

Episode 1

Modern Work: Changing Behaviours

With Mark Cruth from Atlassian

Ian Tyler: Welcome to the Better World of Work Podcast by Talent. I'm your host, Ian Tyler, Talent's Group Chief Strategy Officer. And today we'll be taking all things Modern Leadership and Modern work with Mark Cruth from Atlassian.

Um, so, you know, here we are, and we're gonna dig into what is modern work. And today we are joined by Mark Cruth and Mark, um, is an evangelist around modern work design Atlassian. So Mark, welcome. And let's have a conversation about modern work and what does all this mean?

Mark Cruth: Ian, I'm so excited to be here. And, uh, your, your question around modern work is, is what everybody has.

Like, what is, what does this modern work even mean? And, you know, in my, currently at Atlas, [00:01:00] I hold the title of modern work evangelist. And, and what does that mean? It means I I'm going out there and talking about how do we get work done today? Uh, I think one of the things prior to the pandemic, one of the things that many of us.

Observed was, there's a big hype around what's the future of work look like? How do we think about like, what's gonna be like in 2030, and then of course the pandemic hit and it showed us that none of us knew what we were talking about. Mm-hmm we all kind of had ideas and, and then all of a sudden says, Hey, we've got a different plan for you.

And. The thing is, is we got thrust into the future and it was a future we weren't expecting. Mm. And that's exactly, you know, again, we can guess all we want, but modern work is gonna be then saying, well, cool. We're here. What do we do now? What do we do in this age? And, and that's where for me, I think one of the big things is, and I've always done throughout my career.

So I've spent my career focusing in. What I would consider the pragmatic things we can do to get better modern work. When you take off the, the [00:02:00] window dressing, it's all about how do you, how do you get a little bit better in



the current situation you're in. And that goes back to that idea of like, how do you make meetings suck less, because guess what meetings have sucked since, you know, 1950s, whenever the idea of a meeting came around, it's getting better at that.

Ian Tyler: Yeah, absolutely. Well, you know, you touch on a whole range of things there. So I wouldn't mind, uh, picking on you a little bit in terms of how, how does mark or even. Anybody who's listening to this become the modern work designer and an evangelist, certainly within what is one of the most globally recognizable, um, software companies like Atlassian.

I mean, tell us about your journey.

Mark Cruth: Ah, it was it's, it's kind of been interesting and it's almost like, I don't know. It is one of those like pinch me moments where I'm. Am I really doing this right now. You know, like this is cool. Like I, I never thought I would get here cuz I'll tell you what. I started out my career back.

What was that? About [00:03:00] 12, 12 and a half years ago. I get, I came outta university and I started going through and trying out some different jobs. I actually started working as a programmer. Uh, did a little bit of program. Tried out a few other things like project management. Ultimately I found a love for what we would consider agile software development.

So in that realm, one of the things I found was that in agile, we focus very much on how do we work together? How do we collaborate, solve problems rapidly, you know, prototyping, you know, iterative design, these sorts of things. I just, I absolutely love. The atmosphere created and how we can actually solve problems versus letting things just build out over time.

And so what I, from those early days, I spent a lot of time working with different organizations around the country and specifically in the us, but also places around the world, helping them think about how do they work a little bit differently from a technology perspective. And so one of the things that, uh, kind of I started using early on in my career was, was [00:04:00] Atlassian products.

You know, it was one of those things where I think it was back in like 2010. I remember using JIRA with green hopper, you know, trying to help my, my agile teams do things just a little bit better. And so, as I continued using it, I always used product, you know, Atlassian products to kind of help me do things a little differently.



Really what I did is I tried to use it to help me be more efficient with some of the things. Yeah. I knew I could apply my practices to it. Now, how do we get a little bit better? Fast forward a few more years, I spend my time. I found myself at Atlassian. Again, dream job. I was working with large enterprises to help them think about how do they work differently by applying some of our products mm.

And really trying to solve the enterprise problem. But the one thing I always had a passion about around that, I, I still felt there was a need for, was this idea of how do we, how do we apply the way we. Two things like the tools we work from, because what is it UML creator, Grady. Bosch has this great quote that says a fool with [00:05:00] a tool is still a fool and it couldn't be, you know, couldn't be more true.

I mean, I see, I hear the last absolutely. You were like, oh, I get that, you know? Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Right. Yeah. Yeah. And so for me, it was like, how do we focus in, on some of those practices? And so for me, one of the big things has been is how do we find new ways to unlock those practices in teams? And the best way I found to do that was let's go talk to 'em about that.

