

## The Joy Factory – Being Ourselves At Work Episode

2s Welcome to The Joy Factory, where we explore the art of happiness at work. I'm Susan De Fazio, your host and founder of Be Future Ready Today, where we develop toolkits that simplify our world of work and empower the how for happier and healthier outcomes so that people and businesses can truly thrive. Our podcast, s come from all walks of life, and today we're welcoming Emma Louden. Welcome, Emma.

Hi, Susan. Really lovely to have you on this week's episode. A little bit of background on Emma. Emma is a senior people leader who's driven to improve the employee experience and is passionate about creating an inclusive culture where people can really be at their best. Emma is hub, people leader and digital and chair of CIPD's Mid, Scotland branch. So, Emma, given the scope of her roles and the breadth and depth of her personal journey, we're really keen to explore the thoughts and experiences of this week's theme, which is being yourself at Work, where we'll talk about finding the right conditions, becoming comfortable and fulfilled, and creating respectful boundaries whilst nurturing others. But first, Emma, I'd like to kick off our conversation by asking you personally, what does joy mean to you?

Thanks, Susan. Yeah, I think for me, reflecting on this question, seeing joy in others is really what joy means to me. That's where I get my enjoyment from, whether that is family and friends, whether it's colleagues. And then, I guess from kind of personal perspective, then, 1s beyond seeing it in others, it's very much about achievements and satisfaction. It can be the smallest of things, whether, I don't know, you've had the spring clean in the house and that gets you feeling great, that you've achieved something, or actually you've delivered a really brilliant project at work or you've made an impact on others. I think that's really where I get joy from.

Yes, it's interesting, isn't it? Because there's so many facets to happiness and joy and there's almost like kind of a scale. I'm smiling because you're talking about giving the house a good spring clean. When you're in the mood for doing it and you get it done, it almost gives you this sort of high. Exactly. 2s When I think about happiness, I'm thinking about fulfillment. And I've been doing the more I do this, the more conversations I have. I sort of reflect on what it means for me, and certainly it is that making sure that you're connecting to people in the right way. For me, it's about clarity of where I'm going and how I'm going to get there. And then being quite deliberate about the choices I make, really sort of making sure that I don't set myself up for being unhappy. So I hear what you're saying. It sort of takes on different guises, doesn't it? And fulfillment just means different things to different people at different times of their 1s journey

completely. And actually, at the start of the year, where we are at the moment, 1s it's quite a reflective time, isn't it? And when you're talking about clarity and choices, it's that New Year resolution point in the workplace that might be setting your goals and objectives, planning what you want to achieve across the year. But actually it is about direction. And it goes back to one of my original points on what joy means to me achievement and satisfaction. It's

feeling that you're making progress, that you're proud of something that you've done. It's a sense of achievement, really.

Absolutely. And because we spend so much of our time in the workplace, <sup>1s</sup> I saw read some research recently that says that an average sort of working adult lifespan will spend 13 years and two months working of their entire time. So, of course, it's a significant part of our lives. So finding that great place to work where we can really align our own personal values with that of the organization and really bring our whole self to work has a huge impact, doesn't it, on supporting our growth and avoiding that horrible dreaded Monday morning because we've all felt it. In terms of your experiences, Emma, finding the right conditions, let's start with that. What are your reflections on finding the right conditions? Sort of good and bad.

Yes, I think for me, I was reflecting back over my own career journey on this, and I've had some okay workplaces, I've had some amazing workplaces. And then there's definitely been those negative ones along the journey. And I was kind of thinking, what is it that makes if I start from that finding the right conditions, what makes it not great? And whether that is there's office politics, power struggles, whether <sup>1s</sup> the role that you're doing doesn't fulfill you or you can ABOX in and not really give an opportunity for growth. That's some of the things, <sup>1s</sup> I guess, go back to kind of what we're talking about, of being yourself at work, and it doesn't quite feel right. You feel that perhaps you're going to work on guard. It might be you've got that you spoke about that dreaded feeling that you don't want to get up in the morning. <sup>1s</sup> You're thinking, what else can I do? I'm on the job site, I'm looking for other things. <sup>1s</sup> When those workplaces aren't great, you're not excited about getting up and coming to work, whether it's about the culture of the business that you're part of or the rules. Just not quite right. <sup>2s</sup> Yeah. What do you think? Given that you've experienced the sort of the yin and the yang of <sup>1s</sup> conditions at work and productive and connected conditions at work,

could you have a go at describing what you feel the right conditions are <sup>1s</sup> for allowing individuals to be themselves at work, to bring their whole self to work?

