

# Transcript

## Rebecca Friese | Design thinking & creating cultures that don't suck

18/10/2023

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ozk4ToGr\\_gE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ozk4ToGr_gE)

In this episode, our host, Erica Birtles, and organisational consultant, Rebecca Friese, discuss 'design thinking', why it matters and the role it plays in shaping effective, human-centred workplace cultures. Erica and Rebecca also talk about the changes happening in the DE&I landscape, and why diversity and inclusion should still be a priority for organisations today.

### Speaker(s):

Rebecca Friese  
Erica Birtles

### Transcript:

00:00:01 - 00:40:41:07

#### Erica:

Welcome back to Let's Talk Universal, where we talk to experts in multiple fields to discover how to progress organisational change and alter current behaviours towards a more inclusive workplace. And in this episode, I am joined by co-founder of FLYN and author of The Good Culture, Rebecca Friese. Thank you for joining us, Rebecca.

#### Rebecca:

It's lovely to be here. Thanks for having me.

#### Erica:

Oh, we're happy to have you.

But first of all, I wondered if you could tell us a little bit more about who you are, what it is that you do.

#### Rebecca:

I like to tell people that the reason why I'm here and the reason why I have the company that I have is to help people really do their best work and help create cultures where people can thrive, where they can have the impact that they want to have, where they can truly, like, contribute and feel good about where we spend most of our days - working.

#### Erica:

Today, we're going to be talking a little bit about design thinking and creating good company cultures, as you just mentioned.

But what is it that interests you most in this space?

#### Rebecca:

The thing that interests me the most is understanding that we are all in this together, that we can create the future that we want. Design thinking, as part of that is a tool, a process, an approach that really enables that collaboration and deep insights around what we need as humans in the workplace. And so, for me it really unlocks this thing that I'm really passionate, which is about really understanding that intersection between what the individual needs and wants in order to have a good experience at work, in

## Transcript

order to do their best work and what the organisation needs in order to meet its organisational goals and strategy.

Right? So there's this beautiful intersection which so often... the two are at odds, right? And so I get really passionate about finding that intersection and using design thinking as that process and approach in order to get there.

**Erica:**

And so let's start with FLYN.

What problem is it helping companies to solve and what kind of services does it offer them?

**Rebecca:**

It's a broad range, honestly, because you can say like, okay, like creating a great workplace culture, what does that even mean? It's a very broad range of activities that we do.

So oftentimes, you know, the reason why companies or individuals will come to us is because they're looking for innovative approaches to engage their workplace. So, and to really understand what the needs of their workforce are.

So, they will come to us and it could look at a couple of different things. It could look like our strategy has shifted. And so, we need to actually start shifting our culture in a way that supports that strategy. They might not have those words. They might say like, oh, you know, we feel like people aren't meeting their objectives, or they're not engaged or they're not as productive or they're not as like... they're struggling with something or they're getting feedback that people aren't feeling heard or whatever it is. There's this disconnect between like what we're trying to accomplish here and what the people are doing and the feedback that they're getting.

So, they'll often come to us saying like, there's something missing here and we need to solve for what that x is. Now, it could be really macro, it could be something like, we need to actually, you know, we're a small company. We haven't even articulated our culture, like our values, like what we're even... and our definition of culture is really how the work gets done. So, you know, they haven't even articulated it. So we're kind of starting with a blank sheet of paper.

Or it could be a massive company. And we're talking about one team and we're talking about one item that they're struggling with. And so, we're like innovating on this one program or process or policy or whatever that is. So, it could be kind of all the things in the funnel, but it's really about that intersection of like digging in and understanding what the need is in order to to move them forward.

**Erica:**

If we focus on sort of larger organisations and cultural kind of change. Is there something that is kind of a typical issue or challenge when it comes to designing that and changing it?

**Rebecca:**

I want to say yes, and I want to say no. I mean, the typical challenge... what it often comes down to is alignment, and it shows up in a lot of different ways. So, that's why it's yes and no. And what I mean by alignment is, like, you know, the leaders have one thing on their mind about what's supposed to happen and how they're supposed to do it and where they're supposed to go. And then the individual has no idea what that looks like. And all they see are kind of the programs and policies and actions and all these little... and they take these as signs and they're going in a different direction. And then there's this disconnect, right?

