

Leadership and the Changing Workplace with Chris Shipley

Chris Shipley: [00:00:00] people would much rather work in a place where they felt valued and they, where they belong and they felt appreciated. than they would working in a place where they got a better paycheck. They would so much rather work in a place that shared their values than that were, was mission driven and aligned to their missions than to get more money.

If you view the people in your organization as assets, then you invest and you invest not just in, in salary. That's important. Not just in an environment that can be important, but you're really investing in leadership that invests in them.

Leadership that wants to see their people. , their people be, fulfilled. People be happy, that people feel appreciated.

Debbie Sorensen: That was Chris Shipley on Psychologist Off the clock.

Yael Schonbrun: We are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you [00:01:00] flourish in your relationships, work and health.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile high Denver, Colorado, author of Act Daily Journal, the Act Daily Card Deck, and the upcoming book Act for Burnout.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the book Work Parent Thrive.

Jill Stoddard: And from Coastal New England. I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, author of Be Mighty, the big book of Act metaphors and the Upcoming Imposter. No more.

Debbie Sorensen: We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Jill Stoddard: Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock.

Debbie Sorensen: Hi, this is Debbie and I'm here today with Jill to introduce an episode I did with Chris Shipley, who's the co-author, along with Heather McGowan of a book called *The Empathy Advantage*, leading *The Empowered Workforce*. And this is a conversation really about the current state of the workforce and some of the recent changes to workplace culture

And Jill, what are some of your thoughts about the conversation I had with Chris?

Jill Stoddard: Well, I [00:02:00] really loved this interview and I think it's gonna be helpful for people in both in leadership positions and non-leadership positions, or people who desire to be in leadership positions. And you know, at first blush the title of the book, it might not seem entirely clear how it's related to psychology, which is what we typically talk about on the podcast, but it was so related to psychology and some of the things that really jumped out at me is, you know, Chris talks about how we need to shift our focus from

Overly looking at productivity of workers and instead looking at performance. And to me that sort of reeked of focusing on process over outcome, which is something we talk a lot about in *act* And on the podcast, um, you know, she talks about well, she talked about the the, during the pandemic when everyone was working from home, how leaders started to trust their workers, that they would do their jobs and do them well.

And in fact, that's exactly what happened. And to me, that was a [00:03:00] focus on, oh, like if we rely on our direct experience rather than language, like our assumptions or predictions that are often based on fear that. Optimal and you know, so that really seemed like it mapped onto ideas from *ACT* and psychological flexibility and psychology.

Um, and then of course, you guys talk a lot about values and how important it is for people to feel like they have a sense of purpose, that they're not just a cog in, you know, some machine and the importa. Intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation. And I wrote down this quote, Chris said, people aren't an expense, they're an investment.

And the importance of leaders really kind of having this this mindset shift away from strictly focusing on, you know, the bottom line and the productivity and really investing in workers, in, in them having a quality experie. That will then, you [00:04:00] know, improve

you know, the entire.

Debbie Sorensen: A lot of what you're talking about has to do with sort of short term versus long term. You know, if you kind of set people up for more long-term. Satisfaction and flexibility and that kind of thing, it will serve you well in the long run.

Even if in the initial moment sometimes it feels a little bit harder to lead in that way.

Jill Stoddard: You. You are so right and I think what you're speaking to is less optimal leadership styles. Often are probably experiential avoidance in action, right? Like I'm micromanaging my team because I feel uncomfortable that if I don't, everything might blow up. So in the short term, these things that I'm doing are making me feel better, but in the long term, they're really creating more problems and having that more, you know, that less myopic view and kind of longer term view is, is going to produce better.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, a lot of people might be able to relate to the concept that sometimes organiz. [00:05:00] Businesses, et cetera, they can be reactive, right? Or leadership can be reactive, where it's like everybody panics about this one thing and loses sight of the bigger vision. And, um, I think that can be a problem. I think, you know, when people are in a leadership role, I think, or aspiring to be in a leadership role, I think that it can be a.

Difficult place to be because often you're being against constraints, you know, kind of from above, whether it's , whether it's executives or shareholders or what have you, policies, um, and then trying to keep people happy, who you're leading. And so it can be really hard and stressful and I think.

As I was reading Chris's work and, and talking to her, I was really thinking about how some of the skills are not what you would think, you know, to be a good leader. Sometimes you don't have to be the world's foremost expert on some of the details. It's like you have to have empathy. You have to have that ability to be flexible and to think about multiple different [00:06:00] perspectives, right?

You have to do some perspective taking. You have to have emotional intelligence. Flexibility and really being a leader. I think often it's about being in contact with your values. You know, what kind of leader do I wanna be? , how can I be authentic to myself and my values and do the best to handle all of these really hard situations that keep coming my way day after day.

And so I love that she emphasizes some of those kinds of skills that those actually really matter a lot. You know, some people might call them soft skills or people skills or, you know, really sort of emotional intelligence skills. Um, but if you're gonna be an effective. Good leader, you really need to be working on those, those types of skills as well as just the nuts and bolts of how to do specific things and gain knowledge.

Jill Stoddard: We had Dan Goleman on the podcast a while ago. I think he was a pretty early guest, and he talked about emotional intelligence and research that shows, you know, you have to have.

What do you [00:07:00] call it? Standard intelligence like iq typically in order to rise up into higher leadership kinds of positions. But it's really the people that have the EQ that succeed like that truly succeed and kind of stick in these business roles. And you know, one of the other things Chris talks about is how much.

Better it is to be a mentor, to enable people to succeed rather than to be a manager. You know that she talks about it as being more like a coach rather than a manager. And that what, you know, what do coaches do? They, they enable workers to be their best selves.

