

The New Everyday: Episode 2

Eileen Burbidge

Since the start of 2020, we've lived through a period like never before.

Hybrid working changed our office patterns, digital services allowed us to shop or see a doctor from home and digital change has led directly to social change.

Recent research from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) in partnership with Virgin Media O2 Business found that remote working could unlock even more opportunities in the workplace.

Increased remote working could allow part-time staff to work an extra 1.27 billion hours every year, and enable more parents, disabled people and carers to work than ever before.

And that's what we're looking at in this series, The New Everyday, with me, Eileen Burbidge, a podcast from Virgin Media Business.

Today I'm joined by some fantastic guests, who've all been long-time advocates of technology, but particularly in respect to how to build more inclusive workplaces.

First with me is Shani Dhanda, an award-winning disability specialist listed as one of the UK's most influential disabled people, as a practitioner for inclusion across business, government, not for profits and wider society at large Shani helps organisations break down barriers and integrate inclusion into their frameworks.

Thanks for joining me, Shani.

Shani Dhanda

Hi, it's great to be here.

Eileen Burbidge

Brilliant. Then next I'd like to say welcome to Dr Grace Lordan. Grace is the founding director of Inclusion Initiative, as well as being Associate Professor in Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics.

She's also the author of the book, *Think Big, Take Small Steps and Build the Future You Want*.

Hi there, Grace.

Grace Lordan

Hi Eileen.

Eileen Burbidge

Thanks so much for being here. Next, we have Matt Murdoch, from Virgin Media O2, where Matt is head of Commercial Operations and co-chair of Virgin Media O2 career network, We Care, following his own journey as a carer to his wife and daughter through illness. Hey, Matt.

Matt Murdoch

Hi, Eileen.

Eileen Burbidge

Finally, last but not least, we've got Ruth Rainbow who is the chair of the neurodiversity network, Our Indigo Minds, at Virgin Media O2.

Alongside her main role as a Resourcing Delivery Manager, Ruth is also a parent and a carer to two sons, one of which, her eldest lives with autism and dyspraxia. Hi there, Ruth.

Ruth Rainbow

Hey, thank you for having me.

Eileen Burbidge

No, thanks again to all four of you for being here, it's a real privilege to get the chance to speak to all of you and I'm really thrilled that we've got such great representation.

I want to talk about how we can harness and build on the momentum that we've now got around digital change, given the pandemic.

Things like remote and hybrid working have clearly shaken things up over the last year, year and a half, but all of you were campaigning for change well before the pandemic.

If we can rewind for a second, I'd love to start with why you all got into this space and maybe just your personal pathways, if that's all right?

Shani, you're only in your early thirties, you're so accomplished already, but everyone from Vogue to the FT and the BBC have all singled you out, as an important voice in the fight for disability inclusion.

Especially in helping to remove the awkwardness and the fear that businesses have around having those conversations. For people who don't already know you, can you just tell us why this is so important to you, how you got into this and why you've committed so much time and energy to it.

Shani Dhanda

I'm a South Asian woman who experiences disability, so this is my first-hand lived experience and I have had so many experiences where people have judged my ability, based on my appearance, or they've judged what I can and can't do based on the fact that I have a condition.

And I've gone throughout a lot of my life experiencing this and not a lot has changed in the space of disability inclusion.

I really got into this space because I didn't want others to go through the same situation as me, but I wanted to work with businesses to help them really understand that disability isn't about getting diagnoses all the time, it's not about focusing on fixing people.

We just really need to focus on removing the barriers. We need to understand people and how they work best. If we do that, if we focus on removing barriers, only good things happen.

Eileen Burbidge

That's brilliant. It makes economic sense, obviously for the businesses to have more diverse workforces and to be able to have inclusion for disability. Right?

So, thank you for that. Thank you. Grace it's really great to have you here, so that we can get your macro perspective and that from an economist point of view.

About a year ago, I understand you set up the Inclusion Initiative, which uses behavioural science to recognize and improve inclusion in business.

