Transcription - Riza Kadilar Part 2

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, he's Jamie Wadley and this is Inside Exec. We're continuing our discussion with Dr. Riza Kadilar and in the second part of the discussion, we have quite a range of topics about what inclusion really means, about being fit for a job or belonging in a job, so "fitting in" or "belonging" in particular work, and also about the importance of privilege and what that really means on a day-to-day basis, not in terms of finance, but in terms of just things we take for granted that are actually a privilege to be able to do or to have.

Do you think that the introduction of AI into the workplace is going to affect that feeling of inclusion in those disparate workplaces?

It's a fascinating area, on one hand there are so many research and also people claiming that, you know, belongingness is the biggest challenge in today's, especially in the Western world, whether you name it like in the North South, whether it's the way you define it, but at the same time, we also know that especially for the new generations, they do socialize much more efficiently and really socializing on their gaming, online or whatever the way they communicate. For example, the other day, I had a great privilege to meet with Daniel Pink last week in London, so we had a nice exchange, writer to writer, I liked this book. And then he showed me, and then published, I think, the graphs about how much time we spent, depending on the age. And it showed at the end of the day, we all spent one hour with maybe old colleagues or spouses or whatever you name it, but the part of being lonely really picks up. And that part is, I think, now is being captured as the target for all these AI digital companions. So there's a new concept of the digital companions and maybe they will turn into a robot or whatever, I don't know. But even in my family, in my daughter, sometimes she finds it more kind of comfortable to talk to Chat GPT. She is a person, she can train the other to be a person. So is it healthy, is it unhealthy, is it human? I don't know, we evolve, we change.

So the aspect, and in the workplace, I think, again, this is not scientific thing, it's just my opinion, okay? But I think we are at the start of something big, it could happen really big. So the whole work area will be disrupted and if they claim to be true, really many, many jobs will be eliminated. They are replaced by maybe new jobs, but that's a very big shift that may happen in a very short time. So that's why how AI will have inclusion or not, I don't know, at a person level. But one thing I know, and this one of the reasons I wrote this book, AI is a machine learning. So whatever you make it available, there's no kind of real sense making, but it learns from the patterns. And we don't really generate enough diverse patterns in the digital world. One day, and maybe this one day is already today, I don't know, when the algorithms believe that there's one pattern that dominates all, better than others, we can really kind of go into a very unwanted place, because the richness, the diversity in cultures, humanity, people, personalities, everything, this makes us human. And we know that more diverse humanity managed to overcome diverse problems. We are more resilient with diversity in everything. But machine learning, believing that we're learning that one way is better than others, then we may put ourselves under an unnecessarily very wrong place. So this is one of the encouraged mini cultures, non-English speakers, especially smaller countries, to produce more and more and more document, you know, the digital footprint with

their diversity, with their way of doing things in everything. So that way we should create the whole world with the whole colors of the real world.

It's interesting. So much contributing to the learning of the machine means that they are represented, their thoughts. They've used big culture, as you say, as representing everyone.

Going back to the questions, is there one industry that you worked with that manages inclusion better than others?

That's rather a difficult question, because maybe it's not industry-specific debate. It's more kind of work. But one anecdotal data that I have, based on my observations, the gaming industry, the computer games. They seem to be more agile in the way they deal with diverse cultures, backgrounds, and everything. Because maybe the way they create new ways of life or the worlds they create and everything. So I believe there's even, they find it easier to include people with different backgrounds, our perspectives in everything, and with different technical skills. So that area I find fascinating, they do a great job. In comaprison, the legacy, big industries, they all find it a bit difficult to change, especially the regulated industries like utilities or finance. Even though there's a big push because at the end of day our stakeholders are so diverse. So we got also creating inclusive work environment with diverse people to work with, but there's a legacy. And the more strong culture we have in a company, a company culture, more you make it difficult to include all the differences because you know your own way for success in everything. These are all the big debates. So that's why big companies, very established companies, they may find it a bit more difficult to be inclusive enough, have big diversity.

What I'm hearing is that the creative industries find it easier to manage the diversity and the inclusion than those that have a long history, that do things a certain way, that as you said yourself, train their people or choose their people through university courses, you must have the MBA, you must have gone to this school or that school, or you don't really know what we're like, you don't know our culture. So should we be going back to the education system and looking at diversity and inclusion being more important in those programs when we're looking at developing leaders and looking at giving people the
bits of paper that they need to go into the industries that they choose?

