

62 How to increase engagement & performance in hybrid teams ...

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SPEAKERS

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Murielle Machiels 00:00

I'm really excited by today's podcast episode, it's been now 18 months that many of us are working from home. And it looks like we're not going back to the old ways of working. We're moving towards hybrid teams working from the office and remotely. And remote work has shown many advantages, but also some flaws especially in terms of engagements motivation and innovation. Now, the problem is that due to the sudden pandemic, many organizations had to act rapidly. And in a matter of one or two weeks, most organizations managed to organize working from home from a technological point of view, but not enough really looked at what it takes to make remote work successful. Often meetings and informal chats were simply replaced by virtual meetings. And that was it. As a consequence, many people are spending a big chunk of their time in virtual meetings, which is very tiring, stressful and not productive. And many directors are looking for more engagement and motivation. Now, simply forcing people to go back to the office isn't enough as a strategy, because some people simply don't want to go as often to the office. So in today's podcast, I'm talking to pillar RT, a fellow podcasters specialized in remote working, I was really impressed by her expertise and knowledge, and she's going to share how you can increase engagement and motivation in remote or hybrid teams. And she also shares many different tips and strategies. I'm Murielle. co mom, an educator, I used to work really hard and sacrifice the important things to me until I lost my

motivation. Fast forwards passed many failed attempts and lessons learned. And I found a way to reach great results while working less. Today, I'm obsessed with helping other leaders build meaningful lives. So each week, I'll be sharing inspiration to change your life and organization. This is a rebel leader with a heart whose digitalization was already fundamentally transforming organizations, teams and their leaders. But the pandemic accelerated this transformation and complexified things working from home the lack of boundaries, the disconnection the increased workload, the increased time spent in virtual meetings, the anxiety of going back to the office, but also more time spent with family less traffic jams, more exercising. And so a lot of us are rearranging our priorities. Because we've been in touch with our mortality and fragility. Teams have been impacted heavily as well. And the hybrid model will probably be the new way of working. So leaders need to adapt to this new reality to get the best out of people and from their teams. So we are organizing a free two part webinar series on how COVID is impacting the people and leaders that is part one, and how it is impacting the teams part two. So if you want to participate, just go to keyleader.com slash events, or to the show notes of this episode. And if you think you can go back to normal think again, because the pandemic is accelerating the birthing shift of our society. And you choose if you want to be part of the bright future, or hold on to the crumbling past. So go to keyleader.com slash events to subscribe to our webinar. Now back to our episode. Hi, pillar. Hello, lovely to meet you. Nice to meet you, too. I'm a big fan of your podcast. Oh,

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Pilar Orti 04:20

thank you very much. Thank you very much. I am delighted to be sharing a podcast space with another podcaster because it doesn't happen often. So it's really nice. Thank you. Thank you for getting in touch



Murielle Machiels 04:32

great things. So maybe you can tell the listeners a little bit who you are.

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Pilar Orti 04:38

So yes, my name is pillar or tea and the official way in which I introduce myself because we do have this habit of having a professional title. When we first come across people, especially in a work related podcast. I'm the director of virtual not distant and what this means is that for the last five years or so, I have been looking at ways of supporting managers introduce online collaboration with their teams. And helping them the teams work better together, whether that's been through training, formal training, or facilitation

working with them, or our podcast, 21st century work life, which has developed into a podcast all about online collaboration and leading remote teams. So that's what I've been doing. I also do lots of other stuff. I also do bits of writing, which I love and trying to write a novel, and it's taken me many years, as it does. And I'm also a serial podcaster. I have got 21st century work life, but I'm also a host, co host of facilitation stories, also co host of my pocket psych. And I've just set up adventures in podcasting. So I can go on all day, talking about myself. so delighted to be here to talk about the new world of work and online collaboration.



Murielle Machiels 06:02

Nice. Nice. And why did you decide to become an expert in online or remote work?



Pilar Orti 06:10

Well, I was already in the learning and development world, and already looking at leadership. So pretty much in your in something like your space. And I needed to find a job that didn't require me to be anywhere because I met my husband in Holland, and my father was ill in Spain. So I was traveling a lot. And I found a company that delivered leadership certificates, certifications online. So I became their forum animator, and I became their webinar project manager or whatever. And I saw not only that the online space was also a great way to engage with people in both real time and asynchronously, but also that technology was improving, getting cheaper, and we were going that way, we were going the way of we can now work with people from across the globe. That was how I look used to look at it then. And also it's giving us options at a local level. So that's why I started to look into it, what was different? What was the same? And the main reason was that I thought, if we crack the way of working in a team in the online space, then we will crack how to work in the office as well. Because it's this, I mean, a lot of people are gonna say no, it's not. But for me, it's still the same, the problems are very similar. It's just that the medium in which we meet and communicate is different. So those are all those reasons.