So, I really think that clarity and alignment, a lot of times the crux of the issue is like, if we can get to this agreement and alignment and then we can come up with the... But so often it's like, oh, we think one thing, so we're going to put these things in place and then the individual thinks, they do it this way... and

## Transcript

then there's a disconnect. But that can show up in a lot of different ways. So that's why I would say, it's not necessarily like one issue, but like getting to that clarity is the thing that we usually have to tackle. You usually won't find an organisation that's kind of struggling with these things if they're like, oh no, we're completely aligned, we're all on the same page, you know, it's like, that's kind of where it comes down to. Right. And again, it could be because we haven't even defined things yet, so how could we be aligned if we haven't even defined it? We haven't defined our strategy. We haven't defined our purpose. We have defined our values like, well, how can we be aligned on it if we haven't actually defined it? Or, it could be, well, we've defined it, but what it looks like is different for a leader than it is for an individual. So, you say inclusivity. What it looks like for me is one thing, what it looks like as an individual, like, not the same. Like, I'm expecting something completely different. So, if that makes sense.

**Erica:**

Yeah, and do you think that certain industries or kind of geographical areas find that challenging perhaps?

**Rebecca:**

Oh, wow, isn't that interesting? So, culturally, the impact of our external culture, so where we live, you know, and that could mean... Like, I'm a remote worker or I'm in the office. It could mean I'm urban, or it could mean I am in the countryside, you know, the suburbs. It could mean I'm, you know, in Africa, or India, or I'm in New York City. I mean, we can't ignore the cultural impacts of our environment that's around us. And then you can break it down even further, the cultural impacts of how we've grown up, like what, you know, our families are, whatever the societal, cultural things are. When you try to layer one corporate culture on that, it can be quite difficult.

So, I wouldn't sit here and like call out like, well, this is how it is in Europe versus how it is in North America, versus how it is... Because every culture is bespoke to that organisation. And any culture that tries to kind of cut and paste. A lot of them are like, well, Google's doing it really great so we'll just do everything that they're doing. Like, it doesn't work.

Where you run into trouble is when you're trying to cut and paste and/or you're not taking into account regional differences and any industry difference. So, I want to get back to the industry in a second. So, regional differences are so interesting to me. And then this kind of remote, that's a whole another layer too but like, let's just talk regional first. Because, how can we expect one culture to, like, show up the same? Like you're going to walk into one office in New York versus in India, you know? How can we expect that to be the same? Well, they shouldn't be because they should be understanding the nuances of what's needed in that locality. Right. But they should be aligned. Again, I come back to this word 'alignment'. Like, it should feel... yeah, like this is how we approach work as an organisation. And then there's going to be these nuances.

We were at eBay this one time. One of the things we do is we go into companies, we learn about them, and we learn about what they do in order to create great cultures and be innovative around certain topics. We were talking to eBay and we were asking them this exact question. It was a little different because it was like it was eBay Inc and we were talking about all the companies that they had within eBay and we're like, so do you have one culture? You know, what is that? And they're like, well, how we look at it is that like eBay, we have a way that we approach things. We have a culture. Like, when you're working for eBay or an eBay company, it is like... but that's like 80%. And then there's this 20% that like how each company shows up or each location shows up. And they actually expressed it as like, the United States. They're like the United States, for it to be an American, there's an American culture, right? But a Texan is very different than a Californian, right? So it's like, how that shows up is really different in the way that, you know, in our customs and our behaviours, in the way that we show up, the way that we party, like whatever that is, right?

## Transcript

So it's like, how do you have this umbrella that can be the tenants and the guideposts and then have those nuances show up locally?

**Erica:**

I'd like to come back to design thinking. For those who perhaps don't know what it is and what it's for, could you give a quick overview of what it is, for us?