And I think that's so much what of what she was talking about is instead of focusing on like what's the best bottom line for the company, it's

How do we make professionals really able to be. Best, and that in turn is going to nurture the entire organization.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, and sometimes, I mean, I think that this conversation is [00:08:00] bad news for people who lean more toward being authoritarian in their style or who are more in it for the power and the ego, because I think a lot of what this is about is stepping away from that type of approach or even, you know, Growth and profits at all cost kind of mentality.

I think the world is shifting away from that mindset in ways that actually feel like a step in the right direction. To me personally, maybe not everyone would, would agree with that, but I think I think that in the long run, this is, this is a really important conversation that's, that we're having in the workforce, in the world of work, nowadays.

Jill Stoddard: It's not either or, it's not. You're this kind of leader or it's profits. It's. When you're not this kind of leader, your profits actually suffer. Like,

because if you have attrition, that is the highest, uh, resource sucker in a corporation, right? Like people leaving and having to hire new people costs the company more than anything else, right?

So if you're investing employees [00:09:00] and you have people long term, then that, like really, that does affect the bottom line. But people look so, well like myopically and. I can't think of the words I'm looking for, like not big picture. Do you know what I mean? They don't look at the indirect kinds of like costs and impacts of these things.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm really glad you said that cuz I do think sometimes it's painted. It's either or. It's like either you're a nice person or you're out for making a profit. It's like, well what if those actually are one and the same a lot of the times? Right. Yeah, that's a really good point.

Jill Stoddard: Yeah.

Debbie Sorensen: So we hope you enjoyed this conversation with Chris Shipley. My guest today, Chris Shipley, is a technology analyst of over 30 years, writer and journalist, entrepreneur and future of work strategist. She has documented influence and predicted the impact of technology on business and society for more than 30 years, and has advised hundreds of companies on positioning, business modeling and innovation. She consults with companies on human and [00:10:00] organizational challenges in the face of technology and economically driven disruption. And Chris has co-authored two books along with Heather McGowan. The first was the Adaptation Advantage, and she recently released the book, the Empathy Advantage, leading The Empowered Workforce, and we'll be talking about that today.

Welcome, Chris. I'm so excited to talk to you.

Chris Shipley: Oh, I'm looking forward to a great conversation. Thank you for having.

Debbie Sorensen: Well, you're very welcome. Thank you for being here. I, I think I'm especially excited to talk to you about this because your book is really about the changing world of work and the workforce and workplace culture, and I'm writing a book about burnout and I'm. Really fascinated by this. Right now, I'm following it very closely in the news and in people's lives because I think we're in the middle of a tremendous shift, and it's really fascinating to see what's going on.

So the timing couldn't be better for your book and for this conversation.

Chris Shipley: And, and for yours as well. I think that they really [00:11:00] dovetail, um, the, the issues that we're facing in the workforce today.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. Yeah. Well, let's start with what is changing. I think, you know, there's this shift happening. We're kind of entering a new era of work, and I'm wondering if we could start by kind of laying a little bit of a foundation in terms of what you're seeing. As a shift, like what were some of the features of the workplace before this shift started and what, in your mind, what are some of the most important changes that we're seeing in the world these days?

Chris Shipley: Yeah. You know, it's, it's interesting. I think people tend to look at the last three years of the pandemic and think, well that just changed everything. And my perspective is it didn't really change anything. It just amplified everything. It put everything in stark relief. So, so think about sort of where we were.

The most obvious shift we've seen obviously is work from home. When we were moving in that direction, about 17% of people worked from home, um, before the coronavirus. Um, you know, five or, or [00:12:00] as many as five or fewer days a week. Um, now it's that, that number's 59%. Obviously we went to near a hundred percent during the pandemic.

So we've seen that as a major shift. But let's look at also some of the things that we're underlying that, like income inequality, I think is a per important one to, to underst. , the 7 25, uh, hourly wage has not kept pace with productivity. Um, if it did, it'd be \$26 an hour, right? So what we saw prior to the pandemic is a lot of people who were really struggling to make ends meet on minimum wage jobs.

And so the 40 hour work week was kind of a myth. Um, low wage workers. Probably stringing together two or three jobs to be able to afford basic needs. And then even, um, higher wage earning professional workers were, they were working 60 hours or more a week to keep pace with the hustle culture of, of their [00:13:00] organizations.

And at the same time, they were working for organizations where their, their leaders were making outsized compensation on a, on a ratio ballot. So in the, in 2020, The ratio of CEO salary to worker salary was 372 to one. So for every dollar that a a line worker made, the CEO was making 372. Now, in 1965, that was 20 to one.

So you see how that is, has jumped and CEO salary is out, outpaced worker salary. That income inequality means that so many people will recognize it and they were working harder and longer for very little real wage. , but their CEOs and their stockholders were doing pretty well. That creates a discontent, and I think that came into focus during the pandemic.

And then third major vector is really all the social and cultural changes that we've seen. We've, we've got Gen Z entering the workforce, but boomers are staying in the [00:14:00] workforce longer. So we have four and sometimes five generations in, in a same work. , um, trying to understand each other and work well together.

We've seen shifts in our understanding of gender and sexual identity. We've seen the balance of men and women in the workforce shifting. All those things. Were gearing up well before the pandemic, and then the pandemic has put a spotlight on everything.

Debbie Sorensen: Absolutely. Yeah. And one of the things in your book that I thought was really fascinating was that that the focus for say 50 years or so has really been from the corporate perspective, has been on maximizing productivity from workers and maximizing shareholder profits.

And that has been, you know, kind of the key driving thing and that's not really working anymore. I wonder if you're, you have thoughts about that? Like that sort of, there's almost like this philosophical shift that we're maybe in the beginning of, um, at least I hope it's kind of the beginning of this [00:15:00] shift.

