

Episode 60 - Emotion at Work in Life (and work being part of it)

Phil Willcox: Hello, and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast where we take a deep dive into the human condition. Now, as regular listeners will know, I am fascinated by the boundaries of work, of life, of identity, and how all of that kind of comes together and shows up in the workplace. And, and in a recent episode with Kelly Swingle on Episode 59, we talked about knowing and setting and adhering to boundaries. And yet I know for me personally, that the delineation between those things has been something that's been hard like, is there a work me and a home me? So I've definitely had that in the past and what about this idea of bringing your whole self to work? Because today's episode is about emotion at work in life, and how work is part of that as well. And my guest today is a business leader, is the head of people, risk and compliance at the Market Operator Services Limited which goes by a shorter name of MOSL, and I guess combines a passion with their lived experiences into the areas that we're going to be exploring through the podcast today. So let's get our guests on the air. So welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast, Angie Day. Hi Angie.

Angie Day: Hey, Phil, thank you. Thank you for your warm welcome.

Phil Willcox: Thank you so much for coming on. I'm really excited to hear both your, I guess a combination of your personal experiences and also the work that you've been driving and delivering within MOSL as well. So yeah, super excited. And am I pronouncing that right? Is it MOSL in that way?

Angie Day: Yeah, absolutely correct yeah.

Phil Willcox: Wonderful. Okay, so as usual, for this podcast, then we'll open with an unexpected yet innocuous question. And what I'd like to know is what's your approach to wrapping gifts?

Angie Day: Okay, my approach to this, to the actual sort of wrapping of the present?

Phil Willcox: No, the wrapping of the gift, the actual the act of kind of encasing it in whatever you want to encase it in.

Angie Day: Okay, so I normally use brown paper, and then a coloured ribbon or string, bit like sort of Sound of Music. But I tend to just find a table, I will then get the right size piece of paper. I always make sure I kind of fold over the edges, I like it to be quite neat. And then I get the sellotape ready in advance unless I've got someone else, so this year, it was a bit of a double act between myself and my husband which was great. Certainly better doing it with somebody else. And you're not kind of you know, got sellotape sticking to your hair and sort of on your fingers and wrapped up and things, so I guess my ideal one would be wrapping with somebody else. But yeah, I do take sort of care, attention because I think it kind of says a lot about the giving of the gift so yeah, that is my approach to wrapping, I probably leave it all a little bit last minuteish but yeah, when I do it, that would be my approach.

Phil Willcox: So a little bit last minute maybe, ideally with somebody else to help you.

Angie Day: Yep with the sticky tape.

Phil Willcox: With the sticky tape in particular would they get involved in the cutting of the paper or the folding or any of those things or are they there as a sellotape staging area?

Angie Day: Sellotape staging, and maybe the old thumb, you know the positioned thumb [laughs].

Phil Willcox: Nice, nice.

Angie Day: Yeah, I guess I'm in charge of it. Yeah.

Phil Willcox: Okay, nice, fabulous. So it was interesting because you framed it as you like to take care and give it attention because of the kind of the way it might add meaning to the gift. I take a very different approach when I'm wrapping gifts. So I cut roughly the right amount of paper. And if there's too much that's okay. Because you know, you can just fold it away or you can kind of push the two bits together to make a triangle and if that's just really big and clumpy when you fold it up, that's fine, no problem at all. If you're slightly messy with the sellotape that's okay as well. So, yeah, I'd probably say my approach to wrapping is messy, I think I would say, I certainly don't, you know if I cut the edge with the pair of scissors and the edges is a bit scraggly, I won't fold the paper over to make it look nice and neat. There'll be a scraggly edge to it.

Angie Day: Oh.

Phil Willcox: Oh no is that bad?

Angie Day: [Laughs] My daughter taught me a technique this year where you kind of, if you put the paper at a slight angle it wraps further as it were, so you know if you've got it lined up and it doesn't quite wrap, if you just move the paper slightly and put it at a diagonal, it does tend to fit. So we always get those little bits of paper leftover at the end and you've got little gifts but never quite match up, but yeah, I've very little waste this year which was good. So yeah, my 15 year old everyday teaches me something new about life.

Phil Willcox: Wow, fantastic. So imagine you have like a square box with a square piece of paper then and it doesn't quite come over the top, do you sort of turn it to like 90 degrees or 45 degrees?

Angie Day: Yeah 45 degrees, you kind of put it at an angle. So when you wrap it up, when you kind of cover it over to the top it is at a 45 degree angle, but it must be trigonometry. Yeah, it just works.

Phil Willcox: Nice and there you go fair listener. So that was today's episode of the Emotion at Work podcast, you have your hack for wrapping, and we're done, thank you so much [laughs]. Wonderful. Thank you, Angie. I guess what's interesting, is that we've got both you and I in that example, not knowing what the question was going to be, or what the answer was going to be, we've got very different approaches to that, you know, just to that act in itself of wrapping a gift. And I suppose we both made them mean something in terms of you know, I framed mine as being messy and, and scraggly and you talked about the meaning that it comes from I guess, having that present,



presented in a nice way in a visually appealing way. And so I suppose if we have those differences in, in an everyday act of wrapping a gift, we must have those differences in the workplace to.

Angie Day: Absolutely yeah, and you know, and I guess the thing for me there Phil is, is your way right was my way, right, you know, is there are right way and a wrong way?

Phil Willcox: Yeah and I guess as well...

Angie Day: There just different hey.

Phil Willcox: Yeah, and my way is right for me, which doesn't necessarily mean it will be right for you. Is that something you've been working on in MOSL then? Not the wrapping bit, but the differences and what might be right for one person might not quite be what's right for somebody else?

Angie Day: Yes. Yeah, it absolutely is. And we have been working really hard over the last couple of years in particular, on just sharing experiences and creating environments for people to share their experiences. And to kind of invite people, others to kind of question and just see the world through someone else's eyes.

Phil Willcox: Okay.

Angie Day: Yeah, so yeah, we've done particularly since our Diversity Society was established by my fantastic colleague, Abu, nearly two years ago in January, we've done, he has led a lot of a lot of development and work in this area. So something we're really proud of and excited about and have over the last year in particular, been kind of getting our message out there more broadly into the water industry about what we're doing.