Can you tell us why you felt it was important to set that up and how it compliments everything else that you do?

Grace Lordan

Yeah, so, I studied decision-making, and this is kind of where my journey started working with people who were investing in concentrated portfolios.

So they would pick between companies and one thing that became really clear from working with these people was firstly, when diversity wasn't around the table, they weren't necessarily making very good decisions actually.

In fact, I would say they were making terrible decisions, a lot of the time.

Secondly, without inclusion, without us really actually recognizing that diverse perspectives are good and not shying away from them, the outcomes also tended to be worse.

And from there, I really kind of thought about what does this actually mean for firms.

So the big blue chip firms where people are running teams every day, they have some diversity around the table now, and I do agree that things really have hit a glacier pace.

But a lot of times that diversity isn't getting heard, it's not getting moved along the organisation and really querying why still in 2021, despite us saying that diversity is good for business, very often when diverse perspectives are brought up around tables in some of the biggest corporations in the world, people shy away from them and kind of push them out as outlier ideas.

That's really what the Inclusion Initiative is about. The first thing is for investors, we're measuring inclusion, using data that's external to the firm, so that we can actually rank and based on inclusivity.

The second is when firms say they are doing interventions to increase inclusion and diversity, and I say inclusion and diversity on purpose in that order, we evaluate whether or not it's working.

And I think, like Shani does that, if we do this, we will end up more productive companies and happier workers. So, it's a win-win.

Eileen Burbidge

Fabulous. Thank you so much. Ruth and Matt, you're both carers, obviously full-time workers as well, and you each have stories where you've been able to juggle both, what you have to do as carers, as well as your careers.

Maybe starting with Ruth, could you explain a little bit about your journey and why it became important for you to set up the network, that you set up at work.

And then, the same question to Matt?

Ruth Rainbow

Absolutely. So my background is in resourcing, ironically I went to the LSE, hey Grace, alumni.

I left university and went into agency recruitment, long days, late nights, really enjoyed it.

Like many people who fall into starting a family and wanting to progress, with a different view in life, I started a family and within, by the time my eldest son was three years old, he was diagnosed autistic dyspraxic.

At the point of which perhaps career could start to re-emerge and I could have those focuses, it became increasingly apparent that actually I would need to have a different focus, that the care of my son would be predominant, and early

intervention was key in the diagnosis that he had.

So, yeah, that was a significantly different start in my parenting journey. It did and does, and probably will always continue to affect the kind of job opportunities I can take, as a full-time working parent.

Eileen Burbidge

Thank you for that. Matt, was it a similar realisation for you?

Matt Murdoch

Yeah, I found myself in a caring situation, my daughter was born in 2012 and shortly afterwards, her mum became ill.

That illness resulted in a three-year battle, that battle included transplants, chemotherapy, radiotherapy.

During that time obviously, I was trying to care for my child, trying to care for my wife and trying to do the job that I needed to do to be able to care for my family as well.

That experience taught me a number of things, but one of the reasons that drove me to start The We Care network is actually the value that carers can have to businesses.

Two in three people will become a carer in their lifetime. It's something that impacts the vast majority of us, and they can add a huge amount of value to businesses when they're treated right and supported properly. I want to be a part of the solution to treating them right and supporting them properly.

That's what we're trying to do with We Care.

Eileen Burbidge

No, I think that's amazing. I think there's a lot of people think of business as just transactional, but for me, business is all about the people that run those businesses and empathy is really what drives human behaviour.

I think it's so important, like Grace was saying, it actually impacts the productivity and the output of the businesses. If we can actually funnel all of these different perspectives, doesn't it?

Matt Murdoch

Absolutely.

Ruth Rainbow

And just to interrupt on that. I think one of the things that we need to think about as well is that most businesses fundamentally have a customer at the end of it, whether it's B to B or B to C, there is a customer there.

