**Episode 5 - Why Octopus Energy doesn't have an HR department**

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:00:00] Thanks for downloading Inside Octopus. My name is Russell Goldsmith and for this episode, it's a welcome back to our CEO, Greg Jackson. But I'm also thrilled to say that we have a very special guest joining us online from San Francisco. So a huge thank you to, four time bestselling author keynote speaker and futurist Jacob Morgan, uh, for taking some time out of his busy schedule to chat to us today.

Welcome to you both gents.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:00:24] Thank you very much.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:00:25] Now, the reason we were so keen to get Jacob on this episode is because he's the founder of futureofworkuniversity.com. Now that's an online education and training platform that helps future-proof individuals and organizations by teaching them the skills that they need to succeed in the future of work.

Plus he also hosts "It's the future of work podcast" where he speaks with senior executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors about how the world of work is changing so no pressure on me today. Um, plus he also has a new book out called the future leader, and I'm sure we'll get to hear about that in a bit too.

Now, the reason we've got Greg back on the show is to respond to some of the feedback we've received following his recent interview on the BBC's CEO secret series. This interview ranks at number two in the most read articles in the BBC news app. When it went live back in February, it had over 2 million views within 24 hours, which led to much debate on social media because the BBC headlined it with "My Billion Pound Company has no HR Department".

Greg, we touched on this topic in our first Inside Octopus episode, which is all about culture. I wanted to use this opportunity to go into a bit more detail and give you the chance to respond to some of the questions and criticism that you've received from the HR Industry off the back of that BBC interview.

So first off for those listeners who haven't seen the Claire Paul, read the article on the BBC website, what did you say that's caused such a stir.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:01:52] First of all, let's say, uh, hello to Jacob as well, and no pressure on me too. Anyway, it's an absolutely pleasure to meet you Jacob. What I talked about was the way we built a company from scratch, which is in some ways different than many existing corporates.

One feature of that happens to be that we don't have an HR department, but that doesn't mean we're anti-HR. It doesn't mean that we don't think other company should have one. It doesn't mean we don't think HR directors and HR professionals don't have tremendous value to add. I think what it does mean is that there are more than one way to build an organization around people.

Indeed. You know, I think for us, for some companies looking after the people is, is the key kind of considered an important way of getting business results and they're often seen as enlightened companies and I think even more enlightened, is the idea that a third of our life is spent at work. We live, I don't know what 70 years or something.

So if we're not enjoying that time at work, it's the point of losing 20 or 30 years off our lifespan. That's a disaster. And so for me, you know, kind of thinking about people-centered work, isn't about using people management to create a bit of business. Of course that's important, but it's actually one of the functions of work is to create fulfilling lives.

And I think it's really important for our companies to think about that. And we happened to do that without a traditional HR department for whole pile of reasons we can get into.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:03:18] Sure but you've got 1,400 people in the business now. So is that, I mean, let's bring Jacob in at this point, do you think that's quite unusual for a business of that size to not have an HR team?

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:03:29] Yeah, of course. I mean the, the first thing I thought of when I saw and read that article is, well, I had a lot of the traditional HR things get done. For example, like hiring ,performance reviews, uh, compliance, firing, like there's so much that probably a lot of people are wondering, you know, it sounds great to not have an HR department. But how does all that traditional HR stuff actually get done. So I would love to learn and hear from Greg, how he distributes? Is that just something that the managers are responsible for?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:03:58] Yeah, exactly. So the vast majority of the things you described are much more is the managers are responsible for, and the insight there was, you know, I've worked in a large corporate, I worked at Proctor and Gamble where, by the way, the HR directors, is one of the inspirations for me in how you think about people centered organizations.

Um, but when I started running and building smaller companies, uh, you know, what you find is when a company's got 10 people or 20, or even professionally, you typically don't have an HR professional or an HR function. Instead, the managers have to carry out the sort of tasks you've described, and they also have to act in a sort of pastoral well-being role for that, for their team.

And they're responsible for their team's motivation, their careers, everything, and they do that by becoming more skilled and rounded managers. They can reach out to experts when they want them outside the organization and they can learn formally and informally about what's required, but that creates these kinds of really strong roles for managers and leaders in the business.

And I think it creates a much more direct connection between the employees and their manager, than you may get when, you've got often a sort of an emerging parallel organization. And by the way, I should say, this is about how, when you're building a business from scratch, you can choose to do it different.

It's not to say it's right, it's not. So the format's wrong and it's also not just about HR. I think part of this is saying in any organization, once you have a function. A function comes into being as an organization grows because there is some work to be done. And sometimes the company decides the right thing to do is yeah, we'll hire someone whose full-time job is, but once they've done the core of that work, they've often got a bit of spare time.