Let's actually go, and then once we've gone through the practices, then let's start layering the tools. all of a sudden, I start talking with some of the folks internally and they're like, Hey yeah, this sounds, this is actually an area we wanna invest some time in. Mm. And over the last six months, I actually worked as what we consider what we're calling this new part, part of Atlassian called the team doctors.

Yeah. We're very focused on how do we work with our customers to think about practices? And then from there, I said, say, I wanna go talk to more people about this. And so, uh, my, my new boss, Don price was actually looking for some people to help with that. And I [00:06:00] said, yes, I would love to go out there and start talking to some of our customers.

Yeah. I love to go out there and start talking to others about how we apply practices out there so that, you know, long story short, it's been a whirlwind of a journey. And for anyone who listened out there, that's like, how's your path to get to. There is no path. My path was follow my passions, what got me up in the morning and then just keep following that.

And yeah, it was amazing what new places I went to along that journey. Yeah.

Ian Tyler: So do you think, um, and this, this is where it gets interesting for me because there is no path. Um, that that is well trodden. Um, and you know, and



Dom's path to that was almost like an accidental, um, experiment as well. Um, does it mean that organizations need to think like this more broadly to give people the opportunities to take those paths and stumble across something?

Because that requires a little bit of leadership and [00:07:00] management brave. Um, a hundred percent and you're exploring a little bit of the unknown and, um, and I find it interesting because if it's a, if it's a new role for an individual and a new kind of venture for an organization to then start to evangelize and go out and speak to other organizations, it's like, are we all feeling around in the dark or all?

We all quite comfortable that we kind of know where this thing is.

Mark Cruth: You know, and it's interesting. I'd love to hear what, what you've seen out there too. I'll say that one big piece that I've found is in some of the companies I've worked for very structured in terms of like what, what your job is. And I think one of the things I've seen.

And I've worked with organizations that help do. And Atlassian is really good at, is this idea of let's talk about what skills you've got and how do we want to develop those skills. So it becomes less about a title and yeah, I've got a title, but it becomes a lot more about, Hey, what are you good at? What [00:08:00] do you wanna become good at?

You know, one thing for me was always, honestly, I always loved, uh, I fell in love with things like public speaking back, you know, Six years ago. And so I found myself in a, in a role where I'm like, all right, what are the skills I bring to the table? And all of a sudden they said, all right, you know, love for practices and process love for speaking love for just trying new things.

Lot of exploration, a lot of curiosity, they said, Hey, you know what? We have a need over here that need some of these skills you are interested in doing. Those are how I've seen a lot of people start falling into roles here because we've very much focused on less of like, I need a project manager three and more of, I need someone who's gonna be very astute and knowledgeable in this space.

Yeah. And so that, that has been super beneficial for us as we've started to grow really large, to think about less, less about the titles and more about the skills. What, what about you? What have you seen out there? Ian? What have you done in your organiz?



Ian Tyler: Yeah, and I think it's a, it's a fantastic, um, [00:09:00] way to look at things.

And firstly, what do I see is, um, executive just described its organizations are now turning onto a skills force rather than a workforce. Right. So of course we need humans, um, by and large to come and still do the jobs, certainly as it relates to human engagement, um, certainly the way that people are thinking about, um, outputs rather than managing the individual.

Contribution per se, it's about what are they doing? What are they forming? What are the teams they're forming part of? And therefore they're hiring for that skill, uh, taxonomy more so, uh, than probably the last five years. That's certainly something that's occurring. Mm-hmm . Overlay the job title with that, all of a sudden you put the box in and around that skill base, which is really interesting as a, as a notion, because certainly as a global technology recruitment business and services organization that we are, um, Our [00:10:00] entire taxonomy of recruitment is wedded into job family skill sets.

Mm-hmm um, we, we recruit software engineers with a particular programming language. So there are those boxes that people have to live in or do they, you know, and there's a question is that, is that, is that a modern structure? Um, and, and, and I'll flip the question back to you, which is, so if throughout your path of evangelism and the organizations that you're now talking more to, and about these things.

What are you seeing? What, what outside of Atlassian now in the kind of bigger, broader world are, are companies really turning onto.

Mark Cruth: So I think some companies are, some companies are still trying to are struggling, you know, to kind of find their way. The one, I think one of the big indicators that at least I've seen, that's been drawing towards, this is things like a lot of people, of course are, are moving to new jobs.

A lot of people are looking for, you know, what's the next thing, because maybe they're lacking. Uh, fulfillment in their current work, or maybe just not engaged in what they [00:11:00] do. And it has to do with the fact that they took a job that was a role and not, uh, a, passionary not a skill set for them. So a lot of companies are starting to say, well, what are the skills that we need versus just that job title?