To Matt's point, if two thirds of that population of carers, that's a lot of your customers in my world, one in seven people are likely to be in the neuro-diverse spectrum in some place, that's a lot of people.

If we're not recognizing those figures, and not speaking to that audience, and not engaging that populace in the right way, then that's ultimately your customers, as well as your people, that you need to engage.

Eileen Burbidge

It's not just being mindful that they're there is your customers, it's knowing actually how to engage with them, right. How to respond to them and what their priorities are, which you know as a carer yourself.

No 100%, I couldn't agree more. If maybe I can go back to Shani and to think about on the disability side, what other barriers are there for disabled people in terms of getting into the workforce? And how do you work with employers to get them to overcome those barriers or to try and break those down?

Shani Dhanda

Yeah. I just want to start by setting the context.

22% of the population in the UK are disabled. They live with a conditional impairment and that works out to be about one in five of us.

Disabled people also faced many unavoidable, extra costs. For example, if someone uses an electric wheelchair, they're going to have to charge a wheelchair pretty much every night, therefore they're going to have a higher energy bill.

These costs actually add up to about £583 a month.

Money is non-negotiable for all of us, right? It's how we live.

When you layer on top of that disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed, have to apply for 60% more jobs and actually, I spent 10 years being an event and project manager, and I was really good at it and other people also told me that too, like, why are you so good at this?

There's so much that disabled people can offer to the workforce, but when we're being continually overlooked, because there seems to be this big stigma that we need very costly adjustments. People might have to knock their buildings down because it might not be accessible, et cetera.

That's why I think technology and the disruption in terms of tech that the pandemic has created. I just think it's a big opportunity.

Personally, I have seen more businesses actively wanting to promote disabled people now, because of this ability to work remotely and to work in a hybrid way.

There is a lot of awkwardness in society about disability, research by the charity Scope shows that two thirds have actively admitted to avoiding a conversation with a disabled person.

Now, if that person is hiring manager, they work in a position where they need to make decisions. They're going to have bias against making decisions, if they're having to make a decision about a disabled person and process.

And personally, my views are that, in the UK the perception of disability is either that you're viewed as a benefit cheat, or that you can only be a Paralympian, and these are very extreme narratives.

Eileen Burbidge

It, is it there for them, just the mindfulness of the employers to recognize that it's not their pre-existing notions or their biases about what it means to engage with disabled people?

Shani Dhanda

Absolutely. What I do is I work with businesses and get them to understand that, at the end of the day we all have abilities and limits to those abilities.

People aren't disabled because of their condition or their impairment.

We only experience disability when we're faced with barriers and bias.

If you think about it, we have to navigate such inaccessible places from our homes, to society, even the supermarkets have been inaccessible to me.

We should be trusted to be within workplaces and to be able to contribute as valued members of society.

Eileen Burbidge

Matt and Ruth, were just hearing from Shani talk about representation, existing biases as carers. When you both had this realisation that you weren't going to be able to carry on with your work in the same way that maybe, the organisation had a bias towards assuming you would be able to do, how did you go about trying to go against the bias that might've been there?

How did you go about articulating what was going to have to change and managing that expectation without then feeding into other biases about whether or not you'd be productive and be able to still contribute?

Matt Murdoch

I mean, one of the barriers that all carers face, obviously there's a lot of intersectionality between Ruth's network, my network, Shani's network, where we face different barriers, but also similar barriers.

One of those is just the default for a lot of things, which is the problem.

For a lot of roles, when people introduce roles, it's a full-time person working in a location.

One of the things I came up against as a carer was, well, actually, I needed more flexibility than that.

Whether it was part-time, full-time over a shorter working week, there was various stages that I needed. The instant response from a lot of people was, 'but that's not what everybody else does'.

And that's really challenging. That was one of the things that I dealt with that was a number of years ago, and things are starting to change, but challenging those defaults of when a job is created.

Why is it in our location? Why does it have to be there? Could it be elsewhere? Can it be hybrid? Actually, could it just be completely home-based? What's the risks and those understandings? I think it's really important that we challenge those defaults, that old way of working.

