

## Transcription - Trish Nicklin Part 2

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're continuing our discussion with Trish Nicklin and this is part 2. We're going to talk about transformation in organisations.

Tell me, how would you go about then going in an organisation to help them? For example, this is your mission now. It has been within and now as a business. Where do you start? What do you do?

I can only go in and help if they recognise that they need it. There's already got to be quite an organic shift, otherwise banging on doors and knowing what's going to be interesting. Our chairman of the Australian Transformation and Turnaround Association often refers to dinosaurs going off the edge of the cliff. So what we can see is that organisations are starting to realise they've got to do something and they're running out there and looking for help. What I find is that they're going to the larger consulting firms and then going through these really big programmes, then that the ultimate end of the programme is not delivering them more young people coming in. They might get more graduates, they'll be much the same as before.

When they start to wake up and you get somebody, what I find is, usually somebody at the C-suite, CEO or chairman of the board, somebody at the top says we need to try something else and that's when they start coming to people like me. We start a conversation around what is it that you want to do? I ended up creating a programme because I'm going to see that there were these sort of common themes. It was easier then, for me, to be able to say, how about I just leave this menu with you? I'll come back and take your order and we can take a bit of one and a bit of another and maybe patch something together that's going to work. It really does depend on what they want. I find that by giving people choice and flexibility, it sort of feels that because it's beyond frightening to have share price be affected by what you're going to teach or what you're going to do. It's also beyond frightening to think about, there could be wholesale transformation required here because there's a lot of impact and cost.

So some of the things that we've turned around for an organisation - I can't attract the people I want to attract, when I attract them, I don't retain them, my reputation out there is not saying this but I want to work, I want to work there. The reputation I find is really interesting, because a lot of them think they have a great reputation. Maybe I think that too.

They think they have a great brand. There's a lot of work that goes on around brand. When you're in these organisations, when you bow into it, you want to do well and you desire to crawl to the top of the tree because everybody else is wanting that and you just want to get there so badly. When you come out and you start looking around you, all of a sudden you realise there's a whole world outside. Sometimes there's far more interesting stuff going on in the grass than back in the big trees, in the forest. People in the grass don't really like it. They're not interested. Your tree's got grand leaves, they're not interested in your brand. So I think that there's got to be some shift around recognising, does our brand actually matter?

We talk about disruption and how we're going to get disrupted. I think disruption is just another label for, do I matter anymore? Can someone call me out? We're seeing this flurry of protection running around innovation, life, investment in technology and all sorts of other things, to try and prevent that. So here's where sport comes in, you know, as a really interesting example, because when I worked in a state sporting organisation as a volunteer board director, our question was where are we going to be in five years and we literally had to take a match and burn the house down.

With that, I'm interested in the comparison in terms of attracting young people because we see this across organisations, particularly the cultural activity organisations, that the catch cry is, we have to attract younger people. Why, is my first question. I want to know why you think you have to do that. What is it that you think you're offering that they would want? Who are they? We tend to brand everything with the youth. With youth, innovation and youth go together, which is not necessarily true because we're three of us sitting around a table and we're all innovators. It's easy to label in the innovation, but also the realities. Youth are doing more interesting things in terms of their out-of-work activities, there's a whole lot of calls on their time.

Did you, in that organisation, look to bring in younger people?

This is the interesting thing, and we're talking about the sport of Dragon Boat Racing. There was so much pressure from the members that we must have youth or the young people. There's nobody coming to the race with all the young people. We were seeing masses of people joining in their 50+ age group. So we did start a school's programme where we were getting a lot of success. But what happens is everybody then goes off and they work hard, they have houses, they travel. They have babies and it's very hard and you're in competition with every other sport because in that 20s, 18 right through to 40 age, which is the sweet spot, you're in competition with every single step out there. Life and study and everything else. So as a board, we looked at that and we looked at the effort to go into that and we thought, we're crazy, because the money is in the 50+ age group. These people are retired. These are all the footballers with bad knees who can still get into a boat and paddle. We looked at our growth and covered the State as well. If we actually look up north of the state, where some were retiring, huge amount of growth there. So the plan then became, whilst we absolutely will not stop the momentum in youth, and in what we call the premier age bracket, which is the 18 to 40, we will not also over-invest in it because the reality is, we just can't compete in our resources. A lot of it can work, risk and return. So like any business, you sit there and you think, "Yeah, I'm flunking this today. My resources could be spent over here where all these people are screaming out for a little bit of attention. So let's keep the school programs running and keep investing in that but let's just not worry as much."

The other thing is, let's push it back down to the clubs. They're the ones that know their area. They have the capacity. All we have to do is provide the infrastructure so that they have the boats and they can get on the water and have more racers than they have. That's the support to my mind.

So using that same model, could you not go back to an organization and say, "This is it. Do it." We don't always need younger people, but there might be some projects, some teams, some areas who think that they do. So it's your job to try and find them. Try and find how you

can get them and how you can keep them. And why will they stay? Within the resources of the question, this is tough because we've seen this in the superannuation industry. The glut of old heads scratching themselves going, "Oh, old people sitting there." Or sitting there going, "How can we engage with young people? No-one's interested in their super in their 20s". They have spent fortunes, industry funds and the big funds, and even the media open funds, and the middle funds, and the industry has created new funds. They've all reached out, member engaged, and they will try very, very hard to break it. Now you've got these young disruptors coming through. They are basically money hungry marketing people. There's not much behind it. They're getting traction. I think it's a different way of thinking.