Phil Willcox: So tell me more about if you don't mind me asking, can you tell me a bit more about the Diversity Society? That sounds fascinating.

Angie Day: Yeah, absolutely. So MOSL is a relatively small organisation, or certainly small based on some of the businesses I've worked in before. So we are about 75 people and so unlike, let's take, for example, a Thames Water in the water industry, which is a you know, a big water company, where they would probably have specific networks, you know, Women's Network, and LGBTQ+ network, ethnicity network, they would have a variety of different groups, because of our size, we have one diversity society. So we have one group of people that are that are diverse, they are what we call global majority, but they are ethnically diverse in relation to being white British, and they come together every month, every six weeks, with an agenda, often spending time just connecting, so kind of getting together as a group. And we will get sort of speakers in to that group. We will, I mean, the recent meeting we had we sort of talked about Christmas and the set, you know, the festive period, recognising that a number of people in that group do not celebrate Christmas, but will have traditions over the period of time. So yeah, it was set up for a safe space for group of people to come together to talk about a variety of different topics. But it has grown and the group lead more broad discussions with the whole of the organisation. And as I say, get speakers in and are

now going out and speaking themselves as well. So presenting at most recent one was presented at an EDI event through the Institute of water. So, you know, kind of getting out there. But yeah, it's been, it's been a big success moment. I'm one the executive sponsors as is the CEO, but it is colleague led, and I said in particular led by my colleague, Abu. And it's just been a real joy to actually see how he and that group have kind of grown and developed and, and kind of growing their ambitions to what they want to achieve. So it's been, it's been a real highlight for me, during my career in the last few years.

Phil Willcox: I mean, it sounds fantastic. And I like the framing of it. I think I like the framing of it as a society as well. Because rather than it being a network or a group, which are the terms that you, for example, you mentioned there might have an LGBTQ plus network, for example? And if the answer to this is I don't know, then that's okay. I was just curious about the choice of calling it a society rather than a network or a group or something. Was there some thinking behind that?

Angie Day: I don't think, it was I think, it was just the word that we established and came up with. I mean, what is, I've described all the things that are fantastic about this group, but what is also quite interesting is, because it is a small group, and it is a very broad diversity group, we may find that there are some topics that are discussed in there that are challenging, because it's so broad, it for example, we may be discussing things about LGBTQ plus, that some people within that group for whatever reasons, may find that that doesn't work for them, you know, they don't want to be part of it. So it's, what we've done is and it's really very much my kind of my thoughts around the culture and environment we've set up at MOSL, it's kind of this piece around permission. So kind of setting out what it is you're talking about setting out, you know, so that people can step away, step back, you know, not choose not to kind of engage in something if they are not comfortable with it. And that's kind of how we've, how we've run that group.

Phil Willcox: Okay. I've put a note to myself that maybe I should, I should ask you for Abu's contact details after we finish to see if they want to be a second guest for the podcast. We'll save that for another day. So if I take that link, then that you made into some of the more broader cultural work that's been going on within MOSL then. Where I'd like to go, I'd like to take a slight detour first, and then I'll come back. So where I want to go after the detour is into that broader cultural work that you were describing. And around creating a culture where that's that gives that permission evolves, I want to really get into those terms that you mentioned about permission and setting out and allowing people to engage or disengage depending on how they want to do so. What I thought might be useful for the listener though, before we get there is just to set a bit context around what MOSL kind of does within the water sector, because you mentioned that there's different water companies so you've got the likes of Thames, Anglia Water, Northumbria Water, Wessex Water, and so on, you've got a few different ones who, I guess listeners might experience on a day-to-day basis in terms of providing the water to their home, and then taking the wastewater whether it be grey or brown water away from their home. So where does, how does go, yeah, and you're talking about the issue of water as well. So where does MOSL play in that then?

Angie Day: Okay, so MOSL is the market operator, that is kind of what I described is at the centre of the non-household water market. So the non-household water market, the business retail market

was established back in 2017. And MOSL was the organisation that manages the settlement engine, so manages the correct payments between wholesalers and retailers. And we're kind of custodians of the codes and the rules. So there are a set of codes, rules by which the market operate. And we are kind of the owners and the kind of the subject matter experts I guess on those codes. So we're trading parties want to make changes, because they don't feel that it kind of best meets the needs of the customer or it doesn't quite work for them, then they work with MOSL in designing a change to that code, and then MOSL understand the process that that needs to go through in order to be presented and ultimately approved or otherwise by Ofwat. So we're kind of, so we don't, we don't kind of really you know, we're in the centre of the water market but our, you know, our asset is our people. So you know, we are we are kind of a professional services organisation, rather than, you know, getting out there and sort of, you know, fixing pipes and as you say making sure people have clean water and have their waste removed. But we're very young, because the markets very young, so as an organisation, we're very young, which is, again, for me as an HR professional, very exciting place to be, I think there are, there are huge opportunities when you join a business that is, that is young, I've worked in organisations that, one organisation I worked there for a long-time, you know, was parts of that organisation that was over 200 years old. So you know, there both have pros and cons, but you know, working in a new organisation, you just have that ability to really kind of get your arms around it and develop it and, you know, kind of, you know, develop it to be something that you're that, you know, that you think will enable people to thrive.

Phil Willcox: Okay, wonderful. Thank you. I just thought that was useful, useful context to put around so the listener gets a sense of, before we move into the what we're doing...

Angie Day: Absolutely. Yeah, if you're not, if you're not in the sort of business, it's not the water industry, and certainly in the, you know, the non-household market, it's not necessarily a household name. And as you say, you know, we are sort of about 75 people, so no, that was really important to, to provide the context about what we what we do.

Phil Willcox: And I think that the non-household market is also a little bit different I think, in that in the household market, you don't get a choice of your water company, it's based on where you live, whoever services your area, that's how you get, whereas I think, in the commercial market, you can pick and choose, is that right?

Angie Day: Correct. Yes. That's yeah, absolutely. You're absolutely right. Yes. So businesses can choose their retailer. Yes. And then the retailer manages that relationship with the wholesaler? Yes, you're absolutely right.

