

## Transcription Jamie Wadley Part 1 2019

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we are having a visit from a previous guest. It's probably about two years since we spoke to Jamie Wadley and at that time we talked to him about time management and keeping yourself motivated and marketing in all sorts of ways. So we're going to revisit some of those topics and also hear one of the things that power him up these days. Jamie, welcome back.

I'm very happy to be back for you.

It's good. I know you've been up to lots of things since we spoke last and I do know that you have met certain commitments that you made to yourself. You helped so many clients and you started new ventures. So I'm just going to open it up to you to tell us the highlights of what you've been doing.

The highlights. A lot of the stuff that comes to mind when you ask me things like that are things are on probably of a personal nature. One of the things I've taken on reasonably recently, is to sit on a Board and this is something which is very new to me. I'm finding, in the initial phases, I don't play well with others and it's taking a little bit of getting used to deal with people on a committee-like level, where decisions have to be made and agreements have to be reached. I think that's been one challenge that I've taken on.

The thing that's given me the most reward as of late has been that I've started to journal and I've really just go to the journal at the end of the day or the next day to write about how my day has gone. I'm amazed that I can continually write things down and every time I write something down, it even happened this morning, that I come up with insights about me personally that I discover, that I think would have been lost without writing it down. It has that effect of taking it out of my head, writing on a piece of paper and almost reading what I've written down, lets me bring focus to what I've done. And I actually asterisk things that are right towards the end of the journalling that are the lessons that I need to take from it. These are the things that are outstanding in my mind. There's a lot of other stuff that's gone on but they're two of the highlights I guess.

Excellent. If I go back to the Board bit, do you think it's very different because you've always been used to being the captain on your own, being in charge and making the decisions? And is that why you made the comment about playing with others? With a Board, you're not actually in charge and control of everything. It's a committee sort of arrangement with various views. You're making the decisions but you're not actioning. Is that different for you?

I think that hits the nail on the head. There's probably a day, a month before I go to a meeting, where I start to rant and rave and carry on about this has to be done, that has to be done, why haven't they made this decision? Why is this taking so long? And it does frustrate me a whole lot. Making decisions on the basis where I was the only one who had to do anything where I was, as you say, I was a captain of my own destiny in that respect. It's a big, big change to have to work with even a small group of people and try to reach consensus. Yeah. I'm used to having a look at how things are, saying right these are the facts

of the matter, this is how I see it working, this is what I think needs to be done. And from that point, pull the trigger to make the work. But I'll go through the same sort of process and I try to get people on board with my thinking. But obviously people think different ways and they have different ways of viewing how things should be done. (Yes.) And I'm not happy with that. They should just do what I say. But they don't. So it's challenging and it's a growth experience as well. I really feel as though they're doing me so, so much good. But it'll take time. The tenure of the position is about five years. So I think after five years I'll have much more or a clearer understanding for what I shouldn't do. But it's good. It's a real eye opener.

Actually, you said it's good for you. But let me tell you, it is excellent for the organisation. Having been a recipient of Boards in organisations where the Boards gave us direction, advice and all of that, it does actually make a difference. And having someone with your passion and that determination coming in with fresh eyes, never underestimate that. As an executive in the workplace where you're receiving this feedback, your initial reaction says, "We know what we're doing. Who do you think you are?" But then at the end of the day, we really appreciate it because it's a different view. It's a view not incumbent by all the day to day. It's the helicopter view and it's very, very good. I've also been on boards where I felt the same way. And never lose that passion because, if you start getting too sympathetic with the organisation, then you're just saying, "I understand where they're coming from. It's okay, it's okay." Nobody moves. So, I like your approach.

I've come to the realisation, with help, that there are things I can bring to the group that weren't there before. And I think having been a one-man band, in that respect gives me a different view on how things can be done in a different way, of making things happen. One of the things I'm working with in the Board at the moment is our communication. And I've come to see that the communications we've had in the past have been terribly inefficient. So I'm trying to work on ways to simplify and make that easier for everyone. It is as you said, I am getting a lot out of it even though I'm probably being dragged a little, kicking and screaming, towards it. I know it's a growth thing for me. But in the same token, I think I can help them go in directions that they might not have been able to go in the past without different input.