Murielle Machiels 07:45

Yeah, I agree. I agree. I also started working remotely, because I bought a little house in Andalusia, and I thought, I don't want to go there just for the holidays. And I like to travel. So I thought I want to create something where I can travel around the world and still work. Yeah, so I also decided to, to launch them online programs. And, and I also have a small but online team. So yeah, and that was before the pandemic and you launched all this before the pandemic. Yeah. And how long ago did you set up? And? Yeah, How long ago?

Did you set up three and a half years? Nice.



Pilar Orti 08:29

Nice. Yeah. And, and how did you also think about how you are going to work with your clients, not just your team about how that might work remotely?



Murielle Machiels 08:40

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. That's why I have to say, when when I quit my previous job, I quit because I wanted to launch my own company. And because I knew I wanted to help leaders have a better work life balance and still impact and lead with their hearts and be more connected with themselves. But I, I was thinking, I knew I wanted to do that. But how was I going to do it. So I tried many things. And then I met consultants that were doing great jobs, but we're exhausted. And, and I was thinking, I don't want that. I don't want that life. And then I bought this house in Andalusia and I felt I want to be able to work where and when. And that's why I decided to do an online course to help the leaders with often online keynotes online workshops. But also sometimes I give life keynotes or life workshops. So it's it's more blended. But it allows me to, to travel and to have a lot of freedom.



Pilar Orti 09:47

Yeah, that's a great story as well as the having gives you not just control over location, but also over time, it sounded like as well. Yeah, yeah.



Murielle Machiels 09:57

Yeah. Yeah. And so now I I'm helping a lot of leaders and of course, the pandemic hit. And so many were forced to work from home. And most of my clients, they told me in one or two weeks, everyone was working from home. So the logistical part was not an issue, then also the excuse that Yeah, but we cannot work from home, it's not possible. Well, they went through that. And it was great for for a lot of people. Of course, I often say, working from home in COVID times are working from home, when it's normal times is completely different. Because you have relaxing time, you can see your friends, you can still see your teams at times, and just not always. But a big issue my clients have is how can we increase engagement and motivation? And for many of them, they're looking at that and thinking now, people have to come back to the office, at least two or three days a week, they have to come back, because we have to increase engagement. Yeah. But I don't see

that as a as a solution. But maybe you have a solution. How can we increase engagement and motivation when we work remotely?



Pilar Orti 11:29

In a way you would say that? Exactly. Whatever you whatever you would do in the office? It's very, very similar. And we have to think about what does engagement mean, and motivation, I think is, I think they are two separate things. And it really we need to look at the work, again, is what, what, what helps people engage with the work. And also engagement is such a broad thing as well, where is the locus of engagement, I might engage, feel engaged at work, because I love my colleagues. So having access to them is one thing. However, I might be engaged with my work because it's a word that absorbs me. And I start the work on Night Time flies when I've got the right conditions. So we really got to be very specific about what we mean, or is it? Or are we asking people to engage with the purpose of the organization? Well, how clear is it? And how clearly are we recruiting people who connect with that purpose? I think a lot of the stuff that we look at around engagement and motivation doesn't start now it starts when we bring someone in. Exactly. So I think that we need to, in a way, just forget about the office and where people are located and go back to basics and dig really deep. The other thing is that I think there's a lot of assumptions being made about the fact that everyone wants to be with Pete surrounded by people they know all the time. And that's why we need to go back to the office or that people have the best conversations when they are in a public space. You know, they talk a lot about the the coalition's and the bumping into each other well, yes, that happens. But people also have great conversations when they're sitting in a quiet place and talking to one other person only on the phone. And I think that that's that's the thing is that there's we're generalizing a lot. And also, sometimes the people making decisions have a very different experience of work than the people in lower bits of the organization. So I think that looking at that looking at what does engagement mean for the different kinds of work in the organization, and then go from there, and then you start worrying about whether it happens in the office or not. That's the that's the solution. If not, that's one of the many solutions is having people gather. So that is one bit anything else you want to say about engagement before we go into motivation?



