

Episode 25: Digital Workplace and Purpose-led Workplaces

Oliver: Hi, my name is **Oliver Hussick**. I lead the workplace experience consulting practice at HCLTech, and today we're talking about the digital workplace and how it fits within and significantly supports purpose-led organizations.

I'm joined by **Kimberly Bryer**, an expert, and consultant in the workplace experience, specializing in CX or client experience, and customer experience, however, you'd like to interpret cx, but with a passion for people and purpose and how that affects their perceived experience.

Together, we'll address a couple of questions that arise in this arena, share our insights and talk about why we think it's important for WXC to be able to support our clients by including some of these factors in their vision, values, and strategy.

So, let me start with a question for Kimberly first. Simply, what do we mean by a digital workplace?

Kimberly: I believe it is safe to say that all workplaces have gone digital in some way. But, without delving into the definition of digital, let us assume that we mean workplaces that use technology to create the environment in which people work, to help them communicate, to develop content, to service the needs of customers, and to drive business operations. Furthermore, and perhaps slightly confusingly, we now know it does not have to be a place in itself. Most of us have learned that it can be your home, a cafe, a train, or a plane. Isn't it possible that it could be anywhere now?

Oliver: I would agree, and I find myself working in a mobile capacity more often than I would like. So, what exactly is a purpose-driven organization?

Kimberly: I think that's slightly harder to define. Purposes can be identified at all levels and in various ways across all workplaces. And I think that's the, you know, the focus of conversation essentially, isn't it?

Oliver: I think you're spot on. I think if we consider the blacksmiths, definitely purpose-led, maybe not such a digital workplace.

The hospital's very narrow and well-defined purpose is enormously digitized over recent transformations, but more than any business you would consider operating out of an office. Certainly digital, but not always clear on purpose. Many competing purposes, some internal serving the business, some external serving their clients.

Kimberly: So how is that different, Oliver? Do you consider your purpose and your team's purpose or your role in the purpose of the entire organization?

Oliver: I think, all of them possibly, feel like the right answer when we're talking in this context. From my perspective, are we defaulting to a purpose that's not necessarily aligned with the mission statement of the organization?

We must consider our purpose in support of the organization's purpose, quite often to service customers' requirements, work with our clients, and be led by them, but obviously, our business has a purpose of its own. Our goal is to find a shared purpose with our customers and clients and share that purpose with our internal teams.

I think personally, my alignment with the organization is pretty straightforward. At HCLTech, I seek to support our clients in their pursuit of digital transformation. I want to change the way we make those decisions and think about how my team supports our clients when they are moving towards an improved workplace experience as to whether that purpose was given to me or something that I've deduced and defined. It's always a mixture of the two. I have to infer from the strategy of HCL and from the strategy of the individual clients that we engage with as a team. And then I have to make sure that my business unit, we as an organization, are aligned and delivering what the market needs, what people need, and what the business needs.

And I think one of the important things is, to think about my purpose reframed in maybe several different ways. My purpose is to keep my consultants busy learning, innovating, and driving forwards the thought leadership required in the digital workplace. But then my purpose is also to make sure that my clients are satisfied and we're moving them in the right direction too. My boss might ask me to be, busier, or more innovative or kind of nominate me for a different purpose that suits the overall strategy. I think with all those things in mind, it's really important to consider what changes, what's the purpose of the purpose, and if the purpose is adjusted, what do we have to adjust?

Kimberly: Well, when approaching, this sort of topic with clients, colleagues, friends, and family, my first question is, when you think about individuals and their experiences, within a digital workplace, and the purpose within that, are they aware? So are you aware? Of where your satisfaction comes from. Does that, does satisfaction sit within your role, and is that your purpose? Or does it sit within the knowledge that you're part of something bigger and the organization's purpose is actually what you receive satisfaction from? So, in terms of mission statements or you know, the services that your company provides, where do you, where did your satisfaction sit, and do you build your purpose around that?

Do you find it within it? How is the level of awareness affects your daily life? So if I know that I enjoy a particular task, I'm going to get that done first, but that isn't necessarily my purpose. I enjoy working within a team, for example, that services clients in a certain way. And that's both my purpose and where I gain satisfaction. But how can one go about acceptance of either notion?

Oliver: I think that's a great question. It's nuanced. It's significant and there's no doubt about that. When they're aligned, we're much better off. Because you have to think about how does that affect the job market? Where do people want to work, how does that affect recruitment, and how enthusiastic you are about working for a particular organization?