Um, what are your thoughts about.

Chris Shipley: Well, I know you're exactly right. Um, the. Milton Friedman Doc doctrine that the purpose of a corporation was to return maximum value for their sh shareholders. Um, really established this, let's just milk all the productivity we can out of workers. And so workers were treated as a cost line, as an expense and the organization, and you could use 'em up and then get more workers and then use 'em up and get more workers, and that was kind of the mindset that we've been driving for the last nearly 50.

the conference board in, I believe, 2018, 2019 said, wait a minute. Time out. This isn't, this isn't working. And really our purpose isn't about just, um, stockholders alone, but it's for all the stakeholders. How do we create benefit for our yes, the people who invest in us, but also the communities in which we

work, the customers we serve, and the people who come together as workers in our organization to [00:16:00] deliver that.

that shift seemed like a, um, at the time kind of that's, you know. Hmm. That's interesting. And now I think it's seismic. We recognize that it's actually turning the workforce upside down to really reprioritize what's happening in the workplace to create value and that creating value, um, and working and driving performance rather than productivity actually is, is building more value, more economic.

Into corporations because it's delivering value across all of those shareholders.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, and I just really, I think. Thought so much about how the pandemic has played a huge role in the work changes, and you already mentioned this, right? Even things like working from home and more flexibility and just some really big differences. But I, I, I think something I learned from your book that I didn't really realize before is how much that trend was [00:17:00] already start.

Prior to the pandemic, you know that, that some of this was in motion already and then the pandemic maybe accelerated it or just really changed things very quickly.

Chris Shipley: Oh, well, certainly an accelerator for things like digital transformation in, you know, Late 2019, we still had a lot of folks who were saying, you know, we we're, we've got this five year, this 10 year plan to be fully automated or digitized in, in various parts of our workplace. And then in March of 2020, everyone got sent home and we had to figure out how to do this stuff really quickly.

And by, by some accounts, five years worth of digital transformation technology and implementation happened in about three months.

Debbie Sorensen: Mm-hmm.

Chris Shipley: Companies that never, you know, we're considering maybe we should do some kind of digital aspect of our business or online ordering or, or, you know, other kinds of, you know, the work even, you know, we think about Zoom, in fact, that we're having this conversation now, [00:18:00] thousands of miles apart.

Those things were all kind of, that would be interesting to do. Teleconferencing, fine if we can, if we need it. And now it was essential. And so all that activity happened really, really quickly. people had to, to adapt to that. I think the other thing that sometimes we don't pay enough attention to, but is a significant transformation is that in the, you know, in the pre pandemic world, leaders, managers manage with this sense of, I'm, I'm all knowing and I'm the boss and I'm gonna watch you work.

And when you're sitting here in the office, I can see what you're doing and I can direct your. , then everybody goes home, and now it's really hard to, you know, manage micromanage direct. Instead, you had to trust, you had to provide guidance. You had to point to the, the goal, and [00:19:00] then say, guys, get it done.

And people did it. You know, they, they got their work done. They were trusted by their organizations to, to do that. and it had a tremendous autonomy, which was so essential when you're managing kids from, you know, learning from home, home, right. Homeschooling it had a pro in many households, one or two other adults who were also trying to find their corner of the house to have a, a zoom meeting or get their work done.

And so corners of bedrooms and kitchen tables and then living rooms were turned into offices. , you needed to have a whole lot of flexibility and autonomy to manage your time and manage your space to get your work done. And your organizations generally trusted you to do that. So now, three years later, the world's saying the pandemic is, is, is easing.

We can go back, back to normal. We're not gonna go back anywhere, but we can talk about that. But, but now he, okay, but [00:20:00] I'm not giving back that trust. I'm not gonna give back that. That flexibility was the thing that allowed me to get through this difficult time. So why would you take that away from me now?

You trusted me for three years. Why don't you trust me now? And I think that shift is one that maybe seems subtle or maybe unspoken, but is so dramatic in the way that workers are thinking about their jobs.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. I'm really glad you raised that because I think that's, so, the psychological impact of that is so important. I think we know from research that people are happier and more satisfied and less burnt out at work if they have some autonomy and flexibility. And I think sometimes, you know, the, the. executives and leaders and managers are, there is this sense of like, I

have to make sure you're here and keep an eye on you and make sure you're doing your work. And people don't like that. And the pandemic really forced that change a little [00:21:00] bit and it was a good change, but now it's like, we don't wanna go back to that way.

I mean, I know that's not every worker and not every organization was able to do that, but I think that in general, that happened a lot.

Chris Shipley: Yeah, no, I think you're right. But, but also keep in mind, I bet you if you asked a room full of people who wants to be micromanaged, very few hands would go up, right? No one ever really liked that. But there was an understanding, I think, um, maybe the zeitgeist that said, you know, I'm the leader. I'm the boss, therefore I need to be manag.

and that that managing was this act of making sure people worked in a particular way, in a particular style to a particular quality, to a particular degree of productivity. Now, I think that managers are not really managers. They're mentors and enablers. Right? What I, I want leaders to think about is what is it that these people who come into to work or stay home and come [00:22:00] to virtual work every.

What are they contributing and how can I, as their, their leader, help them be that best contributor? What do they need? Um, whether it's it's clearer direction, uh, straightforward communication, specific tools or, or, or, you know, some kind of, uh, technology to get their work done. What do they need so they can be the best contributor?

That's a really different mindset. , what do I need to do to get the most from these people? And I think by making that shift and, and frankly, God bless the pandemic for forcing it, um, we're gonna see people who I hope we, we start to address this burnout issue. We start to address. Um, the, the kind of wearing that work has been for so many people who feel like they're not being able to be their full true selves, true contributors in their organiz.