Yeah. I think for me, some of the core things that really feed into that is that values and culture. Whether if I look at where I am at the moment and we've got three really simple values of wonder, share and delight, and I can connect to them, <sup>1s</sup> they fit with my wider values that I've got, which are focused on achievement, transparency, challenge, wonders in there as well. For me, And I think values are at a real core of it, because values feed into those ways of working within organizations. They feed into how you recruit people into the organization and align to that and then wider to that is probably another core part I would call out as connections. <sup>1s</sup> It's those colleagues that you work with, the people they interact with in your team or the wider organization. <sup>1s</sup> Those are the things, if I think about the magic of where I'm at just now and why it's a really great environment to be yourself at work, those things make a massive difference. And even down to I don't know if we've touched on this before we've spoken, but even it's small things that we do. So in my current environment, we have our job title and we have our antitrust, and that antitrust tells everybody a little bit about who you are outside of work as well. So I am a pupil leader. And Austin Baker <sup>1s</sup> We've got a whole range of people, and that helps. Then it goes back to that connections part,

because it helps you connect on a personal level to your colleagues, not just on a day to day job level as well.

I think it's magnificent, actually, but it's really quite a simple thing, having those titles, because, yes, you want to make that connection, but being visible about your identity beyond a job title really does help people quite quickly get a sense of because immediately I'm thinking, 3s being an Olsen baby. Care. I love baking and if we were working together every day, of course we wouldn't talk about cooking every day, but it is that you've got that affinity, I think, with somebody or it opens a door to ask questions. If you're not clear 1s if I was a rubbish baker, for instance, you go, gosh Emma, give me some what are your top three tips type of thing. And all of a sudden you're connecting beyond the work task, as it were. But it's so important 2s to 2s the way the organization works to have that connection, do you think? Oh,

completely. And I'm sure if we all reflected on what's made or workplaces fun or who are those people that you've really kind of gelled with? And usually it's not just a purely work relationship, is it? There's usually whether that you've got shared values, whether that you've got something in common, but you get to know each other beyond coming in and the job that you do. So I think that it all feeds into that connections part because 1s you feel comfortable that actually 2s linking back to my current place. Feel comfortable that people are supporting you, they've got your back. If you make mistakes that you can be really I go back to my values, I can be really transparent, I can be really honest about it. But you know, that then you've got that connection, that relationship that then they will work with you and they'll collaborate with you. 3s Connections, I think, is hugely strong in making being yourself at work because it's that psychological safety that comes into it as well, isn't it?

Absolutely. 4s When we're describing this, 1s you talked about the values and the culture. 3s Of course we know that leaders, 1s it comes from the top, but so often I've worked in organizations either inside or sort of supporting them from an outside in perspective and what they say in terms of their culture or their values, there's almost subcultures that seem to emerge. And for me, my sort of reflections on that is that it's very dependent on the leadership. So it can just all be about the founder of the CEO or the CEO, it's got to go through the leadership as well. So what are your thoughts about how leaders keep that that sort of compass, that sort of values compass alive and going? 1s And connected to the overall purpose of the organization. That must be really important.

Yeah. And again, I'll link it back into context of where I am at the moment. Our business is still young and there was a huge amount of thought put in by our founder around about what our culture would be and as I called it, our values. Three simple words, but the jet genuinely run through everything that we do. And to your point about leaders, leaders then keep that alive. They role model it and I guess 1s for me it's how do we hold the leaders and business accountable to that? And where do we call out I've been in the not so positive businesses where you could have all the leaders are fantastic and then there's one individual where actually their behavior is not what you would expect from the culture of the business. And then it comes down to that integrity in the business. Are you going to accept that? And that risks, I guess you called out those subcultures that can take place. Does it risk that? 1s Is it small enough that it just impacts a pocket and businesses are willing to accept that? Or is it

actually then that starts to peep through and it damages the culture that you're holding within the organization. 3s And there's lots of leaders should be holding each other accountable for this. It might be people professionals are involved in that. It might be the employees and the team members. Again, that's about how you create that culture. Have you got a really safe environment where feedback and real radical candor happens there or not?

Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? Because 1s radical candor. I like how you have phrased that because 3s particularly if you're more junior in the organization or newer or have a lower status role, if I can put it like that, it is often harder to flag things that are perhaps running counter to what 2s the senior leaders are saying. So if there's leaders not behaving in the right way, there's got to be sort of mechanisms in place, I think and an openness 2s the hierarchy within the organization set so that people find it safe to be able to challenge and safe to be able to voice their concerns. 1s I'm interested in 2s your experience in transitioning because it's clear to me that in and you feel very comfortable. To bring your whole self to work, which is fantastic. You found a happy place, as it were, but how was that transition into that workplace culture? I mean, if you've worked in organizations that perhaps it wasn't as strong, 1s how did you cope with that transition? Because that might

not wasn't I was fortunate that had other positive experience before jumping into and moving into other roles? I remember having a real suspicion when my new manager was taking a genuine interest in me. And I'm thinking, why we should be asking that. She must be asking that for ulterior motives. Why would she be interested in that? And that came back to when I was talking about some of those negative workplace experiences that came back to that where you felt that you were on guard. So to be in an environment where actually the team is quite open and your manager is genuinely there to help you grow and to do your best in the workplace, that was definitely unsettling. And I think sometimes the culture we're at at the moment is fantastic, but there will definitely be people who join us that go, wow, this is a bit different than we've been before. What's going on here?

Some of the things we do now. It's about how we've got a really 2s fantastic onboarding experience. Because actually that sets the scene when people are coming into the business, but then it's not so disconnected that then when they land with their team after that period that, oh, this is different to what we were told on that through that recruitment process or through that onboarding process. 2s It definitely was a bit of a bumpy experience I've had in the past of moving back. 1s But actually, once you get past that kind of fear and go, oh, it's not just on the surface, there's nothing underlying here, then you're not suspicious. You're not suspicious.

That was if I think about that period of my career, that was still a gradual journey to be able to kind of be comfortable enough that if it was my manager or another team member giving me kind of feedback. That me. Understanding that Feedback was coming from a good place to help me rather than I've definitely been in those teams before where Feedback was there to punish you. 3s There's not many organizations, I don't think, out there that got that perfect, really open, transparent. I think everybody's aspiring to it, but it's tough to get. I've read the Netflix No Rules Rules book and their kind of feedback model on the forays, and that would be great that all organizations operate in. That way. But I think often it's a journey and it's

very much driven by the experiences that different people bring in and where everybody is on being able to have that radical candor that we can spoke about.

Yes. And so really, if I think about being becoming comfortable, what you said is that what helps individuals become comfortable? They're sort of almost two two aspects to if I can kind of boil it down to that, is that it is about your leader or taking interest in you and that you can in a way that is 2s filled with integrity and you're able to show your strength but also be vulnerable. So it's that building that connection sort of peer to peer and with your bosses aware. 1s But also you talked about a great onboarding experience. And it's interesting because my view and what I see 1s out in the marketplace generally is that recruiting, attracting and recruiting, 2s it's a magic there and organizations can be really good at that. But then when it gets to the onboarding piece, it can almost, 2s I don't know, fumble. It kind of feels a little bit so the fact that and has this great onboarding experience, it allows people to enter a new environment and just settle themselves in. And that's really good to hear because 2s I just think onboarding is an underdeveloped, shall I say underdeveloped competency that organizations, I think, need to focus on because I think it makes a massive difference to that connectedness from why should I join this? How does it help me as an individual? 1s But I'm now in a place where I can really thrive.

