

Collaborate Anywhere: Remote Team Mastery | Teresa Harlow | Power Lounge S2 E36

Amy Vaughan: 0:08

Welcome to our weekly Power Lounge, your place to hear authentic conversations from those who have power to share. My name is Amy Vaughn and I am the owner and Chief Empowerment Officer of Together Digital, a diverse and collaborative community of women who work in digital and choose to share their knowledge, power and connections. Join the movement at www.togetherindigital.com. Let's get started. Welcome to our last recording of 2023. We have had such an amazing season with a number of wonderful guests who have shared such amazing and insightful stories and experiences. I want to encourage and invite all of our listeners to go back and take a listen If there's anything that you missed. There's not a lot that we didn't cover this year Everything from AI to leadership to managing change you name it. We kind of covered it, but we're so excited we are actually booked out through April of 2024. So we've got season three coming for you soon.

Amy Vaughan: 1:26

In the meantime, we hope, while we're on break, you'll take the time to go back and take a listen to some of our amazing guests. And, as they say, last but not least, we're excited to invite or to have Teresa Harlow here with us. We're talking about remote work and how to manage and master remote teams, because they're saying that by 2025, 32.6 million Americans will work remote. This pretty much suggests that remote work is not going away. Sorry to those who feel otherwise and are telling their teams come back to the office. Today we're going to talk to and gain sites on saving time, boosting accountability and building a strong team culture.

Amy Vaughan: 2:09

Here to help us along with that is Teresa Harlow. She has 30 years of global tech leadership experience. She is a seasoned problem solver who has shaped diverse technology teams. Since 1992, she has led groundbreaking efforts in digital technology, focusing on financial services and insurance. Teresa's proven collaboration framework, honed over the years, is a testament to her success in achieving remarkable outcomes for her teams. Today, Teresa shares this framework to help organizations save time,

resources and fortify key relationships, melding her corporate experience or expertise with a passion for performing arts Such a cool combination. She conducts unique rock and roll keynote experiences and rock shops ROCK shops. Beyond her corporate role, Teresa is a coach, mediator and bestselling author of combative to collaborative the co-parenting code. In this capacity, she guides divorced parents and separated parents to raise children collaboratively after they split. Teresa, thank you so much for joining us today and sharing your unique skill set of skills and gifts with us today. We're excited to have you here.

Teresa Harlow: 3:23

Well, thanks for having me, Amy, and you know, I should have left out that 1992 thing. Oh, stop, I was five.

Amy Vaughan: 3:32

Right, you know, under my head I was like and I didn't want to say it because I try not to make comments I'm like not that you could tell by looking at her, but since 1992, seriously, we need to be at a 30-year-old and we've met in person too. So, like again, well done, whatever you're doing, keep it up.

Teresa Harlow: 3:49

You look amazing. Good James, it's in spite of me.

Amy Vaughan: 3:53

Right, hydration. Good, James, all that stuff, you know, it all counts, it all makes it all, it all helps, and just your energy, too, is for this topic and the other topics that I spoke upon. That was one thing that really impressed me about you when we met a couple months ago was, you know, just obvious passion for what it is that you do. So I'm kind of curious, and that's where I want to start, is what was that defining moment or experience that helped shape your perspective on team collaboration, especially as it kind of comes to remote and hybrid work? Because I feel like, again, like so many of our guests, your journey's been a little winding.

Teresa Harlow: 4:28

Yeah, winding is one way I call it amaze Not amazing necessarily, but amaze. But yeah, you know, I have been around technology a long time and have witnessed a lot of things evolve and I would say my understanding and recognition of the need for collaboration has been an evolution. I don't think I started in a place where I acknowledged or realized how important that element was to the success of my teams and me. But in early 2000s I was a consultant for what we used to term satellite company. It was a consult oh yeah,

boutique consulting firm Didn't have an office anywhere. Everybody just worked from wherever their client was or from home and we would go into the client's location when we needed to talk about status and those sort of things. But day to day was a lot of remote work. When we needed to get together because we were bringing an agile type of methodology to the forefront, something that was super rare back in the early 2000s, we would do that co-location thing by getting together in a Panera bread. I mean, I think I spent days on end in a Panera bread working with my team and drinking way too much coffee, but back then I really think I was focused on. Really I see three elements to any business effort. You've got a product or service, you've got a process to live within, and then you have the people, and I really wasn't so focused on the people. I really thought that if I knew the product, if I knew my stuff and I understood the process and how to manipulate those, where needed to pull the levers to change things, that the people as long as I was nice to them it would take care of itself. So back in these early 2000s, I was able to work with our largest client to date for this particular firm to bring forward two projects that finished that they had struggled with for seven years. So we got them both done in a year and a half and a lot of that, I would say, was because of the agile process that we were using. It was kind of a unique brand of that in this particular firm, but it really exemplified all the positive pieces of agile.