Debbie Sorensen: Right. And I think one of the things, so you had this, this chapter about [00:23:00] how, I guess the new normal around things like work habits and work environments and what people want. And right at this moment that we're in, you know, there's a lot happening economically and some industries are having layoffs, but in general, I think it's like, , the question is how do we keep employees and how do we keep them engaged and how do we keep them from leaving?

And I think that in this new normal, you know, maybe people, leaders are having to ask themselves that, those kinds of questions. So what do you think, and, and I loved your chapter on work habits in this new era, and I'm wondering what do you think are some of the important factors to work to keep workers? Right now.

Chris Shipley: Yeah. Well, well, cause I. address the issue of you. I talked about we're not gonna go back to normal and we talk often about the new normal. And I wanna give you another frame, um, which is what I like to call the now normal because things are moving so fast. And by things [00:24:00] I mean technology. I mean, think about just in the last quarter, what we've learned about generative AI and the way it's going to impact our work.

It's got a lot of people, um, Incredibly fascinated and curious, but also some people very apprehensive about these new technologies. Um, cultural shifts, political shifts, all those things are changing so fast that normal is only gonna be normal for a very short period of time until something else comes along and shifts are thinking again.

And so if we can adapt ourselves to the idea that normal is normal for a time for now, and things are going to shift and change again. , I can be more adaptable and ready for those changes. And I think sometimes normal or going back to normal is about being more calcified in our way of, of thinking about what our roles are and aren't work, or what our roles are with society or family.

And since those things are so much more fluid now, being able [00:25:00] to be in the moment of what's necessary. , I think goes to your question about how do we keep people more satisfied, more happy. If I see change happening all around me and I'm not in a place where it's safe to adapt or safe to question, if I'm not sure I have no certainty about tomorrow or the day after, then I am going to have a high level of anxiety at work.

And so what leaders can do, I think, or first of all, recognize that things. Rapidly changing work with their teams to build change and learning into the, the act of doing work. Um, my co-author, Heather, we used to work in order to learn and now we are working or we used to learn in order to work and now we're working in order to learn.

So how do we build learning into it as a continuous cycle that allows us. be prepared and, [00:26:00] and for whatever change may come, gives us that sense of more confidence. We don't know what's out there, right? And so a leader being willing to say, I don't know, but let's find out together suggests a

level of of curiosity and candor that we're not used to seeing the workplace, but I think.

Again, reduces the level of anxiety and gives workers a sense more sense of, of commitment and engagement to an organization than is least being really honest about where things are going. Um, and then I think, you know the title of the book, it's empathy. Let's understand the people who, let's understand who we are.

I think we have to start with being empathetic with ourselves sometimes, and then really reaching out and getting to know where our people are coming from. How are we can't lead them if we don't know. . And so by building those, I think three layers together, you get to a place where you create a, a psychological safety, [00:27:00] um, and in and conditions for people to, uh, lower anxiety, be more adaptable, and be more, um, I don't content, maybe these too, too much to wish for, but, but Happy.

Debbie Sorensen: Okay. I wanna, um, unpack. The empathy piece a bit more later on in our conversation. That's, you know, it's in the title of your book. And so, and, and I wanna dive into that a little bit more for people who are in a leadership position to, to see what that means. But first I wanna just say, that I think you and Heather must have been psychic because your first book, which I haven't read, I read The Empathy Advantage and it's terrific. So now I wanna go back and read your first book, but it was called The Adaptation Advantage. So I assume it's about being adaptable and didn't it come out right around the time Covid was starting up?

Well, you, that was a really interesting timing, wasn't it?

Chris Shipley: In interesting in that, uh, isn't it The Chinese curse. Interesting. They live in interesting [00:28:00] times. We finished the manuscript for the book in ums. Uh, the, I guess in December of 2019, and then we had big plans for a, you know, typical book launch and we would go do lots of speaking and meeting with people and book clubs.

And then, and the book was due to to be in market in April, early April of 2020. Obviously everything changed and so we had to adapt and, and I think the book itself became kind of the accidental guide to leading through the. . Um, and, and you know, so it was good timing. Maybe, I don't know if we were such visionaries, but, uh, certainly we got lucky with our timing there.

Um, and I hope that people who read the book felt like they got lucky to have a resource that would help them think about how to, to adapt in rapidly shifting times much more easily.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it is, if you think. If there's one skill that leaders needed and that [00:29:00] organizations and corporations needed at that time, it was the ability to adapt quickly. So, yeah. Interesting.

Chris Shipley: Yes.

Debbie Sorensen: Well, one of the things that you already mentioned briefly, but I wanna go back to is about diversity in the workforce and starting with the age diverse workforce. You know, you mentioned we right now have multiple generations who have had very different histories in the workforce altogether from.

Boomers to, you know, gen Z and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the ways that some of the younger generations enter the workforce are kind of early in their careers, like Gen Z are in comparison with some other generations. And maybe, I don't know what you noticed in your, the work that you're doing around that generational shift and generations kind of working together, you.

Chris Shipley: Yeah, well, , you know, this is a story as probably as old as time, right? The, the, the youngins and the old ones coming together and, and not understanding each other [00:30:00] yet. I think that, again, because we're living in this, this age of so much exponential change, older generations like mine, we may not fully appreciate what Gen Z coming into the workforce have experience.