**Rebecca:**

Yeah, absolutely. So, there's the hundreds of books written on design thinking or human-centered design or innovation. They all have the same tenets when you're thinking about like, what is this about? So, what's the goal of design thinking or human-centered design? The goal is to create something that actually very specifically meets the needs of the intended user, in our case, employee, customer, whatever. Right?

So you want to create something that actually meets those unmet needs in an innovative way, right? So, how that happens. So that's the goal, like why do we even use design thinking, well it's to come up with something that actually really meets the unmet needs of our intended audience, whether it's an employee or a user, or a customer.

The approach, the thing that sets it apart from just kind of a process, in order to create a new product or service or whatever. And the thing that sets it apart... or the couple of things I should say.

Number one, it's the definition upfront. So, what is the need that we're trying to solve for? Like what what is the problem? And oftentimes we go off with a lot of assumptions in a process like this is a problem. And we don't take the time to really dig in and understand, well, is that really the problem? What's going on behind that? Why is that the problem? What are actually the unmet needs, like underneath that, right? And you might find that you're actually solving for a different question than what you originally set out to solve for. Right. So you can imagine if you're not even solving for the right question, you're going to come up with a solution that definitely doesn't meet the needs, right? So that's what really sets design thinking apart.

It's that whole, oh my gosh, there's a mark Twain quote that I'm going to butcher, but it's like, spend 90% of your time on defining the problem and then 5% on the solution, right? I'm probably even misquoting who that's from. But, the point is, spend a lot of time really understanding the needs way upfront. So, what is the problem we're trying to solve for and why, what's going on with that? So that deep insight around the, in our case, employee needs is huge. We'll spend 80% of our project on that. And that's the misnomer, is people think design thinking, innovation like it's all about new ideas and cool stuff and like, whatever, and yes it is. But again, if you're not basing it on like the true insight, then you're going to, sure, maybe come up with some cool idea, but it's not going to actually help you get to where you want to get.. So, then the second thing that really, well, those are really two things like, understanding the problem and deep inside are kind of two things.

The third thing that is really different about design thinking is the way that we ideate. So, we think about solutions, we use stimulus and we use lateral thinking tools, and all this stuff to get us thinking outside of how we normally think about a problem. So, coming up with ideas again, hundreds of books written with hundreds of ways in order to have ideas in an innovative way, but really applying these design thinking tools at the time of ideation helps you come up with things that are really different approaches versus just kind of stuff that we've done for years and years and years. Right?

And then, the final thing that I think is really important is around iteration. So, it's not just like, okay, we come up with solution, we're going to implement it done. It's like, no, we're going to test this out, get some feedback from employees, we're going to tweak it, we're going to continue to tweak it, we're going to experiment, we're going to play with stuff. You know, we're going to, you know, constantly iterate and

## Transcript

get feedback and not be done, you know, not be done until we need to be done. So, I think that's really important, is the iteration and the feedback process at the end of it. So, did we actually, are we actually answering the right question? Did we get this right? Like, is this a good solution? Do we need to tweak it? What's weak about it? Let's build it, you know, and then it's just like the steadfastness of implementing. Operationalising like all these ideas are great at the end of the day. But if you don't actually have the grit to really stand it up and operationalise it, then all the talk was worth it. And I see so many people give up.

We've talked a little bit about even like DE&I programs and whatever. Like people just kind of give up. They're like, Oh, well, we did that and it didn't actually have any impact, so we're throwing it out the window and you're like, well, back up, like wait, let's not let's not cut it off before we've actually, like, pulled it through, right?

**Erica:**

And so, for organisations who are looking to change their culture using this method, I just want to know what the sort of outcomes are for them when looking at changing their culture.

**Rebecca:**

So measurement is really important. So outcomes, you know, again, coming back to the question, why are they even coming to us, why they've been doing this? Well, there's something amiss. There's something either... they're not hitting their targets, they're losing workforce, they're getting, you know, lots of complaints or low engagement scores, which is a leading, you know, indicator to losing people and retention issues. So, there's something amiss that's probably measurable and should be measurable. So I think, in that kind of insight stage, it's like, again, what's the problem we're trying to solve for and how do we know that that's a problem and how will we know when we've solved it?