Murielle Machiels 13:59

No, maybe what I wanted to say is, yeah, first of all, I like your Yeah, layered, there are different types of engagements. And what I see about purpose, for instance, and values is for many organizations, these are things that they put on the wall, or send an email, once about, or once in this speech. But these are not things that are lived. And for me, it's so important when you are living your purpose and making your decisions aligned with your

value which increases engagement already.



Pilar Orti 14:35

One thing that distributed companies so companies that were either born as a fully remote fully distributed, or that became a distributed company very quickly, is that they're very purposeful. They're very sorry, they very deliberately live their values. And what that means is that again, that when they recruit values form an important part that through Every decision, people are asked to make decisions in the organizations that are in line with the values, that all the time we are being explicit about the behaviors that are aligned with our values. And you cannot leave it to chance. Because in the online world, unless you deliberate about stuff, it just doesn't happen. And it doesn't resonate. So that's another thing. If we want people to engage and be part of feel that part sense of belonging, we've got to be very clear about that. And the role modeling has to be very strong from from leadership as well. So So yes, so that, that maybe that's around engagement, and then around motivation, I think that the will as always, it's very personal. So I really like how dieci and Ryan look at motivation with their self determination theory, which is saying that everyone wants to be engaged at work, because they're motivated to do their best work. We all want that. But the context gets in the way. So when we don't have the resources when other people get in our way. And he says that, as long as we have a feeling that we've got enough autonomy, enough competence, and enough relatedness, relatedness, we will want to do our best. So again, when we're looking at motivation, what do we mean? Do people need more autonomy? If they don't have enough autonomy? Why is that? Or is it me the manager that is micromanaging? Or don't they have autonomy? Because they don't have information? competence, the same thing? What can how can we help people do a great job or learn on the job? And the same thing, going back to what we were talking about? If we want people to have a sense of relatedness? Is it about feeling closer to the colleagues? Or is it about understanding how their task impacts the end product? Again, it's breaking it down and being very specific on what we're trying to do.



Murielle Machiels 16:57

Yeah, yeah, that's, that's really great. And I think it's Daniel Pink, who puts it? Yes, same way, we turn on me purpose and mastery. Exactly, I completely agree. And, in my experience, also, what I saw as successful teams that started working remotely, yes, suddenly, during the confinement were teams where there was empowerment. And when you don't have empowerment, then it's very difficult to be successful in, in the remote or hybrid world. But I would say, in a fast changing world, it's even hard to be successful.

When you're working at the office, you have a sense of control, maybe as a boss, over the people because you see them. But it doesn't mean that you are impactful.



Pilar Orti 17:53

Yeah. And also, I mean, one of the great things about the online space, if you use it to its full advantage, of course, like everything, we can use everything for good and for bad. But when you use the online space, well, it allows teams to self organize, it allows team members to not always back to your point have to go through the manager to understand the work to understand what other people are doing. Because the online environment allows us to do that. So what I think when you talk about empowerment, it also makes me think of autonomy and also competence. Because we start to think well, what do our team members need to be able to do their work. And one is, of course, that wonderful use of the online system to share the information that we need to have so that it's available to everyone all the time, not just during meetings. And that takes a great understanding of the risk, the online resources. And what happened during the pandemic is that there hasn't been much because it hasn't been time mainly hasn't been time for teams to discover some of the tools that we've got. So we relied on the tool that looked more like what we're used to, which is the online meeting. Yeah, and hence, hence all the things. And so another thing I think that is really important, especially from leading a remote team point of view, is to even more so than in when we are co located is the adopting the coaching mindset. Every because we also managers tend to be problem solvers. I love people covering to ask me for for me, I love to say, well, that's how I do it. But actually, when you're operating at a distance, you want people who get used to solving as much as possible their problems are on their own that point of contact or with their colleagues and not always having to resort to have someone at hand to resolve it with them. And I think as a manager that that's key, and it's very difficult in the online space. Because especially when we have very short bits of conversations that might be text. It's much easier to reply. Solve rather than replan coach, there's a lot of stuff around that.



Murielle Machiels 20:06

Yeah. And I believe things will, even complexify. Because you and I, we give workshops also sometimes. So in a workshop, you are, in a way facilitating and coaching. And it's pretty easy to do it when you're face to face, it's pretty easy to do it when you're full remote. But I had to do it in the last month, also, with hybrid teams, or some people at the office all with one screen all behind the one camera and some people working from home. And it's increase its complexity, a hybrid versus remote work.