You think about it, these. People, young people who have never known the world without conflict, they were born at the time of, of nine 11. They have never known a world a long, long period of financial stability. It seen multiple financial crisis, uh, through their life, lifetime. They have lived a life of, you know, as a baby boomer, we may have had duck and cover drills, but they have active shooter drills in school, all the.

and face the re the reality of, um, gun violence, climate change, and the climate crisis is weighing heavily on this generation. Um, and on and on and on. So it is not [00:31:00] surprising that this is an organ, uh, uh, uh, generation of, of young workers who are saying this needs to have some meaning and some purpose.

For me, I don't see the point in spending my time working on things that aren't going to move the. and that's a really different mindset from someone of, say a baby boomer generation who thinks, listen, kid, I had to suck it up when I was your age and take that terrible job and work hard for a mean boss.

And you just need to, you know, buckle up and, you know, buckle in and do it. Those, those are really different mindsets. So when you put those two mindsets in the workforce, you've got the, the, you know, hey, okay boomer and you know, kids today kind of mindset. That's a. Unless you can restructure again, you're thinking about this and, and this is one of the things that I think we miss when we, um, sometimes when we talk about, um, diversity and inclusion belonging in the workplace is that [00:32:00] when we see that as it's checkbox, we have to have a couple of those in a couple of these and a couple of them to make a diverse workforce.

We're missing the point and the point. , there is such an opportunity to learn from different perspectives, and that learning from different perspectives means we also have an incredible opportunity to serve better our customers, our stakeholders, and we have a great opportunity to identify new avenues for value creation, new opportunities.

We have a better opportunity to solve difficult problems because we're seeing it from every different. , and I think that's the benefit of diversity and inclusion. It's not a, and I hesitate to let this word come out my mouth, but it's not a work woke issue. It's not being woke at work. It's about maximizing value.

Because now I can see all the vectors from value that will impact the products and [00:33:00] services and the value that my company delivers into the marketplace. And if you come into the workplace as. as a boomer, as a Gen X, as a Gen Z, and you say, you know, I don't, I don't, I didn't listen to the music you listen to.

I don't understand why you don't wear your hat forward, and I don't understand why. You always feel you need to wear a coat and tie or, and you put that aside, the what's your experience, what do you know, what do you feeling? The learning that comes from that is gonna make you so much better in your work, and it's gonna be so much more interest.

I think for the Curious Mind. And so, you know, these, I think each generation is, is, you know, has its set of, of formative experiences. The, the Gen Z has a very different and a more, much more difficult, I think, set of formative experiences, um, and recognizing that there [00:34:00] is value there and. You

know, discounting this as a slacker generation who doesn't wanna work is, is where we start to, I think, help that generation also emerge from what we're seeing more and more as kind of malaise is probably too nice a word to say, but we're seeing a lot of issues of, of depression, of mental illness in that, uh, in the Gen Z group because really they've been given a very heavy burden to.

And so how can we in our workplace also help them lift that?

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, and I mean, I think. Of that desire for, you know, doing something that matters in the world. Some younger folks are challenging the status quo, and that's a good thing, you know, for, for some of these things to, to get better, we're gonna have to have some people who challenge, challenge it. And they're not just accepting, oh, well this is the way, you know, my parents and my grandparents did it, so therefore I'm gonna keep doing it.

Um,

Chris Shipley: Yeah, and, and you know, [00:35:00] when a Gen Z worker says, You know, I'm not gonna do that work for that little pay and, and causes a, uh, a shift to an hour, uh, a living wage in an organization. Everybody in the organization benefits from that. Maybe not. The guys in the boardroom who are a little upset that they're, they're now cost of, of HR is too high.

But ultimately, if you think about, and we argue this, that people aren't an expense. They're an. and, and the work that Gen Z is doing to, to really bring to light the disparity of wage actually helps everybody in the workforce.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. the shift is good for everyone, I think. Well, and similarly I think with a more diverse workforce in other ways, you know, more racially diverse, more gender and sexual minority diversity, et cetera, and so on. I mean, I think that, you know, I really appreciate your point, that it's not just about [00:36:00] checking boxes, that there are some advantages to working together.

And actually, you cited in the book a paper by someone. I went to grad school with Anita Williams Wooley, who has done research, and there's some real advantages on a team of having, for instance, women instead of an all male team and having more diversity and thinking and perspectives can be really helpful.

And I'm wondering, okay. I'm about to ask you a big question here, Chris. That's

Chris Shipley: All right. I'm gonna try to be prepared for it.

Debbie Sorensen: You know, instead of looking at it as like check boxes, you know, you really emphasize belonging and helping all these different people, like all the potential of all the different people coming into the workforce to be maximized.

Do you have any thoughts about, you know, how, leaders can foster more inclusivity and belonging for all different kinds of people. Again, I know that's a big one, but what are your thoughts on that

Chris Shipley: Well, belonging. We talk about diversity and inclusion, and that's not, that is [00:37:00] necessary, but not sufficient. It really is belonging and, and that sense of, um, fitting in and being part of a community and being part of something that by. Being in a collective is bigger than just I am, that that's belonging, right?

And it's a place where I feel at home, I feel comfortable. So how, how do you, the question is really how do you create that environment and it's not, and let's put in more com comfy chairs and make sure that there's a better brand of coffee in the break room, which is how I think a lot of companies have solved, tried to solve for this.

Like, let's, let's put in perks that make, make it a fun place to come to work. I can't have great coffee, but I don't. Necessarily belong. I belong to a place where I have shared values, where I see that what I contribute is valued by the organization and that drives to something that is meaningful to me.

So it really, [00:38:00] I think, means we start talking and getting, we need to understand who people are as people, not just as job descriptions. We need to understand contributions. a an expression of purpose and values not as tasked to be completed. And when we as leaders begin to know our people, for what they want to contribute, for what they find valuable for who they are in the workplace and, and out of the workplace, um, I think we start to create, uh, and foster a sense of, of you belong here.