For a change, Kim is trying to butt in manually.

I've got my hand up because I don't think I'll ever get an opportunity to ask a question. So what I want to ask you both, in terms of the management of this situation, we have a Board, we have a workforce and a paid workforce that are rostered type of work, are not permanent full-time employees but permanent part-time employees, rostered seven days a week on activities and then we have volunteer groups, plural, that also interact with the workforce, not so much the Board. So how, as a Board, can you manage the not-crisis management approach that often happens in those situations?

I must admit, I've felt the crisis management approach happening ever since I got involved. This is probably something I'm still trying to work out the answer for. I've mentioned to Fulyana just then about the communication. I think the communication is a vital part of it. Another part of that is giving people a chance to say what they think and listening to them without prejudice and if I can use that well-used phrase and trying to see if we can get a synergy going where there is results rather than just angst between different opinions on the Board.

Crisis management, once again I think systems are the answer and there's not many systems in place where I am at the moment. That's changing. I hope they never hear this podcast but anyway.

I hope they do because I think it's very helpful.

I think we're moving towards systems more and those systems will help take a lot of the bumps out of the road. There will be things that will come up that we just can't plan for but if we have process that can help simplify the method we use to come to a solution and the task or the process we use to come up with those solutions maybe it will get simpler in time. As Board members we're getting used to one another a little bit more now. That's a really good question and I don't think there's one simple answer for it.

Fulyana might have a different opinion has because she's been taking notes.

Well, I want to go back to the first comment that you made in response to Kim's question and that's the communication. You say the word communication but it has so many facets. The first step is that a lot of Boards are buried with paperwork so each meeting you have to read about three volumes of a book to get ready. I think that's an old habit rather than a value add and when you talked to me about communication in the past, it's making that very efficient, that process. What are the agenda items and how much information do you really need to read about it? What's the essence of it? So putting in a structure of what is it and then talk to it, so it is a discussion rather than he read this and that's how it's always been done.

And if you don't do it, that's the danger. There's more opinions. The people around the table in the Board have been there for a reason. Usually they add much more value than they think they can add because they're buried in paperwork and therefore, if you manage that communication, that's one aspect, the preparation, the structure, then what do you do with it afterwards? The communication after documentation, how that should be? What's the essence of it? Who's doing what by when? And how? Any action that's agreed, and I think if you look at, not sure about your Board itself, but in general, some Boards, particularly in the not for profit space, because people just come and do their best, they don't end up using the best of everything and the communication if you break it up, documentation, structure and systems, there's so much they can use.

I think you're on to it. Yeah, there's a thing you said there that resonates with me the most, is that who does what by when?

Yeah certainly that's a part of the communication style, but I think in the early stages, we were worried about upsetting by another. And now we've grown a little bit, it needs to have some sort of formal process where we say okay, you've got this task to finish by this amount of time and it's not holding a gun up to someone's head. It's, when do you think it can happen? And just making people a little bit more accountable for what needs to go on and that's the only way things will get done. Otherwise we're just like chooks in a chook yard, not getting a whole lot done, just cackling to one another. Yeah and that's a frustrating thing for everyone. That also gives them an opportunity to know what their role is and so you start to get a role

definition, not only within the Board but also the staff that you've got. You're getting some definition for the tasks and the interaction that they would have with the Board or where they have that interaction or who the interacting point is and that then flows down to the volunteer groups. So that they've also got that single point of contact or that they know what the process is for the things that they're the input, because often they are a valuable resource that you can't really find a way to tap into. So that's the way you can get those structures of communication and of process.

Sorry, I was going to say, wouldn't that also, what you just said both of you, help the priorities, make it clear to all the players or stakeholders, Board, volunteers, what the priorities are? Because they will change. You might have one for the year but something happens. So by doing that you will know what's the top three priorities.