Pilar Orti 20:50

Yeah, well, there's, I think we need to differentiate hybrid team from a hybrid meeting. Because I think that it's very important that we don't get into the mindset that all collaboration has to be done real time. So hybrid meetings are really, really difficult because the technology is not there. Just before the pandemic hit, I ran a meetup just experimented with some technology, which had been designed for hybrid meetings, it didn't work, because the microphones were reliant on some kind of Wi Fi stuff. And so stuff got cut off. Yeah, the microphones were lovely, they were all over the room, but it wasn't working properly. Again, because there was only one camera. And even though the camera followed, the person talking around the room, it's still one camera. So the consensus always around hybrid meetings has always been that we need to operate as a remote team. So when possible, one person one device, more than anything, because if we are a hybrid team, we're also an online team. And our resources are going to be online. If I don't have my laptop with me, and I How can I update a document as we talk? How can I how can we have a canvas where we all add ideas? It's very difficult. And so you've to level the playing field, get everyone behind the computer? If you can, that's not always possible. Because if you're in the office, it's very difficult to find good spaces for everyone to be there.



Murielle Machiels 22:20

Yeah. But that's why many are redesigning their offices, they now realize they have to have more like meeting space to really enhance collaborations and at the same time, more small spaces too, for people when they have a remote meeting.



Pilar Orti 22:42

Yeah. And the other thing is, the next step also is to start to get away from the meeting as that place. And I think a hybrid team. For me, it is an online team, the common space all the time, whether you're in the office or online is online. That's the common space. So the office is one more collaboration tool. And it's such as you will use it for the things that that that you do best there. And so starting to look at, okay, we used to do this real time, but actually, how else can we do it asynchronously. And I think asynchronous communication is difficult to adapt, to adapt to and adopt. But it's key, it is key for us and also start to redesign how we think about collaboration. Because larger teams, it's very difficult to have an online meeting or a hybrid meeting with everyone is truly engaged to go back to that word.



Murielle Machiels 23:38

But it will start to think about available or even available.



Pilar Orti 23:41

Yeah, or even able, yeah, available to be there at that time. Because that's the whole flexibility around time as well. So can we operate more like a network? If we're a large team? How do we do this? How do we there's different ways of doing stuff, we don't all have to have idea generation at the same time as decision making at the same time as action planning. Can we I think it's a great opportunity to break down what collaboration is, and find different ways of doing each stage. Because we have different spaces that are better for that. And by that I mean asynchronous space or synchronous space. So I think back to your point, I think the hybrid team needs to be looking at themselves as an online team. And, and reduce the amount of meetings because they're really difficult to to get, right.



Murielle Machiels 24:30

Yeah, exactly. And a lot of the people that are in my audience and that are working in large organizations, they spend their days in meeting like, maybe 80% of their time they are in virtual meeting, some go from one virtual meeting to the next and in the past, they could at least move on or take a break and now we'll just go from one room to the next and it's crazy because You have so many great tools to like a year, we use a project management tool. So I know what Mark my colleagues are working on, or I know when something is finished or without having to meet or to send an email or, yeah,



Pilar Orti 25:19

all of that. And I think that what, so when, when people had to adopt working from home in a crisis, as you're saying, which is very different to what we're talking about, that was rushed, that was let's do what we can, and anything goes great. Now we've got the opportunity to think about how we're doing it. And I think we need to understand that we need to work differently, and we need to redesign a lot. So I think the temptation is there just to go, Okay, well, how do we recreate this? backboard? Yeah, back to normal, but also just so that some people in the office Well, it doesn't matter where they are, but you've got to change how you work. And that's not easy, because this is been ingrained in full, since the beginning of our working life. So some of us and we don't know any other way. Yeah, it's mindset is completely new, it's a completely new way of looking at relationships, as well. Because what I was reading something today is a really good article on wired.co.uk.

And it was great about how if you have some people who are coming into the office all the time, and some people who aren't, you might have two tribes. So that is a very real problem. And I love the article. But there's one thing that I absolutely disagreed with, it said in the end, the people who are online, they or their relationships will always be weak ties, as in you can't have strong relationships if you only met online. And I think that we need to, that is still really, really strong, people still thinking that, because many people haven't had that experience. And I think just things like that we've got to go back to Well, some people will be able to, and some people won't. Some people will have better relationships with people they've only met online and with whom they see online or communicate with text. Some people will have better relationships with people they see in the office. And it's that we've assumed for a very long time that things are the same way for everyone. Yeah, and now is the time that we have to see it's not true.