You're part of us. Or, and, and I think this is an okay outcome too. You understand that we are values aligned, and my job then as a leader is not to change your values, but to help you find a place and a way for your values to be honored and recognized. And that may mean I'm going to tap my net network to help you find a job somewhere else.[00:39:00]

It might mean that I'm gonna find need to, we're gonna have to come to some understanding about a separat. , it's done in a, in a supportive way to just, it's not about your work or your quality work, but you're never gonna be happy here if you want this kind of environment. And we can only provide that kind of environment.

And, and so understanding that there's a, a delta there that can't be bridged but can be, um, handled with compassion. Even that exercise for those who are on, if you will, your side of the. Says, okay, this, this person, this leader is, is helping us create a more cohesive and, and, and, um, understanding community by doing this compassionate thing to help someone find their way that's gonna be more fulfilling for them.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah.

Chris Shipley: So, and that's not easy to do. I think, [00:40:00] again, one of the things we talk about, um, in the book, . As a leader, you really have to have this mind shift, right? You no longer have people who are working for you, you're working for them. Your job is to be an enabler so that people can come in and, um, be their, do their best work.

Um, and that sometimes, um, it means bending in ways that you're not accustomed to as a leader where. You know, do, as I say, is no longer, uh, the mantra of the leader. It's what can I do for you? And that is a big shift for a lot of folks who came up in a system of the boss is always right, uh, to, to suddenly, you know, go away for a few years to, because of a pandemic and bring people back together instead of saying, I wanna see you at your desk at at at eight o'clock.

And you'll take your lunch break and I'll expect you all to be here [00:41:00] still working, toiling into the evening. That's productivity. To suddenly be in a place to say, Hey guys, what do you need? How do I help you? Let me, how do you come into the office today? Because we're gonna have a curated experience of collaboration and learning, uh, to work on a problem together.

But hey, no need to commute If you can get your work done just as easily at home managing that, that, um, Multimodal ways of working in a much more curated way is a lot harder than telling people what to do and when to do it. And so I, I, I have great, um, empathy for leaders today because their job has gotten a lot harder.

However, I think those who embrace that are also going to find that their jobs are getting a lot better because they're engaging with people in a way that they hadn't, and they're finding. Opportunities for their businesses in ways they couldn't before. And they're solving problems much more completely and [00:42:00] collaboratively in ways that were incomplete before and building value for their company, but also building relationships in a place that they belong to.

It's not just about, do my employees belong here? Do they feel a sense of safety and belonging? But do I, as the leader also belong here? Is this where I should be and is this the work I should be? All of those things. It's, it's hard, but I think it's better. And that's the, the goal I hope people will reach for.

Debbie Sorensen: Well, I'm really glad that you said that because I think in some ways yes, it sounds daunting. I think if you're in a leadership position or if you're a manager, you're sort of in the middle here trying to. You know, kind of make this thing run, but also keep people happy. So yes, it can be challenging and in some ways it's easier to just say, Hey, do this, this, this, and this.

I'll, you know, I'll expect it by 5:00 PM but in some ways this is more humane for everyone, right? It is more fulfilling because leaders can also be more humane and more. [00:43:00] Authentic. And like you said, it's okay to say, well, I don't know, let's try to figure this out together and to get to know employees in a different way.

So it's maybe it's better for everyone, even if it absolutely has some challenges and it's probably not gonna come naturally for everyone. There might be some people who struggle with that, who are used to doing it, um, in that more, hey, you know, do this, this, and this kind of style of manag.

Chris Shipley: I mean, I think that's very hard for some people who just really want to be an authoritarian.

Debbie Sorensen: right.

Chris Shipley: Um, that they think that, that, that gives them a sense of status and, and value and purpose. Um, I think those people are gonna find themselves with very few people to lead over time. And that's really the, the downside for that leadership style is that people, the workforce is saying no.

Um, that's not how I. And I will find someplace else to work, or I'll go start my own business. We've seen a great upstart uptick and new [00:44:00] business

starts, I think from people saying, you know what? I can't get the flexibility and the autonomy in the workplace that I, I had before, so let me go try to create one of my own.

I, and so I, I, I think all, excuse me, asshole bosses will go away in a new era. No, I don't do, I think all the sort of authoritarian. my way or the highway leaders are going to, to just suddenly disappear. Surely not. But I think those people are gonna find themselves with much less engaged workforces, um, who, uh, who churn cont continuously and their expense because they're treating people as an expense we'll, um, you know, continue to grow as they have to continue to recruit and hire and train to in order.

Recruit and hire and train because the people, they just did that to left because of the leadership style that wasn't really addressing it as a person.

Debbie Sorensen: Well, we [00:45:00] we're talking about the empathic leader, which is really, I think, think ultimately the, you know, the, the focus of your book, the Empathy Advantage, it's about leaders becoming more empathic. And I'm just wondering if you could describe a little bit, um, I think that makes a lot of sense, why that is a, a good direction for people to be going and, and.

That this is an effective form of leadership, especially maybe always, but especially in today's world. Um, so if you were talking to someone who's in a leadership role and you wanted to explain to them just sort of the overall qualities of an empathic leader, um, could you just tell us a little bit about what, what that looks?

Chris Shipley: well, we'll talk about in the book about four shifts of leadership, and I think that's a, a good place to start. And, and one is, we've talked about it already, is mindset. This idea that I am managing people to the fact that now as a leader, I am enabling them. I, I don't, I no longer people, no longer work [00:46:00] for me.

I work for them. I think the other is, is culture a cultural shift? A lot of workplaces where. Um, driving productivity around an idea that, that our peers were, were competitors. This person's working harder, that person's working longer. Here's the employee of the month, here's the salesperson of the year.