Now, the interesting thing. And I'd be, and this is where, like you think about like modern recruiting and talent and those sorts of. The whole area of like jobs,



titles, family, like job families that is ingrained in that, in that industry. And so it's very interesting to watch, you know, as whether it be internal recruiting groups or external recruiting groups, try to figure out how do we, how do we play here?

And again, I, I don't think anyone has truly solved it yet lasting. We still use titles. But what we do now is when we have those conversations with a, with a can. We're starting to talk a lot more about, you know, what are the things that, you know, we think that is needed to be successful here with them.

We're talking about what are the things they bring to the table versus like, do you have experience in a, B, C, and D you know, we really wanna understand what [00:12:00] drives their passion, what skills they're trying to develop versus what do we need and, and using, you know, current infrastructure as a mechanism to get there, but really trying to drive that conversation a little differently.

So I think that's probably. Still at the cusp of some of that, you know, we still gotta, it's gonna take a while, but it's how we, you know, I like to use the word intent, how we intentfully look at those conversations when we're starting to talk to candidates, as we're starting to go through and say, Hey it, do we wanna bring someone in here?

Who's looking for a title. Are they trying to be here? Because they wanna do a really cool job.

Ian Tyler: Uh, that it, it leads me into one of the things that I know that you, you, you talk about externally and internally with, with Atlassian around. Um Holocracy so if you think, if you think about that in the context of what we are talking about around skills and teams and job titles, That kind of stuff.

Yeah. And then you think about the system of Holocracy, uh, which [00:13:00] obviously, I mean, and you can talk about this better than I can, but that kind of decentralized leadership and kind of, um, self-organization I mean, how does that all fit together?

Mark Cruth: That was a really interesting one. And I, I am a big fan of these ideas of like self-management.

And like you said, I've talked about it a lot. And I think when we think about like, what is the future? Like, what is things like? How we bring someone into an organization or what is like my role now, if all of a sudden now we're, self-managing, we're decentralized. There's no longer levels. that's actually



something that in at least in Holocracy based structures or sociocracy, or what have you, one of the big things they focus on there is that kind of self-identification what do you want to be?

What is that self definition of that? Uh, and so I think, and I'll be honest, somebody who is looking for a title, they're going to struggle in a Holocracy based environment, because it really is about how do we [00:14:00] collaborate together versus how am I climbing a chain? And so. I think the future of like something like a Holocracy those sorts of areas.

It's a little bit of a utopia. It's a little bit of a thing that says, Hey, if I'm gonna put that little bit of my brain, that's, that's very selfish. You know, the what is it? The, uh, I forgot what it is, but that part of the brain stem that's like, Hey, I gotta be selfish and look out for myself. If I can put that aside, things like Holocracy work out really well.

But the thing is, is we are we're we're bags of emotions. You know, we, we make irrational decisions, you know, it, it, it's one of those things where it makes it very difficult to hit to that utopia. , but I think things like Holocracy and others can give us some really cool road signs for how do we start maybe working a little differently.

And that goes into things. Hey, maybe my, maybe my job title isn't as much of a thing. Uh, instead maybe I need to say a great example of a company who does some self practice areas, uh, or self-management [00:15:00] kind of things is, uh, Morningstar, uh, tomatoes out of the us. And one of the things they do is they, they create these ideas of clues.

There are colleagues letters, colleague letter, Understanding and what it is. It's basically me saying to my colleagues, this is who I am and what I bring to the table for us this time. Like, something like that is like, oh, that's revolutionary. I don't have to go whole, whole accuracy or anything. But if I put that in place, talk about changing the mindset around what my role is.

In an organization. Talk about my ownership at that point. So I dunno, what have you, have you talked to people who played with the Holocracy, what have you seen as you maybe nibbled on that, that idea out there, especially in the talent space.

Ian Tyler: Yeah. And, and do you know what, I, I go back to something I mentioned before about bravery.



Um, I, I think there are many organiz, I mean, the whole Holocracy concept is not a new thing it's been around for a while, but it's yep. The, the experiments that organizations have done much, like, [00:16:00] um, You know, the, um, the introduction a number of years back now, uh, with the concept of the four day work week.

Um, and if you think about that in its kind of looser construct, you could say, well, there's essentially a degree of Holocracy that relates to that because there's self organization, there's internal social contracts. There's. You know, having expectations on one another, but essentially the people within the team and or the construct or the business unit self organizing and holding each other account to, to outputs as opposed to a physical presence in an office on certain number of days, et cetera.