So I think getting really clear upfront about like, okay, what's the problem? Well, retention is a problem. Okay, well, that's not actually the problem. That's the measure. So like, what's causing that retention issue? You know, so digging in and really understanding, again, if we get really clear on the problem, then we should be able to measure that, right? We should be able to say what is the actual thing. So I mean, a very typical thing that gets measured in our industry in companies, is engagement.

Engagement, retention, even kind of time to hire. Those kinds of examples are good, yet they're often lagging. And it's often like, if your engagement scores are already dropping, you might have missed the bullet in a lot of aspects. So, but it is something that, you know, you can track year over year. Right. And you can start to see spikes and whatnot. So we focus a lot on that, but then we try to get a little more... And sometimes it has to be qualitative. We try to get a little more timely and we get in there with focus groups and surveys and whatnot, and ask really pointed questions about certain things. And we deal with kind of the gap and the lag with some very timely, like qualitative feedback to see where that needle moves. Does that answer the question?

**Rebecca:**

Yeah, that does, because what we're really talking about is that there are larger reasons why companies should be investing in changing their culture and making sure that it suits their people.

**Rebecca:**

Yeah, well, there's so many studies out there at this point and it's almost shocking to me that people aren't paying attention or investing... Because it is a known fact that happy employees are productive and just as a human, don't we know that internally, like when I am happy at work, when I am crushing it, I am literally crushing it. I am just like things are firing, I'm in flow. I am like, making it happen. And so why do we say like, oh, we don't have time or budget or money or resources to invest in our people and making sure that they are feeling like they're supported, that they're engaged, that they're connected, that they're being cared for, that they're being developed, they're being included that they like. It actually is kind of bonkers to me that, you know, employees just want all these things now. They're so entitled.

## Transcript

They're so like blah blah blah. I'm like, employees just want to be able to do their best work, like and there's, you know, sure, there's always going to be people who are going to take advantage of things, of course. But that doesn't mean you throw it out because a couple of employees are going to take advantage of that vacation policy that is unlimited. You know, whatever it is, it is bonkers to me that people don't connect the dots. If my person is burning out, do I really expect that they're going to create good work products? If they are literally not able to sleep or not getting enough sleep or are mentally exhausted? Do I really expect that they're going to come up with a great solution for whatever challenge that I've given them? It just, it's bonkers to me.

**Erica:**

No, I have to agree and I think, you know, recently we're seeing a lot of D&I leaders and D&I initiatives even kind of being pushed down in the priorities of organisations. It's more around sort of... Design thinking kind of, I assume, helps to create sustainable methods, just as much as it does effective ones.

**Rebecca:**

You were saying design thinking does?

**Erica:**

Well, this method to develop good cultures.

**Rebecca:**

The reason why we rely on it as our approach is, because it's so insight-based, because we take the time to really understand what the problem is, whatnot.

So, if a company calls me and says like, no, no, we know what the problem is, can you just help us, like, implement the solution? I will pause and I will say, like how do you know that, how did you come up with that? Like, what was the process by which you understood that? And if they can't, they'll be like, oh well, we just know like that we've had this, you know, then I will pause and I don't know if I'll go in there cause I don't want to implement something that will end up on a shelf or end up never being used or not have the impact, right, because it's not sustainable. It's because we didn't actually do the work to understand it.

The other piece that I didn't mention about design thinking is it's highly collaborative. So any solution that gets put out there has everybody's handprints all over it. So it's not like I made it over here in this box or me and a leader made it in this box and said, like, here, you're going to do this now, isn't it great? Like the whole part is, like, from insight to implementation, we are involving tons of people and that's just change management 101.