It really does. I think we've all kind of had those experiences where, oh, there's your desk, right, and I get to work. And 2s the cost of recruiting and the cost of replacing in businesses is huge. So invest. You want people to have the best experience. You want them then to be able to perform their best. Otherwise you wasted all that time doing the recruitment in the first place. So give them that space and time, make the connections, can join the dots for them as they're joining the business. 1s Think about certainly our onboarding process is not it still since I joined the business years ago. But whether it is that you're. A session from our founder to talk about what is the vision, how did we even begin through to talk about psychological safety or feedback or values or culture. Of course there's the most practical things around about systems and kind of doing your job and things like that, but actually 3s a culture then and really allows you to 1s it's joining the dots. Really joining the dots and setting people up for success. I think 1s beyond that, when you say setting up for success, there was this sort of the traditional model. I'll put it like that where you joined and you did that role, and you didn't step out of those boundaries unless you were sort of part of succession planning or that 1s you just felt that, okay, I look at that particular job role, and I identify with the tasks in there, and I want to aim for that. In terms of your trajectory, but for me now I see a workforce that is made up of people who 2s want to grow, want to have experiences, don't necessarily want to have the confines of a particular job role. First of all, would you agree with that? Is that what you're seeing, Emma? And secondly, if you do, how do you within the context of getting work done and fulfilling the objectives that the business is set, how do you kind of give that flexibility within roles without boxing people in?

Yeah, it's a tough certainly go back to the original question. Yes, absolutely see that I don't think careers are so linear as they used to be and therefore you get the most growth from being able to kind of flex. And 1s we could do a whole other podcast on even just our approach to growth. I'll just quickly touch on it. But our business is we operate in an agile methodology and our approach to people's growth, we borrow from that and we talk about

people being the product owners of their own careers. So moving away from that parental approach to performance management or growth or succession plan and that perhaps I've experienced in other businesses to how can you empower people to really drive the ownership of what direction they want to head in? And then how do you create opportunities? And a real kind of personal example, if I think when I joined MC current organization, 1s one of the skills I was less comfortable with. Was presenting to others and I realized quite early on that was something that can encompass my role. But actually what I had the flexibility and autonomy to do was then to find my own path about how I wanted to upskill in that it wasn't I've been in those places before. Again, you have a manager who said yes, you go and do this course and then that will have you at that level. Actually, for me it was finding something I connected with and 2s it's a Google initiative called I Am Remarkable that I went along to kind of networking session that they ran this thought this was great, and then thought actually do you know what? They give support and you can become a facilitator. It's not a paid role, it's just a volunteering role, I guess. But that was a path that then I chose that I would go and do because it would help me in my day to day job. But actually it gave me something that I was quite interested and passionate about. Go back to that original question of what does Joy mean to me? And me delivering that workshop allows me to enjoy in others because it talks about achievements, it talks about accomplishments and it really uplifts individuals, I guess, even understanding why for some people it's really difficult to do that. But 1s that was a pathway of me upskilling gave benefit to my role. Actually. I fit it around everything else that I do and I still run it and that's kind of an example of that. And we've got lots of little pockets of where people are passionate about things, whether it's a community of practice, 2s but people have that flight, I guess it's moving away in business from that real militant you will work nine until 05:30. And actually it's changing that focus. I think COVID has really pushed along, hasn't it, of output and therefore trust your people as adults and professionals to manage their day to fit in. Of course, there's always core deliverables of your role, but then it just flex it to the other things that will help you grow, develop or just make you happy at work. Yeah, 3s first of all, I love the example that you shared about I Am Remarkable. I will go and have a look at that now that you've shared that with me. Because I think 2s as we grow as individuals, 2s you actually channel that back into the work that you're doing, whether it's within the company, sort of boundaries, if you like, or within the community. And I think 1s it's about that connectedness of growing yourself, but also giving something back to others to help them grow and to help facilitate and build 1s resilience or confidence or whatever it is that people are. Seeking. So I love that 2s fulfillment. 1s It's empowering fulfillment, I suppose, isn't it? You're given the right conditions, but you're also being proactive yourself and saying, okay, what can I do to help myself grow as an individual? So 1s I really like that. And I think it kind of makes me think about 1s as you're creating the right conditions and 1s you're allowing people to become comfortable and then giving them the opportunity to 1s be successful in the rule number one, but also be fulfilled beyond those sort of confinements of a rule. What about the aspect of being yourself? Because we all have things that we feel vulnerable about, or we all have challenges. I call it the spillover effect 1s when things in your personal life are perhaps not going as well as you might like. So we all have those ebbs and flows. What's your experience, Emma, of being able to 1s be supportive as a leader, 1s but at the same time creating those 1s boundaries while you're nurturing that environment, of allowing people to reveal themselves, maybe start even with that. I've gone back to other more traditional environments, or perhaps not as positive cultures as I've

