

## Transcription - How Do You Know What Skills Your Team Has

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn, and this is Inside Exec. Today we're going to continue a discussion that we started with Tammy Alvarez. Tammy talked to us about how you can change the dynamic in a team. She talked about her experience with having different teams in different geographic locations around the world who are all doing very similar tasks, and they were working well, but not happy in the sense that she felt that they could have been more excited about their work, and so she brought them together, and she said, "It's not working, what's the problem?" They identified that there were tasks that each of them were doing they didn't really like, but within the group, there were people who liked the tasks others didn't like. The upshot of it was that she was able to, rather than have individual managers in certain countries, she had global managers for particular tasks. So she had someone that would do the analytics, someone that would do the sales, someone that would do other things and that was their area of delight and joy, and they did it on a global basis. What she was concerned about out of that, was that the reporting would be difficult, and she would struggle to get the right reporting happening, but that took care of itself, as she said. I'll put a link to that particular episode of Tammy's, so that if you haven't heard it, you can hear the background.

But what has happened since then, is that I had a number of inquiries about how you do it, because Tammy obviously talked about a global team, and one that she was in charge of, and she had the opportunity to make those changes without having to change structure or go to anywhere else for approval to do it, they all still reported to her. How do you make that happen when you're in an organisation that might be small?

One of the queries I had is from an organisation that's got three people in it, and one of them, they know, is not working to full capacity. My reading of it is that she's bored with the work, been doing it too long, not busy enough, not challenged enough, and so she retreats back into being on the phone too often for personal calls. When she does take the business calls, they're not engaging or encouraging in any way, because I've been on the other end of those phone calls. So a very small team. Then I've had other inquiries for groups that are medium-sized, but are interested in that concept of finding out what skills, what knowledge, what abilities their team has that they don't know about.

Now we've talked about it previously, we've just touched on it, we've talked about finding out or transferring the skills that you might use outside of the workplace into the workplace and vice versa. My prime example is Fulyana, because periodically I'll hear about the house renovations and things that she's doing, you know, bathroom renovations particularly. I know that because of the work that she's done in construction, that she'll draw up a timeline, she'll do the resources, she'll do the, you know, when things have to be ordered so they can arrive on time, all of that.

That's bringing a work skill into a home environment. On the flip side, obviously we can bring skills that we use outside of work into a work environment to better make use of our skills and our resources and our understanding of topics.

I think that that's probably the first place to start with this, is to start talking to people about what is it, and it's a simple question and this is what I've done for this very small group, just

said to this person, what is it that you could do that we're not asking you to do at the moment? What skills have you got that you like, that you would like to do, that you think you could do, for this business, that we haven't asked you to do at this point in time? It's been interesting to get the response, because it's not anything that they expected.

If you're looking, medium size, I remember an exercise that we did in a couple of organizations. The driver behind this exercise before I say what it was, it is really to get to know each other better and as human to human, because there was, it wasn't a very friendly environment and people have made up their minds about this one is strict, this one got no sense of humour, whatever, right? So it needed some attention. The facilitator got us into a room and told us beforehand that we need to find something that no one here knows about us. So we got to share something about ourselves that nobody knows about and it doesn't have to be anything to do with work. That was so, so interesting because all of a sudden a person that was known as, oh, you know, you're kind of serious, don't say hello to him because he's always looked serious and he's just thinking you're interrupting him if you say, how are you and all of that. What blew my mind, he said, I'll just show you. When the time came, he stood up and started singing. He was a very, very good singer too. Anyway, so there was that, and somebody else was an artist, somebody else was a writer. So to you point about what skills do you have, you see them differently, so you get to know them as human beings, but you also think I might have the person that you actually could see, he's obviously got presentation, natural presentation ability. So if we need someone to go and do an ad or something like that, the person that draws can help us by saying, how do we create our image and so on.

So you could use all of that and by this just playful exercise, I could combine it as a team building.

If not, particularly with a team of three, question, let's start forward. What do you have? What haven't we asked you? And then just listen to what they're saying, because are they saying they really want to do something to fulfill them? Are they just complying and saying, if I tell you, you'll give me more work. You've got to be following one step at a time.

It's got to be a safe environment to start with to be able to ask those questions. If it's not a safe environment, if it's a, and particularly for very small organizations where you're in everyone is in other each other's faces, all day, every day, and you might make people feel uncomfortable by asking that question, then there has to be a different way of approaching it. The next step that I was going to take had the questioning not worked that way, was to prepare a job brief because there wasn't a job brief, there isn't a job brief existing for this role because it's just grown. That's, you know, that's not uncommon. (Yes.) I talk about job brief rather than job description, because I think job description is an outdated term. I think it's a term that people fall back on to make it sound like they're doing something. They produce this bit of paper, this is the job description, but no one ever looks at it again. Whereas a job brief doesn't necessarily have to fill out that same sort of format. We're not looking at a description of the tasks, but sometimes it might just be a checklist, developing that job brief. That's one of the things that I'm going to work with this person on. She said at the time, the job sort of evolved around me.

