

Transcription - What Should Keep You Up At Night?

Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie she's Fulyana Orsborn and you're listening to Inside Exec. Today, we want to explore the question, what should keep me up at night?

So what should keep me up at night, firstly, I want to say that it shouldn't be the things that you haven't done. There's no point in worrying overnight unless you can fix them overnight. So what should keep you up at night should be the things that you're thinking about that are moving you or your organization forward rather than the negative.

So I'm looking at things that keep you up at night should be positive rather than negative and I know that that's ideal. But if we honestly answer the question, what should keep me up at night? It's the things that are positive, not the things that are negative. I will start with my favorite topic, which is people.

People are the most important thing we hear that time and time and time again, but that would be an item that would keep me up at night. Have I got the right talent management in place?

Am I hiring the right people, am I looking after the people I hired? Am I making sure that I continuously grow the cross section of talent that we need? So that would be number one on my list. That will keep you up at night? Yes, it should keep you up at night. I believe it should keep me up at night because even when I'm doing everything right, I like to keep awake making sure that I've got this one right because I feel it's strongly about how key it is to success of any organization. So the bottom line out of that, if people are the most important thing to you, if you're listening, is that what should keep you up at night, the area of your work responsibilities that you think are the most important?

I'm just gonna mention another couple of headings and then I'll go into them in more detail. Product innovation. Now, how are you going to come up with product innovation without having the right people around you? So you've got to keep asking yourself what is it, what puts the niche in the market that needs to be satisfied?

What sort of products, are our products current, are our products relevant? And make sure that we are continuously improving that side of things with using the latest technology.

But again, I'll go back to people so what should keep me up at night and I focus on is the talent management and the product innovation. The 3rd is regulation

and legislation. Alright, before some of you might roll your eyes and go how boring and why does that mean? Why do we understand that? We have to follow it, but why should that keep you up at night? It should keep you up at night. Not because you're crippled by the idea of I've got all these regulations I have to follow. Yes, we don't want to break the law, but at the same time we want to think with that within the legislation and within the regulation that we have, whether they're enforced or sorry, imposed by the organization itself or external, particularly when you're working in maybe a global company where you have got regulations that cross countries and they're all quite different, it takes quite a bit of innovation to think about how can I meet the regulation and still achieve my business results.

And bottom line, something you've heard in these first few minutes is that neither of us think that you should be kept up at night worrying about particular individual issues. What we've both talked about is a more broader approach, a bigger picture. Looking at what you're doing and how you're doing it and what you might be doing in the future rather than I have this problem that I can't solve. I have to stay up all night until I can work out the answer or worry and by worrying, causing yourself illness or injury in some way that somehow that torture that you put yourself through will resolve an issue that is an immediate issue for you and your work environment.

But what we're talking about are not those things and I personally don't believe that worrying about a problem all night is going to solve it and I don't think it makes it easier for you to solve it in the light of day for the most part. If it is an immediate problem, you write it down, you do your risk filter over it. Look at the worst thing that might happen and what risks are there to the organization?

To me, all those things, write them down, don't judge them and come back to it with a fresh eye, fresh approach, have some sleep so that your brain can function properly. I would much rather see you staying up at night, keeping yourself up at night, thinking about a product innovation, about your people team about other issues that are not an immediate problem. So when you're up at night wondering about product innovation, I don't think that's the time where you have personally got to come up with a new innovation. You can if you want to, but what should keep you up at night is - am I creating an environment where people feel comfortable to take time to only think about innovation? Am I encouraging people and rewarding the behavior where we always come up with ideas and people do not put each other down because that's a stupid idea? We tried it before. It didn't work. So product innovation itself as a topic can keep you up all night.

But the caution here is not to try to stay focused on what you personally have to do yourself. You've got a team, you've got the whole organization and between everyone if we've got the right people in the organization we will come up with the right products. It's good. I like the idea that we are thinking broadly in terms of the team and the environment and the work ethics and that's the sort of big picture that I like to see. People.