Murielle Machiels 27:25

I agree. And, and year again, I often say the quality of your relationship is dependent on the quality of your conversations. So if you have deep conversations online, where you share things that are important, or things that you've been through, or that you really care about or Filner abilities, then you create deeper relationships. And so if you do that online, you create this, this great relationship with a person.



Pilar Orti 27:57

Yeah. And we have to be very careful not to give hierarchy to certain mediums. So for example, to your point, we can have a deep conversation online in real time, like we are now we can have a same deep conversation in the office, we can have a shallow conversation in the office, we can have a shallow conversation online, we can have a deep conversation and share quite important thoughts in the written form asynchronously or through our recorded audio. We can have an hour of conversations in the written form. Yeah. So I think that we have to be very careful not to always imply that in the same colocated space in the same physical space, and synchronous is always better than asynchronous and not not in the physical space. So yeah, really checking in with ourselves. Really important. Yeah, I think that you're right, that it's paying attention to the quality of the conversations, not necessarily how that's important.



Murielle Machiels 28:58

Yeah. And I also liked what you said with digitalization. And in the beginning, when people started digitalizing, their products or services, they also did the same as what they did

physically. They tried to, to then copy that online. But then when you advance when you move forward, you notice that digitalization is 180 degree transformation of your business models, your services, your products, and your whole organization. And like you say, working online is exactly the same. And a lot of companies they just tried doing the same as what they were doing at the office, but with online tools. So we are really at the beginning of how we can work online in a very productive way where people can have great lives



Pilar Orti 29:58

and you make me think that There's quite a few companies that had digital products. So again, stuff, they'd figured out how that was different. But the company was still relying on the traditional being in the office together all the time. And I think also that, and I think that again, that has to come with the way in which we view our relationships and our working relationships. And yeah, you've just making me think of that. And even thinking now, I've worked working with an organization whose whose services are online, but they were always they were very, very in person, people. And so we're saying we need to start to apply some of what we've got some of what we're doing in our services to how we operate as it's real. Yeah. It's funny that



Murielle Machiels 30:48

Yeah, and yeah, we were doing the shift like to digitalization, but now I see another shift happening in organizations, and it's to humanisation. So we have to become to humanisation. So, so we have to become humans again. And our customers expect a really great human service where they get get to help and where they can build a relationship with your brand or with your services. But that's also what we need to do with our employees, whether we are at the office, or remote. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And another mistake I see is, like I said, empowerment is very important if we want a successful team, especially online. But many leaders think that empowerment is just about asking people to take more responsibility, and it stops there. Well, there are really different criterias. If you want empowerment. Yeah. Yeah. And do you want to take us through the criteria? Yeah. Yeah, the first one is, we already talked about it a little bit, but I call it clarity, you have to know where you want to go. And especially if you work remotely, you cannot simply ask something to your colleague very rapidly, you could call him but you have to know where you want to go, what your values are your purpose, what you want to do the processes, although they don't have to be fixed, we don't want a very fixed structure. That's, that's another mistake we can make where everything is very clear, because we have to constantly balance between clarity and chaos. Because in chaos, we get the creativity and the flexibility, and then the new ideas. And then when we have the

new ID, we have to have the structure again to implement it. So clarity. And then I call this autonomy. But autonomy is about having the tools, the information, but also the organizational structure where you are not dependent, too much too much dependent on other teams. So cross functional teams work better online. And if you want the empowerment, then the classic functional organization where you are so dependent from other teams, that you have to constantly communicate or spend your time in meetings, trying to get the information.

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Pilar Orti 33:36

I think the one of the kinds of teams that work very well in the online space, of course, are self managed organizations. And I think that that is another thing that organizations could have a very, very strong look at themselves, and see how much hierarchy is going to stop people from being able to do their work independently, or, or not even independently? It's just how are how much is hierarchy stopping people from making decisions? How long people have to wait for? I don't know, three layers up to say, yes. I mean, I was came across an organization that for they said to me, Oh, you don't want to see the threat of emails until we were able to make a decision. And that was no, I don't want to, because what that is telling me is that I do say that everything is that things are not clear that people cannot take decisions that people don't know how to take a decision after consulting. thing also. That is that is important. Empowerment also means access. If I have to make a decision, and I need to talk to someone from another team, but that someone is only going to talk to my manager because blah, blah, blah, blah, yeah, there's not empowerment, that is just delegation of tasks, go and do it, like you said, but also it's about access. And I think again, it's a real rewiring of how we operate at an organizational level.