As a carer, one of the other things I came up against was that change. It wasn't always the same for me, I didn't need to be part-time all the time, it was that change and flexibility.

I'm convinced that the value of the business gets out of allowing the flexibility, is much greater on the business side. I put more effort and energy into the hours I did do, because I was given the opportunity to do what I needed to do.

To care for my family, to care for my child and my wife, I put everything back into that business.

Matt Murdoch

I never missed a minute that I could otherwise do, and I just kept going. I think the business earns that value back from the flexibility, tenfold.

Whether that's in tenacity of the people that you're employing, if you want people that can manage their time, get things done quickly and keep things moving, Carers is a great place to start.

I know that Shani's group is an amazing place to start to find incredibly talented people, giving them the ability to come and work here is actually quite a small adjustment for a business of our size.

That's the experience that I had - removing some of the defaults is really important.

Eileen Burbidge

Amazing. Actually, Ruth, before you jump in, if you don't mind, I'm going to add an extra layer onto yours too.

As women in businesses, I think it's actually been, I've mentioned, I've been in the UK for 17 years, I've had a career now that's 30 years long.

I also mentioned that I co-parent five children, but for a long time, I would not acknowledge that at work. It was not seen as necessarily a positive thing to talk about my children, my family, and other commitments outside of work. For you as a carer or, a child with a disability on top of that, how did you think about how you could articulate to your employer and also in building up your networks, what you would need given the double layering, if you will, of what might be biases, what might be different from the default as Matt was speaking about, and how you then could contribute to work?

Ruth Rainbow

Absolutely. I think anyone who's been in that position where you're a parent and someone questions how you are going to be able to do your job, because you are a parent, because you might have to have caring responsibilities.

That's multiplied when that child has additional needs or has disabilities, to try and create some difference or to try and get some flexibility, you're always coming backwards from a position of you need different, you are other, what you're requesting is not the norm.

Now I think where we are now in terms of our work-life balance, things are significantly different because I suspect that the reality of hybrid working, it has become more accessible for lots of people. But certainly, when I went into working full-time and I found myself, with the title of being a carer, it was really only those in leadership who were able to have some flexibility because, there is that draconian image of the Bentham's tower, having a look, watching people.

What are you doing? Where are you? What are you delivering? I'm actually sometimes explaining to leadership that you might need some flexibility.

Ruth Rainbow

There was often a bit of a glass ceiling and understanding because leadership often do have that flexibility. I think there's lots of intersectionality elements that affect that decision-making process as well.

Shani Dhanda

I think trust is a big theme as well throughout everything, I think all three of us have just spoken about.

If trust isn't there between the organisation and its workforce, then it's never going to work. People will never be trusted to work at home, or even if you're asking for an adjustment or flexibility, from a business' perspective, what you want is a productive workforce.

You don't want people coming into the workplace and having to hide a big part of themselves, or a big part of their lives, because they're going to be focusing and spending more energy and hiding that rather than focusing on, their role and be the best that they can be.

I think that's why trust, is really key to this whole conversation as well.

Eileen Burbidge

No you're right, trust and building up that loyalty is what Matt was speaking about, right? You give people that empowerment and they're going to pay it back to five tenfold.

Ruth Rainbow

I was just going to say, one of the things I think that you experienced as well is, it's kind of those little microaggressions that you pick up on.

Let's say for example, you have a reduced working day, or we might start work early in order to beat the traffic to get back for mealtimes. Things like the microaggressions of, "Oh, X is a really good worker. They were emailing at nine o'clock last night" or "So-and-so is really producing great stuff because, they were in the office until 7:00", and actually the grim reality that sits outside of that, it's often that individual might have floated in late, been to the gym, had a long lunch, not necessarily being productive.