If you want something to be sustainable, you have to involve the people that it's going to impact all along the way. And so design thinking does that in a very intentional way in order to get diverse perspectives along the way and in order to like have that change be much easier, like by the time we actually implement, like, yeah, I actually helped design this. Like of course I'm in, you know, I'm not you don't have to sell me on it, right? So, so many times somebody would come to us and be like oh, we need change management on this thing. I'm like, well, it's too late. Like, you already have the thing that you made, and you want me to, like, wave a magic wand and manage that change, and that I'll do it? You messed it up already, right? So, yeah, sustainability is about the process, right? Like, involving people in the process early on.

First of all, getting the right question, the right problem that we're working on and you know, and then if you are solving for a thing and then involving people along the way with the solution. So yeah.

**Erica:**

I think we should mention your book at this point.

## Transcript

**Rebecca:**

Oh okay!

**Erica:**

Which is titled *The Good Culture: The Leaders Guide to Creating a Workplace That Doesn't Suck*. And I love that title, by the way. It's so to the point. Could you give us an overview of who it's aimed at and what it aims to kind of help them with?

**Rebecca:**

So it is aimed at leaders, however, my definition of 'leaders' is very broad. It could be a team leader, it could be one person that's creating a mini culture in their team. You know, it could be the CEO. Anybody who has influence on a culture and that culture could be... a family culture. It could be, you know, your community, it could be your team, it could be a function, it could be a whole company. So, it's pretty broad in that sense. But it is about people who can have that influence, right?

However, we've had people that aren't leaders in the traditional sense read it too, and it helps them understand like the words behind, you know, what's missing. I've had people come up to me and say, like, you know, basically, I read your book and I quit the next day because I realised that like, oh, like this is what was missing and this is why. And I just, I know that this isn't going to happen. So I need to go find a place where it is happening, right? That's who it's intended towards. And it's not as practical as a workbook, but it is definitely on the more practical side in the sense of like, I'm really walking people through the things they need to think about if they really want to have a good culture and why that's important, right? So, why it's important to have that culture and which is all the things that we've just talked about. And then, kind of the really main tenets on how you get there and a little bit of like 'how to'.

And, you know, I start off with what we've already talked about. I start off with like, if you don't have the clarity at the top, if you haven't defined what your purpose is, defined what your strategy is, defined what your values are and the HOW you want to work. And this is back to the cut and paste because I truly believe that every culture, while it might look and smell and, feel similar to another culture, like every culture is bespoke. It is made up of those people doing whatever thing that they're doing, you know, whatever their purpose is and that in itself makes it bespoke unless you're making the exact same product and the exact same industry and the exact same... But even then, you've got different leaders.

So, every culture is specific to its own. What we're trying to do here in the way that we want to do that. So everything starts with that. So what is it? Let's get it on paper, let's get clear about it. Let's make sure everybody understands what we're trying to do here and how we want to be doing that, how we want to behave on that. Because anybody can make a mug, Right. But the way we do it and the way we agree to do that is what our culture is, right? So and how we're going to interact around making that mug. So, that's what the book is about.

**Erica:**

I think perhaps you might have already covered it. But are there any sort of key takeaways that people can take away.

**Rebecca:**

From the book?

**Erica:**

From the book, yeah.

**Rebecca:**

## Transcript

So key takeaway is, number one, around clarity and alignment. And then, number two is getting to a point where we call it a “culture code”, kind of nod to Silicon Valley here. Like it's one thing to list your values, it's another thing to really define those and put guardrails around what that means. So, what do we mean when we say we're going to be inclusive? What do we mean when we say that we're going to be transparent? You know, like in giving people this code, this path to understanding where those guardrails are, and then they get to choose like, do I want to be part of that or not, right? But you can no longer say like, well, I didn't realize that wasn't expected of me, right? So you can make it that much more clear when you're recruiting and hiring. So, it's kind of like you've got this alignment at the top around your purpose and your values, and then you have this coding that needs to happen.