That competition that put people, uh, pitted one worker against another. Now, I think if we shift to peers as collaborators, we get the benefit of this, um, amalgamated knowledge and energy, right. Because no one person really holds all the answers anymore, all the information, and only when. When one person

talks to another that engages with a third, then we start to see the whole picture come together.

That's a collaboration that you would never get if you know it's a race to the top, because I want, in that competitive environment, I wanna hold information to myself because that's my currency [00:47:00] in a collaborative environment. I wanna share everything I know because sharing is becomes my. So that's a, I think a, a incredibly important shift.

We've talked a lot, um, already about values, but I think that's another place that we really want to tap in terms of, of an approach in, in past leadership models. Um, motivation was, was extrinsic. We get her pay raise, you'll, you'll get. The employee of the month parking space, you'll get more perks. You'll not get fired.

You. It was all these external carrots and sticks that were used to, to drive performance. I think in this, um, new era, we're really looking for how do we foster the intrinsic, uh, motivations, right? How do I get someone to come to work every day, not because they're chasing a paycheck, because they're chasing a dream, they're chasing a value, they're chasing a purpose, and that.

[00:48:00] requires, I think conversations that are really different. It's like, what do you, what do you want? What do you see? What gives you joy in your work? What doesn't give you joy in your work? And I'm not saying that that's all gonna go away, but let's figure out how we can align your personal purpose, mission and values with the work that's happening in our organization so that you can see the impact you're having.

So I know that what, that my work matters. I feel I have a personal energizer Bonnie, to drive me to go. when I think that my work is just a cog in a machine, any cog can come in here and do this, that I, I have to be motivated and it's not even very motivating, but I have to be driven by extrinsic factors.

So that shift to an intrinsic, more values centric way. And I think, you know, that just changes the behavior of a leader from one who has to be the all-knowing, um, boss to one who can be a coach, a mentor, an. So that people [00:49:00] can do their best work because they're driven to do their best work with their colleagues in a space that we're able to be successful together.

Debbie Sorensen: I love that. I, I love that piece around values and purpose. And I actually wanna unpack one piece of it. Maybe we'll kind of end on, on this note, um, which is around the team. Part and just being part of more of a

collaborative instead of a competitive, um, you know, more, more collaborative instead of more competitive with your colleagues and coworkers.

And I'm interested in that in part because I think that's a complicated one, but also one that really matters in terms of people wellbeing and my burnout work. I think there's a real emphasis on those interpersonal dynamics and how being a part of a team can either, Really make work fulfilling or it can make it pretty awful.

And so, and this is another big question here, but [00:50:00] what are your thoughts about a healthy team and how leaders can, like what they could be looking for in terms of how do they get there so that they, because if they ha, if a leader has a great team and people are engaged with their team, and the team is cohesive and collaborative, then actually the job of a leader. of easy, really. So how can people, what are what? What would be some good shifts to see in the direction of building a team that has that, that quality to.

Chris Shipley: Well, I think, well, a couple of things. First of all, I think that the term collaboration gets thrown around a lot, right? And, and in fact, so much of the return to office is because we need to collaborate. And then you go into the office and you are in your cubicle or in your, your office, or in your workshop or in whatever part of the organization you are.

and you just do your job and you're not actually inter interacting much. It's, that's not collaboration. You know, the, there might be some occasional creative collisions that happen when two people happen to be at [00:51:00] the coffee maker at the same time, or m waving their lunch or got caught in the elevator.

But that's not collaboration like, that's just coincidence. And so if you're really building a collaborative team, you have to underst. A few things. First of all, like what is it we're trying to do? What, what's the problem or the opportunity that we're working on? And get clarity around that so that we know what we're working on.

What's, what are we actually trying to do here? And I think that's, that's, you know, at core then who do we have around the table? And, and part of that, and I know there's some hesitancy from some people, like, I don't want necessarily. be overly personal at work. Right? And I'm not suggesting that you have to go in and, and tell your life story or, or that as a leader you should be pushing for that.

But I think you can say to someone What, what matters to you? Why, why are you here? And, and, and I think this starts in the, in the recruitment process. What is [00:52:00] your, what is it you want to achieve? How do you, how do you like to work? What, um, what does a good day at the office look like to you? Um, what. , how do you, how do you build friendships?

Do you build friendships with all those kinds of things that have nothing to do with the job description and everything to do with how people show up at AT at work to understand then is there alignment? And I think alignment is so critical because if I say, you know what, I just really, I thrive in a boiler room, deadline driven, gotta make my quotas environ.

and you know, but ours is an office where we are all kind of, you know, rowing together. I know that's not gonna be a place for me. I'm not gonna fit there. I'm not aligned. And so being very clear about what kind of a workplace you want to create is, I think a fun, [00:53:00] fundamentally from the outset. It's a, it's a good, it's a magnet for the kind of people that are gonna be great on your team.

And it's a filter for. But maybe we will self-select out of an interview process because they don't want to be in that kind of an organization. Um, so I think kinda envisioning what that workplace is and what, what is, what are we, what are we trying to do together? What skills and curiosities do we all bring to the table?

Sharing that understanding so that I know that I'm really good at this piece. But Debbie, I know you're really good at that piece. Tap your brain for a little bit that can I have a reason for coming in the office to actually sit with a group of my team members to really work on something together and, and not just come to have a meeting, but come to work on a, a challenge together.