So we are seeing organizations certainly in the, um, Um, Asia Pacific region, mm-hmm, leaning right into that. It's not necessarily a new thing in the us and across the UK and European markets in which we operate, it's really starting to, to, to be adopted those types of things. So I think that would be my vantage point.

I've got, [00:17:00] um, on that. Um, but the, the, I think that's

Mark Cruth: a really interesting piece too, is. That aspect of like the practices you're talking about. Like some of that decentralization, like to me, I think those are the biggest things to pull out of that, you know, it's like, how do we, how do we get, you know, how do we release some of the power back to the teams to allow them to help kind of figure out what's gonna work best for them, whether I'm a knowledge worker sitting at a desk somewhere with a bunch of people or I'm working on assembly line, you know, manufacturing, X kind of product.

The more I can figure out, Hey, you're closer to the work. You know, the work, I should let you make decisions around some of the work, as long as you have that intent in mind. Yeah. That that's, to me, like what we, how we get to things like ultimately, what does the future of an organization look like? It's those little practices in there.

Yeah,

Ian Tyler: I, I, I agree. And, you know, the, I would say by and large, um, I, I, I have this sense now post pandemic, if I'm [00:18:00] able to kind of say that in invert commerce, um, that organizations, irrespective of industry and sector are more open to, um, experiment. Um, mm-hmm and, and I feel that organizations are



now in a situation where they're much more inclined to give their people a bloody good listening to, um, and then acting on some of that stuff.

And, and that's really encouraging. So, um, You, you know, one thing I

Mark Cruth: wanna, I want one thing that's interesting with that. And I it's based on, I was doing some research recently around things like engagement is that one interesting thing. A lot of companies are finding themselves into. And I think at this point to your point, they're learning to experiment quickly and they're learning to listen to their people.

But one of the things that we're still, we're still seeing some problems around is this idea of I've listened to you. Now what, like, and what am I doing about that? And so like, you're actually starting to see, [00:19:00] we've been climbing in like employee engagement for the last, you know, 10 years. And just this last year we saw the first dip in a long time.

And, and it's attributed to the fact that we're like, We've asked people and that's, that's the thing we've asked people. Step one, good. Step two. We do something about it. And we're starting to struggle because we're, we're not, we don't know how to act. Uh, how, how do we, they say we need better, uh, clarity on our work.

Well, crap. How do we do that? You know, and I think, yeah, that's something we're like the new organ, the modern organization has to get their hands around that. How do. How do we both talk, but then also do at the same

Ian Tyler: time. So, so let's unpack that a little bit more. Cause I think that for me is really where that's where the rubber hits the road.

It's it's like run an engagement survey, as you say. Um, great. We are really engaged. Now what. Exactly. Yeah. Awesome. Yeah. Go go us. Here's the pin of honor. Um, do we get a cup with [00:20:00] that? I mean, what would, yeah, no. Right, exactly. yeah. Um, so, so, so the notion of that, and, and leaders out there that may be listening to this, um, and it is happened in other podcasts where people have reached out and asked to be introduced.

Different people that we, we we've had on the podcast. And it would be like, I'd love to get 10 minutes for that person. Can you do an introduction or whatever? Um, and people get really intrigued by not necessarily the, what it is more the how. Um, and I'm not asking you to give away the keys to the kingdom here, but more about like, What are you seeing in some businesses that are doing the



listening well of an applying the change or applying the modern work thinking or practice around experimentation?

Mark Cruth: Mm-hmm I think it goes one of the biggest things I've seen out there. And one of the things we encourage out there, like part of the practices that we, or I. I'm out there talking about with companies, uh, is something that we, we do at Atlassian, which is really cool is, you know, we, we do these engagement [00:21:00] surveys.

So even at Atlassian, we do a monthly engagement survey, kinda understand, you know, Hey, how are our things? Where are you struggling? Where are you now? And our management teams. Get that data. And so one of the big things that we try to do, and our management teams have been really fairly good at this is going out there and saying, all right in, we don't have to solve this for your whole organization, but Hey, you know, mark, you're, you're a manager of these 10 people go work with your people to figure out what's one thing you can change.

And, you know, based on that feedback, I think a lot of times what I've seen is that all of a sudden you get this, you get that first survey back and it comes with like a big old list of like, here, they're struggling here. Oh, things are great here, but you could use some improvement here and it's almost this, you, you almost kind of get paralyzed being like, do I gotta do all these things when instead we say, no, This is just like we would do in software teams.