Teresa Harlow: 7:19

However, while the team received the CTO, received a global award for this achievement, right, I got fired, get out. No, I did, and it was like wait a minute, I did a good job. What happened? You got awards for this. Yeah, do I get to claim anything about this award, like as a consultant, you didn't. It was the client that they awarded that to the internal team, which was fine. But to think that I thought I'd done this great job and I got fired. I'm like what went wrong? And I'm like I know my stuff. I pulled the levers where I needed to knock down processes that weren't valuable, or get waivers where needed, or create new processes to build those bridges and stuff. Good, I realized that it was this people thing that was the gap for me.

Teresa Harlow: 8:17

So, fast forward, you know, about a decade. I had taken some time to have some other business ventures between the consulting and this next foray in the 20 teens. But when I came back to a corporate setting and to technology, I was going to solve this problem and I decided to do this happen again because I really wanted it to be, you know, not just a here's, this thing that's out in the environment, but people actually wanted to spend time in my presence. You know I mean, right, everyone wants to be liked. But so I was working for this big bank and I decided the first thing I needed to do was get to know the people, because, you know, I hadn't really spent the time to do that I was always too

busy and the first team I had I was a project manager leading giant programs and my whole team was in New York, new Jersey and the United Kingdom.

Teresa Harlow: 9:25

Now they all had video phones but those video phones had not come to Columbus yet and I was the manager of the overall team. You know, the program manager and the executive sponsor kept saying why can't you get, you know, video? And I checked and checked and everybody told me there was no way to do it. So we worked through this without that. I went on site to meet with them in person in New York a couple of times but they really the company was not very open to me needing to travel because they're like well, you have everything you need to. You know you can talk to each other, you can do teleconferences what else do you need? And not recognizing that sometimes face to face is required.

Teresa Harlow: 10:15

And my executive sponsor really wanted me in the room and they would be all gathered around some conference room somewhere in New York. And here I am, this disembodied voice, talking to them about what the expectations were, and it was sort of like I was an afterthought, like they'd be having these. I would hear these side conversations sort of bubble up and I'd be like, is there something I need to be hearing you know? And I'd have to bring their attention back to me. And it was just a struggle but we did finish and the lessons I took from that were that, you know, if my team has video capability, I've got to find a way to make that happen. I can't be an afterthought. I have to take my seat at the table. They're always telling us, you know, as women, we need to take our seat at the table. So I had to find a way to insist that happen.

Teresa Harlow: 11:08

And then meeting in person was still something that needed to occur for things that were strategic in nature kickoff meeting. I did that remotely, but it would have had so much more impact if I could have been with them in a room, maybe shared a cocktail or coffee, you know, before or after. So you really get to care about each other. You know who do you want to work hardest for. You know the people that you care about, who do you want to support the people that you care about, and so that was something I worked very hard to achieve, given the tools I had. Now, after about a couple years and we had finished that project, I was handed an even larger program. It was giant, it was global, you know, literally thousands of stakeholders, and the direct team, you know, crossed eight lines of business for this big bank, and the executive sponsors were like I

don't know, four levels up from my level of management and I was expected to lead this group. And so first thing I said is I have to be connected visually and I got an approval.

Teresa Harlow: 12:34

I just said I have to have this, this is what I need to succeed, and you have to speak up and say you want this to succeed. Here's what's required. I went out and bought an iPad. Actually, my husband bought it for me for Christmas so that I would have it when this project launched in early January and I set up the iPad and I worked with my tech support to get it done. So, you know, we were able to really work together as if you know well, you know all the benefits of being able to see somebody and that visual queuing that you do to each other when you're communicating. So the other thing with that program is I got very good at quantifying the results so that we could spur competition for one across these eight different lines of business. Right, Competing executives yeah, it's a good thing, Whatever gets a note of it.

Teresa Harlow: 13:38

Yeah, it also gave us a way to recognize accomplishment, recognize how far they were getting, and we could do it in a no-transcript 30 second time frame. I could hit a button, had the benefit of a really cool Programmer to help me develop that kind of reporting, but we could say at any moment how much value had been delivered. Right, so it was. It was a matter of these tools, in addition to my focus on understanding. We need to care about each other. We need to be Interested in, in cheering each other on. Yeah.

Amy Vaughan: 14:14

That's really great and we'll definitely get to some of those like KPIs and things like that that you referred to in your dashboard. I do think that is an important aspect of it. I think it does help people who maybe don't feel as comfortable or confident kind of having these remote relationships, feel more confident about it. But as somebody who Namely exists as a person within the zoom box, I can tell you it's pretty Stellar what you can accomplish with other people and I do think that added element of being able to see them in the body language and even like the surrounding sometimes and things like that, it just gives you more insights as to who they truly are and there's more cues you can take, obviously, from body language. I love that you talk about the fact that you got fired. I think some of us, when we're talking about our career paths and journeys, we don't like to talk about the messy stuff, but I feel like the messy and the hard things are where we have the most opportunity to grow and I also think it makes you more relatable, because sometimes people just see the success and they don't think that they can either Relate or ever achieve something similar. And the fact of the matter is is I dare you to find somebody who's not been in the working world For more than a decade,

who hasn't faced either build layoff or a firing right? And I also love that you mentioned the too busy and, for those who are listening to the podcast, you didn't get to see the air quotes, but being busy to get to know your co-workers.