I think that's true and I like the idea of defining the roles more definitely and I think really that's because, you know, our Board is essentially the second board who have been involved with particular enterprise. There isn't a defined structure that I've been able to see, what each role is for and indeed I'm in a new role because the government regulation that hasn't existed in the past. I think it's a legacy. What we should aim for is having well-defined roles so when the existing people of the Board move on and new people move in, it'll be much easier for saying well this sort of person will fit this role better, maybe you should be the chairman, maybe you should be the treasurer and making it simpler from that point on. And simplicity, I'm learning, is very much more efficient. So I think it's a good idea.

On that point, I think Kim and I have both been in situations where that can be changed, so when you say this the chair of the Board, that can change, that can be a rotating chair, it can be subject matter chair, so we are introducing new systems in the place and the best person for that, to manage all of that, can be the chair, that person is Mr. X and you let them run with it. And the normal chair will become a team member or Board member rather than a chair and that is making sure everybody does what they do best.

And that's probably a good plan to have when you've got a long term tenure for a Board and you've got certain projects that you want to happen.

At the beginning of it, where everyone's getting that initial phase, that initial 12 months whatever it is, that you have someone who can carry through with the business of the previous Board or knows a little bit about what's happening but then having that rotating chair means that people feel that if they have a particular project that they want to engage with, that they can have some influence, that they can focus on that, that there's going to be some input time.

But I think what it also does, is stops the opportunity for you to take on subcommittees and to have all these extra little trails that lead in, that really fuss around and don't have direction and don't have purpose and don't have a time that they can interact with the Board or interact with the staff and you get this messy structure rather than have the Board. And we rotate so that the focus is always the next project that's happening. So I see that as a better solution than having subcommittees, just having a rotating chair. And the same happens in a team environment when you're working in an organisation and you've got project teams. So you will have a project team and this might be the project team for the implementation of X which is a massive project and rather than have sub teams or subcommittees or anything else that

bloats out that activity that you are working on. And the thing is that you identify in that initial team, all of these people who have different skills and expertise and you say at the beginning, we're going to, when we get to this stage of the project, you're going to be the team leader. When we get to this stage, you're going to be the team leader because that's where your expertise lies, so they all feel like they can contribute up to that point and then they're going to have to take on responsibility. Better for them in development terms and better for the outcome of the project I think.

Yeah I think that's true. There's been a couple of instances I've had with the Board who have had to make a decision on certain things and a lot of these things have been things that I have had no experience with at all but there are two men on the Board who are very much involved with these aspects of what the Board does. And I delegate my vote essentially to their decision because they are the experts in that field and in the same token if something comes up that is something that's more in my field of expertise, whether it be marketing or promotion or who knows, but that should be something that I should carry a bit more weight, rather than just have five people on a board and five people votes, because it varies depending on what the decision to be made is. I think Ray Dalio does the same thing with Bridgewater where everyone has a vote, but in this particular instance this person has much more experience, so that vote carries more weight than someone else's vote. It's not a democracy as such, what we want to do is do the most efficient and the right thing in each situation and that means calling on what expertise we have whoever it may be.

The other thing that is sometimes frustrating for both the Board and the organisation or the stakeholders is that they need to clarify something or revisit something and they have to wait for the next Board meeting. Now Board meetings might be monthly, bi-monthly in some cases, quarterly and half yearly, so do you think a process of knowing who to go to to ask a question or clarify, if it can be the Board member or the whole Board? Is there some structure around that do you think?

We meet once a month exactly you say but we tend to have email communications happening on an ongoing basis and this is one of my pet peeves because if I get an email from someone that's about an ongoing issue, I often receive an email that has ten forwards underneath it and I tend to get lost in it. Certainly there needs to be a process. The process at the moment, we're using, is the Board gets an email and whoever wants to put their hand up, has ten cents worth to make some decision or make some comment on it. But I think you would be much more ambitious if we could say this is matter X, this would probably be best handled by Fulyana.