Phil Willcox: And that then puts MOSL really central to that, in terms of helping make sure that that market operates in a functional way and also a sustainable way?

Angie Day: Absolutely, yeah.

Phil Willcox: All right. So let's take that link back in to the cultural work that you've been doing then, so you talked about how permission was one of the was one of the aspects of the culture that you're developing. Tell me a bit more about that one?

Angie Day: So I'd like to, perhaps give you a couple of examples around this permission piece. So you know, I think it's fairly, I'm a fairly simple person Phil and this is just, you know, I don't think any of this stuff is complicated. For me, it's about treating people like grownups. So it is about this piece around permission. This year at our away day, so we had an away day and we had a company come in to do some team building activities. And there were lots of different activities that were going on some that sort of, you know, quite interactive, some that were mathematical, or, you know, a real range. And, at the beginning of each of the activities that we did, we just basically said to people, you know, choose to engage on a level that you're comfortable with. So if there's a particular activity that you know, that you don't want to take part in then step away from that, choose something different. Similarly, we had some, you know, again back to EDI, we had a really good EDI discussion set up, and sort of said to people, you know, if you don't feel comfortable at any point in time, either mentally or physically, you know, step away. And why that's important is we had, we had direct feedback following the away days from a colleague, who said, I really appreciated that I've been at these types of things before, and I've been kind of, you know, forced to put on a stupid outfit and do a stupid dance where I'd felt really uncomfortable about, and I mentioned it to my manager and manager turned around and said, well, you know, if you don't do that bit, you know, it's a career limiting move. And you just kind of think, you know, on what level is that remotely motivating, or respectful to that person. And my experience of giving people permission is they normally choose to engage, and just being given the respect and the, I'm going to treat you like a grown up, normally means people go, thanks for that. I've got that in my back pocket and I'm going to make the decision to engage. And I just think, you know, and this is my point around it. I don't think it's complicated. I think it's just really subtle things that give people that confidence and assurance, to you know, to step away if they want to understand my experiences, people tend not to, they tend to go up, you know, I'm going to dissipate, I'm going to throw myself into this or whatever. There are a couple of live examples from there from our away day where people directly came back and said, you know just want to say thank you, I've appreciated that, that's not the type of culture I've come from before, it does make a difference. And it's just one example, I think that talks to, to our culture, which is one of openness and you know, let us know, how you're doing, how you're feeling where we can support, you know, what's, you know, what's happening that we may, that may be helpful for us to be able to help you. And I think so. So all of these things are, by themselves quite little. But I think when you add them all up, it speaks to, it speaks to the culture. And as you know from organisations, it's, you know, great cultures take time, and they have to be consistent, and it only takes one tiny little thing that introduces mistrust or inconsistency, and it all comes tumbling down. So, you know, each of these little incremental things, and being consistent about them, I think, is what's builds and sustains a good working, good collaborative and open working environment.

Phil Willcox: Yeah, definitely. It's really got me thinking about so one of the things that I talk about, both with my clients and with my team is how, I'm really keen on things. If there's a spectrum of explicit and implicit, I'm always really keen to be at the explicit end of the spectrum. So that we all know what's at play, we all know what's happening, we all know what's going on, so we're not looking for those kind of hidden meanings and what else it could mean, but beyond what's actually

there, if that makes sense. And so similarly to, I think, in a similar sounding approach to what you're describing there, whether it be in a coaching session, whether it be in a team event that I'm facilitating, whether it be in a, in a workshop I'm facilitating, then what I'm expressing is an invitation. So there's an invitation to engage, and the extent to which you want to take that invitation is up to you, you can choose to engage or not, it's entirely up to you as to how you want to play that and you're not going to be judged one way or another. If you disengage completely, then I may check in with you at some point to go is everything okay? Because I'm not able to hear what your thoughts and feelings are. And I respect that, if you want to keep those thoughts and feelings to yourself, then that's okay as well. So it's, it's not, it's not like, you can sit there and do nothing, and everything will be fine. Because it's not that case, but it's also not the case of that if you sit there and do nothing, I'm going to shame you in front of the rest of the group and go, right Angie, you've not said anything all day, what is it you're saying so the rules, or I guess the permissions maybe, or the rules of the game, I really work hard to set them out quite early. And similarly with my team, so I've had examples in the past where I can tell something's wrong. I can tell there's something happening at home maybe or in another part of their life that I'm unaware of, or maybe part of their work that I'm unaware of. And I can see that something isn't, I guess, yeah, isn't right for that individual. And once I pushed to get it, so I can see that something wasn't right and I pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed to the point where a member of my team said Phil, just back off back off. Leave me alone. If I wanted to talk about it, I would talk about it. I was like, oh, okay. And my intent was to help. So my intent was I can help you, I can help you, I can help you, was what was in my head, as I was kind of consistently saying, I don't think everything's okay. You're telling me everything's okay. But I don't think everything's okay. What's going on, tell me what's going on. And that experience really kind of brought home for me that the approach I now take is, it looks like there's something happening and I want you to know that if you want to share you can and I happily listen and I won't judge whatever that is, and if there's something that I, or the company can do to support you, then let us know what that is, but at the same time, we trust you that you're making decisions that are right for you. So we hope you're okay and the expectation is that you'll share something at some point if that's something that you want to do. But there's no expectation for you to do so.

Angie Day: Yeah, yeah, I've done it. As you were speaking a number of examples were running through my head in my career where, you know, I kind of don't understand because I kind of think well, and it comes from the challenge, it's come from a place of kind of I. So I've kind of gone well, why won't they tell me, because I want to help and you know, what, what is it about me that enables them to kind of, you know, that's stopping them from, from letting me help them. But you're right, some people just, you know, they just don't, they just don't want that. And, you know, I agree with you Phil, I think, you know, there have been times where I've almost just had, you sometimes just have to play back objective things that you are seeing that say to you, you know, you know, I'm seeing, this is what I'm seeing, and it was different from that. And therefore, if there's anything you want to say, and I often say to managers, that the best they can they can do is continue to have the door open. So, you know, constantly reinforced that their door is open. And at some point somebody may walk through it. But you're right, if somebody doesn't want to share, then that is absolutely their prerogative. But as I say, I think if you're always in a position where you are always saying I'm here, and you know, and you leave that door ajar, that person may just step through at

the point in time that they need you. I think if you close it down and kind of go, okay, well, fine, don't tell what's going on, but you know, therefore, just want you to carry on as normal. It's not, you know, again, that's a bit I centred isn't it, rather than the other person?