They start looking around for where else their expertise can be useful. And in doing so they spot, you know, if you've got a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. So if you're a professional in one function everywhere, you're looking at organization, you will spot opportunities that you can improve the organization.

As you see it. And very quickly, you've created quite a lot of extra work that never used to be done. And a lot of that work requires other people to do work as well. And certainly by the new function is getting busy. And so it needs to hire some people. And the other people in the company are getting busy and they need to add some people to deal with the extra work.

And so it multiplies. And so I think part of the thinking here is actually just, how would you reduce the number of specialist functions in an organization. As much as it is specifically about this HR topic.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:06:23] But if you're giving that responsibility, you, you talked about it. So, you know, to the teams, to the managers, what if one of the issues that a team member has is with their manager, with the team leader?

You know, what happens then? If that, if that's where the grievance is.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:06:37] I mean, first of all, that grievances are a tiny part of the overall kind of function of a company. Okay and we shouldn't build a company around the few things that go wrong, right? Secondly, if I throw that back at that kind of thinking, it's like, well, what happens when someone in an HR function has got grievous with their manager, right?

So the problem never goes away, right? So actually you have to learn to deal with problems like that in companies, regardless of whether or not you've got that function, small companies have to deal with it without having an HR function. Actually, I think one of the interesting things is if you don't have another function who can look after your problems for you.

You're much better at preventing them happening in the first place,

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:07:16] Greg is assuming that all humans can act like adults,

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:07:19] That's a very good point.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:07:22] I like it. No, no, no. I like it. I mean, it's a, it's a simple approach, right? It's basically saying like, look, adults, you have kids, you have mortgages, you have responsibilities, you can figure it out with each other.

You don't, uh, you don't need to act like little kids and go to a third party to have you figure things out for you. I like that approach. I mean, I, I'm trying to imagine like a, a big global company, like IBM or Coca-Cola one day getting rid of HR departments and what would happen there. But I mean, to Greg's point, I have a team of 11 people that I work with.

I don't have an HR department, you know, I am managing my own team. When issues come up, I step in, I know how much I need to spend. I know who I need to bring in. And I can imagine if I was a part of a company where there was, I don't know, 1,000 people and every manager, every leader was responsible for 10, 15, 20 people.

Everybody would know this about their own teams, right? Uh, building relationships. What do people care about? What is everybody doing? Kind of helping guide them along the way, helping make sure that they can be more successful. So it does require I think a lot of autonomy and a lot of trust, which, you know, is the sign. I think of a great corporate culture that if you can do that and do it well, yeah. Makes sense.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:08:35] I want to pick up on something we've, we've used the term manager quite a bit, and you know, I've started listening to your podcast because I knew, I knew you were coming onto the show, obviously, and not on a recent episode, you talked about the role of the manager and whether or not we should actually get rid of that term manager.

And I, and I actually think that all links quite nicely into the conversation that we're having. Do you want to just sort of follow up on that?

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:08:57] Yeah. There've been a couple of executives that I've interviewed over the years. Um, one of them who's probably most adamant about this is Bob Chapman. He's the CEO of a company called Barry Waymiller.

They have around 12,000 employees. It's a manufacturing company and I've known him for a few years. I've interviewed him a few times and he's actually in my book, "The Future Leader" and he's very adamant about not using the word manager or management in any capacity in his company, either with his teams on any document, it's just, it's deleted.

And I'm starting to find that more and more executives are kind of embracing this mentality because nobody wants to be a manager, and nobody wants to be managed. Like, there's this big gap, you know, there's always a big debate. Do you want to be a manager, or do you want to be a leader? And historically when we think about management, we think about somebody who's standing over you command and control like that.

That's the mentality that we get up when we think of a manager, like from the movie office space, the guy who comes around and asks for your TPS reports. And then usually when we think of a leader, we think of like this visionary, creative, engaging, motivating, and inspiring person. And. I, I think it's, it's interesting um, but it's not, it's not just about a name change, right? So when, when I say, should we get rid of managers altogether? It's not just call every manager a leader. It's a mindset shift. It's a skill set shift. It's understanding that the role of this person is not to delegate and command and control. The role of this person is to help create other people more successful than they are it's to coach it's to mentor it's to create a vision for the organization it's to do all the types of things that we assume that a leader would typically do.

So I think that's an important disclaimer to make, it's not just about a name change and a title change. It's very much about a behavior change, a mindset and skillset change.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:10:45] Greg coming back to the point you made on the BBC article, you said that HR and IT departments don't make employees happier or more productive. And I'm just thinking like linking this to what Jacob was just talking about there in terms of leading, coaching and you know, all those different kind of skill sets. I mean, how are you measuring that kind of thing in the business at the moment then?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:11:09] Cool. And I'd love to come back on the manager point in a second as well, but there's a risk here of making this very boring by just agreeing with Jacob and everything.