Amy Vaughan: 15:29

I have definitely been there, yeah, it really wasn't until I joined together digital and started building my own community and network. Did I make that correlation right? Because I was so busy, title chasing and working hard and, you know, climbing my way up. You know, I definitely felt connected to my co-workers, but I wouldn't say we were like hanging out after work. We weren't, yeah, and didn't know much about. I knew some about their life outside, especially if they were on my team. I took extra time at that point, but beyond that, a bomb, beyond my immediate team. Again, I was like, again, air quotes too busy, yeah, and I also wanted to call out you mentioned, you know, and I do remember I worked remote in 2011. It is there's that fear of being out of sight, out of mind, and For those who are listening, which are majority, those who identify as women. Women pay this kind of what is it called that presence, not attendance, but it's like it's another it's another one of the many penalties.

Amy Vaughan: 16:29

We pay presence for just not being present, for not being there all the time. Yeah, a lot of times we kind of pay the price when it comes to new opportunities because, like you said, those sidebar Conversations happen which then turn into new opportunities and if you're not standing in that same space you miss out on that.

Teresa Harlow: 16:47

Well, just, you know, I just got a, I got a share, another piece of that, that experience with that giant team. So, you know, I caught wind, like about a month into this month and a half into this new program, even though I was having weekly, you know, status meetings with a very large contingent of the of the team core team, there was this executive level Status meeting happening. It was called a program status meeting. I'm like, okay, they're having a program status without the program manager there. That doesn't make any sense. So I reached out to the executive sponsors I said, if you're going to have a program status meeting, don't you think the program manager should be there? And they're like, oh, good point, yeah, sure, come along. And so I I ended up, you know, attending and kind of observing the first meeting and maybe just kind of started inserting little things in the second meeting. And by the third and fourth meeting they realized I was, I was a leading cast member of this meeting, right, and another two or

three weeks went by and they were looking to me to lead the meeting and I ultimately took over the meeting and facilitated it, because that's what made sense.

Teresa Harlow: 18:06

Yeah, and the executive sponsors there were two of them and they said, well, do we need to be here? I said, okay, look, yes, you need to be here. Most of the time, I get it. If you have very high level jobs, I get it. But I do need you to show buy-in and and and this, the sponsorship of this thing, and you cannot take your name off the invite, because that gave leverage to to me to get the people that were at their level to show up. Right, exactly that influence without without being at that level, yeah, important.

Amy Vaughan: 18:42

I love your ability to advocate for yourself. I think that's a big thing to call out to there. If you're kind of in a semi remote or hybrid situation, you know we already pay that penalty of not being constantly present. Advocating for yourself, I think, is such an important way to kind of help avoid that. And then also I kind of am curious to see over the next few years how, if remote work is going to level the playing field for women.

Teresa Harlow: 19:07

You know well, it's not really flexibility, like flexibly and differently, and yeah here's an interesting thing, so you can only see me from here up right now. There have been studies, and I don't know the statistics to you know necessarily rattle them off here, but I know there's studies that show that shorter people are at a disadvantage.

Teresa Harlow: 19:28

Oh I just in the professional world, and you can't tell how shorter tall I am, right here, point yeah. So it actually takes that off, especially if you're in the presence, of you know, and I've spent most of my life in rooms with full of men and they're all taller right, and so you know, if you're physically there with them, there's that intimidation factor and just that physical, you know. In that way that goes away online.

Amy Vaughan: 19:57

So there's that Good point. I have so many people say that to me when they find because, again, like I said, I live in the zoom box they see me and they're like, oh, I think I think you should tell me I'm taller, then why they thought.

Teresa Harlow: 20:07

I'm shorter.

Amy Vaughan: 20:08

I'm five, six, I'm like pretty average, about as average as you can get.

Teresa Harlow: 20:12

Well, you seem pretty tall to me. I'm fine, right.

Amy Vaughan: 20:18

Awesome, teresa. In your experience, what are some common misconceptions or pitfalls organizations face while Transitioning to remote or hybrid work model? Because I think people, even though we've kind of been at it for a while now, they still still like a problem to them. How can some of these be mitigated in your opinion?

Teresa Harlow: 20:35

Yeah. So when the pandemic hit, I was working for this very large bank and we were sent home just like everybody else. But at work, you know, I would go into this cubicle and work with teams across the world every day, where I had two monitors, really nice chair like the one I'm sitting in now, a vera desk, all this, all the stuff right for very good reasons, so that I could do my best work. And when we went home, the, the company did not recognize the need for that at home. So the message is people need the right equipment, yeah, to do there, and you shouldn't be Assuming they can afford to get all that equipment. Now I did. I went out and bought my monitors, my very desk, but it was like, you know, you heard Apple and Google and all these. They were giving them like ten thousand dollars to go build out a remote office and that was that was an appropriate thing to do. I don't know about the email, but I know it was appropriate to give them a way to Excuse me to get the right things they needed to do the job.