We're gonna retrospect, we're gonna find one item and guess what we're gonna do. We're gonna try an experiment around that. And so one of the things we've encouraged our, our leaders to do we've I encouraged [00:22:00] our customers to do, and you're starting to see this with customers is they're taking that data.

And now they're doing, you know, again, these small experiments, you don't have to change your business overnight kind of thing. Be like, well, crap, we've gotta fix the engagement. So we've gotta introduce X, new practice across everybody. And so giving teams that ability and, you know, to actually do those small experiments has been huge.

And the thing is, is. We have to be able to then go in and give the, those, those leaders, the, essentially the autonomy to go change some of those things and really think about, again, what's in their sphere of influence, what can they do to help their teams? Mm-hmm . And so that, that, I think that's been the big thing we've done.



Like whether it be things like, um, one thing we ended up doing was we. We ran an engagement survey, uh, here at Atlassian with a number of teams. And after that says, you know what, we need to dig deeper. And so they would go in and they would run things like our health monitors, uh, that we have at Atlassian it's on our playbook.

And so we'd run a health monitor and then we'd say, all right, based on that looks like, you know, we're really struggling here with maybe some shared [00:23:00] understanding or maybe we're, you know, some of our rituals are outta. And then they say, okay, let's go. And let's like, one of my favorite things to do is let's do a ritual reset.

Let's take a look at our meetings and figure out what's working. What's not. And, and all of a sudden what was a problem, what was causing us to maybe not feel so empowered? About an hour and a half later now we're like, oh cool. We, we could change something that's kind of novel. So I, I think that's the biggest thing is small incremental changes that the team feels that they can own.

So I, what have, uh, what are some of the things you do you do in, in, in your organization to kind of help with that kind of thinking of engagement? Thinking of how do I own that improvement?

Ian Tyler: Yeah, no, it's, it's a good question. So we, the, the rituals that we have and, you know, Shaily um, the pandemic pushed us to be a much better communicator as an organization than we were before.

Mm-hmm um, and I say that unashamedly, because I think, um, the truth will be said of many organizations around that. [00:24:00] Um, so communicate communicate and listen. Um, and then do, um, and so our, our, our global CEO, Mark Nielsen has been phenomenal at that, where he runs rituals. It's all hands meetings. Every two weeks mm-hmm , there is a, a real cadence around that.

And then there's a lot of change within those types of, uh, meetings. So as you don't always know exactly what you're gonna get, so there's an element of insight, surprise, and those type, which actually mean that, you know, when you jump on the zoom or you're in a room, the crowd is always big. Um, and it's not just because, you know, it's our CEO talking it's because sometimes that's where you're going to get some information.

You ain't gonna hear you're



Mark Cruth: being really intentful about those meetings, right? Being like, Hey, we, we need to be able to add some of that, that whimsy, but we also need to make sure, you know, it's communicating something. I think that's what makes something like that super successful instead of just saying, Hey, we're every two weeks [00:25:00] where all hands meeting join and we'll share you some information, you you're very intentful with it.

I love

Ian Tyler: that. Yeah, absolutely. And you, you know, one, one of the other things. That, um, again, we've spoken about on this podcast before is about the art and science of communication, which is meeting people where they're at consuming information, how they wanna consume it, getting the right medium, to make sure that every pocket of the organization is aware, um, and actually wants to participate in those types of updates and collaborations and so on.

Um, but they, they that's. Example of, of some of the things that, that we've done. And I know for a fact, from speaking to the organizations that I do. Every organization is changing the way that they communicate and collaborate. Um, you know, just for example, this that we are doing now, you are in Detroit, in the us.

So I'm in Sydney, Australia, mm-hmm um, we are having a conversation about modern work, about, you know, really blowing up this concept of future of work. It's [00:26:00] now it's real. That whole kind of notion of future of work kind of is a little bit irritating. Um, cuz everyone got it wrong. Um, exactly. Um, that, and, and that's why I'm, I'm really intrigued by, by the work that you do and, and you know, this conversation more.

So if I, if I may indulge myself and, and jump a little bit into, um, thi this, this notion of, um, future work again, but in terms of leader, And I touched on before about bravery, um, and leaders being brave to take these experiments and do new things. What are some of the things that outside of the, the rituals and the kind of communication that we, we kind of have to constantly evolve is never done.

It's just a constantly evolving be. What are you seeing organizations do better?

Mark Cruth: I think one of the big things. And I think it goes back into actually the [00:27:00] concept of leadership is really focusing on what leadership should be versus what it has been. Hmm. A lot of times organizations have found,



especially, you know, Pre pandemic, you know, you would take someone who is an expert, doer.