Phil Willcox: Yeah, yeah, definitely. And you mentioned, one of the phrases you used when you were describing, for example, you were talking about the permission. Assessing out the permissions and the teams, for example, what happened on the team day? And you said how you were quite a simple person, and you like it to be simple. And so my question then is, what do you think makes it complicated?

Angie Day: I think we, I think we sometimes complicate managing and leading people and setting the right environment with just using sort of complicated words, really, I just, you know, it's just really simple. My view on creating the right environment is having decent, quality, honest conversations, giving people time and giving people you know, listening. You know, I don't I just don't think it's really any more complicated than that, you know, it's, it's about it's about relationships, it's about listening to each other. It's about communicating effectively so you know, I think we sometimes overcomplicate things, I think we sometimes have our own, we project our own experiences on things, you know, we put our own barriers up. And, you know, I'm a big fan of, you know, the Chimp Paradox, I think our chimp sometimes gets in the way. And, you know, and that's a big part, I think of what makes some of this complex. But, you know, I think, you know, fundamentally, it comes down to simple communication, honest communication, authentic communication, you know, this, this piece around being who you are and being consistent, being clear, clarity of communication, you know, and I think it's as sort of as straightforward as that.

Phil Willcox: Okay. Okay, thank you. I tend to, I think, I tend to agree in that. To quote Beverly Knight, although she might have been covering another song anyway, I think sometimes what makes it complicated is the should of, would of, could of aspects. I shouldn't be doing this. What would so and so do? I could do this, I could do that, I would do that, I should do that. And those, I guess, those things that, those stories that we tell ourselves to then quote Brene Brown, inspired quotes, the stories that we tell ourselves about our role in that moment, or what we're there to do, or how we we're meant to be in that setting.

Angie Day: And I, you know, I've kind of not, I've got to this point in time where I am, through a journey, you know, I did used to, you know, I used to take myself, you know, incredibly seriously, you know, and I would, you know, manager would speak and I would over complicate things and I would perhaps over formalise things and I've kind of learned through experiences along the way that sometimes it's just having a conversation on the human level with somebody that actually achieves the outcomes. And it's, you know, it's kind of feels like, it's sort of taken me 20 plus years to get here. But I'm kind of here thinking, I think this is just about connecting with people. And having the structures around that. I mean, clearly, organisations are there to achieve certain things. So the clarity around what the organisation has to achieve needs to be clear, the clarity of what the person is there at work to achieve needs to be clear, expectations, performance needs to be clear. So, you know, I'm not, I hope I'm not painting a picture of floating around the office, having sort of really lovely chats with everybody. This is kind of within the how within the structures and the context of what it is, a business is trying to achieve. And again, I just think we just sometimes over complicate it

by talking about well we're this business and with this business. Fundamentally, it's about people, it's about the relationships with those people. It's about clarity, it's about listening to them, it's about being clear with what's expected. And, you know, I'm not sure it's any more complicated than that, but really welcome your thoughts on that, Phil?

Phil Willcox: So, I think I agree, again, at the risk of sounding like the Angie Day fan club, I think I agree. And when I think about the, some of the things that I do, for example, so one of the, I think it was when I joined South Gloucestershire council back in 2008. My boss who hired me, a lady called Alison McIver, she has been just, I think, the best boss I've ever had. And part of what made her fantastic was on day one of arrival, she said to me, how do you want me to lead you? So you've been you for however many years, I want to know how you want me to lead you so that you can be at your best? And I was like, wow? How do I answer that question? And not being really sure. I think I was 27 at the time, I think it was 2005. Yeah, 27 and so she gave me a few days to think about it. So we had like my one-to-one on the Friday. And I remember going into that being incredibly nervous. Because (A), no one had ever asked me and so I was a bit suspicious. I was like where's this going? Where's she's trying to take it? But also, I was really nervous about the answer. Because I was then and I still am really needy, for a short period of time, I really need to understand the rules of the game, I need to understand who I'm engaging with, I need to understand what's expected, I need to understand what we're trying to achieve, I need to understand where we're going, I need to understand, you know, and I have loads and loads of questions. And I'm like, what I described to Alison was that I'm just really needy. And I'm going to be really needy for somewhere between three and six months. And if you can see me through my neediness, then I'll fly. And basically, you won't hear from me really, after that, I'll just be telling you, you'll go through three to six months of me asking you loads of questions, and then the focus will shift. And I'll start telling you what I'm doing. And I'll update you as what I'm doing. And then if I need your help, I'll ask for it. But basically see me through that period of time and then I'll fly. And that felt really scary to do. Because describing myself as needy, because I am, was really tricky. And I wasn't sure if I could be that open and honest. And Allison said, well what does needy look like then? And I said, well, can we have like a one-to-one every week where we review what I've been doing, how I've been going and what we've been achieving and asking my questions and all these things? She said of course we can, we can do that, when would work? And I said, like Fridays? She said yeah, Fridays are fine. So Friday at two o'clock was our one-to-one. I think it was after about five weeks, she said Phil I can't sustain this. This is just too much, this is taking too much of my time, like you're having me for an hour and a half, two hours every Friday afternoon and I've got stuff I need to do. So I know I said this is what we do, but I can't sustain it anymore. So we need to change it. Can we can we change it to either, we need it to be less time or it needs to be less frequent. So either every other week for two hours is fine, or we need to be more focused on what we discussed, but I can't keep giving you an hour and a half, two hours every Friday afternoon. And I was okay with that. Because we were both really clear on what the boundaries were. If that makes sense.

