

Rob O'Donohue ([00:00](#)):

In many ways, it's about culture. It's about leadership. It's about talent and people, and it's about diversity, equity and inclusion. And I'm starting to, dip my, toe a little bit into sustainability as well, but from the lens of those, those four areas. So it's the human side of everything I would say. And try to yeah. Trying to help leaders clients to, to kind of do better with work and make work more, I suppose, enjoyable and productive for their people and I'm emphasizing the word people more than employees.

Larry Maguire ([00:37](#)):

Yeah. That, that it's refreshing to hear it because, you know, I suppose us a traditional corporate world would be about, you know, getting things done, turning a book and being profitable. And I suppose the last 10 years, would that be fair that things have kind of shifted in terms of the business focus on, on people and creating a better work environment and a better culture than maybe in the past?

Rob O'Donohue ([01:00](#)):

Yeah, I would, I would like to think so. I would say I'm probably working 22 years or so now in professional life or whatever that might be. And I guess I've been lucky along the way to have some really good people managers and leaders that actually kind of got that early on, but also without doubt, I've had some that didn't and they always made me more determined to be more of a people manager and people person when I, when I did manage. So I think it's the thankfully the more interactions I'm having and throughout my career, as it progressed, it is yeah. Moving a little bit more to that. And I would say over the last two years that's accelerated even more as a consequence, you know, of, of the pandemic and people working from home and now, you know, leaders managers need to, to manage the person as much as just the employee, you know?

Larry Maguire ([01:57](#)):

Yeah. And what do you think the, I mean, you're dealing with organizations in this respect you know, your throughout your working week and day, whatever, but what do you think is the, is the big driver, the motivator for leaders in organizations to kind of address, you know, the culture issue?

Rob O'Donohue ([02:17](#)):

Well, I suppose there's many different things, right. At the end of the day, organizations are predominantly there to make a profit, right? Unless you're a nonprofit or an NGO or, you know, depending on the, kind of the, the purpose, but figuring out what your strategy is and tying your culture to that, so that you have a thriving culture that will enable you deliver on your strategy. Now, I would say what I'm seeing more and more again, without going into too much detail is organizations that are realizing, you know, environmental, social, you know, diversity, equity and inclusion to ESG, all of that are fundamental to their success in the long term, they need to kind of reposition their purpose to be aligned to that, to the stakeholders.

Aren't just you know, to making profit, but their employees, the environment, there's a number of different factors in there.

Rob O'Donohue ([03:18](#)):

So, so I think that shift to becoming a bit more focused on the greater good and you can still, you can still do good and, and make profit. Right. So, so I think that's, that's that's important and then figuring out what are the elements of your culture that would enable you to do that. Right. And again, culture is, you know, a whole massive area, but ultimately when I'm talking to clients now, and in my role, they want to hear what I have to say. <Laugh> and maybe in previous roles that, you know, the, the, the manager and leader might have a, an interest, but in some cases they would, they, they would believe they're right. No matter what. Right. So, so it's, it's nice now to, to know when you're talking to somebody in a powerful position and they realize that culture or diversity equity inclusion, or talent, or whatever topic that we're focused on is something they need to to, to have a better perspective on, and to, you know, trust the research and advice that we're giving will, will help them do that.

Larry Maguire ([04:29](#)):

They've come to you, not necessarily with a problem, but would it maybe a desire to make some positive change? And they're obviously open to hearing what you have to say then.

Rob O'Donohue ([04:40](#)):

Yeah. It's, it's a one to two rather and a half to, right. And I would say 99 times out of a hundred, there's that sense that they're willing to listen and willing to learn and want to improve and very, you know, on a very rare occasion, get the sense that that's not the case, but, but again, yeah, that's, that's, that's positive. And I would say like with everything we do in, in, in the role and, and in the work we do in Gartner, that it isn't just an opinion, right. It's not just me coming up with a kind of crazy idea that this

Larry Maguire ([05:15](#)):

Finger in the air type of thing, it's, it's based in research.

Rob O'Donohue ([05:19](#)):

Yeah. Research, evidence based. And if I'm, you know, giving the advice and giving, I always try to give an example or multiple examples of how it worked or, or, or lessons learned from it not working and their real world examples from, from organizations that either we've worked with or, or that are, you know, secondary research that's out there. So, so from that point of view were, you know, were very much focused on that. Now, again, I, the areas I focus on because it's not technical, it's not like giving advice on one product over another it's, it is more, a bit messy in many ways because it is dealing with the person and the human and the competencies and skills, but we can still get evidence around that, you know?

Larry Maguire ([06:03](#)):

Yeah. It's the psych psychology of work in practice really, isn't it, you know?

Rob O'Donohue ([06:07](#)):

Yeah. It's organizational psychology and behavior and lots of mixed up things in all of that. And and like I said, like every day, you know, when I took this role two years ago, I figured I knew a good lot of things about culture and leadership and people and, and it's that kind of well known, I dunno, is it Socrates or whoever said that the more I know, the more I realize, I, I don't know or less. I know, so, and it is, it's, it's very true. Like it's, it's very Rabbit hole that you go down

Larry Maguire ([06:39](#)):

And listen. A, a lot of the people that would maybe read what I have to write or, or listen to the podcast would be solo workers or, or maybe running small organizations. Is there, is there any advice you could give, let's say an and applying what you teach or what you try and convey to your clients? Is there anything that you might suggest smaller organizations can do because they, first of all, they may not have to budget to, to hire professionals, let's say such as yourself to come in and do the work with them for long periods, what can they do to create the right culture or environment or, or, or even improve their own leadership skills at work?

Rob O'Donohue ([07:18](#)):

Yeah, like I would say, you know, in, in some ways, if you're a small shop, right, and there's a few people involved, you are much more nimble and agile and you can, you can change much more quickly. Right. And and that's, that's very important. And I suppose I would say from a leader manager, whatever role you have, if you're a CEO of five people just always ask and listen to what those people have to, to say on how to move things forward, how to solve the problems. Like at the end of the day, the more anyone is asked for their opinion and it's shown to be valued and you have a genuine interest and, and you know, a bit of humility and vulnerability that you don't have all the answers you're going to increase the likelihood of those wanting to help and their accountability of actually following through on it will, will be massive.

Rob O'Donohue ([08:13](#)):

Yeah. The increased as well. So, so, you know, again, it's, it's asked for help, don't ever think that it's, it's your solo slog, as, as you said, it might be, you might be a one man band, but you have friends or family that might want to help out. And sometimes it's the hardest thing though in those positions is to ask for that, right. If it's a pride thing or if it's a or a thing that you feel nobody else has the time, or, you know, whatever might be the case, this, this goes for, you know, any team, right? Any kind of kind of kinda set of principles that you might set up. I, I remember when I ran a team in previous company, we had a large enough team, but I suppose one of the things we we put into that was like, I was very much, I definitely don't have all the answers guys and I'm never going to pretend I do.

Rob O'Donohue ([09:01](#)):

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So that was kind of a very important kinda ground rule that I have. And if you're looking around at everybody else and you think everybody's too busy to to, to kinda support you, and you're afraid of asking for the help take on board a kind of a mindset of offering to help. So, so kind of, instead of asking for it, always having your mind can I help, you know, just ask that on a regular basis. And you know, then you're, you're creating that kinda culture of, of kinda willing to support each other. Yeah.