I don't really know what it does. And I said, well, what happens when you go on holidays? How, if we wanted someone to come in to replace you while you're on holidays, what would happen? And she said, I just go. It's the same as when I leave at four o'clock in the afternoon

and people will still, I don't work at the weekends and so people will still ring over the weekends wanting information. She said, "it just goes to the answering service". I thought, well, this is a whole process for this business stuck around one person that you're not utilizing properly.

Let's just have a look at everything that this role does. Not this person. What does this role require in terms of the business? Let's see what comes out of that. What will come out of it is not necessarily lots more things for that role to do, but some processes that need to be in place. So it's a great exercise to do. Even if you've got what you think are job descriptions now for particular roles, it might be time to review them and think about them in terms of job briefs in this environment, for this organization, for the resources that you've got now, in conjunction with talking to people about the skills they might have that they contribute. Because if you start that review process with a non-personal thing, you start with the job brief rather than asking the person, then it doesn't send up the red flags with people about, "Oh, you've changed in my job, they don't think I'm working hard enough", all of the negative defensive mechanisms come first. But if you talk about the job brief, first of all, just say, "We're just going to do a review because the business is always changing, and we want to make sure that we're not overworking you". Fall on your sword and say, "We don't want to overwork you. We don't want to make it too hard for you."

I have found, through all of my experience, if I fall on my sword and say, "Oh, look, you know, I don't want to impose. I don't want to make it any harder for you. Let me work on this", the response is, "Oh, no, no, let me help. I'll do it."

How do you think these podcasts came about? I said to Fulyana, "I'm going to do these podcasts. I don't know how I'm going to do it, or who I'm going to talk to". She almost put up her hand and said, "I'll do it. I could probably, if I knew what a podcast was, I could probably talk to you."

I had no idea.

I think in that, we're talking about continuous improvement. And continuous improvement doesn't mean it wasn't done right before either. It means it's a dynamic situation, it changes. Have we got the right information in the right place? Have we got the right flow of the work? Have we got the right systems? Have we got people trained? Because this is new, you know what I mean?

It's not just looking at one job brief in isolation because a lot of them interact and they have dependencies. So you need to look at the full picture. And it's much the same way as we take on new software. Suddenly we're looking at, "Oh, we've got all these reams of paper that we do contracts." We prepare contracts all the time. We just have someone who types up contracts all day. Then suddenly this software becomes available that automates that process. Do we take on the software? Do we leave the person there, slogging away at typing the same thing all day every day, which is not necessarily the best use of their time or life skills? Do we move them into a supervisory role and say, "You just review the contracts. Make sure they're, you know the best. You know what we want because you've been doing it for years. Just review it and tell us whether this is right or not. Then think about other things that you can contribute. Or perhaps you can do this or that for us that is related to the contract

stuff because you've got that wealth of knowledge and we don't want to lose that. And then that moves us forward. That brings us into a different framework for that particular task". Reviewing of the job briefs is no different to changing from a manual system to an automated system. We know that it's better to do it that way because it's more efficient.

I think that you're very right in highlighting that the job brief is not just about the job, but it's about the processes behind it. It's about the checklists. It's about the interactions and identifying those interactions because at this point, if I go back to this particular example, there's an issue with food allergies and things when people are ringing up. That information needs to be passed on to the kitchen but there's no process to do that because the kitchen staff aren't there every day. It just becomes, I think, at the moment, a note on the booking but there is no process for that being relayed to the place that needs to know about it. (Yes.) As a small organisation, they rely on the fact that, "Oh, I'll remember to tell them. I'll just highlight that this has to happen." Then they're not there on the day when the kitchen staff are there, so it doesn't get relayed. Then it comes a big issue at the end of the process because the person who's taken the time and the trouble to say, "I can't eat this, I can't have that" gets presented with something that they can't have and they've paid their money already. So it creates a problem that didn't need to be there because you haven't looked at the interactions and haven't and utilised processes, people and otherwise, to the best of their abilities.

Well, I hope that has given you some indication of where to start. The job briefs and looking at the people is the place to start in this instance, regardless of the size of the organisation. I think you've got to take time to do that continuous improvement because it's not just a continuous improvement. It's not just about the process, it's about the people as well. Look at the resources that you've got and utilise them so that you are getting the best out of everyone, that they feel like they're contributing the best that they can, rather than holding back or getting resentful in some cases. They don't know that I can do this, nobody's asked me and I don't want to say anything because they're all too busy or they look like they're managing and they don't need my help. That's not always the case. It's just that they don't know how to ask because they don't know what to ask.

Once again, it is the communication. Start the discussion, begin the process of, if you're not going to talk to people first off about what skills they might have that they could contribute to the organisation, start with the job brief and do a review or start them, have them in place.

I have spoken! We shall leave the discussion there. If you've got any more questions about Tammy's discussion or any of the other guests that we've had this year, please drop us a line, we're more than happy to continue those discussions and help you implement some of the things that you hear from these wonderful guests that we've got. And I will say at this point, we've got a couple of guests lined up for next year that are really intriguing but more about that early next year. For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.