Angie Day: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Phil Willcox: And then I take a lot of that into what I do now, so for example with my team, on week one, I'll ask them the same question. What do you need from me to lead you so that you can be at your best? But I also have in week one, what do we do when we piss each other off? What do we do

when we let each other down? What do we do when we think each other isn't pulling their weight? What do we do when I make a mistake and offend you? What do we do when you make a mistake and offend me? So I've identified sort of four or five key areas that can often be really tricky to get into. And we are on week one, we agree the parameters for how we do that. So that when it happens, because it will, we've both agreed that this is how it's going to be, whether that be, so for example, one colleague I've had in the past said to me, can you tell me and not give me the chance to reply, because I find it really overwhelming. Because I feel like I've let you down. And I feel like I've not done enough. And so tell me, and then just let me think about it. Because if you ask me what I think in that moment, it's going to be really hard for me, because I'm just going to be massively overwhelmed. So just tell me, and then let's book another meeting in like, a couple of hours later in the day, where we can then discuss what you told me. I'm like, okay, yeah, if that works for you, we can do that. And they found that really useful, because it gave them the chance to feel more in control of what was happening, rather than feeling as though they have to, they have to say something in that moment there without being really clear on how they're thinking, because their feelings are so intense in that moment. I feel like I've been talking for ages.

Angie Day: No, I really, really like the example you just gave, because I like the honesty about the fact that stuff will go wrong. And it's funny, isn't it? Because when we onboard people into a role, we're all, both the organisation and the new people, we're in that honeymoon period, aren't we? We're very much you know, it's all shiny and new, and everything's going to be fine. I love the fact Phil, though, that you address the, so let's get on the table now. How are we going to deal with conflict? Because it's so much harder to deal with it in the moment, isn't it? Because it's, it's suddenly really emotional in the moment, actually getting on the table when it's not emotional is you know, it's yeah, so I'm going to, I'm going to steal that thank you. I'm going to personally use it, I'm going to use it with my leaders as well, because I think that's, you're basically sort of setting out the ground rules, aren't you, you're kind of setting out the ground rules at the point in time when people are, you know, being objective and kind of focused and not emotional. And the only other thing I wanted to say about what you said, Phil was, you'll use the word needy, I would just use the word clarity, you know, I think, you know, one of the key things most people seek in a work environment, in my opinion, is clarity. And I think, you know, you sort of said, you said you were needy, I would switch that word. And so the way you described it, it just sounded like, you know, clarity was really, really important for you in those initial kind of months, and it is and I'd say it's one of those key pillars in sort of good leadership. So, but please don't apologise for talking a lot, I took a huge amount from what you just said, thank you.

Phil Willcox: Okay thank you and I'll take the reframe. I'll take the needy to clarity. So I know that within MOSL I guess this is something that has been implicitly behind some of the topics we've been discussing so far. And this idea of being your authentic self, because that was you know, in a way what Allison was asking of me back in the day when she said, how do you want me to lead you and I was so scared. And I know that working about bringing your authentic self into the workplace is something that you've been focusing on from a cultural perspective in MOSL, so how have you been doing that?

Angie Day: Okay, so I mean, I think again for me it comes back a bit to permissions. So you know, that this piece around you know, I had a great conversation with my amazing CEO Sarah McMath the other day about this, about how you know, there are people that kind of, they're quite happy with their home self and their work self you know, they don't want to, you know, reveal all at work and, and that's fine. That is also sort of fine, but I think this piece around bringing your whole self to work. My view is if you are in work and you are masking or you are hiding or you are, and I mean hiding as in fear of, you know, challenge or kind of, you know, being singled out or something is going on in your personal life and you're kind of, you know, trying to just push on through, you are distracting from working yeah. So, you know my thinking around being your authentic self at work, if you can just be in work and be you, be kind of vulnerable and be you know, I'm having a fantastic day to day or do you know what I'm not having a great day to day. And this is why and, you know, I just think it, it kind of, it means that the energy you're investing in work is you know, you're investing more energy in your work, it kind of makes business sense for me. You know, I think if you are coming to work and you are expelling energy, or expending energy is the right word, in kind of being who you're not and that's energy that's not being used on doing great work in a work environment. So you know, I think, you know, it's not just kind of an altruistic look, you know, you want to create this amazing place where people, you know, where people share the love and kind of get on, it's as much a business thing, it's about, okay, if you feel comfortable in work, you feel comfortable in your skin, and you feel comfortable with the conversations you're having with the people around you, then you will produce better work, you will thrive more at work. So that's the piece around sort of the authentic self and I, and I am, you know, I really am an open book, you know, I wear my heart on my sleeve. You know would not want me on a poker team at all. So, so I kind of, that's kind of, that's, all I know, really, you know, I kind of, all I know, is kind of being pretty honest and easy to read and transparent. And in the main, that has worked for me really well, you know, I, you know, I think I've formed stronger relationships with people through that, you know, there are times where, you know, I would sort of be in union negotiations and have to put on my mask, because, you know, there are times in business when you need to keep your powder dry, but, I kind of, I bring, I am me, what people see is what they get with me. And so, as I say I think there's this piece around authentic self. And I think the other piece around authentic self, that's really important. And, you know, I'd like to come back to my fantastic CEO on this one is, I think in certain leadership roles so let's take CEO roles, people have in their own mind, what it is to be a CEO. They look at people and think, oh, well, you must be, you must have had a particular background, or you must have had a particular privilege, or you must have come through this route, or you must or whatever. And I think if you are more authentic, and you tell your story, you are paving a way for other people, because, you know, everyone has their own story in their own journey. And it's not always privileged. And it's not always easy. And it's, and I think sharing, and particularly for women, I think sharing the journey so that others can go, okay, wow, yep. You know, I see a path, I see a way, I can see that, you know, that, that there have been barriers that are overcome. So I think again, part of the permissions thing, isn't it? You know, it's giving other people permission to go, oh okay, yep so you know, I can do this. So, yeah. Sorry, a bit rambley?