And then, what we get into is like, how do you operationalise that? So, that's like, you know, leaders working with, and this is where design thinking comes in this like, how do we... Well it actually can come in at any phase, but like, how do we actually stand this up? So, okay, so you say you're transparent. And so what that means, like the definition around that is, is we agree to share information, blah, blah, blah, blah. Like, so you have this code, but then you're like, okay, how does that show up in your programs, your policies, your procedures, your, you know, how does that show up in the every day, in your organisation? So, that's where there's some kind of essential actions that I talk about, that if you're going to do nothing else, you should really look at these pieces, but then you really should be looking at the whole of your organisation. Like, how do we interact with our customers? What's our brand look like externally? You know, how do we like if we say that we're inclusive, how does that show up in our community? Right? Like, how do we welcome our community? How do we you know, if we really believe this, like how does this show up?

But there are these essential actions in the book that I talk about and they're really around hiring. Like, if you're not clear in hiring about all this, then you're going to attract the wrong people, right? And then you have a mismatch from the beginning. Onboarding. So like, really helping people from the get go be successful. And then, development. What's that pathway for people so they can continue to learn and grow and develop in a way that's fit for purpose for your organisation, right? So, those are to me like the essential places to start looking. And then there's the measurement. Which is like, you know, really understanding that there's consequences to not aligning with the culture.

We were at Box this one time and the Chief People Officer at the time, Evan Wittenberg, was talking about, you know, this kind of culture coding and they have really strong values at Box, and they have them up on the wall and they talk about them all the time and they're, you know, they're part of their programming and whatnot. And he was talking about like this, the kind of like, you know, it's the old adage of the the weakest link, right? He was like, you know, for us, one of their values was like, make mom proud. Make your mom proud. And then, like in parentheses, hilariously it said, unless she's evil. But like, the point being is like, you know, we want your behaviours to, like, make your mom proud. So, he was talking about like, a lot of people will like, grab salad and then take it back to their desk, right, walking down the hallway like a leaf of lettuce flies off their plate, unbeknownst to them. Right. The behaviour that you watch is the person behind them. That either just walks right by it or picks it up and puts it away. He doesn't say anything, but just does it. Right. And he's like, that's what we're watching for, is like that person... When they don't, we know that there's a cultural mismatch, right? That they're not taking care of each other. They're not doing stuff that would make their mom proud, you know, whatever it is, right?

And it was like, these proof points is something that I talk about is like, okay, so how do you know when it's happening and then measure for that, right? So, that's what I get into in the end of the book is like the essential actions, like these are the proof points of like you say you're one thing, you've gotten clear on it, you've communicated that. But then how is it showing up in your in your culture?

**Erica:**



## Transcript

I find all of that really fascinating. And one of the things that stands out for me is that obviously with D&I, the focus a lot of the time is on hiring and retention. But actually there's this broader scope of D&I, that is, you know, into brand, it's into how you interact with customers. And I think that's something that we haven't quite hit in the industry.

**Rebecca:**

Oh, my gosh. And it's a long road. And I feel like people are becoming... they like run out of steam in some respects, right? That they're just... I'm like, the inclusivity is not a one and done thing. Like, diversity is not a one and done thing. it is a constant commitment to understanding your people and shifting as appropriate to make them feel included, to have diversity of thoughts and opinions, and perspectives. Right? It's a constantly shifting landscape, and so it has to be constant attention to it.

But unfortunately, there are so many organisations and still are that we're so far from even like they have to start somewhere, right? So they start with things that are highly measurable and that's not a bad thing, right? They start with recruiting, they start with, you know, teaming. But then they stop and it's like, well, that's not... I think most of us have moved away from quotas being the answer and like taking that further into, okay, when we say we want to be diverse, what does that really mean and how does that show up? Right. But there's a long journey between quotas and truly diverse and inclusive workforce. And so, you know, I think people get tired. They don't understand the work that it takes or aren't committed or just doing it to check a box and they give up. And that's really sad.

Don't we all want to work in a workplace where, like, everybody's opinion is valued and everybody feels included and that they belong, and, you know, it's just... it's really sad. But I guess there's some people that that don't care about that.

**Erica:**

For those who do identify that they have a problem, whether that culturally or in other areas of their business where perhaps design thinking and this kind of methodology applies, what would you recommend the first steps be from identifying that problem?