Teresa Harlow: 21:51

The other another misconception is people don't need camaraderie, they don't need to, you know, have the, the team, rah, rah sort of stuff, and I think that's completely wrong. In fact it's probably more necessary because you got to try harder at. It has to be intentional. It's not going to happen organically at a water cooler or in a break room or just walking down the hallway running into each other. So you're going to have to set up some very intentional opportunities for people to get to know each other and have that you know, that camaraderie, that team feeling I used to do like when it was the early days of COVID. I started doing themed weekly staff meetings and I'd say, okay, come as your fantasy career, and so you know people would. One guy he came in his hard hat and had like construction sort of props available. I came with my rock and roll attire because I wanted to be a rock star when I was younger and you know, different people

wore different things just to kind of have some fun with it and just give people something to smile about. So people still need that stuff.

Teresa Harlow: 23:19

The other thing that can be a misconception that you have to be really careful of is that everyone can work well remotely. Everyone's autonomous, everyone works well autonomously, don't need a lot of hand holding and everyone is self-motivated. That's absolutely not true. Some people even know I'm not designed to work remotely, so you have to take some additional measures to figure out how to help the people that are like that. First you have to know they're like that. So you have to get to know your people, understand what challenges them and what their talents are, and then work to put them in positions where their talent shine and their challenges are either mitigated or minimized.

Teresa Harlow: 24:08

In terms of how much there'll be a problem. And, of course, 70 to 93% of communication is nonverbal. Even though we have the box here, there's still a certain percentage of that 70 to 93% that's lost. I mean you don't have full body, posture or stance and all of that stuff. You don't see gestures they might be making off screen whatever. So people don't necessarily communicate just as well without seeing each other and being in their presence. So, encouraging people to take advantage of the tools they have at hand, make sure your video is on. I know a lot of people and my husband's company's one of them. He's right on the other wall from me.

Teresa Harlow: 25:09

I can tell you all the time their videos are off, all of them. I'm like what in the world? And I always insisted. My whole team had their videos on all the time and, much to their chagrin, sometimes they're like oh, I got to do my hair or whatever, and I'm like look, you need to see me, I need to see you, my eyes communicate with you and I know whether you're hearing me right, whether you're understanding me. These are important pieces of communication which you lose without that visual, and so people don't communicate as well without seeing each other Exactly.

Amy Vaughan: 25:49

I know it's a struggle. We've talked a lot about the terminal for ever live, now Zoom fatigue. So I think it is a matter of being intentional with how many meetings you're scheduling with people back to back, giving them that time. Also, hot tip for those of you who do feel that Zoom fatigue turn off yourself you. It's actually more of you looking at

yourself, fatiguing yourself than it is anything else. If you're just focusing on the person you're talking with, it definitely helps reduce it greatly.

Teresa Harlow: 26:17

But I know you wouldn't have a mirror with you looking at it if you were in person with people, right? So kind of think of it that way you don't need to see yourself.

Amy Vaughan: 26:25

No, it's just all that extra internal dialogue that you're dealing with as well. Because, let's be honest, as soon as you turn your camera off, you know that you're checking your phone more, you know that you're looking off to the side for email, you know that you're getting up and doing other things, you're not being fully present and that's just not the way you would be. When you were in the room physically with someone. You would still have that. It kind of keeps you accountable. But I also do understand the need for some people to, you know, not always have it on and feel safe and comfortable not having it on, because, yeah, it can be quite fatiguing. And I agree with you too about the what I thought of when you mentioned there's kind of more cultural type events. I think I have found the ones that are just more genuine, intentional and low key, you know, to be the more fun ones, where it's like it doesn't feel forced, it doesn't feel overhanded, it's not all mandatory, it is a challenge, it is a whole new way to have to approach management and people and I think I completely agree with you you have to just lean in that much harder on understanding your folks. Like you said, don't just assume everybody is self-motivated, don't just assume they all can work well remotely, and then if you can find ways to provide them with additional support, whether that's additional socialization, that they are an extrovert, you know, maybe it's letting them have the camera off from time to time, if it's like they're an introvert and they just need that extra mental space.

Amy Vaughan: 27:55

You know, I found things really helpful for me, having worked in agency environments for decades and all of a sudden, working from home and it's quiet, it's too quiet, like I know. So one of our members found this app or the site called Noisily, with an I at the end, and I love it because it's like helps you. You can like mix different sounds. You can do like coffee shop or trees or white noise, pink noise, brown noise, all those things, and I found it really helped me focus because just having that little bit of background noise, for whatever reason, put me in the zone. So I do think taking the time for yourself and for your team to understand, like what gives them focus when you're at an at-home work environment is a really great way to go about it. Those are-

Teresa Harlow: 28:37

Yeah, and you know, to your point of having to be off screen and the fatigue thing. Look, I got to the point. If I would have left my schedule open, people would have put something on every hour of every day. Oh my gosh. I know what plenty of people who allowed that to happen to themselves they're like oh, I never eat lunch.