But we've kind of built this culture and we are ebbing away at it slowly, of presenteeism. You have to be there. You have to show your face. You have to have the gossip at the water fountain. You have to catch up over lunch. You have to go to beers after work. You have to be part of that presence and that group. And that's where your networking happens. And that's where you evolve. That's where you are seen to being good at your job.

Now, if your situation is like Matt and I where, at times, you don't have a choice. You have to bolt out the door, as soon as it hits four o'clock there's, if you don't get back, there's going to be tantrums and meltdowns that could last the whole evening. It's not a choice to stay and be part of those conversations.

It's actually, you'd love to do, you'd love to be involved, but you know you can't. Therefore, the productivity you've given in order to get to that point, could be significantly more impressive or have a great higher value, a greater higher value than perhaps someone who's done the presenteeism.

Sometimes to me, it kind of sits around the language with how we communicate with our teams and how we embed that language into our culture of our business, because let's not reward people because they were firing emails really late at night, or say how impressed you are by someone, because they were always at their desk working.

Because, for someone like Matt and I that's the dagger in the heart of everything we try and do. We end up working overtime just to make up for that.

Eileen Burbidge

Sure. It's like what Matt said about breaking down the defaults and something else you said, there's so many different directions I want to go here, but something you mentioned Ruth was about remote and hybrid working, and Shani talked about that too.

I want to get on that very quickly, but just before I do, I want to talk about, because we're talking about what it takes to break down these barriers and get greater inclusion. I think it's important to actually just crystallize a bit what the opportunity cost, or the consequences of not doing this is.

For example, earlier, I mentioned the findings from the CEBR research, and across the country the results from that research suggest that 3.8 million people are currently locked out of work, due to their personal circumstances. They'd be more inclined to take up a job with remote working or with other accommodation, one and a half million of those have a disability, half a million are carers.

Before we go on to remote working and hybrid working, and some of these solutions that we think we're seeing now. I wanted to ask Grace, if you could quantify from, again, an economics point of view, what is the cost to us as a society, as industries, as certain sectors, for people being locked out of work.

Grace Lordan

We don't have precise estimates, but it definitely runs into millions if not billions of pounds.

I think we know this through lab experiments, field experiments, where we bring diverse groups together and we look at what their outcomes are and are they more creative? Are they more innovative? Do they assess risks better?

On the flip side, we can backward look at major decisions that have been made by policy makers and CEOs of the largest companies and look to see the damage. I think, everything that people have been saying, I would like to echo the need to enable talent, regardless of their circumstances.

The one beautiful thing I think about technology and hybrid working, which we're moving on to now, is that the constraints that were there in the past of presenteeism and having to be physically in the office, because we didn't have our own computers in the 1980s, 1990s, everybody does now, or it can be enabled by an employer.

Those constraints need to be lifted.

If we think about the future of inclusion, it really starts with the manager.

I know when Matt was speaking, I really felt empathy because my mom, when I was 24, I was her carer. And it never dawned on me that I wouldn't be her carer actually during that period of time. And, and she passed away and I was with her. I think if my employer hadn't enabled that, and if I had struggled, my career would be very different now.

Really kind of think about when have people in front of us, it's not about, can I get enough productivity out of them on a Monday, a Tuesday or a Wednesday.

It's looking at them as individuals and thinking about the medium and long term, everyone on the call has echoed, maybe I need some time off in the morning, but I would do it in the afternoon or the evening or a different time around my schedule.

And one striking piece of research that's always overlooked, is that flexibility two decades ago was linked to productivity, and those studies were replicated again and again.

If I went out now and ask people to associate a word with flexibility, they would say women, and they would imagine women taking care of their children, juggling the second shift.

Maybe they might imagine somebody who is disabled by their employer and not able to get to work in the way that they want to get to work on that particular day, but they wouldn't think of productivity.

We have to shift that mindset and we have to shift the mindset from watching people, what they're doing on a Monday, to what are they actually producing.

The figures that you have in front of you Eileen, will get so much better. I think for the UK, the US and some other countries who are in a productivity trap, we'll see us being released.

