are smart people, generally, they know this, but what will be stopping them is the fear is the worry of saying something that isn't quite accurate, or it's a fear of upsetting a group of people who may have very loud voices who are causing a scene. And in that case, is how do you manage that against the values of your organization and the purpose that you have? And bring that into the conversation? Because we all have that, right? And it's how do you make those values meaningful, and the mission and the vision of the organization meaningful and the purpose and use that as your conversational starter with your leader, who may be feeling a bit reluctant to speak about some controversial topics and education, by the way, is a big point on this. So, help them get more educated in this space and as Priya says, we talk about this in more detail in the first, early chapters of our book.

**Greg Stortz** 51:51

I love this. And I think in that conversation, yeah, if you're going to run some risk assessments of, you know, saying or mentioning DE&I within your organization that will help a lot of leaders understand what could happen, what is the worst that could happen? But on the same side of that risk assessment, ask yourself, what would happen if you don't? Right, because there is risk involved with that as well. And I think I think they all of that needs to be sorted and kind of give them a buffet, so that they can make some good decisions.

**Advita Patel** 52:22

And also, the staff that are retaliating against some of the, you know, the things that you should be doing well, anyway, my question back is, do those people belong in the organization? Is that the type of people that you're trying to attract in that organization? And people, as Priya said, don't like change. It's uncomfortable, it doesn't help them because, you know, they don't understand what it means for them. Does that mean you take it away from them? Does that mean they won't get opportunities going forward. And it's just trying to understand what inclusion means for your organization and workplace and how your leaders deliver against those messages, because trust will deplete if you are saying one thing. So, if you send out a powerful statement when it's Black History Month, but then your behaviors towards your black colleagues in your organization are poor, then you are going to lose trust, and people are going to retaliate. And people are going to go external, with reputational damage in terms of what they experience. So just be aware of that. But start with your leader, individual, one on one time, find out what the barriers are.

**Priya Bates** 53:23

And one of the things, Advita, we shared a story. We were at the Festival of Work in the UK, and they had a what was it a hackathon. I remember this, they had a hackathon at this Festival of Work, where lots of HR, 5,000 HR professionals attend this event, and we were walking around before we were presenting there and there were they did a hackathon where they had a mental health and wellness, wellbeing board, and then they had a DEI board. We posted it on our LinkedIn, but the wellbeing board had stickies and suggestions that like were full that it couldn't even fit on the board. The DEI board had six stickies on it, six post it notes, and it kind of told us what the challenge is in the space that somehow, we've created a narrative that says wellbeing is about all of us, but DEI is about them.

And think about the word, diversity is about diversity, you're included in diversity, whoever you are. Think about equity, you're included in equity because it's about fairness. Think about inclusion. Enough said inclusion is inclusion. These words are about all of us. It's about all of us belonging. It's about creating a culture where we can all trust one another. And if we don't trust one another, what's the impact on our business? What's the impact on our leaders and what's the impact on our results? Right? And so we've created this net narrative of us and them. And that's something we're trying to break down barriers on.

**Greg Stortz** 55:04

I love that. Yeah. And I think you nailed that. Like, I think this happens without us even thinking about it. It's it is even in some conversations you have it feels that way. And it's not you're absolutely right. It's not meant to feel that way. It's, it's good. Very good. Well, we are at the top of the hour. So, I'm going to hold the questions here, there are a few left, and we'll find ways to find the answers to them and get them out to you. But I want to thank you both for being here today, sharing your expertise, your experiences, your tips. Throughout this entire presentation, there's so much to learn and so much to take back to our own organizations from everything you've shared. So, thank you very much for taking the time today to be with us, we really appreciate it.

**Priya Bates** 55:51

Thanks for having us.

**Greg Stortz** 55:53

And just anybody who's staying on the call, I do have a couple other options for you. If you're interested in more webinars, hosted by Interact and other people, this 'Creating personal digital experiences with MUFG' is a webinar that you can subscribe to and should show up on your screen right now. And if you're also in the mix of doing things for your own organization, with Pride Month being still active and still out there, or if you're planning for your next year's Pride Month, or maybe you celebrate in a different month, which is also okay. We do have a Pride hub, which has a bunch of resources that may be useful for you and your organization. So, that is also showing up on your screen, so take a look at that. But I want to thank everyone for attending today. It's been a pleasure to hang out with some very cool people. And I appreciate everyone for taking the time to hang out with us today. Go buy that book. And we'll be in touch soon. Thank you everybody and enjoy the rest of your day.

**Priya Bates** 56:56

Bye everyone.

**Greg Stortz** 56:58

Bye bye.