How does, a candidate's perception through recruiters adjusts their likelihood to get a job, for instance? And, how does your perception of aligning with purpose even make you want to stay working for a particular company?

Kimberly: I think this nowadays particularly, is a much bigger factor when people are looking for employment or role a place. They're looking for, um, the values of the business to see what their mission statements are and whether they buy into them. The way that the company portrays itself and the way they go about things. So, it's a massive factor in employment nowadays. You know, I've got friends and family colleagues that seek out organizations with a purpose that matches their own, whether that be sustainable living or, operating in a certain way, but as well as deciding to leave a job because an employer fails to act on their mission statement in the right way.

So that relationships and rapport are important to quite a lot of people now, I think it's fair to say. So let me pose a question back to you, Oliver. Thinking about your role, your position, satisfaction, and purpose, how do you connect your team to their purpose? When everyone, is almost, excuse me, always

working remotely, how do you, build on that connection and ensure that they are connected and engaged?

Oliver: That is, thank you for that question. It's incredibly tricky. It's been a skill that we've had to learn rapidly. I've always been comfortable with remote working, but when it's enforced as it has been for the last few years, and then becomes the norm as it has for the last sort of six to 12 months.

It comes into really sharp focus. There are questions about my comfort and our team's comfort. In a workplace that only exists in a digital domain, is it reasonable to expect people to work from home all the time, or does a workplace that is digital automatically mean? Meeting rooms, hot desks, and collaboration spaces allow you to contribute to the purpose without being entirely digital.

Do I think people lost track of their purpose? In my team, I maintain, that our focus was sharpened by the needs of our clients to get up to speed on this, but it was much harder to gauge. It was really difficult to feel connected with people because you don't have the coffee machine chat or the water cooler chat. Momentum within the team and we don't measure productivity where consultants and thought leadership is crucial. you know, thinking about things whilst driving or walking in the forest or what have you, is crucial. But it's very intangible because there are so many gaps in our interactions. A bit of meeting fatigue, and so when you, kind of on downtime. There was a feeling of disconnect, even though there were massive levels of trust required and innate in our team. I think everyone has to trust more. I trusted the team to continue in the same vein as they were working before we transformed into a thoroughly remote environment. Then the team had to trust me not to change our purpose in secret between meetings or change my mind or lose track of the importance of our purpose.

Kimberly: Absolutely. Asking that question, just as a disclaimer is not a reflection of how I feel about being on your team. Just to clarify. However, in the pursuit of understanding the employee experience. It's just a couple of thought-provoking questions for me, and coming at it from that angle, you know, to anybody listening, both employees, team leaders, and everybody else, I think it's important to consider when you're thinking about satisfaction and purpose, within the digital workplace and connecting teams and engage in employees when they are set at home.

Living at work essentially or working from home is the more popular phrase, but it does feel like the primary sometimes. But my questions are, how does an organization connect you with its purpose in digital and non-digital ways? Is there employee engagement purely in the digital arena? So, through email, the internet, or other social internal social networks, and engagement tools. Is change only managed in this or do they convey an infused purpose with true multi-channel engagement? Our organization is doing a good job, it's my job to find out. So those are the sorts of questions that I'm asking, and it's all about that employee experience.

So, while it seems beneficial for us to be in this digital workplace, you know, that's not the way everybody works. It's not the way things have always been done. And it's about, whether is there that hybrid of engagement and connectivity rather than simply relying on the digital.

Oliver: 100%. I've missed town halls and, and get-togethers. Even a digital town hall where our leader stands up shares their vision, makes me feel connected and realize the purpose and the more often we do things like that. So that's in the digital space, but we're going back to a kind of connected people-orientated format. I enjoy that.

We recently started a kind of campaign around connecting with our colleagues off-topic from work. So HCLTech is currently engaged in the vision of supercharging progress for our clients. And we've been having discussions on our internal yammers and kind of non-email thou shout campaign type spaces.

Around supercharged weekends, what have you been up to? Share your kind of personal purpose and think about how it relates to work or even doesn't. And I've enjoyed that and I think that's a big part of WXC's interest in how these things are panning out because workplace trends are always of interest.

And I think that workplaces, acknowledging that they're not the only thing in your life are cool, really important, really crucial.