They wanna, they wanna rise with the ranks, all of a sudden, cool. I'm gonna be a, a people leader. And the thing is, is when we were all together in one place, somebody could play people leader, but then through osmosis, you know, all in the one place you could kind of have your people development happening.

You know, I remember I had leaders. Like that in the past that were very much expert doers. They didn't really focus on my development, but I had some really great team members that just working with them, helped me think about my development. Well, now fast forward, everything's remote for a few years, and now I literally have a person I'm talking to, you know, about my development, about where I'm trying to grow, what I'm trying to do.

And so what it's really done is it, it kind of pushed that concept. What is what is actually a leader's job to the [00:28:00] forefront because, you know, what is it? What's the odd saying? You know, people don't leave companies, they lead leave bad bosses. And so as people have started to find, especially giving, giving, being, given some ability to now be a little bit more mobile than they used to be with, you know, being able to be remote in jobs.

Seeing things of like, what could, what could I be doing out in the world to make an impact? Now, people are asking hard questions to their leaders being like, how am I making an impact? What's my, what am I trying to do? How I, I wanna talk about my wellbeing. I wanna talk about how, how our company is, you know, trying to change parts of the world.

Managers have had to really step up their game to actually think about, do I really wanna do this job? Because again, beforehand, it. Cool. That was how I rised up the ranks. Now that leader is looked at for a lot more really looked at for things like how do we develop people? Which honestly is what leadership always needed to be, but struggled to get there.

[00:29:00] And so I've seen a lot of companies, Atlassian included. We doubled in size over the last two, you know, two years. Um, we had to put a big focus in on how do we develop our leaders? You know, how do we, we're bringing up a lot of new people. How do we, how do we do that? Because we realized that. Folks are, you know, these folks who are coming into these spots might be really good at their job, but in our world, it doesn't matter that much.



That you're really a really good software engineer. My best boss I have had in, in a very long time is, was my first one here at Atlassian. He told me when I remember joining, he says, I have no idea what you do. You know, like, I really don't understand, you know, a lot of the enterprise agility space and, and, and things like.

But I do understand people. And, and my goal here is to help you be as successful as possible. I mean, talk about a, you know, a glass of a nice, you know, refreshing water right there. Tell me about it. Right. And so those are some of the things that you're starting to see people try to focus on developing.

What is that new? How do we develop that leadership muscle? [00:30:00] Yeah. In, in these new leaders. Yeah.

Ian Tyler: It, it's interesting, you know, because you know, there is also. Uh, this notion out there, certainly in organizations and, you know, I, I, I think I'm, I'm one of them personified in terms of my role at talent, but there are, there are leaders out there that might necessarily be, uh, might not necessarily be the best software engineer, but leaders of software engineering group, because our amazing leaders, but conversely, mm-hmm, , the opposite can be true, which is, they're an amazing software engineer.

but they're really, uh, poor people leader, but because they're brilliant at the software engineer, the old structure has said, well, we need to promote them through the ranks. And therefore mm-hmm they hold this title back to the thing that we were talking about before. And it's like, well, actually, no. Um, can we just not do that anymore?

Because you're absolutely right. You know, we. It's you've gotta have the right people. And therefore the, the learning around leadership needs to evolve mm-hmm and change. And you know, that that's [00:31:00] complicated. Um, but is it, oh, it is. Yeah, but, but is it it's like the notion of it's quite simple. So, you know, it's simple but not easy.

Mark Cruth: Well, it goes right back to our first conversation. First part of the conversation around skills versus titles. And it goes back to this whole piece where, you know, a lot of times, like if we dissect the problem, you know, we think about it. It's like, all right, cool. You know, people wanted to grow in seniority.

They wanted to maybe make more money. They wanna do these things. And you know, where we're the only option for that was before. Management that's oh,



okay. That's I, I hit a ceiling now I have to climb this part of the line. I don't want, maybe don't want to, but you know what, there's, there's a bit of me that I want to, you know, I want to continue to grow.

And so for us, many organizations have to think about how they reinvent that and it doesn't necessarily means saying, create a technical track for folks. Now this goes back down to the skills development, start focusing on what kind of skills you want to and, and reward for things like you've been building mastery in [00:32:00] these areas.

Awesome. You know, if you're a master across these six different skill sets that might represent something where. Hey, maybe now you get a pay boost or something like that because you're becoming an expert who can then go out there and grow others, uh, or something to that effect. That's where I think we can reimagine some of this without saying, well, the only pathways here, because there's some people I know that absolutely are amazing people, leaders that, you know, what they were, that they were destined that, that path, like those are the skills they're really good at they're empathy, their collaboration, the communication.