Teresa Harlow: 28:56

I'm like, look, I don't miss lunch. I know I always have it scheduled, not only because I'm one of those people that needs to eat some every so many hours and I'm gonna get hangry and it's not good for me, but I need the mental break to recharge. So I take a full hour for lunch every day. I schedule it on my calendar. Now I may move it if someone needs that time and that's the only time they can meet, but I get that hour in. So it's. You're positioning yourself for greater success if you do those things which is good for you to do, for your employer Exactly, or?

Teresa Harlow: 29:35

for your business, depending on whether you're self-employed or whether you're someone that works for someone else. You're going to do your best work if you give yourself those opportunities to get up and go to the bathroom, get your water, do those things. You're not a machine, you're not a machine.

Amy Vaughan: 29:53

I agree with that. I think regularly scheduled stand-up walk breaks. It is so easy when some of us are a little bit of workaholics and you feel like, because you're not physically somewhere for work, that you have to always seem like you're on, and that can be pretty taxing too. So I'm definitely with you. I'm at my desk at nine every day. I'll light a candle or something to kind of help queue that start of my day. I block time for checking emails, I block time for lunch and then, yeah, I really truly try to be done at five and just stop everything else.

Amy Vaughan: 30:28

Because honestly too, I will say, not having those kind of between meeting conversations and other socializations like I honestly get plenty done in those hours, to the point that I don't need to be working late so much, but then, as an entrepreneur, I own a lot more of my time. So there's a little perk for you, any of you considering that route. Co-hatch is a new kind of shared work, social and family space built on. Community. Members get access to workspace amenities like rock walls and sports simulators and more to live a fully integrated life that balances work, family well-being, community and giving back. Co-hatch has 31 locations open or under construction

nationwide, throughout Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. Visit www.cohatch.com for more information. Let's talk about teamwork, because that's another you know kind of challenge I would say that a lot of folks face when it comes to teamwork. What challenges have you seen, and how? One of these? How do these challenges impact collaboration?

Teresa Harlow: 31:47

Yeah, well, I already talked about you need to get to know each other. Not only do you need to know your people on your team, they need to know each other. So so that's one of the struggles is finding opportunities to make that happen very intentional, and if you're leading a team, you're going to have to drive that and not expect it to just happen. You don't. You've lost the organic opportunity for that to happen. The other thing that I see you know not everyone's an extrovert. So when you get in this, you know box format we're in with with zoom and especially if you're using the speaker focus sort of setting, every time you speak, of a sudden your picture gets really big and that can be, you know, off putting. Yeah, people will maybe not even speak up because they don't want to be that person that got big on the screen, right, they don't want to ask a question to clarify understandings. So you know they don't, and then they think they knew what was intended by something and they really didn't. There are a lot of managers and those leading teams that leave things to chance. Well, they heard it, I said it once, and now it's all going to fall into place. I mean this. This holds true whether it's remote or not. But in the remote situation, you've lost certain elements of the communication, to be clear that they understood you, and so you can't leave things to chance and you can position it so that it doesn't feel like you're hovering over people or you're, you know, not trusting them.

Teresa Harlow: 33:39

You can, you know, check in with your team. Look, I know you had something big coming up today. I want to make sure you have everything you need. Is there anything you need for me to help? And that way you've let that, you've reminded them of the task and you've also offered hey, if you got some issues, we need to try about them now, not after they've blown up. And I already mentioned the not using video. I mean, use your video, it's for your benefit, it really is. Do your hair I'm sorry it doesn't have to Right and use the little lever there to make your. You know, yeah, improve your appearance, whatever.

Amy Vaughan: 34:19

But you only got to do it from the waist up y'all.

Teresa Harlow: 34:22

That's right, that's right, where your bunny slippers? Oh, I'll wait. Yoga pants, bunny slippers, whatever, right, yeah.

Amy Vaughan: 34:30

Yeah, I, just I. It's hard now to just get dressed up and go out. It's just so much more like mentally labor intensive. I'm like what? Why? This is too much work. I just can't.

Teresa Harlow: 34:40

It's true but now I kind of look forward to it. Yeah, something novel.

Amy Vaughan: 34:47

That's true it is. It does feel double. Now that's so funny, but I do agree. I think, establishing trust and respect between teammates, giving them time and space one on one you know before you expect them to get together to collaborate such good advice. And then also, you know, checking in with your more quiet participants when you're on a zoom, because, you're right, you'll have people who are more extroverted or verbal processors, which is also a lot of fun when you're on zoom and it's like, ok, you want to give time and space to them, obviously, but then Make sure that you acknowledge those who are quieter in the space and say OK, before we hop off. So, and so do you, do you it's actually. Is there something you need to ask, right, or do you feel clear on what we need to do next? Just that, even just verbally, check in with them and verify that they are feeling, seen and heard is also a great way to make sure that you're not leaving anyone out when you're on those meetings.

Teresa Harlow: 35:38

Yeah, and, and you know we're all kind of uncomfortable with silence, right, so I? Something I notice a lot of times happens is people ask do you have any questions? And then they wait like three seconds and like OK, we're done. It's like, oh yeah, it takes people a little while longer to get up the nerve and you know if you're an introvert to bring forward your, your thought. So be comfortable with this silence. Count to, you know. I don't know what the right number is, but I usually count about 10, at least I was going to say 10 because Definitely longer than you think it should be. But if you do that, chances are someone's going to talk because they're going to feel the pressure of the silence themselves and want to end it.