If I reflect a bit on the regulation and legislation, sometimes we think there's a regulation that is actually not working for the organization. In fact it's actually not working for the industry. We yes, we do have to be compliant, but that's not where it should stop. So I will be thinking about who can we approach? Is there an industry body that we can come together and show that this particular legislation can be modified and still provide the legal protection that it initially was supposed to do or is it irrelevant etcetera.

So to me it is then I'll be up but not saying who are those bodies that we need to go to? Who are the organization, which government contacts do we have and then I'll work with my relevant areas of the business that specialize in that and the next day don't solve it. Just have the initial idea and then do something about it the next day. That could also be if there is no regulation, there is no protection for your industry, there is no overriding governing body and you might have identified that there needs to be because of your particular knowledge of your industry or the interaction of your industry with other industries where there is legislation or governance of some kind. So we're not looking at the beating of the stick, but again more broadly at your work environment, your work situation, your work processes and a very broad picture.

The other area that comes to my mind now that we start to think about as you know, are likely to be kept up at night by the positive things, but let's take that one step further and say that that I think you should be kept up at night by the exciting things as well.

So be excited by something that you might think about happening within the working norm or the industry as a whole. You know, maybe it's a whole change to the industry and be excited by the changes that are coming, changes that are happening. We all know that that technology moves ahead in leaps and bounds and that you know, in another 20 years I'll make a prediction. Now we will have smart machines, we will have robots doing the things that lots of us do. Now there will be less and less trades, people will be less and less specialist jobs that are repetitive jobs that can be taken over by a machine that is taught to do.

When we're talking about intelligent machines, not just mechanical gears and levers, be excited by change. Be excited by innovation and be kept up at night thinking about what that's going to mean to you and to your industry and to your team. So technology, where is it going? How does it help me? Am I up to date enough? Am I involved in the bright areas to know what's coming? What's futuristic, what's immediate future etcetera? So again, very exciting.

Another one back on the positive theme is to say, am I celebrating small milestones and successes within the organization? This is really important because it's not just about okay, well we expect you to meet these targets. We expect you to exceed them or we were just about them. This major project that has been outstanding. We need to celebrate the successes. Are we celebrating them, if not why not? And how can I in whatever job I'm in in the organization, influence that? So it's become the norm in the organization and actually then take action.

I know in recent history for me within one of my other hats that I wear, we have a not for profit organization and it has always had, always been history to recognize and celebrate people's involvement in a world championship and that practice died away.

Nobody particularly responsible for that, perhaps it was just that it was printed at the time. It was probably something as simple as that. But no one had the responsibility for the task of recognizing the people and so it just didn't happen for probably four or five years and then recently, just this past six months, someone who had previously been recognized realized that since that time no one had been recognized and so she instigated the question and asked the organization why it hadn't happened and went through the formal channels of making sure that it did happen and that it got minuted so that as in all good, yes minister parlance, if it's not in the minutes it didn't happen. She made sure that the organization knew, I was reminded that it should happen and that it did and that it would continue to happen.

So they are probably the three things that were good outcomes that she recognized that, she made it happen. She made sure that the process was in place so that would continue. I don't know that it kept her up at night, but it shouldn't. Another example in relation to talent management.

I think a lot of effort is put into finding the right staff, hiring the right resources and training them and growing them and all of that. I think what should keep us up at night is how do we say goodbye to those people? Now, when the time

comes for someone to leave, be it a resignation, be it a redundancy or be it a performance issue, it's absolutely crucial the way that process and interaction is handled because it's these people that would feel at the end of the day, how they thought about how you treated them in the way they left the organization. So if they resign, for example, I hired you, I trained you and now you're leaving sort of attitude that's not going to go down very well. If you do a positive reflection, they're more likely to talk about the organization in a very positive sense, be prepared to come back to the organization at a different stage of their career and that's really important.

Likewise, even if it's a performance issue, showing that person respect means that you have fulfilled your obligation to treat them in accordance with the values and behaviors that you signed up for. So talent management doesn't end, it's all the way through. Even when the person leaves, it's absolutely no different to when you have a customer who might leave you, you still want them to come back. You want them to think well of you, your organization and product. It's more powerful even to do that with your own team.