Kimberly: I think it's a no-brainer. Employee engagement is deeper when the channels are broader. So any ways that you can think of, yes, you might need to use the digital workplace format to connect with people, but bringing that human element back in and trying to make it feel as physical as possible to ensure that your employees are connected with you, with the organization and therefore the purpose and finding out from them where their satisfaction sits so that you can engage with them in the right way, as in what is their focus, their satisfaction, where is their purpose. And you know, invest in time in that so that, and it grows and improves and gets stronger.

Oliver: 100%. And I think it's important to recognize, um, and we forget all too often the people in our workplace, humans in the human resource space, who are experiencing this digital workplace.

For them, change and transformation are still quiet, maybe not unnerving, but it's something you want to have your hand held through. You are going to react. Much more viscerally and more connected to a style of engagement whereby someone says, Hey, this is what we're doing for you. We're investing in a new and iterated digital workspace, and I want to talk you through that.

And talking you through that is much more effective when it's made tangible rather than just a dick tap, dispatched from my outbox to tell you this is happening. Get on board. Bringing people on board and engaging them and finding out their purpose makes a massive difference. They're gonna be far more receptive to change.

Kimberly: Absolutely. It's easier to connect with products and services, which is often the purpose of an organization. When employees are empowered to experience them firsthand in group settings and through more memorable methods than email alone. I think we all know death by PowerPoint and obviously, it can feel a bit like death by email as well at times.

So really exploring what the mediums that you have access to, and how can they be most beneficial and utilized to appeal to as many users as possible, essentially. And we're starting to bring in that focus of user-centricity, finding out what works for them, and reacting to that.

Oliver: 100%. I think also, and I focus on this an awful lot, sharing a purpose with a group of peers is an experience. And that bonds people and helps with confidence and collaboration around. Do we all feel okay about this? Is this good? Yeah, this is great. Um, because we're consumed with improving the experiences that employees are exposed to in the workplace.

And we're maybe not thinking about the experiences that we're creating whilst exposing them to those, those new workplace experiences. So it's all kind of iterative and layered and meta, I think would be the modern term. You know, experience within experience is, is getting to the crux of it.

Kimberly: Well, when you have that clear communication and particularly the purpose of an organization or project or you know, the thing that's happening at the moment is transparent and your employees feel like their experience firsthand, they're well knowledgeable on the topic and they're part of the conversation.

The feedback that you're gonna receive is far more comprehensive and useful and is gonna create such a strong, and cycle in the improvement and the change and the adoption and the transformation. And all of those things only get better and better essentially. And it becomes almost like when you have a team that knows they can feedback and that that information is gonna be good, put to good use, and they're gonna be heard and they're gonna be listened to, they're then more engaged with it and more willing to, and provide very specific feedback, for example, that you know, is only gonna help you move forward.

Oliver: 100%. And that's the reason that WXC exists. And the reason I wanted to build this is that I do care about those experiences. So we work with our clients on value, drivers, vision, and strategy because they all interplay with the purpose of an organization and the most fundamental of ways.

Kimberly: Well, that leaves you with the monitor. So, this is difficult for most. Monitoring employee sat, employee satisfaction, and productivity about purpose, do your people understand, what you are pursuing together? Are your messages landing and have you got the right strategy in place to measure any of these purpose-related metrics?

Olive: Absolutely. And helping you land those messages is a key part of strategic change in adoption. You know, making sure that people understand why we're doing what we're doing and not just the what. And like you said, moments ago, being heard and being invited, being engaged to participate in that and contribute to the purpose just means that, that it's two ways bidirectional communication.

I think from our perspective, it's really important for us. Because we are technology and agnostic to the industry, you know, so we're not wedded to a particular silo in the market or a particular platform because the purpose is not a tool or a platform. It's just an ethereal concept that somebody has decided when they build a business or an organization.

And this is the purpose we're striving for. You can't buy your purpose off the shelf, and you can't update it with a patch. So, the reason WXC exists is, is to help with these challenges around connecting to your people, connecting them with the organization's purpose, driving meaningful change, and sustaining it.

Kimberly, this has been an amazing chat. I'd like to thank you for your expertise and passion in getting to the bottom of how people feel about their work and how crucial that is to purpose. In a future episode, I'd like to talk with John Hawkes, who is a service design architect and, and help desk swarming exercise expert about how a change in individual group and service purpose can have an enormous effect on the efficiency and outcomes of support.

But for today, once again, thank you very much for joining and sharing.