Amy Vaughan: 36:28

So I want to kind of work that way too. That is true, that's so true. And then I also feel like encouraging people to leverage different methods of communication, to write, so,

like the chat or a poll or something like that can help you get some feedback and questions as well, if people don't feel comfortable with speaking up. Let's talk about those KPIs, because we love key performance indicators, women and digital, but what are some examples of KPIs that companies have used or can use to measure and enhance collaboration while working remotely?

Teresa Harlow: 36:59

We have to measure results, because that's what matters. You know we can talk a lot about people and processes and products and all that, but it's all about you know the value you deliver. That is important to your work. So measuring those results based on what kind of value you deliver, find a way to quantify that. In this one program we were reclaiming large hardware that was associated with with the environment for this, for this financial institution, and I found a way to actually keep track of every server reclaimed so that we could tell them look at this number, it's real, it becomes real. And so you can do that.

Teresa Harlow: 37:57

And then always comparing your plan versus actual is a good thing. It can be, hey, we can pat ourselves on the back, or it can be an eye opener Wow, we're really lagging. And these are not things you wouldn't do in person. They're just that much more important when you're taking things remote to keep people kind of in an understanding of what's going on. So, looking at your you know actual, to plan for your time, your budget, what you've produced so far, how much that's benefiting whomever is getting the end result of that. If you're creating success stories, that's always a good thing.

Teresa Harlow: 38:45

But measuring those results, doing it every week, making it very routine and expected, so people can look forward to learning what the result is and also it it applies a little bit of I don't want to say pressure, but maybe pressure is the right word to to get to their result by a certain time frame, because they know it's going to be. It's going to be out there. And keep things simple though. You know, I came through a certain training at one of my corporate employers and there was this I think it was a Harvard thing to put everything on one slide so that you know you get. If you couldn't get it all on one slide, it shouldn't be said, okay, and I would look at some of these slides.

Amy Vaughan: 39:41

I'm like that is so busy and confused to say somebody who's patient for design and white space, that feels cringy.

Teresa Harlow: 39:50

It's, you lose everyone, especially if they're looking at a shared screen. On a smaller screen, you don't know if they have the large you know displays or not, and that's another thing to be mindful of is everything gets shrunk down. So any graphics you provide need to be simple and visual. And measuring results includes awarding achievement, publicly recognizing segments of your team or individuals that have done extraordinary things, or even ordinary things that have cumulatively added up to success. So public acknowledgement of things going right or people supporting each other goes a long way.

Teresa Harlow: 40:40

Measuring mistakes is also a good thing to do. It sounds negative and all that, but it's reality and it's not the mistake. It's what you learn from it and correct from there. If there's mistakes in the system, you got to fix them in order to get past them. So measuring your things that aren't going right and you know, finding mitigation strategies for them as you go, and maybe measuring the mitigation of it as well I would have an issues list and measure the mitigation of that. How many issues do I have? How many you know are hanging out there for a certain period of time and not getting resolved. So those things, and also measuring satisfaction Satisfaction of your team, satisfaction of the customer you're serving, because if you're measuring satisfaction, you'll have good insight to how much well you can look at retention, to see this, too, if people are leaving your team.

Teresa Harlow: 41:43

Yeah, I mean something. There's a reason, and you need to understand what that reason is. You can do that through surveying them, just talking to them directly and taking account of lessons learned at certain milestones within your, within your effort, and having that kind of coming together to to observe that.

Amy Vaughan: 42:11

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense Setting very clear goals for everyone, making sure everyone understands what we're trying to achieve and how that's going to be measured Again, super important when you're dealing with different people, different places, different backgrounds and experiences and learning abilities or anything like that.

Amy Vaughan: 42:29

But then also I love that other aspect of it is outside of clear goals is having a consistent acknowledgement, because how many of us have forgotten that while we're not in person, I can't tell you. I don't think there was a single company that I've been a part of

over the last 14 years that didn't have some sort of annual awards or monthly recognition program. How many of us have let things like that go to the wayside while we've been remote, and it's such an important thing to make sure that we pause and celebrate those moments so people don't feel like constant machines. Yeah, that's obviously kind of one tool that leads nicely into the next question, one tool that leaders could possibly use. But are there other tools or steps leaders can take to encourage intentional communication and build camaraderie among team members when they're not like physically sharing a space?

Teresa Harlow: 43:21

Yeah, I think you set an expectation that you expect your team members to get to know each other and understand what each other needs so that they can do their best work on the team and contribute to the extent they should. So, you know, and leading by example, getting to know them and you know, saying it very bluntly, I want you guys get to know each other, have meetings to understand where you each stand, what you each need, what your challenges are and what you expect of one another in order to succeed. I also think that there's there still needs to be, a recognition of the, of the appropriateness of in person gatherings at pivotal times in an effort, like, maybe when you're launching a new effort and gathering physically in the same place and a certain milestones maybe the end of planning, or when you have to come together to do your strategic planning, and when you've, when you've accomplished something again, to do those celebrations and recognition. Encouraging actual two way conversations is something that I think has gotten lost since email became a thing and I had a manager and this was a while ago, but he had already become very disenchanted with email. I mean, I think it was back in geez early 2000s and he said do not send me an email, I'm not going to respond, call me. Pick up the phone and call me.