Eileen Burbidge

Yeah. That's brilliant. Bringing Matt back in, through your network, or just through your experience, what have you seen as any big wins over the last year, year and a half?

Matt Murdoch

Remote working has brought some real wins for carers.

The ability to start work in your own home is important, the fact that you're removing the travel time is huge.

A lot of the problems with locations is getting there. It's allowing for timing traffic, it's allowing what happens if I get stuck in traffic on the way back, what happens to the person I'm caring for, whether that's a child, a partner, a neighbour.

It doesn't matter what happens if.

Part of that's been removed by the allowance of remote working, or hybrid working. That's definitely part of it, depending on the type of carer where it's kind of full-time carers, medical.

The ability to be at home and removing that constant fear of what happens if they fall over, what happens if they become ill, what happens if I can't get back in time? It's quite liberating, but it's a double-edged sword.

So I'll be completely honest. Some of the things that Covid brought quickly with hybrid working and home working is detrimental.

My laptop is always on, my laptop is always in this room.

When I'm trying to be the parent and the father, I need to be and want to be. It's that constant there, that the thing in the corner of the room that's drawing, you know you've got more work to do. Sometimes finding the work-life balance, is more difficult.

Eileen Burbidge

Again, so many places I want to, so many directions I want to go with this. One, to pick up on what you were talking about with respect to the dangers of being always on. Secondly, in terms of hiring or recruiting people, actually, Ruth, you do a lot of hiring in your role. How has that changed with remote or hybrid working, either through the interview process and the recruitment process, or even onboarding new team members.

Ruth Rainbow

Okay. I'll try and take the always-on piece first, just as the synergy from Matt, because he's absolutely right, it's a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, I've absolutely loved the notion of team, not necessarily being this very linear structure of people who happen to report to the same person, my identity within the organisation, my sense of team, what I deliver.

Matt and I have never met, Matt and I have spoken on the phone a couple of times a week, every week for a number of months. We've built a great relationship and we work, and we deliver things together and we find synergies and that's purely within the network, but that context of being able to broaden your positioning, and what you do, and how you interact and how you work. I think, from a commercial perspective, that's been absolutely ground-breaking for me personally and professionally.

I'm sure for many others that when we were in lockdown, the children saw me say, shush, no, please. Having to put work first, before that was something that happened outside of the home.

At times that has been emotionally tough and draining, when you are constantly telling the children, they are not important, you cannot give them the time.

In regards to the resourcing, clearly that's my day job, that's my passion and my 20 years' experience. It's a really broad question, I can take that from so many angles.

But from an engagement and attraction perspective for Virgin Media, we're a massive brand, pretty recession-proof.

When other businesses may have been having difficult times, we saw the cottage industries collapse, we saw service, hospitality, travel education, close doors.

There are opportunities there, particularly from a volume hiring perspective from we talk about things like our customer contact, our early talent, our emerging roles to really onboard and engage, candidates who might not necessarily have come to us before.

We could onboard people digitally. We could do all of the training and the learning and development piece was entirely digital. The assessment was entirely digital, and we could send out laptops to facilitate that to happen. We did really well in that space because we were able to do some pretty impactful work.

When Covid hit, we were already positioned with lots of things on our side to be able to grow at pace and scale. I think that would be significantly less for other businesses who perhaps didn't have that attraction in the first place.

Eileen Burbidge

No, I think you're absolutely right. We've been talking a lot about digital change and remote hybrid working. I want to stick on obviously the emphasis and the impact of technology.

Before we do that, I feel like we'd be remiss not to mention that something else that I think has been really monumental over the last couple of years, is the Black Lives Matter movement. Aside from the politics of that, I really feel like that helped underscore and amplify the need to have conversations about wider inclusion. As that enveloped with everything else, back to technology and digital change, wondering what everyone's thoughts are, on what else we think technology can help with, how else can it help?

Shani Dhanda

Disabled people are one of the most, socially isolated group of people due to living in an inaccessible world.