I don't know. Reflective practice, reflective thinking, reflecting all your experiences, this is the way we learn and this is the way human beings kind of progress. But in the education system, how much space do we allow for reflection? I don't know. I know some programs, for some international baccalaureate, IB program, they really focus on the value of reflection, but still for many countries it's a kind of trace, you know, you got to make it or leave it or whatever. So this way, it's very difficult to see it because reflective practice, reflective thinking allows you to be aware of your emotions and be aware of your emotional triggers. And once you're aware of this, you may have a debate whether you feel included or not, or what you exclude deliberately or automatically with your biases, your unconscious biases, your top patterns, all those things that makes life maybe very difficult for others or for yourself, you are aware. But we don't have enough reflective practice in early schooling age. We may have it later, but then in K-12, we kind of learn that we go for the other basics, like mathematics and everything.

I know that in this country there are a number of initiatives to allow very young children, K1 and 2, to have a period of time in the day that is their meditation time, it is their reflective time. And I think starting patterns at that age is an interesting way to let them know that it's okay to have that, what we call quiet time or solitude time, and to then have that as part of their framework or coping mechanisms. So just an interesting area to look at because we have talked to many other guests over at time about leadership in general and leadership skills and I think, to a person, they've said that we don't start developing leaders early enough and not giving them the skills early enough to be good leaders. And I guess this is another area where we need to start thinking about it as well.

The important part of my book is dedicated to the leadership of inclusion. And there are very basic paradigm changes. For example, when I was raised, we were raised with this Superman kind of approach, like one man who knows it all, check and change the word, the Hercules and everything. Today, maybe this LLM is the Gen AI, whatever they know, everything, but we can't really expect anyone to know all the answers. So in my time, leader is the person that you really asked for the answer. Today, it's more like the leader knows how to ask the right question. It's a big change, but you know, subtle. In the early age of my career, we were taught all this negotiation, pitching, presentation, convincing, persuasion, whatever kind of trainings. Today, listening is more important, you know, what to listen, how to listen, you know, where to listen, whatever, these are even more important. For example, we were kind of raised to thinking that, you know, once there's a success, it's the leader's success and the team, whatever. But also, your competitor is a contribution if they lose. That was a part of your success, isn't it? So today success doesn't belong to the leader, it belongs to the whole system. Now, we are more kind of ecosystem thinking, uh, rather than the verticals. So it is a little bit of a big change, uh, happened with technology, of course, but also with the way we get organized as humanity.

Interesting when I was doing the research, you were talking about including stakeholders as well. And I think that's an area that we completely disregard when we're talking about leadership. We really focus on the immediate area. I would like to hear how do you think that we can include stakeholders in this process that we're going through?

Very practical approach, you know. We do it in Gestalt coaching. It's very straightforward. You leave an empty chair in your meeting table, okay? And then you debate, you discuss whatever, but before you really make a decision, you just give yourself a moment and you ask, whose voice didn't we hear yet? Somebody, a group of people or concepts or whatever, you didn't really take into account so far. And then this empty chair represents a group, that person. Then in that perspective, in the debate, you repeat it a couple of times and then you have a much more kind of inclusive way of addressing the issue. Now, because those people that you don't hear in the system, their voice, this voice is kind of becomes the headache sooner or later. Because if you're a part of the game, you will not see it or know it. So this is very practical exercise before you conclude your debate. Just think, whose voice don't we hear now? Can't we bring them in the room?

I like that. Listen now or get shot down later.

The last question that we sent to you was about when should we be, in leadership

development, should we begin focusing on inclusion? And I think we've probably covered that sufficiently. But one of the other things that I was intrigued by, because I do have a human resources background over 40 plus years, is I heard you talk about job descriptions very briefly. And that fascinates me because I think that job descriptions are probably the biggest hurdle to choosing the right people for a particular position. And I'm not in favor of them. I haven't been for a long time. I wondered whether you thought there was something else because organizations rely on them, recruiters is rely on them. Is there some other outline that we should be using that isn't particularly a job description or job outcome?