And then there's folks who are really good at like the, the technical angles or what have you. And so how do we lean into what people are passionate and good at and then help them self identify where they wanna grow? Yeah.

Ian Tyler: You, you, you just rattled off a couple of competencies there around, you know, empathy and, and compassion and so on.

Yeah, I don't, I, I don't think, um, you give me any good leader. It from history to, to now. I don't think those fundamentals [00:33:00] have really changed, you know, mm-hmm, , I, I find that really interesting empathetic leadership, you know, people who can collaborate, people who can communicate. Isn't that just a really good hallmark of people being good leaders.

Mark Cruth: Oh, a hundred percent. Well, and I think it's interesting is you have to look at too, like the. The the second part of every leadership story. I think, I think that's the big thing is, so you look at like the success and the thing is you be like, oh wow, that was a great leader there. And then you look at, you know, and then what happened next?

You know, if all of a sudden you find cool, we released this thing or we, we do, we did this thing. And all of a sudden now, like half our organization exited or things like that, you can have these leaders who are going out there and they. They will



get people, you know, get things through done through pushing people through walls versus lifting them over.

And, and I think it's, and I think that's one of the big things that we've gotta always keep conscious of is like, how do we make sure that we've got, you [00:34:00] know, that it's not just the end of the story of that success, but what happened later? Like how do people now talk about it? And I think that's where it's funny values in an organization is a, is a great example of this.

Values, you know, every organization has their values, you know, those things that they hold up or they etch on their walls, you know, but the thing is, is there's this idea of, um, uh, aspired values and enacted values. And the idea of an aspired one is like, oh, I wanna do that, but I don't have any good stories of it.

And enacted one is like, oh, I have a good story about that. We have to have those enacted stories of our leaders to actually say, well, that was good leadership there because afterwards we, it was like, here's an example of where that continued happen. Mm,

Ian Tyler: a and, and organizations that celebrate those stories.

Yes. Um, I think it, it is, again, it it's starting to happen more and more and more, the more like if, if we take the banking sector, you know, what, what 25 years ago may have been seen as stuffy and elitist and all the rest of [00:35:00] it, you know what, they're coming back down to more. Tech scale up vibes mm-hmm to, you know, really kind of getting into this, you know what we are good.

And we are celebrating these stories and we work with, you know, at the pointy end of what makes the world go round in terms of money and happiness and fulfillment and all these wonderful things. That's great. But that whole sector has changed so much to be, um, an organizational, um, structure. Is now more reminiscent of tech scale ups and tech startup mm-hmm

And I find that really interesting and they celebrate leadership stories, um, in such a good way that I'm finding through different conversations, more so than they have done in the last 25 years.

Mark Cruth: And you know what the key to that is. So there's one, there's one word that I think is the key to all of that.

So what do you think it is? There's one word evolution. I would put that right in there with it. I was thinking of behaviors and, and it's that? [00:36:00] How do we



change behaviors in our organization? And honestly, that's the game of modern work in my mind is behaviors. How do we think about. Those things that we want to change in our organization, cuz you know, whether I flatten my hierarchy or whether I decentralize my decision making, if I don't change my behaviors around those sorts of things, the things that, um, the, the leaders, the, the behaviors that my leaders demonstrate and they share what they do.

They share stories, it's things through like sharing those success. Stories of leadership is a way of expressing a behavior. . And so all of a sudden now people are like, oh cool. We promote this behavior. I like that. And, and so now I do it and then you do it. And then a bunch of us start doing it. And it starts becoming part of what our company is known for.

It's about our culture then mm-hmm . And so for me, I, I find that, you know, modern Tech's a great, or Mo like, banking's a great example where there was this aspect that they said, you know what we are, we have to change the way we work. and it wasn't [00:37:00] a agile transformation or a digital transformation that changed the way they work.

What they ultimately ended up doing was saying, well, we have to treat change how we react to things, how we, how we treat our people around things and what do we celebrate? You know, mm-hmm, those sorts of things. And all of a sudden, you see through those little things like that. Organizations, all of a sudden become like, wow, you look at a, at a bank.

You're like, you're a bank. Like really? Yeah. You know, I'm actually working, I'm doing a talk with a group. Um, uh, they're a bank. And one of the things they're doing is like, they're doing a tech, like an innovation week right now. And one of the things they did is they submitted, they had this idea, this portal submit all these new ideas for like innovation within their tech space.