Technology has massively helped with connectivity, whether that be within work, social events were suddenly very accessible to people where they hadn't been before, but also things outside of work as well. I spoke at a virtual pub called The Stake Inn, and there were disabled people there from across the world, that probably never would have happened if it wasn't for the pandemic.

I've just seen the most beautiful things come out of using technology to connect people, in different ways.

Eileen Burbidge

Right, thank you. Grace.

Grace Lordan

I mean, I think technology is shaping the entire way that we work, isn't it because, knowledge doesn't have value anymore because anybody can Google something and find it out. Where our edge is, bringing people together who actually see the knowledge on the screen in different ways that we can connect dots and innovate and create, and kind of assess risk better.

That really speaks directly to the diversity mindset. So, for me, the technology on an individual level has sped up what I do. It's very easy for me, to write a proposal, to find out a fact, to have a conversation with a colleague, you can do all of that now with the aid of technology.

But, for the workforces of the future, because of what technology is giving us, it underscores the need to actually bring diverse perspectives together, in a way where we're excited about the fact that people don't agree with each other and people don't see the world the same way, because that's, what's actually going to move us forward.

Eileen Burbidge

How do you think we can push employers to adopt more change? And are there other things that you think more people need to be doing or more broadly we need to be talking about?

Grace Lordan

I mean, if we think about kind of social norms change, and that's really what we're talking about, there's kind of two ways to change them.

Major events, you mentioned Black Lives Matter and the murder of George Floyd, and I think that absolutely did raise awareness of black professional people, within the organisations that I'm working in.

And there has been some progress, I would say that there was probably more virtue signalling than progress, but it remains to be seen whether that actually transpires, but the second is tipping.

And I really believe fundamentally that as long as human resources are in charge of diversity and inclusion, we're not going to see the gains that we actually want to see within the workplaces.

Every leader should be an inclusive leader. So, I teach executive inclusive leadership at the LSE. If I'm talking to you Eileen in a decade and it's just called leadership full stop, then I'll know that we've probably made the progress in the direction that we deserve.

Grace Lordan

I think if people are turned off by the idea of inclusive leadership, they're not the leaders that we actually need in our company.

When we're hiring people, we should hire them based on the competency to do the job as we've always done. If we're thinking that this is going to be somebody who will accelerate in the organisation asking the question, are they inclusive or are they going to be just about themselves?

And I think if we focus on bringing inclusive leaders into the workplace, myself, Shani, you, other people who are, who have diverse characteristics, we'll find ourselves around the table much more regularly, than we are at this present moment in time.

Eileen Burbidge

No, I love what you're saying and it's absolutely right.

If I'm hearing you right, inclusive businesses come from inclusive leaders. Do you think there's more that we can use digital or technology to do in order to maybe help inform or educate those leaders of tomorrow, leaders at all parts of the organisation?

You mentioned you teach, for example, what else, what other digital interventions do you think? I mean, you've said it's taken over everything that we do. Do you think there's anything we're missing or haven't taken advantage of?

Grace Lordan

There's a lot of learning that has to be done by leaders across the organisation, from the mid-level manager through to the C-suite about having hard conversations, but also hearing about the challenges that talent that's actually being left behind or having.

So, the idea of reverse mentoring and it isn't really possible today to have all of our meetings, all physically in one place.

Opening up that channel where we're doing these one-on-one meetings online, is an amazing guess. And, and for me, being able to put up education, that's free online, remove some of the barriers that previously people had to go to the LSE or pay some other university in order to learn something. There isn't any excuse actually for not being an inclusive leader, only that you're not accessing your digital content properly.

Eileen Burbidge

Right. So it's the accessibility piece. And actually, then back to Shani. Yeah, I was getting that's a perfect cue for you, but also maybe as a final question.

What's the one single thing you would urge business leaders, to do straightaway as a near term tactical thing in order to try and be more inclusive as business, or to have more inclusive leadership?