My contribution to the literature is still limited so I won't be able to really stretch everything and start something new. But a couple of things. First one is two words, one "fit in" and the other one "belong". And I think Brene Brown puts it so nicely. So nobody wants to "fit in" into a box. This is one aspect from the job description. You create a box and you want people to fit in this box. And they're additional characters, attributes or personalities, whatever, they get lost. They just want to bring whatever is expected to this box. On the other hand, the word "belong", be as you are, bring everything you've got in the workplace.
Maybe you remember all these dress codes? They were part of creating strong culture because humanity really progressed so well. And even before like early days, Dr. Harari says, "Homo sapiens was not the fastest or strongest or whatever, but the one who knew how to get organized, collaborate." So that's how Homo sapiens win and conquer the world. The same applies for creating these strong cultures, unified cultures so that people can get organized easier, faster, thinking systems, dress codes, behaviors, education systems and everything. But with everything we talk about, this technology change, the demographics and the whole new way of thinking resilience, thanks to pandemic and everything, when you want to kind of co-create with people who are not like you, then it's all thinking kind of, it's a kind of barrier. So that's why more we allow people to bring who they are to the work, rather than fitting in into a box. I think we see more and more creative resilience, trust-based work environments. But is there a proper way of, a new way of like, you know, telling all the recruiters to do it? The one way is to get aligned on values. What really makes you motivated, what you believe in life is important. If we get aligned on our values and our motivators and everything, maybe there's another way of looking into creating a work environment with diversity, but also with bringing, that will also bring the feeling of inclusion. But again, we don't have enough empirical data to claim, but, totally and intuitively, I think we're moving that way.

Yeah, as you said with the gaming industry, it is a dynamic industry for the reasons that there's so many different skills that have to be brought to the table. So, what would you say, I want someone to fit in this box, if you can get someone to come to, you know, and belong, as you say, who has other skills that you might not know you need until you find them.

And in the startup domain, in scale-ups, in instructive technologies, you even don't have just a real description, because you want to repeat this so fast. But you have the mistake, whenever they kind of raise serious capital, because I'm also an investor, I do invest in scale-up or potential scale-up companies, the minute they find the money, they want to create a more common ground. They want to recruit the chief marketing officer, a chief investment officer, but they're all the titles. But, you know, why? It's the way we learn, it's difficult to recover. They're hard-wired.

We've had a lovely long conversation with you this morning, is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to share with our listeners?

Wow, there are, of course. What we should be covering more? Maybe privileges. (Okay.) Let me say privilege, we think about, like, you know, status, money, blah, blah, all those things, but what is more striking, if you are using your right hand, right handed people, they are privileged, because even the door handles are designed for people using their right hand, okay?

Let me just say, it's very relevant because Jaime is left handed.

Really? Okay. Jaime, is it correct? You know, it's embedded. (It is.) And then you even don't notice. The problem with privileges, they're a problem when you don't feel them, so when you believe that it's natural. I can walk, luckily I can still walk. It's a privilege. Many people cannot walk. And even, really, my wife had a kind of ankle problem. The whole summer was like hell, so, so difficult, so no systems really designed equally. Or being man, woman in men's societies, being too short, like, many things we take for granted. Education, for example, it's amazing. Education, it's just right for it. We work hard for it. It's a kind of, you know, we deserve to get whatever the privilege that comes with it, but at the end of day, should it be the expense of other people being excluded? And the question, it's a real question, because I think those people who are really the most endangered ones are the experts. I wouldn't like to an expert of anything today, because the whole technology will attack you first. They know more than you do, because they have
collected all the data, blah, blah. Some are still saying, it's down to experience, whatever, but it's the end of being the expert. And then all education, bringing all the expertise and status is also a barrier for inclusion. And if you don't include the new ways of thinking, if they are not, you are not opening up for change. And if you're not open to change, it is a tough life, because things do change around you, so you get to adapt. So that's why I think privilege is something that you should really think on deeply and be aware of. And one of the very simplest things that we don't feel like a privilege, but they are, and they should be barrier for inclusion, because then it will block our growth, our adaptability, our change.
Yeah, just as you say, it's across the board. It's a privilege in this country, because there's such distances, to be close to a shopping centre. It's a privilege to have a reliable internet service, which Jamie and I, neither of us have, and yet, we have businesses that we have to run. And so it covers such a broad area. I'm really glad that you brought it up because it will make our listening audience think a little bit more about the privileges that they do take for granted across the board. So thank you. Anything else, Jamie, from you today?

No, I've enjoyed this immensely. I must admit, so it's been a real pleasure, Riza, really it's been good talking to you, and some good takeaways there for us, so thank you.

And I thank you too. We will allow you to finish your very long day, and we do appreciate the time that you've found to share with our listeners. As I said, if we get some questions we'll pass them on to you. We will have all of your details so people can contact you directly. But for now, thank you for joining us. I'm Kim Baillie, he's Jamie Wadley, we've been talking with Dr. Riza Kadilar, and this is Inside Exec.