Murielle Machiels 35:05

So that you have to learn to let go to let go of control to trust and

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Pilar Orti 35:12

and also I would like to see, and of course, senior leadership end up in a lot more meetings because strategy is something that sometimes requires in depth conversations with for most people are, it's easier to have in real time. So that's why they end up in all those meetings. However, wouldn't it be great to say, Well, I'm at this level, I need to be accessible to other people in the organization's as well, I'm going to set half a day a week, to go on the social network on Yammer, for example, internal whatever, we're Facebook,

workplace, or Slack, whatever is the internal place where other people are hanging out? How can I make myself visible to them? They're, I'm visible in the office, that's great. Where else do I need to make myself visible? Where else and because making yourself visible means that you're accessible, it means that again, people who are away from you who need something from you can come to you. So I think empowerment, again, we need to really dig deep into what does it mean? And again, hierarchy structure, communication channels, all of that needs rewiring?



Murielle Machiels 36:20

Yeah, yeah, completely ignore you, I completely agree. And, and also, what we need is a safe environment, where people can take like the, the interpersonal risk for the greater good of your team. And they're you you need that, again, online or offline, or at work or wherever you are, you need to feel safe to, to say that's a bad ID, or to talk about an ID you have. But that might be ridiculous. But you might be able to say it or the feedback, you want to give to someone the transparency that I made a mistake. And we need to fix this. So this, this also is really important. And it's really difficult when you're online, I think this is something that



Pilar Orti 37:16

especially we're not used to it, because a lot of the conversations online, will happen in the written form, if we want this flexibility is going back to this a synchronous communication. And there's something about the written form that still carries a little bit more weight than a casual conversation. So I think we've got to be quite aware of that. And where how do we lay down the safety for that, and what we might need to do to make it a bit safer. So that not every important conversation or every sharing of ideas and stuff happens. written down is? Yeah, there's lots of issues that can arise with that. So I think we also need to think of the again, what does it mean to be psychologically safe here, given the new context?



Murielle Machiels 38:03

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And, yeah, that's, that's true. What you say and I often see, and I think it's it's still true is when you have to give negative feedback to someone, I believe it's still better to take your phone or do a meeting. Because the way you say it, the body language, or the tone of voice, is as important as a message and the interpretation is so difficult when you send an email, it never comes across, as you want it to make it come across when you have something hard to say. I don't know what you think about that.



Pilar Orti 38:51

I, I would agree in some cases, but not necessarily. It also depends what that negative feedback is, I mean, we can go from being very harsh about a written piece of work that needs a lot of reworking right to someone's behavior, which is unacceptable. So again, the same, the same thing that there will be some way you actually Yes, the best media will be a real time, whatever, either. And for some people, the phone might be better than but for some people video might be better. So again, what do we find ourselves is having to evaluate more communication channels than maybe 50 years ago. What I really like is, when we're thinking of difficult conversations I'm going to go into into that rather than feedback is that we can't start working the difficult conversation when we have the conversation. This is something we need to be laying the foundations down for and that the concept of radical candor. That book really opened my eyes, which is if we want to get to the place where we can have difficult conversations either by Email, however, it doesn't matter, we've got to have shown that we care. And we got, we have to have built those relationships. So again, in the online space, we need to be very deliberate and really be looking out for those places where we can say to someone, that piece is great that you just wrote down because ABC or wonderful how you phrase that, or, oh, my God, it was so good in that conversation with that person, you put your point, clearly, you were empathetic, whatever. And really just finding more of these things to bring up. Because then when we have to have the conversation that is difficult, doesn't matter, because that person knows we care. And they know where it's coming from. So this, this is also something that I've learned over the years that in the online space, it's even more important, it's really easy not to do anything when things go well. But you've even if it's just so that things are easier when you get to when things don't go so well. You really got to put the work in.