experienced where I am. I've been in those places where you're at work, so therefore you're professional and you're doing your job, and nothing personal goes on about that. But actually, we all employ humans. Humans are messy. There's not a defined line between work and personal and what else is going on for someone, whether that is from a health perspective, from a family perspective, whatever it may be. There's always things that can bubble over and go back to being yourself at work. For me, I went through really kind of bumpy times personally as a teenager, and I can think about other work environments that I've been in the past. And actually, if I'd been there, I probably would have had to have taken time off work. My stress levels would have been higher. **2s** Who knows that I've even got to the point of just saying, you know what? I'm going to have to resign because the balance is so far on the other side around about actually just now, I need to spend some time to focus on family. But actually the experience that I've had and being in a really kind of people for supportive culture. **1s** Is that actually what I was able to do first and foremost, most I've got some brilliant support in place so being able to reach out to well-being support and to get a counselor in place, **3s** really simple. But in lots of organizations, you wouldn't be able to do this. But then to be able to openly talk about it and if as a senior leader in the business myself, that I can talk to others about, yeah, I picked up the phone and I got some counselor support that vulnerability as a leader to then allow others to kind of recognize that that support. And then I think it comes down to you spoke about what's the boundaries, I guess, with it as well. **2s** It's in your choice about who you share that with or how much you share. **2s** I was a really fortunate position at that point when that kind of started for me. I was in a part of the business, you know, that approximately 80, 90 people and I was able to share what I've got something personal going on at the moment that didn't impact how respected I was in the business. It didn't change my ability to do my job. But actually **1s** again, I think back to some previous experiences, I'm sure we've all had interaction with colleagues and you thought, god, what's wrong with them today? Actually in having a little bit of understanding that we've all got things bubbling around under the surface, **2s** there's a balance. Because, actually, if I came into work every day and I spoke about that and I gave everybody the ins and outs of what was maybe going on outside of work, I'm not going to achieve my role. Actually, that starts negatively impacting another. So there is careful boundaries about **1s** where do you get your support and where's just I guess a building and awareness from others.

Yes, I think you're right because it's just acknowledging I'm dealing with something really tricky at the moment, or **2s** however it is you want to put it. I think in the workplace we all have to get better at perhaps **1s** just reading the room and seeing when somebody maybe and it can be nonverbal things **1s** it's sometimes a feeling that you pick up on and then saying is everything okay? Do you need any can I help? Or whatever. But it's saying **1s** I think the other thing with shading things, perhaps more of a personal nature is that you really as an individual, you don't need to over explain **3s** there's a way of saying I'm dealing with something tricky and you will pick the individuals in your. **1s** In your community at work where it's appropriate maybe to share that a little bit more, whether it's with, as you said, with well-being, support, or just that it's a full stop, I'm just going through something **1s** I may need to leave absolutely on time or before time or whatever it is, what the ramifications are. But like you, I've definitely been in **2s** in environments in the past. And one that kind of comes to mind was **2s** many years ago, I was going through a divorce, and I just felt I could not tell

anybody 2s in the business because I don't know whether or not I felt judged or whatever, but I didn't want to show that vulnerability. But inside I was dying, and I'm sure it must have affected me. And I think if I had been maybe just felt more comfortable, I think that it's that reassurance that you can just say, okay, breathe. This is going on. But this work can be actually, in many ways, when you're going through challenging times, it can be a bit of a savior, as long as you get the balance right, because mentally it's a distraction, don't you think?

Yes, completely. 1s Just smiled when you're talking about your experience as well, because they brought back an emery of I remember working in one workplace, and at that point, I was a single mum, and I didn't even want to share that because I thought I would be judged. It just shows the contrast to where I am now. 3s I guess where I sit on this is actually if you want to get the best from your people and you want to have your own personal best experience at work, 1s everything from whether we celebrate life events of baby being born, people move in house, birthdays, whatever that may be, why shouldn't we be able to do the flip side of that? Whether someone's going through a real kind of health worry or 2s there's something personal going on. 1s I guess what I'm trying to say is it feels great to be in such a safe environment where you can share what you choose to share. And actually, colleagues are not in the position that they'll ask more or they're being nosy, or they'll gossip about it behind your back, 3s understand somebody's having a bit of a tough time. And, yeah, again, it's way back to the what does happiness work? Community and connections is back there, isn't it? It's about having your tribe, having your support group. That's in the workplace, too.