Phil Willcox: No, no, no, not at all. So, I guess, what I was thinking was, it might be useful to maybe get a bit more specific, maybe I think in terms of, so how has that manifested itself then? So, within MOSL, the idea of bringing your whole self to work is really important. One of the ways that we do that is through being really explicit about permission. And doing it in a, and treating people like

grown-ups was a phrase you used to, and it might be a phrase that's used internally, but that was a phrase that used early on. And so what are some of the I guess, maybe the tactical things or some of the, the things that you've done that have helped people bring their whole self to work?

Angie Day: So, leadership is critical. So I think any type of culture you're trying to create has to be lived and breathed by the leadership of the organisation, in particular, the CEO. I've worked in organisations where, certainly as an HR professional, I've, you know, often felt that myself and my HR colleagues were sort of you know, on this, this sort of, you know, single department mission to try and achieve things where, you know, perhaps the CEO was not aligned. And it's, it's really hard so I think CEO leading by example, at MOSL, we do internal blogs. So people write blogs about a variety of things, about health issues, about bereavement issues, about their experiences of being a woman of being ethnic minority, a variety of things that we've, during lockdown, we created our lockdown diaries, which was really cool. So people, every sort of other week or so would sort of put in their diary of what they got up to during the week which was great, because, again, you know, we're all we're all a bit nosy really, aren't we, we all quite like to peer through the window to see what's going on? So that was something that we did. I think that lockdown, I'm sure you've had this conversation with a number of your interviews in the past Phil, you know, I think lockdown did suddenly give a window into people's lives that wasn't there before. And you know, and it kind of, it did, it did kind of change the sort of the view of work being a place you kind of go to and show up at versus kind of, you know, the what we had in lockdown. And I think it is just how we, how we manage, how we communicate. Again, the consistent pieces is key for me. You know, supporting people. So you know, if people feel like they're not, if people are concerned about maybe how somebody outside the organisation is communicating with them, or that they're in a position where they don't feel supported? Again, it's about supporting them yeah, so it's, you know, again, it's consistency, but certainly the, our internal blogs that we've done, you know, have really been some really poignant ones. And ones where people have really felt, you know, have really shared some quite, really personal stuff that others have gone, thank you. Thanks for doing that, that's something I've gone through or I'm experienced, or even just thank you, I feel like I understand you a bit better now. You know, so it's just kind of opening all of those avenues.

Phil Willcox: So it's quite a, quite a broad, I guess, so you've got an element of as you said, leadership being key and that role modelling at the top, but also using a mixture of other I guess approaches, so you got some corporate comms or what might be classically looked at as corporate comms stuff in there in terms of, you know, the blogs and the lockdown diaries, as well as maybe some of the more, I don't know, people focused activities that you might, that you might expect around things like, you know, saying expectation setting, expectations around performance, around expectations of engaging in conversations and dialogue and those kinds of things.

Angie Day: Yeah, you know, we have values, we have our values, like all organisations have had their values, but we have our values, and we are, you know, they are embedded through kind of everything we do really, so respect is one of our values, clarity, influence, expertise. Those are our four values. So they are kind of our framework in which we operate. And now our competencies, speak to those, our recognition speaks to those. And you know, we bring them to life in a piece around the blogs, you know, they are, they are produced by colleagues. So they're very much written by sort of colleagues, rather than kind of necessarily our communications and corporate

comms team. So, yeah, and it kind of, it just, you know, the things that give me great joy about working at MOSL and the culture we created is, you create a snowball effect, if you get it, right, it just, it just grows it, you know, it grows legs, and it develops on its own. And that gives me huge joy. Because I think that is what, it's what culture is, isn't it, it's something that if any of the leadership team were to step away from the organisation, it would still live and thrive. And that gives me huge joy and pleasure, because that's not something that I've experienced in, in any of my organisations, actually, that I've worked in, in the past, you know, it's, it's, I do truly believe and I, you know, had recent feedback from a colleague that, you know, what, what MOSL has in relation to its culture is really something quite special. And, you know, and that's, that's really exciting and scary at the same time, because you know, that you know, that something as special as that can, you know, again, can be sort of lost in a in a moment, so makes it all the more important to sort of protect it and, you know, again, allow it to continue to thrive and grow.

Phil Willcox: Yeah, definitely. Can I just go back a quick step? So you said the four values are respects clarity, expertise and influence?

Angie Day: Influence, yeah.

Phil Willcox: So one of the, I guess one of the challenges that I experience with bring your whole self to work is that the, and the risk is that I'm doing end of the spectrum stuff to illustrate a point. And I get and I understand that before I say what I'm going to say next. Because what we see in society, and so we're recording this episode on the 21st of December 2022. And in the UK, this week, there's been a piece that's been published in The Sun newspaper by a TV presenter called Jeremy Clarkson, who's talked about his view of Meghan Markel, who's married to Prince Harry, I think it's Prince Harry and what that, put that piece, and I'll put a link to it in the show notes, I'll put a link to that in the show notes, but I can't actually because The Sun newspaper has taken it down, anyway but I'll put a link to the story in the show notes. But what that piece indicates is that the idea of, for example, being not being inclusive, and causing harm and vilifying or shaming people is a, something that is present in society. And so you've got, and there will always be people on a spectrum, whichever spectrum you use, whether it's right and left whether you use, that there will be views and experiences that people have that may not fit the cultural narrative, or the cultural expectations for an organisation, which potentially then makes the bringing your whole self to work part challenging, because on one hand, we want you to bring your whole self to work. But we don't want you to bring that part actually, because that part doesn't, that part doesn't fit. Yeah, and I just wondered how you might see it?