**Rebecca:**

Just listening. I mean, I think listening is absolutely key. Like, again, my question would always be like, what do you actually think the problem is? And then let's dig into that and find out why that's happening.

Right? So listening is key. Like that is, you know, number one is like, let's go out and we see we have this problem. What's the problem? We can't hire enough divers- we can't keep the diverse candidates that we have hired. You know, what is the thing that's the red flag? And then let's go deep and let's ask the questions and let's do it in a way. A lot of times we get hired because they need a third party to ask the hard questions and to really dig. A lot of times people won't tell their employer they don't feel comfortable there, they feel threatened, they whatever. Like, there was a reason why they left. And it might be because I couldn't talk to that person and they didn't feel, you know, they don't want to get other people in trouble. Like whatever it is.

I think listening is number one. However you can do that in a way that's the most honest and getting the real deal behind it. And then you have to take that and you have to look for the patterns, right? And this is kind of where the approach gets a little artistic, not necessarily like you can do some data mining on it, but really you have to be like, I'm looking back at all this data. What is that? And you do that with the leaders. You don't give them a report on what you heard. You actually let them see the rawness of it and have them say, oh my gosh. I see what's going on here. Okay. And if you can't do that, it's not going to work, right? If you can't have an honest conversation with them and have them recognise what it is and call it out and say, okay, this needs to change and I see why, then you're going to have a problem, because then it's just like one DEI leader just saying like, we really need to do this thing. And the leader is like, ugh really, do we? You know? So, it's having that like deep, deep dive and then having that honest

## Transcript

conversation where they're having the ahas and saying, okay. I get it. And this is why we need to change. And then you can start talking about solutions and whatnot, right?

**Erica:**

And is there anything that we've kind of not touched on or you'd like to go back to just before we finish this session?

**Rebecca:**

I think the only thing that we haven't gone really deep into is this concept around inclusivity. And you know, what's happening today with the workforce and, you know, post-COVID, I have to tell you and I get a little emotional about this because I consider myself like a workforce crusader, like I really care about people. And I had weirdly such hope for the workplace during COVID because I was like, we are now on as level the playing field as we can get. Everyone is home. Everyone is having to deal with the same issues. It wasn't that there weren't issues, but we're all dealing with the same stuff, like we're all literally dealing with the same thing. How do you manage a remote workforce? How do you connect with people if you can't be in person with them, right?

And I was like, this is it! This will be the great awakening of managers and leaders to say like, okay, everybody has an equal voice. We're all the same sized squares on the screen. You know, this is like it really gave me, weirdly, hope in a time that was, like, really hard, right? And now, again, I think I'm just going to call it what it is. I think it's super lazy. I think leaders are like, [...] that was hard. Sorry [...] Man, this is hard. Let's just go back to the way it was, because I know that way. I grew up that way. I've worked, you know, decades that way, and I know how to manage that way. So, let's just bring it back.

And I feel like now we've created more problems, right? Like because now we created this space in which people could be remote and do all these things. And it created so much opportunity for us to be more inclusive for all of the things, right? Like all the things. I mean, everything from like elderly care to child care, to ability and all the things. And now we're like, nope, sorry, come back. And I just think it's lazy and it really is disappointing. It's really disappointing to me.

**Erica:**

I think there was a report, I think it was a Deloitte report that was saying how before COVID we were kind of sticking to these organisational, structures and ways of working. And post COVID, even following the change in how we all worked and interact with each other and some of the positives that came out of that in terms of, you know, women being able to carry on working, as it was flexible. Those with disabilities being able to work from home or neurodiverse people or neurodivergent people, I should probably say, having opportunities for jobs where they didn't have to go into environments they weren't comfortable with and that we're in a situation where organisations don't want to admit that the workers have all the power and they don't want to change.

They want to go back to how it was before because that's what they were comfortable with. But the reality is that it doesn't help a lot of those groups that found, you know, comfortable working situations for themselves during COVID.

**Rebecca:**

Yeah, exactly. And it's just such a missed opportunity. It's such a... again, I just call it lazy. I was at an organisation that I won't name that recently. You know, and they own a lot of real estate here in the Bay Area and I get it. It comes down to like a financial equation at some point. I mean I don't get it but okay like I can see where their logic came to, you know, on a spreadsheet and like, we've got to get people back in the office.