Murielle Machiels 41:01

Yeah. And I also think, like you say, once the trust is there, and the psychological safety is there, and and it's mainly based on the fact that you know, you will be safe no matter what, then you can start moving away from a difficult conversation, life to maybe saying something online, because you know, you have a good intention. But when you start if that's not in your culture, yet, the interpretations and unfortunately, many people interpret things negatively. We have more negative thoughts than positive thoughts, unfortunately. So we tend to immediately think, yeah, I'm not good enough, or should I, they don't like me, or I'm going to get fired. Or



Pilar Orti 41:52

the irony is that when you work online, you have to work harder at knowing the person as well. So if you, you and I was reading a piece only yesterday, I think it was saying, Yeah, some people don't want to do that, because it's hard. And and some of us are not, we're also not, I mean, this is, this is personality, there's a diversity within this. So I'm not saying that one thing is better than the other. But for people who are not used to or don't want to get to know people so well at work, this is really hard. So it's easier to coast by not knowing someone and just sensing when you are seeing people all the time in the office, same space, once you further apart, you've got to work a lot harder. So again, this is just when we're looking at choice, or how we work, this is also something that we need to be working on.



Murielle Machiels 42:42

Yeah, and when I interview senior leaders and ask about their challenges, almost all the challenges they have are regarding people really resistance to change, engage people, inspire them to follow or implementation and, and but when you look then at the word, they spend almost all their time on operational work, and not enough on people management really, like you say, listening to people and caring about people. And what you're describing is it's true to the work, as we knew it two years ago,



Pilar Orti 43:24

as it is now as it's gonna be, it's that the challenges are the same. And then the online space just means that we have to solve them differently. And that we can't ignore them. Because I think what many people will have realized, especially with what's got to do with team dynamics, and relationships is that when you go into the online space, everything gets amplified. So people who had a very who, again, who had word completely dependent from each other had loads of meetings that was amplified, people who tended in their team just to head down and not say anything that got amplified. So you've got it's all there. It's only that the online space is trickier, because then it just becomes more noticeable.



Murielle Machiels 44:07

Yeah. But also the positive things were amplified. I had a leader that told me, yes, suddenly we were working working remotely. And a plan that would have taken us two or three years to implement. We implemented it in a couple of months, because we were very fast online, so



Pilar Orti 44:28

and trust with teams that had trust, who maybe hadn't realized how much because again, it was taken for granted. suddenly noticed that Yeah, they didn't have to say where they were they just were doing the work. They were available to each other when they weren't available. No one thought that was skiving, they just thought well, not available right now. So I think that yes, you see that as well. So teams with low trust or low psychological safety will struggle more and teams with high psychological safety or hopefully they You won't struggle as much.



Murielle Machiels 45:01

Yeah. And that's why and that's the fourth criteria, it's the leadership has to change from the alpha leader, to the authentic leader that's aware of his behavior. So her behaviors under pressure, because a lot of leaders, they know, they have to listen, they have to allow mistakes, they have to co create, and they know that but as soon as they are under pressure, they get dominant again, and, and can get angry or impatient. And that's why you have to be aware of your behaviors under pressure. And not only that, but stay calm and empathic, even when things are wrong. And like you said, Show trust. And, and for that, also letting go. Sometimes,



Pilar Orti 45:47

I wonder also whether there is a case for not always being calm, and empathetic, because if we want, I mean, that's about showing our human side also. So I think that there's, it goes back to psychological safety to that. Leadership, always seeming to have all the answers or always being in control, is very reassuring. But it doesn't give space to not being in control. It doesn't. So I think, and that is really difficult. Because as you say, something can be knocking you, of course, you don't want it to let that cloud everything and affect you in a way that's not helpful. At the same times, we need to show that we are human, and that it is okay to be knocked off course. And when when you're online, and there's less opportunities for that to just come in. Maybe it has more weight, maybe that, I don't know, sudden loss of control that might be very fleeting, because you're seeing everyone all the time. Suddenly, it happens once in a meeting, for example, and it's got more weight. So again, that awareness needs to increase so that we can it's, for me, it's not about managing that as much better about communicating what that's about a little bit more. I think it's so complex.