So the owner or that team leader you refer to, saying any questions on this go to Fulyana. I think that would be the way forward. Obviously everyone else can have an input because, you know, someone wants to remember something, that's brilliant for you. But then the owner can maybe come back to the other members. So if I was the contact for that, but I still needed specialist or I'd always come to you or to whoever it is on the Board or outside the Board that I need to go to to pull it together, rather than everybody being buried again with emails.

And that's probably the next thing that's interesting to talk about, is that we are all now increasingly relying on email as our communication choice for want of a better word. And yet there are lots of other systems out there that provide a better way of communicating internally

in an organisation, externally with very geographically diverse people. I know in the groups that I'm associated, I would really like to find another way other than email because I get to a point where even if I am the sender of the emails and the initial response comes through that is for that one., someone, not everyone, but someone will change the subject line. And so then I get lost in where does this follow? What is this part of?

Finding a solution to that ongoing communication, which sometimes can be urgent and sometimes is not, sometimes is just information, and finding a way where it's as reliable or as immediate as we think email is. Often these days I'll get to a point where I think I'm not going to look at the email. I'm not going to engage in that interaction, that conversation for another 24 hours, I'll just leave it for a while. But then people will want to know that I've actually seen the information. So then I get an SMS or I get phone calls and the classic is when you get an SMS that says I've just sent you an email. Can you read it?

Yeah, that's right. So looking at the communication side of things, the solutions in that arena, we've all got phones, we've all got access to either laptop or desktop machines. There has to be a better way for organisations to communicate. I know there's lots of internal ones that companies use within themselves to message one another. And we, at one stage, were exposed to a thing called Pink Notes, which was just like the sticky note, but it was on the screen. Obviously it's been an issue for some considerable time, decades, probably. Is there a way that you can suggest for us to look at better communication? Just putting you on the spot, probably.

I must admit, I do like them, but I am very literal. To me, it is like posting it a letter. And I think there are some things that it does better than anything else. But the way it's used now, I think it's become a very blunt instrument. It can be frustrating for all the reasons that both of you have said, and I've certainly felt that as well. I'm actually looking at a product at the moment, a thing called Slack, and it is almost like a chat program, but it's powerful. For me, I can't say if this will be the solution to our problems, but I think it's certainly a step in the right direction. I'm actually going to see if I can implement that across the Board, so to speak, in a meeting coming up later this month. But the email, because of what you can do with it, it doesn't get read, and as such, it's wasted, it's useless. I've seen a lot of people who aren't seeing the information they want you to see, it's frustrating for you because you have to weigh through so much information that you may have seen before or really don't find required for you to make a decision. I think something where you can have it on the phone, just as you can with email, but something that's a little less top-heavy.

You mentioned the SMS before. I like SMS because it's restricted by how much you can actually say, whereas email can go on like Blue Hills, and I do get lost, and I really don't like it. So, just stay tuned, you know, how Slack as a solution turns out.

I can't tell you what the program is because I'm technically very challenged. (Exactly, challenged.) Yes, so true. But they have this thing where it is, it's like the old internet accessible to a group. So, what it is, they come in and they say what they think. The problem with that is, as I see it, it has a lot of great points and some concerns. However, ownership is the issue. So, everybody, they see it as a "join the conversation, give your opinion." No accountability, no follow-up, no responsibility. So, I think it's not the technology, I think it's the education and the agreed use of it. It's got to be clear who owns what, and who is responsible

for it, the fact that I put it in that bucket and said, "Oh, it's still a problem we're seeing and something should be done about it." That's not good enough. Who, to whom, what's your ideas, what has been done so far, and who's going to see it through and pull those thoughts together and turn it into a solution? And I think if we put those around it, it's got to be education and training for them, the users, really.

At this point, we're going to take a break in our conversation with Jamie, so we thank him for his time so far, and we will continue talking to him in the next episode. But for now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn, we are talking with Jamie Wadley, and this is InsideExec.