Teresa Harlow: 45:08

I want to have a conversation and a lot of times we default to email because we want to do the CYA and copy 20 people, you know whatever, but you know. If you're trying to solve a problem through email, I think that that's counterproductive. You need to have a two way conversation. Pick up the phone. If you need to follow it up with a confirmation of what you discussed, that's fine. But don't try to problem solve by going back and forth in an email thread that gets so long that their plot is lost and that happens all the time and then people start weighing in, then they start a second thread and then that one goes off in another branch of communication that the first group doesn't even see. So yeah, it's just wacko.

Amy Vaughan: 45:52

It's so interesting to and I believe it's such a generational thing as well, right, because so many of us nowadays it's like don't call me, text me. And if you're going to call me, text me first, like we're so on a custom to two way conversation.

Teresa Harlow: 46:06

I feel like that's gonna be a bad person. We need to go back to it, so valuable.

Amy Vaughan: 46:11

I'm going to start a movement Like right she wake you because you know somebody calls you and you're like, oh my gosh, I've been so much trouble. It must be urgent If we have to get on the phone call.

Teresa Harlow: 46:23

I don't know, I don't know. It doesn't have to be urgent, it just has to be like something that you can easily answer in a sentence.

Amy Vaughan: 46:31

you know right, beautiful thing we have a phobia when the phone rang. I don't know why it's such a thing. Maybe it's because I have children now and a mom that I take care of. It's like I'm always waiting for like a call from some of the school or something. But yeah, it's just one of those things. It's just phone calls. Now it feels like such an uncommon thing, but obviously I grew up at a time in which I definitely spent like hours and hours on the phone.

Amy Vaughan: 46:56

Yeah with friends when I was a kid, but nowadays it's such an uncommon. Even when my kids and we know how to hold a phone, I will hand them to speak to like one of their grandparents, and they're holding it out like six inches away from their head. I'm like you have to hold the phone to your ear.

Amy Vaughan: 47:11

But it just goes, show how little like you have a good point how little to a conversation we have. So maybe working to increase that, yeah, or have that as a set goal to have more to a conversations with your remote team. I think that's really smart. Yeah, I'm with you on the movement. Let's start making little steps to kind of get to that bigger movement. All right, I've got a two part question for you with this next one. One do you believe that we are more or less motivated while working, while remote? We kind of touched on this earlier, right, basically what you've observed and then what are some

strategies that you find most effective and making sure that team members do feel accountable and motivated in a virtual work environment.

Teresa Harlow: 47:48

Yeah. So to your first question are we more or less motivated? I think it depends on the individual. As we mentioned, some people are really good at autonomously working and others being self directed is not something they really master very well. That doesn't mean they're not a valuable employee that could contribute greatly. You're just going to need to approach them differently and support them differently. And you know that employer that pays for the correct equipment, making sure that they set up the intentional communication and building out that team culture and understanding, is going to take more effort, more effort than in person to achieve those same things. So you know, that's the. That's the gist of what I think are the. You know whether we're more or less motivated. Now, what strategies?

Teresa Harlow: 48:53

So I think a lot of it has to do with just setting it and not just setting an expectation. It's more than that. Sometimes you'll have great management setup of something you've got a leader that comes in says here's the expectations for this effort, we're going to deal, but then they never check in on it or they don't do anything to really kind of maintain that. You have to set up the framework to maintain that expectation and make it real to people and live it. I always established what I call to cadence, so they knew Monday through Friday, here was the things that you were focused on, and every Wednesday we're going to have our status meeting or whatever day it was, and then the new assignments would come out the next day after that. And so just establishing those expectations and then making sure to enforce them super important being as visual as possible. Anything visual becomes real. I mean, we believe it when we see it. Yeah, that's a great point, and if you don't, it's kind of like theory. Sure, make it real for people, where you can use props if you need to, or graphics or whatever.

Teresa Harlow: 50:17

We've got lots of capabilities in this, in this zoom platform. That takes some time to learn those things and leverage them. Make sure to celebrate that success every week, both with team members and individuals, and make sure that the team has what they need to succeed. And those aren't always things. Sometimes those are your time. You may think you're as easy to reach at home as you were when you sat in a cube in it in an office space, but you're not. You may not walk up to you, you may not have wanted them to, but they would walk up and interrupt you and it was probably because they really needed you then. So if you say you're going to be available, and granted, you may not be

able to pick up every call, but make it a commitment to return those calls or emails within a certain time frame. So I think that's really what. What can really make up some of the difference in this remote work setting?