Um, all of those things start to create a place where we belong. We wanna be part of, because we're all working toward [00:54:00] that goal that we all said was, was the thing we wanted to contribute.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. I. It factors for burnout is feeling appreciated, feeling valued, feeling. , like your work matters. You know, in the, it, it may not even be in some grand sense of the world, but just feeling like, oh, you know, it's, it's, people respect me and, and value the work that I'm doing. And so I think that that tone that you're talking about, it's kind of everybody's bringing something and that thing is being appreciated and is being, you know, and, and their contribution is being appreciated.

Chris Shipley: Yeah, absolutely mean there's so much, um, research and, and especially of late that talks about people would much rather work in a place where they felt valued and they, where they belong and they felt appreciated. than they would working in a place where they got a better paycheck. They would so much rather work in a place that shared their values than that were, was mission driven and aligned to their missions than to get more [00:55:00] money.

And I think it really comes back to this fundamental question of, are people in your organization a an expense line in a budget? And if so, hire and fire 'em. And, and you know, we're seeing that with, with, I think these, um, the contagion of. Right. Just, well, those, that'll save us some money. Let's get rid of 10,000 people. If you're an expense line, you're, you're, you're disposable. If you view the people in your organization as assets, then you invest and you invest not just in, in salary. That's important. Not just in an environment that can be important, but you're really investing in leadership that invests in them.

Leadership that wants to see their people. , their people be, fulfilled. People be happy, that people feel appreciated. I, I can remember coming home from the, uh, from work, you know, from time to time. Like, wow, I was really smart at work today. And it, you know, that was never on payday. It [00:56:00] wasn't the day that I got, you know, I didn't care about that.

It was like I did something in the workplace today that allowed other people to, um, to get their work done. And I. , it just felt like I really hit it on the nail. Those are fulfilling days at work, right?

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah.

Chris Shipley: And yes, it's nice to get the paycheck and maybe, you know, have your Friday night out, but that's, that's a different kind of, that's the extrinsic work.

How do we start tapping the intrinsic motivations that really allow people to contribute their as best it possibly can? And, and that's the new rule of leadership, is to find those, those inner switches and flip. To the greater, um, not pro performance, I think better than, more than productivity, um, where we all feel really satisfied in the work that we do together.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. This really maps onto what we know about human psychology and having a meaningful life and how, you know, A lot of different aspects of [00:57:00] that, but usually it's not the bottom line of how many

dollars are in your bank account. I mean, obviously if there's a lot of financial stress that's gonna take a toll, but that there is something about pursuing meaning and pursuing, you know, these kinds of relationships and human connections and belonging, that that certainly contributes to wellbeing in a pretty profound way.

Um, yeah. Well, Chris, thank you so much. I really, I'm, like I said, I'm, I think this is super interesting and it'll be really interesting to see what happens ahead in the, the working world. And so I'll, I'll continue to follow your work. Um, and so again, your book is *The Empathy Advantage*, leading *The Empowered Workforce*.

I highly recommend it to anyone who's interested in this. Anyone who's in a leadership position or just wants to. Think about the working world that we're in nowadays. Where can people find out more about your work and where can people follow you? Chris?

Chris Shipley: Yeah, so, um, both Heather McGowan and I [00:58:00] have, I think, relatively simple URLs. Uh, I'm at cshipley.com and she is heathermcgowan.com and. , we both, um, write, uh, a lot about these topics, uh, on LinkedIn and, uh, on Twitter and elsewhere. So, um, really a simple Google search. We'll get to there. And, um, we really, what we both really enjoy about, um, our writing and certainly on social platforms is, is the engagement, right?

We would love to the comments back the, the interaction. So, um, I would love to, to see those. We're in a place right now where, as I said, it's, it's a now normal and we don't really have a lot of clarity on the future, but I think we can get there together. It's gonna take a lot of these kinds of conversations to help us do that in a, in a most healthy way.

And I'm really so thrilled for the work that you're doing, particularly around burnout, which is such a challenging issue. Um, I think that, [00:59:00] that, um, we can, I feel really optimistic about where, where the future is going in the, in the work. because workers are empowered, and I know that that feels maybe threatening to some leaders or it's different to some leaders, but when they recognize that, that's their great opportunity to tap that and use it to the benefit of, of the sh the entire stakeholders and organization.

That's, that's what everyone feels empowered.

So

Debbie Sorensen: I feel the same way.

Chris Shipley: inviting me into this conversation and for the work you do. I really appreciate.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, I think we share this, this desire to, to talk about this and, and spread the word. And, and so yeah. We'll look forward to, to following your work and we'll link to all of those resources to the book and to your webpages. And I know you both do some. Consultation and speaking engagements. And so we'll link to all of that on our show notes for today.

And Chris, thank you for the important work that you're doing and for being a voice of change and um, I really appreciate you coming on today.[01:00:00]

Chris Shipley: Oh, it's been great talking to you. Thank you so much.

Debbie Sorensen: Thank you.

Yael Schonbrun: Hey, psychologists, off the clock listeners, I'm gonna guess that if you got to the end of this episode that you also love to geek out about books in psychology.

Michael Herold: If you don't know where to store all your books and people are already complaining that you talk about this book that you're reading all the time, then why don't you join us once a.

To read a book together.

Yael Schonbrun: If you're interested in joining us, we hope you are. Just send an email to off the clock psych gmail.com and we'll send you more information.

Debbie Sorensen: Thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

Yael Schonbrun: You can get more psychology tips by subscribing to our newsletter and connecting with us on social media.

Jill Stoddard: We'd like to thank our strategic consultant, Michael Harold, and our podcast Production Manager, Jaidine Stout Williams.

Debbie Sorensen: This podcast is for informational and entertainment purposes only, and is not meant to be a substitute for mental health treatment. If you're having a mental health emergency, dial [01:01:00] 9 1 1. If you're looking for mental health treatment, please visit the resources page of our website off the clock.

psych.com