Murielle Machiels 47:12

Yeah, but when I mean calm and empathic, it doesn't mean in control. Yeah, yeah. But when you when you become impatient, you start shouting, and your, your triggers and, and fears take over. Well, then you can really, yeah, harm the safe and environment that you create. Yeah. So it's more about being aware of your behaviors. Yeah. And then being in control of your actions, because you know, what you want as a result, and, and a lot of people, they, they don't know, they want people to change. And they will just say to people do this, this this, but that doesn't work. So you won't get the result that you want by doing that. But often, you have to do more respond instead of react. Yeah. Yeah. And and I assessed many teams, and, and then I was looking to the data, and I was looking at different things. And I saw, for instance, if you have a leader that's not able to trust and let go, you have almost zero agility in a team. Yeah. So being able to trust and let go, that's your way to agility. And, and fortunately, working online, like the COVID forced us to do has allowed people to learn to let go and to trust. But unfortunately, for some leaders, it was like, Okay, now I don't have a choice. So I will do it for a couple of months. But now we all have to go back to the office. And I'm going to control again.



Pilar Orti 49:04

Yeah, what is very uncomfortable for some people, because the propensity to trust is something that's so personal. And so if you are someone who has difficulty trusting people and and suddenly you have to trust it, it is really uncomfortable. And I love that you mentioned that you learn to do it. Because this is something that we do need to pay attention and learn to. So going back to your point, you need the self awareness to understand where you are. And then you have to understand whether being different in certain situations will be helpful. And then you've got to understand how to do that. And I think that this is where organizations can support their management and their people a bit more is saying things like, Okay, what do you need to be able to trust people more? What do you need to change within the team or what do you need? To ask from your team, so that you can trust them more, and then make that gradual as well. And I think this is sometimes being missed is that it is very important to trust people when you have distributed way of working, whether that includes the office or not. But for some, it's very difficult. And like you say, there will be some contexts in which you find like, you've got to do it. But then once you're back to the the pressure goes off, and you want to be back to feeling a little bit more comfortable in yourself. That's when you need a little bit more help. Maybe.



Murielle Machiels 50:34

Yeah, that's why I love what you say that we need to take steps and baby steps I, I often

say, if you learn to ski, you're not going to go from the black robe immediately. Yes, you're going to go first on the on the uneasy one, and then on the more difficult one. And it's the same with empowerment, it's the same with letting go with trust. And that's why I believe we need a conversation within our team about what are the conditions of satisfaction, so what do I need to be able to let go, and so that you can make decisions and the team members have also to say what do we need to be able to take more responsibility? And then again, it's a discussion on another level. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Well, it was a nice conversation, I can really see that it's in your DNA that remote teams, you, you really have thought about it, you have a lot of experience, I learned new things. So thank you for that.



Pilar Orti 51:44

It for me, it's just because it really, we it makes us go deep into how we work together. And also who we are as people, which is the irony, because the online world has always been saying, Oh, it's dehumanizing, blah, yeah, it's an opportunity to really, really get to talk about how we work together as people so it's, which is why it's so hard. So thank you very much for Yeah, for the conversation and and all the different content, different ways of seeing it. And also, your experiences really nice. Thank you. Thank you. And so where can people find you? Oh, virtual not distant.com. That's the best place to start. But I'm also on LinkedIn at pillar or T. That's my name. Nice. Okay, and you in case we cross over to the 21st century work life podcast.



Murielle Machiels 52:37

Yes, your your contact. So my name is Murielle Machiels. And you can find me on key leader.com que si leader.com. And key comes from the Chinese it's energy of life. Yeah, and if you want to assess your team, then it's team dot key leader.com. And there you will find a free assessment if you want to measure the level of empowerment of your team. Great. Great. Yeah. Well, thank you. Thank you. working remotely enhanced what was already present when working from home, and it's complexified teamwork for certain aspects. So being intentional in how you want to work together is crucial. When you say he wants more engagement, what type of engagement Are you expecting? When you want more motivation? What are you missing? Is it autonomy mastery purpose. Here again, we see the importance also of values and purpose. Successful distributed organizations, meaning companies with employees working remotely all over the world, are very intentional with their values and purpose. But in a world of choice, and digitalization, we've also seen how important values are to many people. And many of us have been in touch with our mortality and fragility during COVID times, we are we arranging our priorities. And here again, we want meaningful careers in line with our values. So I learned a lot things to biller, and I hope you did as well. Thank you for listening

to us. Thank you for the reviews you leave on the platform. I really appreciate those as well. And have a great week. Yeah, you finished another episode of rebel leader with the hearts if you want more, go to rebel leader with a heart.com for show notes and past episodes. If you love the show, subscribe, leave a review and share it with your friends, the more the merrier. Thanks for tuning in and have a great week you rebel leader with a hearts