Shani Dhanda

More broadly for inclusion and diversity is to understand the difference between what they all mean. People think that these terms all mean the same things.

But diversity is a count, it's a measurement, inclusion is an action and belonging is a feeling that you have when you're not masking who you are, when you don't have to hide a big identity that you might have.

I think that's the best place to start, to actually understand what this means. Because working in this space, I know people use all these terms very interchangeably, but can I just say, I love every phrase that Grace has said today.

I'm like, yes, I'm cheering on from here, I absolutely love it. It is in our own self-interest to be allies to people from diverse and oppressed groups, because ultimately our own struggles are tied to everybody else's.

So that's another piece of advice I would give, you need to see yourself as an ally. You can't just say, yes, I'm an ally. You have to actively be one.

If this feels uncomfortable, then you're doing a good job because this work, especially in this space of inclusion, belonging, if it feels comfortable, I don't think you're doing it right personally.

Grace Lordan

I would love to connect Shani with you after the show.

I have to say what you said about, covering and the resilience of individuals really sticking up on me at the start of this, I'm type one diabetic, and I have covered from time to time, not just told people that I have the illness and if I was having a hypo, I would hide it.

And you mentioned something about resilience. If you think about the muscles that people have to build in order to cover, if you could strip that away so people felt like they belong, like you've just described. Imagine the productivity gains that we would have within the organisations.

Eileen Burbidge

I love that you might connect afterwards and stay in touch. Shani how can other people connect with your work or follow through with what you've been talking about today?

Shani Dhanda

Sure. I'm also the co-chair of Ultraviolet, which is Virgin Media O2's disability network. As for me more generally, just ShaniDhanda.com or @ShaniDhanda on all socials.

Eileen Burbidge

Amazing. Matt, Ruth?

Matt Murdoch

So, from a We Care perspective, whether it's as a carer or as an ally, education and understanding of what's happening in carers and the changes we're trying to deliver is really important, so we welcome everybody to come and join.

Ruth Rainbow

Absolutely. So I think the big thing for me is that diversity's quite a new word, right? We're just landing it in society. People are just beginning to understand and it's okay to not understand.

So, what I would say to anyone is, if one in seven people are on the new diverse spectrum, whether it's yourself, someone that you live with, someone that you share your life with, it could be someone that you may do in the future, it could be someone you work with, it could be somewhere you're going to employ. At some point, your life will touch someone who is ND.

And it's just a great thing to go find out about because, not only do we talk about new diversity from a disability perspective, but there's a whole range of super skills and creativity and positive sides to it as well. We really learn that message really strongly.

Eileen Burbidge

Thank you so much. Grace, we've talked about your book when I introduced you, what other resources would you point people to, if they want to find out more about what you're doing with behavioural science and everything else that you do.

Grace Lordan

Do check out the [Inclusion Initiative at the LSE](#). We have a bunch of free resources. There is no, absolutely no paywall. I would love to get feedback on that. My website is www.gracelordan.com and Twitter is @gracelordan_.

Eileen Burbidge

Amazing. Thank you, so much. It's been so fascinating for me, really appreciated everyone's thoughts and contributions.

I hope everyone who's been listening has enjoyed it as much as I have.

If you have, please hit subscribe so you can stay up to date on upcoming episodes.

If you want more information on the research that's been mentioned, as well as how technology is transforming, how we live and work for the better search for Virgin Media Business CEBR, online.

But with that, it's just been such a pleasure. I'm really grateful for all of the thoughts. I'm sorry we didn't have even more time to go into more specifics with everybody's specific areas of expertise and pathways but thank you so much for being with me today and for everything that you've offered.

All guests

Thank you, Eileen. Cheers. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Eileen Burbidge

In the next episode, *Jumpstarting digital change*, we'll be taking a look under the bonnet of businesses.

We'll discover how hybrid working is creating happier employees, more satisfied customers, more productive businesses, and where to go next. Until then, this is me, Eileen Burbidge. Thanks so much for listening.