Amy Vaughan: 51:26

Yeah, I could see that. I think follow through it is so important. It's like and I'm relating to this as a parent, I know not all of you are, but I mean, it's one of those things that you learn pretty quickly. You can't just set standards and then not have follow through and hold like the line on things, because otherwise they just kind of know, oh, you're going to tell me that these are the consequences if the system get done, but then they know they can just not do it and nothing will happen. So it's not even about like making people fearful of getting into trouble, it's just hey, you know that I've set this expectation and you know that I'm going to follow up with you about it will help to ensure that it gets done. And then also holding.

Amy Vaughan: 52:09

One thing I have found really helpful too is, you know, sometimes in these like zoom environments people do find it hard to speak up and ask questions, even in chat or off of mute. So I always try to offer up my calendar. I have Tuesdays and Thursdays blocked for meetings for members, ambassadors, things like that, to really make sure that I have something of an open door policy where people can come and set time on my calendar Any time they need it. We're getting close to time, so I want to just drop it over to our audience that's listening with us live, to make sure you guys have any questions, we definitely want to get those answered for you.

Amy Vaughan: 52:44

While Teresa's here and while you're thinking about your question that you're going to drop into the chat, I'm going to ask you one more here, teresa. I'm going to have to pick a couple left, but I want to make sure it's like of the juiciest one. Um, yeah, we talked a lot about tools and a little bit about tools. We talked about collaboration quite a bit, so the next two are going to be more collaboration focused. Still, let's talk about technology. With your background and technology, how do you see emerging tech influencing the dynamics of remote teamwork? How do they play a role in achieving success? Because even Zoom, all of these tools, have really evolved over the last few years. Even with AI and whatnot, everything is a smart device.

Teresa Harlow: 53:32

Our refrigerators are smart. I know, right, everything learns from you and is listening to you, not to be conspiracy theorists, but AI is the big game changer. It seems like it went

from zero to 150 in the last year. Good, and so I think it's like when the internet came about for those of us who were already in the workforce when that happened. But one thing to remember is, yeah, ai is a big game changer, but it's not human. It lacks a soul.

Teresa Harlow: 54:10

No matter how well, it's programmed, it doesn't have a conscience, and AI can be distorted by its creators and by the biases maybe they hold or the information that they hold to be true. So it's crap in, crap out. So that's how AI works. We were talking about neural networks back in the late 90s and that's what was the precursor to artificial intelligence. I was like, oh great, it learns from itself. But that's a great and powerful thing. But you do have to remember there's a human element Besides AI, though. I saw something. I don't even remember what the news program was, but they were highlighting these holographic telepresence things where oh, actually put you in the room.

Amy Vaughan: 55:02

I'm trying to find one for one. I buy Star Wars, you know I mean, as a speaker I could be.

Teresa Harlow: 55:07

Maybe it's like, it's like the next best thing to being teleported to another location.

Teresa Harlow: 55:14

But I think holographics may gain some momentum at least in the, in the realms of, you know, stage level presentation. I don't know how much you're going to see holographics in like a boardroom where someone plants themselves in the middle of the room. That would be weird, but there's definitely going to be something come there and the continuation of robotics will have some weird impacts on us as well, which I don't think we know what those are yet. But the bottom line remote's not going away. But I do think that there's a recognition of the need and value of some level of in-person interaction as well, and it's just making sure we use that where it makes sense. In strategic scenarios. Tactical stuff can be done remotely, but strategic things really make sense to get together, at least sometimes in order to set the tone.

Amy Vaughan: 56:15

Yeah, I agree, I think you know. Even as a small business owner running an events-based organization, I have come to realize we are a lot more picky, intentional about how and where we spend our physical time, more than we were before the pandemic. So I do agree with you you need to be strategic and thoughtful about when and where you're having those in-person opportunities and sessions, because some people will flock to

them and some people will avoid them like the plague. But if you work hard to make it feel like a safe space and you've been thoughtful throughout, you can get great engagement, get plenty of people together and have a very amazing time. Because it is so fascinating to see how many of our members who've never stepped foot in a room together though, they've done virtual coffee chats, they've met on Slack, just they, just. It's like as soon as they see each other it's almost hard to believe they've never shared the same physical space before. So we're proving that you know we can build meaningful relationships through virtual. But the icing on the cake is absolutely the moment we get to step into the room together. So I hope you all take the chance to kind of do a little bit of both with your teams and your coworkers.

Amy Vaughan: 57:24

It has been such an awesome time talking with you, teresa. I think we're at this such an interesting point in history of this. You know, fusion of both an AI and remote work revolution, like the way in which we work will never be the same. Because of those two things, I love that we talked about AI there at the end. I could do like a whole number of conversations, just, but we are at time and we didn't get any questions from a live listening audience. But you all have Teresa's website in the chat. If you would like to check anything out about her, connect with her on LinkedIn as well. That's all we have for you today, everyone. Thank you so much, teresa, for being our last in 2023.

Teresa Harlow: 58:05

Yay. Well, thank you, and everyone you know appreciate you being here to take it in. I hope you found it valuable.

Amy Vaughan: 58:13

It was very helpful. Thank you so much, Teresa. All right, everyone take care. A wonderful holiday. Happy New Year. We will see you soon. Until then, please keep asking, keep giving, keep growing. We'll see you next year. Bye, See you.