Angie Day: Yeah, yeah, and I am, for me, it comes down to this piece around respect. And, you know I'm not a fan of these people that kind of step forward and say, you know, I'm going to have a right to express my opinion, I'm going to kind of just do that regardless. Because, you know, that's, that's my right. You know, I kind of think, really, you know, is that kind of respectful. So I think the organisation, people are still making a choice to join an organisation. And I think if that organisation is clear about what it's trying to achieve, how it expects to, how employees should expect to be treated in that organisation. How we expect people to deal with trading or customers or external, who whatever the organisation is, I think, you know, you're still, you still have to kind of set some ground rules, don't you? You know, this is not kind of the local pub, you know, this is not, it is still a,

it is a professional setting. And, you know, I think, and I, you know, I do appreciate you kind of sort of potentially saying, well actually, you know, choosing the extremes here. So, I think there is something around respect, I think it is about the respect aspect, and, you know, and kind of really saying, you know, is this, is this a conversation to have in the workplace. And it's about confidence, isn't it? I think it's about the confidence of people, maybe getting into a conversation and that conversation maybe going somewhere rather unexpected and someone having the confidence to say, I don't want to continue this conversation or another colleague stepping in and kind of saying, look, I'm not sure this is the right place to have this conversation. So I think it's about the confidence to articulate how you're feeling about what is being discussed. So you know, it is yeah, it is a challenge. But you know, I'm I, where people kind of go, well, I'm just kind of putting it out there because, you know, I'm, you know, I have a right to say what, I just think that's a little bit of an excuse to sometimes be a bit vile. You know, but again, you know, I can hear, I'm already hearing Phil, that I'm projecting my own views and my own values on that. So, you know, it's complex, isn't it? It is complex, but you know, I think we've all got a pretty good idea in our own minds, sort of, you know, respect and kindness and, you know, look like and kind of a responsibility to support others in that where maybe others are not as in tune or, or with that, but I think a workplace does have, you know, kind of has rules, isn't it? It has policies, it has guidance, it has a framework. And, you know, I think as long as those conversations are open and not punishing I suppose, you know, it's kind of a, this is why we didn't really feel that this was the type of conversation to have, and, you know, how do you sort through the impact you might have had on X Y and Z type thing. So it's about people learning from it, rather than just kind of going, and I'm a school governor as well at my daughter's school, and, you know, one of the things that they are battling with is some of the sort of the inappropriate language used by children, that may be culturally appropriate for some people and not for others, and they are very much taking an approach of educating, so you know, yes they're holding people to account for their behaviours, but they are, they're kind of going more down a kind of, want you to understand why this is not right, rather than just saying, that is not right, and we are going to punish you for it. And again, it's not it's not easy, but I do believe that's the right way.

Phil Willcox: Yeah, so I was having a, I think, the risk of sounding like every organisation should have respect as a value. So I think what the values do, for example, for MOSL then is as you said, they outline the expectations of how to go into a conversation, that what could be really difficult conversation, that you go in with respect, you go with clarity, so those two values can clearly show up in the way that that conversation is hard. Because it could be that a particular perspective or a particular point of view, comes from a particular individuals life experiences, and therefore, they aren't aware of a different perspective or other experiences, because that's all they've known. And I've deliberately kept that vague because it can be interpreted in different ways. The other point you make around organisations being a professional place, in the same way that a country has a set of laws that are enforced by an approved body, therefore being in the UK anyway, being the police, the individuals are expected to operate within, for the good of society, that's what the laws are there to do, they're there to uphold the country as a whole, so that those people that break those laws are therefore, and if proven to have broken those laws, there will be repercussions appropriate to the bending or the breaking of the laws. So in the same way for organisations then, there are expectations that an organisation can have, and I suppose the difference would be that an individual can choose whether to work for an organisation or not. And so if they don't, if they don't want to work within the boundaries, or the expectations that the organisation is outlining, then they can

make that choice to do so or not do so. Then again it could be a case of, you or this organisation isn't what I want to work for because actually, they do things in a way that I just really wouldn't want to do those things. And so therefore, I'm going to step away. Again, whether that be my morals and my values, say different to what this organisation says, and therefore, I'm not going to stay. So I think the way that these individuals are engaged with and the way these conversations are heard, as you said, I think is really important.

Angie Day: And I think the onus on the HR team is that, you know, setting out for candidates that come into that organisation, truly what the organisation is about, what they would expect to see and be involved in. So that you do make, so that you both make the right decision, you know that MOSL make the right decision on people making offers to people and go yes, this is an organisation that that is going to get the best from me and I'm going to thrive. So I think it's on us as HR professionals to make sure that those decisions are the right ones and we get it wrong and we do you know, but that we, you know that people are equipped with everything that they can have to kind of make the right decisions. And one of the things we do at MOSL is we put videos on our website of teams, so we you know, we have a, we have a particular job role that's not particularly easy to articulate. So we had a, one of our team members got together with three others. So there's, there's a lovely sort of Teams call going on, where they talk about what they do, they talk about what they do, and they talk about what they liked doing. And it just kind of, it's like, just brought it to life. And so people can look at that and think, okay, so these are, these are maybe the type of people I might bump into at this organisation, this is kind of what it is they do, and this is how they work. And from that they see very authentically, you know, a group of people having a basically having conversation, and they can, I think get a very small kind of insight into us as business that enables them to kind of go yeah, that looks like my type of place, or no, I'm not sure, you know, I'm not sure that that's for me. So, you know, we're always thinking and trying to find new ways to kind of get ourselves out there because, you know, as you say, we're not a household name. So actually, you know, getting people to kind of understand what we are about, what we're trying to achieve. And, and you know, that our, the opportunities and challenges we have is something that we have to think about.

Phil Willcox: Okay. That was wonderful. I really enjoyed our conversation today. Thank you, Angie. I think I want to start pulling us together and wrapping us up if that's okay.

Angie Day: Yeah super.

Phil Willcox: Before I do that, though, is there, is there something else or something more that you're thinking feeling or want to say before, sort of taking us into our typical wrap up questions?

Angie Day: I guess the only thing I probably want to add is that, you know, I'm kind of on a personal journey around sort of related to kindness at the moment, and it's kind of the next step really, for me and my journey and kind of the journey that I'd like see at MOSL as well. And that's kind of just one around, you talked about this, the article earlier this week, and I just, you know, my personal journey is one of truly trying to put myself in somebody else's shoes, trying to just slow my thought processes down to kind of really reflect on where that other person is coming from. And just trying really hard to just, you know, just to be kind in every moment, not just when it suits me, or when I feel like it or when I'm in a great mood. And I just kind of, I'm on this kind of one person mission, and

there's lots of people doing this, but it just, it just feels like now more than ever kindness is needed. And, you know it's something that I'm going to be focused on in the next, hopefully, forever, I guess going on going forward. But, you know, I will be sort of looking at what that means for, you know, for the world of work as well. But yeah, just kind of perhaps wanted to add that, I guess, to add it to kind of almost put it out there Phil, so people can say to me, how's that going? You know what they say, you sort of put something out there and then people can you know, you kind of get someone to hold you to account for it. But yes, I think the world needs kindness right now. And if just if we could just start making some of those different calls. I think the world and the world of work would be a better place for us.