When you were talking about the Dragon Boats and talking about young people, and 50s and all that, what I was really hearing is, "Your stage is in the last cycle." Because the numbers really are outdated. There's many, many things written, and stats about, we are living 30 years longer than we did about 40 years ago, right? So, the average age now, people living to 90s, very common, maybe even 100-plus. Instead of looking at how old, young people, that young person, it's really what you said about the footballers, who, that's the right group, the right fit for these, because that's my target market, because that's what they want. In that group, it's huge, and I think the old way of thinking was, "My membership is dying out. I need to get new blood." It's nothing to do with age anymore. No, it is what is the right for this sport, for this project, for this company, and keep changing it.

So, I think it won't be surprising, if over time, we won't be working as a permanent employee. 90% of the workforce will be working for themselves, and going on the project side, whether today I'm working for this company, as part of making this happen tomorrow for you. Freelance economy. We see it already with freelance art out there, there's a number of websites, experts, that's part of what I've done, too, is, I sort of took this decision, and thought, "I've got a unique opportunity here to go out and start my own business." I'm also looking for, you know, might pick-up a contract for two or three days a week, or a short term contract for a while, and get myself re-educated. I was raised looking for safety and permanent work. If you don't have a permanent work, then you could be in trouble. You might not be able to pay your bills. We have to move that mindset, because there is work out there, or there are other ways. There's a whole heap of us in our mid to late 40s and over. If you're not starting to disrupt yourself and get used to being very uncomfortable, then you could find yourself in exactly the position you most fear.

I think organisations should also be looking at how can we educate our people. Well, organisations are in the same spot. If not disrupting themselves, they will be. Yeah, they'll be looking at the dinosaurs. They'll be off the grid. How many of them understand that within 10 years, half of the jobs will be done by a machine of some description? They'll just be different. Which ones? There is a lot of work that's done out there, and there's a lot of assessment being done about that. You know, the jobs that I did when I first came out of school, I was an accounting assistant, and I was manually typing things, and ensuring the general ledger. Well, that doesn't exist anymore. That's all automated. And then, I spent many years as a portfolio accountant, calculating the assets, minds, liabilities, balance sheet, lists of a portfolio. Well, that's all done by an algorithm. Still, it does give you skills though, I have to say that.

My first job was folding men's shirts and putting them back into the cellophane box. I can still

fold a man's shirt with 17 pins. I know exactly what I have to do. I learned a lot.

I used to work in a chicken shop at school, and I can cut a chicken into eight.

Jokes aside, it's a very valid point, because when you talk about the shirts, somebody might be thinking, "we don't fold all the shirts anymore." I think that skill that you got from there, you are applying in your floral art world. And I think the skill that you learned from carving is applied somewhere else. So, yeah, we shouldn't dismiss any experience and expertise that we gained that's no longer required in that format, but utilised some other way.

It's very much the same education as looking at, I trained as an architect. Do I use that now? No, I don't work as an architect. I build flower arrangements. I think some of that must come into it, but it's not the focus of my work. It actually has never been the focus of my work.

I've never studied. This is what I love about what you were just talking about. It has changed up, you know. I may have trained in this for a while, and then I moved to something else. I'm okay, you know, I survived, because there are people that do that seamlessly. When I look at people that have 20-60 years in financial services, at some point, you think, when are we going to get off the train? For me, it was, I moved into leadership of people, maybe, because that was my sweet spot. I needed to go through a process of learning to find it. You pick up the other things along the way. I think that, in that first pass of moving from the structure, to the one that is a bit more self-determined, if you stay with the industry or the organisation that's comfortable, and then an opportunity arises that throws you completely somewhere else, you think, well, why not? I'm ready now. That's a nice transition, where the sort of closing one door, opens another.

The next is very hard for some people to feel that they are adequate. Our biggest issue, I think, as a race, is that we celebrate our weaknesses, our fallibilities, so much less than we celebrate our strengths. We think that that's the appropriate thing to do. That's not just a cultural thing in this country. It's a human thing. I see it everywhere I go. You can still be humble and you can still be good at your job, but you need to recognise it.

I think you've got to have a list somewhere that you look at, even if it's first thing in the morning that says, this is the stuff I'm good at. Remember this today, and then you go off and do the day. It's okay to know what you're not good at, and own that as well and decide if you want to do something about it, or just comfortable with that. Or, "Look, you know what? It looks like it's impossible, but I'm going to try." Then it feels fantastic when you get something that you want to be good at and you've proved to yourself that you can do it.

Yeah, and it's little stuff. It's like, I really, public admission, I detest using the phone. I always have. I love the electronic age, because I can do everything by email. I'm really good at writing stuff down. But in the event where I have to, there's no alternative for me, I have to use the phone, I will use it. Then when it's done, I'll think, "I did that. Good on me". Pat on the back. I don't have to do it again for another six months at the same time.

We're just not good at sort of saying, "I'm not really good at this, but I'm going to try." I think also, we've got to get better at not judging people who do that. I think that in organisations and leadership and management, you've got an obligation to start, you know, to go about

stretching people. You've also got to provide safety there, saying, "If you fail, it'll be okay." You might always say to your staff, "Here's the box. Play around in there as much as you want, but step outside, that's where I can't help you. I can't prevent you. I can't save you." You're not alone, because I've given you the box and the box is pretty big. We have that conversation. It sort of really does set a standard.

You talk about pushing the lines of regulatory, legal, risk. We've got a risk forever, because we've become so risk-adverse as opposed to being risk-accepting. You think about it in personal life, if you're knocking down a kitchen or something and you've got the sledgehammer there and the cupboard. You think, do I put the sledgehammer through the cupboard knowing that there might be a water pipe behind it? How many times at home do you think, I'll give it a go? I'll give it a go, and I'll take the consequence, because I am not the plumber. But we just don't apply the same mindset in a work place. We don't take the same responsibility.

Time for us to take a break in this discussion. Join us again for part three of the discussion with Trish Nicklin. For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.