We were meeting with this leader and I was like, I just really think that that's the most lazy solution that I have heard. You know, I'm like, I get it. And I get that like, this is what leadership is saying that you have

## Transcript

to do because you know, on a spreadsheet like this is what this looks like, but you're going to lose a lot of people because of this.

And the thing is, some of them don't care. And the reason why they don't care is because, you know, during this time when the economy was doing really well, they overstaffed, they over-hired. So it's almost like they're using this as an excuse. Well, if they can't do it, then they can go somewhere else. It's fine. You know. But what you know, what we're going to find in a year or so is that they're going to lose the really valuable people. And if they really did believe in diversity and in like they're like cutting out their nose to spite their face, right? The numbers might look right for you, but like, if you look at the people you're going to lose, you're going to lose the people that you really did not want to lose. So, I mean, for those people that, you know, that work through them and they can do it and like whatever, of course, there's going to be some people that stay, like relish it, whatever. But there's going to be some back end consequences, you know, I mean, maybe some of these organisations are too big to fail in that sense. Like they're you know, there will always be a workforce that is going to stay and whatnot. But again, like I find it really sad.

And it's not that it's an easy equation. I get it and here I am, I'm like one person over here, I'm not managing 200,000 people and trying to figure out this equation globally. Like, I completely get how complicated it is, but we can't lose the humanity that we found when COVID hit, and we know we can do it. We know it's hard, but we know that there's a way in which to really create an environment in which people can have their needs be met and therefore they can do great work.

I feel like that organisations think that it's all about like what you just said, like they think that the power is in the employee's hands. I'm sorry, it's not that, it's a mutually... we're taking care of each other. I take care of you. You get the work done, so that we crush it. It is not that the employees have the power. It's just that you're trying to give the employees the voice in order to understand what they need in order to get their work done. Like this is what that whole notion of employees having power... Well yes, they've always had the power in the sense of like they can always leave. But, you know, just because they now have a voice or we're giving them a voice doesn't necessarily mean that organisations are just rolling over. You know, it's not about that. It's about that mutual like taking care of each other.

You know, Reid Hoffman talks about in his book shoot, I'm going to forget the name of it, but he talks about tours of duty. You know, they think about structuring work as like this, mutual contract of like, okay, what do you need to do to develop and grow in your career? What do we need at the organisation? Okay, here, here's a tour of duty. Like you're going to work on this thing for the next year, year and a half, and then we'll see what the next thing is. It's not just this like, well, you get paid, so you should show up and you should do the thing. And it's and it's not all the way on the other side of like, well, I'm not going to do that because I, you know, I'm just going to do what I want, right? It is this mutually respectfully agreed upon contract.

For me, it's like the new employee contract. It's like, no, we're going to agree. Like, you and I are going to talk. Me, the organisation, I have goals that need to be met. You as an individual, you have needs that need to be met in your career. And we're going to find that match and we're gonna agree on it and work towards it together.

Right? So, all right, that was a little bit of a soapbox, but [...]

### Erica:

No, I think that all of that is completely valid. And thank you for sharing your kind of perspectives on inclusivity and kind of company cultures. I think that's just as important as the how. I do want to share with the audience that your book is available on Amazon, which they'll be able to find the link on our podcast web page, [theuwi.com/podcast](http://theuwi.com/podcast) And they can also find more information about FLYN and the work that you do with organisations at [flynconsulting.com](http://flynconsulting.com) But thanks again so much for taking the time

## Transcript

to talk with me through design thinking, how to build good cultures and sharing your insights and perspectives.

**Rebecca:**

Fantastic. Thank you. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk about this. I'm obviously quite passionate about it and love the work I do. And I have a lot of hope for organisations. I really, really do.

**Erica:**

Me too, thank you so much again.

**Rebecca:**

You're welcome. It was good to talk to you. Thanks.

**Erica:**

Bye.