There's a lot of truth to the cliché that an organization is its people, if you think about that in terms of what we just heard for you to relate what it means is that the impression of the organization relies very heavily on what the people internally think of the organization because they're the ones that show the face of the organization and when they do leave the organization, they're the ones that talk about the organization. So, we've all come across people who will say, what was it like working at such and such?

And I say, oh, you know, it was just awful. Why was it awful? Most likely it was because of the way they were treated when they left. Not because, if you then drill down, did you have a good office? Did you have good processes? Did you have the right sort of equipment? All of those things are generally in place, but it's something about the way they were individually treated, regardless of what level they were in the organization, that leaves them with the impression that they then promote from that time onwards about what it was like to work there.

Fulyana and I could both talk about a place we worked together, where we both left of our own accord. Now, I went from a government organization into the private sector at a time when there was a quite substantial difference in the amount of money that was being paid for doing exactly the same work and in the private sector, it was vastly, vastly higher than it was in the public sector. But the public sector, you know, when I talk about it and I'll talk about it a lot in these podcasts, it gave me 10 years of invaluable experience, there is no way that I

could have worked anywhere in the private sector and got the same kind of breadth and depth of experience in that 10 years at that time of my life.

So I remember it as being a very positive experience and all through that 10 years and even afterwards the catch cry used to say that he worked in the public sector, you're a public servant, nothing to do all day. Now, I know we both worked very hard, that our work ethic hasn't changed, all the people that we've worked with worked hard and were good at what they did. And so the things that I remember about the organization that it was difficult at times to work there and that was a process of procedure of people think that might have been in place at the time, but the feedback that I give to people when they say, what was it like working there is positive because when I left I was made to feel like I had made a difference in the time that I was there, that they valued what I had done in the time I was there, they were sorry to see me go and that they would welcome me back if indeed I chose to come back in some sort of capacity and in later years I could go back and do consulting and other activities with them and I felt comfortable about doing that because of the way I was treated when I left. I have to agree with that, I've learned many, many basic things about how to treat people, how to respect what you're doing, how to show loyalty and commitment, how to work hard, how to be ethical, etcetera.

One of the things that stuck with me forever and applies no matter where you were, is not just doing the right thing, but being seen to be doing the right thing. Now, I remember one time I was working in Canberra and I didn't know Canberra very well and it's not really known for its public transport. Most people drive. So I actually went from one building to another for a meeting and I used the hire car. Now I got in trouble for that and I was really surprised and I thought why am I getting in trouble? And I said, I actually paid for that myself. I didn't use any of the organization's money, I paid cash from my own pocket, so what is it? And that's when I had to be reminded again by the question, by the thing that said yes, you did the right thing, but you haven't been seen to be doing the right thing because all people see is a senior executive hopping in there in a chauffeur driven limousine at the expense of the taxpayer.

So that's an important lesson, is what you do is important and people notice. So we go back to that phrase that we're looking for the author of that is "I can't hear what you say, but what you do is shouting" or words to that effect. If you can attribute that quote to someone, please let us know, email us and let us know. We can acknowledge that as well because we're finding that it's a very useful little phrase for our podcast and we will continue to revisit it.

We've strayed somewhat from our question of what should keep me up at night but I think that for the most part, we've explored all sorts of things that should and should not keep you up at night and we'll be interested to hear what things do keep you up at night, things that worry you or even if it's things that you think shouldn't be keeping you up at night, please drop us a line and we'll address those in a later podcast.

We'll actually look at the things that you send to us and we'll address them and talk about in our opinion, whether we think that should be keeping you up at night or not. And so it gives you a chance to bounce your concerns and your ideas off someone else and get some feedback that way. But thanks for being with us again today, I'm Kim Baillie remember to give us that feedback so we can talk about this another bit more depth and another podcast and solve some issues for you. She's Fulyana Orsborn, this is Inside Exec..