Yeah, absolutely. And I do think, 2s as independent. Individuals. 2s I've not always been good with this. So I'm talking from 1s a place where I've had to really work on this. And that is you have to be very clear about what's important to you and do the work in the same way you do your shopping list you do it, or the same way you approach something else, which is pretty fundamental to getting some control and confidence in your life. But you have to be quite methodological. There has to be a method, I think, that you go through where you say, okay, as life evolves, 1s things change. You talked about an example with your family, so things change. So what is important to me, so do that stock take of what are my values? Does it align with the workplace? Is the workplace really 1s mirroring those? Do I see that I'm getting or I'm creating a sense of belonging? And am I being helped with that? 4s There's personal accountability in there, isn't there?

Definitely. And I know I can realize when I was talking about, I understand how lucky a position I am, and to be in such a positive culture of organization and 1s my wider HR network. I do hear the horror stories of other organizations. 3s I recognize it's not always an individual's control, but you do take some accountability about evaluating, does this align with me? Is this the right environment? What can I do to change this? Whether that's I can stay where I am and change things, or actually I need to step away. 2s It goes back to your point, isn't it? How many hours, how many days, how many years we spend at work? 1s Wouldn't it be a miserable life if we spent that time in an organization or a rule or a culture that wasn't enjoyable? Yeah,



it is a fascinating subject about bringing ourselves to work. And I'm conscious of time. I thought I'd do a little bit of a recap. I mean, there's so many things that you've said, and I thank you because I think it reveals in real life what it can mean to bring your whole self to work. One of the things I love about what you've said is that there's a couple of things, actually, or more than a couple, but I'll put them in my summary. But this radical candor if you are in an organization where you can be. Be honest and transparent and be direct and still feel whole and still respected, then you're in a pretty special place, I think. But if you're not, you can make some choices. And that piece about I am remarkable. I think focusing on our growth and how we help others is really important. 1s Some of the stuff that I've looked at in terms of 1s bringing ourselves, our whole selves to work and the way we make connections, one of the final takeaways that I think is important is think of your organization as a community, just like you would. 1s We talk about families, don't we? Families are either functional or dysfunctional or they can be both. If you think about your organization as a community, then you can really think, can I really reveal myself as a person I am and be happy and celebrated for doing that? That's the one sort of thing that I would see is about bringing your whole self to work. What do you think?

Absolutely. And I think it's a good thing to kind of pause and evaluate it in that way. Definitely.

Any final thoughts from you, Emma? 1s I think it's been fascinating to get involved in this and chat about it, because even taking that time to reflect on the journey, the organizations, the roles, the colleagues that I've had over time, I think has been really interesting. But 2s I think I would encourage those listening think about the environment you're in just now. Does it link to your values? Are the connections there? 2s What one thing would make it better? 1s Yes, that's an excellent way, actually. Really concise and 1s very useful 1s support to anybody listening to this. And if people are interested, to find out a bit more, because I must admit, I love the values of Anne, this wonder, share and delight. It's so simple and easy to sort of anchor everything too. But if anybody is interested in finding out more about you, is it better to find you on LinkedIn? Is that the best place?

Yeah, absolutely. LinkedIn. And you can find links there too. And who I work with, if you're interested in us as a business as well. And also I Am Remarkable, which we touched on in terms of the workshops there. But, yeah, absolutely. Connect up with me in LinkedIn or take a little bit of a look at my profile there.

Well, 2s finding the right environment, 1s it's. It can be tricky 2s and things change as well. Leaders change, direction changes and so on. So I think, yeah, I'm certainly drawn in to find out more about what you do and what it is like at. And 1s anyway, I'd like to thank you, Emma, and as you said, there's probably more and more aspects to this that you can talk about out, so I look forward to having you back on again at some point.

Thanks so much for getting me involved. Susan

Thank you once again, Emma, for sharing valuable insights about being ourselves at work and the key ingredients of culture, values and the supportive practices that allow us to bring our whole selves to work.

We definitely need more positive examples of workplace that allow us to thrive. Please join me on the next episode where I'll be chatting with our next guest and discovering their thoughts about how we connect and create happiness for ourselves and others.