Phil Willcox: And how is it going so far? So you said you're on a journey? How's it going so far?

Angie Day: It's going okay, yeah, it's, and it's funny because I have to laugh sometimes because part of the journey, I think it's about being kind to self, about recognising when you just need to give yourself a break and go okay, all right. Okay, you know, you're trying and, you know, this is, this is going well, you know, I'll be completely honest with you, I find it easier in a work environment. I think we all we are always less kind perhaps to those people that are closest to us. You know, they're those people that you know, we are really emotionally attached to and evolve with and it's those times where I kind of think okay, be kind, you know, think differently here. But, yeah, it's going okay. Yeah, I haven't, I certainly haven't given up on it. It's more to do. And it's just it's practice, isn't it? It's kind of it's, you know, it's like any type of behaviour change it needs to be, it needs to become habit.

Phil Willcox: Yes, yeah definitely.

Angie Day: And if so, you know, I, there was a colleague, I used to work with a previous organisation who was a lawyer, and I loved it, if I could just share this quote from her because I just love it. She says, while there is no law, telling people to be kind, it is much harder to screw up legally by being kind. I just love that. Because again, it's business as well, again, yeah, you know, it's not, this is not just about, you know, lovely, fluffy. Let's, let's be all loving stuff. So this stuff makes business sense, yeah. If we just approach things from a different angle. It makes business sense too, so thanks for that Phil.

Phil Willcox: You're welcome. You're welcome. Have you seen or read anything by Dr. Jia Wang from, she's a professor in Texas, I think. And I know this might sound a bit strange, because you'll say Phil I was talking about kindness. So she researches into incivility in the workplace.

Angie Day: That kind of links into some people liken it to microaggressions. And it's similar to, but it's and it's also slightly different from, and so yeah, that might be interesting. So I'll send the link to you. And I'll put a link please. Yeah, yes, she did a TED Talk back in 2017 I think. So I'll put a link to the TED Talk in the show notes and also a send you across the link, might be please, yes, yeah, love it. I love good TED talk.

Phil Willcox: Okay, wonderful. And are there, so what are we moving into sort of closing off questions? And are there other sort of books or videos or resources that you would, if people are interested in, in thinking some more or doing some more work on this idea of bringing your whole

self to work and all the other aspects that we've talked around in terms of openness and making sure people have got clarity and the permission side of things, yeah, are there best sort of places that you would signpost people to?

Angie Day: I've mentioned it already. But I think I will mention again, the Steve Peters, The Chimp Paradox, it's the one, it's the one management book that I go back to, it's the one audiobook I listened to more than, more than once, and it's the one book I normally recommend to people on mentoring. Because my view is, you know, all kinds of change starts with self. And what I like about the Chimp Paradox is it just kind of explains what's going on in the brain and why we behave in the way we do sometimes and what we can do about changing that. And, you know, I truly believe we kind of understand self, we kind of have to understand self before we can influence other. So you know, that's, if I'm sure most of your listeners Phil would have, will have come across this book, because it's quite, you know it's certainly out there. But if they haven't, I would strongly recommend reading it. And I guess my favourite TED Talk, which is one about diversity and inclusion and very topical, based on a recent news event is Taiye Selasithe's, "Don't ask me where I'm from, ask where I'm local", this is a one around.

Phil Willcox: Yeah.

Angie Day: Have you heard of it, you've seen it?

Phil Willcox: Yeah, yeah.

Angie Day: So that's, I think that's, I think that's excellent. I think it's a really great, I love lots of TED Talks, but that again, that is one that I recommend to people, because I think she positions that so well, so clearly, and is in the something that, it feels like something that still trips us up in a work environment and we find it a bit challenging and scary. So, yeah, so those, those would probably be the two I would call out amongst many.

Phil Willcox: That's fab, thank you. Okay, and how can people get hold of you, if they wanted to? If they wanted to maybe ask you some more or wanted to follow up on something? How would you like people to get hold of you?

Angie Day: Well, I'm certainly contactable through our MOSL website. So my kind of details are on there and people can find me through there and I am also on LinkedIn.

Phil Willcox: Fabulous, all right. I'll put a link to both of those, to the MOSL website, and I'll put a link to your profile in the show notes as well. Does that sound okay?

Angie Day: Yeah, lovely.

Phil Willcox: Okay, so two other questions then. So is there someone you would recommend for us to seek out to get on to this podcast? Is there some who you think yeah you should go and talk to them because I think they'd be really interesting?

Angie Day: Yes, yep. So I would like to suggest you contact a fantastic woman called Sarah Harvey, otherwise known as Savvy Sarah. She is somebody that I've encountered probably in the last three years of my career, and we've engaged with her directly as MOSL. She is a coaching background mediation and specialising conflict. So you know she has a book Savvy Conversations and what I like about Sarah is she, coming back to this thing around simplicity, you know, she kind of breaks things down, breaks conflict down in a really, in a really kind of fun and interesting way. She uses kind of musical links as well, which again just kind of talks to me. So you know, I would, I would love it, I would love to hear Sarah Harvey on a podcast.

Phil Willcox: Wonderful, fantastic, thank you, I'll get in contact. Lovely, okay, in that case then Angie is there something else, something else or something more that you're thinking, feeling or want to say before we close?

Angie Day: No, I think the only thing I would probably want to say is, you know, it's been a great conversation, Phil, thank you. Real privilege to spend time with you and I've really enjoyed it and I hope that that listeners take you know, they just take one thing away, then I think that's success for me.

Phil Willcox: Absolutely and I have no doubt at all that they will, I think it's been a fantastic episode. Thank you so much for coming on. Thank you for sharing your thinking and also for sharing your gift wrapping tips as well. Thank you so much.

Angie Day: [Laughs] thank you.

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