And they were only expecting like three or four ideas and they got 50 of. And that was a sign that the behaviors that they were trying to encourage around innovation was, was actually working because they were like, wow, people felt open. They. They wanted to contribute ideas versus just being like, all right, cool.

There's just an option to do it. So I, I love seeing how [00:38:00] those little things like that can kind of help feed the system and feed the, the way an organization actually works.

Ian Tyler: Yeah, absolutely. And it nourishes the organization to go, yes. You know what? I'm gonna put my hand up here. I'm gonna give it a go.



Yes. I'll submit an idea. Even though I might be doing negative self talk and saying. That's crap. That's not gonna fly, but actually, you know, it's that behavior you're absolutely right. That encourages that, that transformation evolution as a result of that, so, yep. Um, yep, absolutely. Um, just, um, conscious of that, we are kind of coming to the end of our time together, uh, mark.

And if there's, um, a couple of takeaways that you would like our, our listeners to. Kind of sit there and ponder on it and sit with the problem on for a moment. What, what would some of those things be as it relates to future work and, and the context of our conversation that we've, we we've just gone.

Mark Cruth: I think the biggest, some of the [00:39:00] biggest things that kind of come to mind to me are gonna be some of those key words that we've kind of thrown out throughout the day is things like focusing on skills, you know, how do we think about what if you're a listener and you're thinking about your growth, you know, think about what do you wanna master?

What are the things, what are the things you're okay with? Not mastering and determine how you wanna get better at those things. Mm-hmm, find someone who you feel is a master there and learn. You know, that's how we wanna start thinking about our growth today. As organizations out there are starting to think about how they get better intentionality thinking, being very intentful about how you work.

How do you think about improvement? You know, we talked about the employee surveys. How do you spend intentionally spend time? Doing changes. And again, you don't have to, you don't have to make big changes. It's like the old adage of, you know, how do you eat an elephant one bite at a time? You don't have to make everything better at once small things, and then continue to iterate on that.

Build a pattern, bitter, build a ritual [00:40:00] around that. And then I think, you know, this idea of behaviors and the evolution of the organization, continue to keep that in mind, people like, as you think about it, don't think about what you wanna change in your organization. Think about what behavior do you wanna see enacted in your organization?

Mm. If you were to, if you were to stop and see, like, all right, I would know my organization is growing and evolving. If I witnessed this happen in my organization, what would that be? What would then, what would it take to start moving in that direction? Mm-hmm how would you, how can you enact that behavior and start setting some of that example?



So I think to me, that's what modern works all about. Yeah. Is how do we do these? Little things today to make tomorrow a little better, because we know that, Hey, who knows what will happen in, in two, three years from now, right? Yeah. We, we, I remember March 2020, we all thought we had a plan, so,

Ian Tyler: yeah, exactly.

Right. Um, and, and thank you for sharing that. And, and that just [00:41:00] kind of brings into focus for me. I mean, we have a, a company vision, which is empowering people to build a better world of work for all. That's our vision mm-hmm . Um, and when I think about that, we use this wonderful little, an acronym called be wow, the better world of work.

And that's, you know, the name of our podcast. It's that better world of work. What, what does that invoke in you when we think about, well, what is, what would one thing be for you that a better world of work for mark growth?

Mark Cruth: What would that be? I think to me, it would be looking at how do we see more experimentation and, and more, and to your point earlier celebrated experimentation.

I think we are getting better at that. I think many organizations are starting to embrace it, but. I think that's one of that's gonna be our, that's gonna be the key for us in the future. Mm-hmm how do we continue to iterate experiment and be okay with, you know, not being perfect with things and [00:42:00] so a better, you know, a better ways of working a better, you know, future of work is going to be one we're we're okay with not getting the right answer at the right time, because guess what?

We can, we can experiment. Yeah,

Ian Tyler: absolutely. Um, mark, I wanna say a huge, huge, huge thanks, uh, for your time. Um, and the investment of time that you've put into this, you've been exceptionally gracious and thank you so so much.

Mark Cruth: Oh, thanks for having me. I absolutely love this conversation. And to any of your listeners out there, y'all want to continue this all feel free to reach out, cuz I, this is what we're trying to do.

We want to talk. What, what is, what does the work look like the next couple years? Because that's where we can, we gotta strike where the iron's hot.



Ian Tyler: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. It's on the, it's in the boardrooms, uh, and on the conversations of every CEO and employee, um, around the world right now. So, uh, mark crew from Atlassian.

Thank you so much. Thank you all.