But the, um, in terms of sort of employee happiness, there were all many indicators that matter, right? So first of all, we've done our KPIs for it. What we do instead do though, is maintain an enormous array of ways in which we communicate maximum bandwidth with our team. Now, some of that has a numbers attack.

So we use an app called office vibe, which every day or every week, um, asks team members questions about how they're feeling about what's working what's not, it gives them a channel by which they can communicate anonymously or not anonymously issues and problems and opportunities and ideas and observations.

And we hugely care about coming in and then talk about it, work out what, what messages that there about what, what the company is doing well for its team, what it needs to do better and where we've got issues. But I think then we also look carefully for the external indicators and just like we look at Trustpilot for our customers.

We look at Glassdoor for our team. If someone wants to go and write externally, positively or negatively about the company, there's a big signal, just in fact, have chosen to do that. Nevermind what they actually write. We then have slack, this astonishing internal communications tool, uh, you know, uh, last time I looked, we had 12 million private messages on slack in the last year.

It's a turbo charged communications tool. We have massive open channels on all kinds of topics. And that enables us to really understand across the whole company, this isn't about senior managers sitting on high, looking down what the masses are doing. This is very, very flat. It's the equivalent of open plan offices, but in digital space.

And then every Friday the whole company comes together for what we call family dinner and everything from just looking at how many people choose to turn up for that versus how many choose to do something else with that time is a great indicator of the extent to which we're kind of getting things right and wrong.

Every person in the company can drop me a slack or an email. If there's an issue, you know, we really try to make sure that the corollary to not having a formal command and control structure or sort of an HR department is a really open engagement across functions and seniorities for want of a better term so I think that's really important.

Traditionally companies are obsessed with a metric. They'll set a KPI and say, we want to offer you an employee engagement score. 7.8. Right. But the problem is, as soon as you do that, the people whose job is to deliver that the people who are being measured on it can find ways to achieve it without delivering the underlying outcome.

It's like exam results where, you know, as soon as you target educational establishments on the exam results that they're going to deliver. Kids get trained to pass exams. They don't get educated. And it's exactly the same when you measure stuff in companies.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:14:02] I actually talked to a chief human resource officer of a big global company.

And she was telling me that if you really want to manipulate your employee engagement scores, there are a couple of really simple things that you can do. One year you measure it when it's rainy and cloudy outside, and it looks very depressing. And then the next time you measure employee engagement, you do it when it's beautiful outside.

And usually you'll get an automatic 8 to 10 boost in employee engagement scores. Also organizations tend to do it you know, they have an Employee Appreciation Day, the same day that they're doing the employee engagement surveys. And it's like, congratulations, we appreciate you, free food free drink.

Just kind of hang out today, relax by the way, take our annual employee engagement survey. So there, there are definitely ways that you can get that score. Like you said, without actually doing, the work to get it.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:14:47] That's brilliant by the way, I think it's called Goodhart's law and Goodhart's law says. You know a measure loses its power the moment it becomes a KPI.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:14:55] Yeah.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:14:56] Can we just talk about the management question as well? Because I actually really was sensitive even earlier when I was using the word managers, because I think there's a sort of a language shortfall because I don't know what other terms to use, but for example, you know, if you try to build an organization with dramatically less command and control, then you know, sometimes the job of the person that's called a manager or leader is an orchestrator.

A convener, a friend of mine works for large organization was, was grumpy because they'd had the third holiday request. This year turned down, by some administrators and obviously an HR function. And that's how it works in our organizations. I think with most teams, they're kind of sort it out among themselves.

I think we keep track of holidays just so that if someone leaves, we know how many days means pay them in lieu or whatever it's called, but actually most of the time it is for the team to sort out among themselves, what's going to work for all of them. And you end up with dramatically better outcomes instead of having this kind of presumptive, that holiday one, a rush for everyone to sort of going quickly pre-book as much as they can as far in advance, and then find that their colleagues can't get really important days off when something happens.

You've got a world where people mediate and kind of come together to solve a problem that's dramatically better than the kind of control one. And so Jacob, when you were talking about that kind of companies and beginning to drop the word manager, and often underneath the non-kosher the concept, you know, I was really intrigued and you know, I'd love to learn more.

Because I think it is a hugely more grown-up way of doing things.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:16:31] Yeah. I mean, I think the language that we use inside of our organizations matters a lot. And if you want people to step outside of the conventional idea of being a manager, but you keep calling them a manager. I mean, when we hear the word manager, that's what we think of, right.

Somebody who is orchestrating, manipulating, moving things around, you know, keeping the ship running. Like that's just what pops into your mind, right? Like the guy from office space. And so if you expect people to motivate and engage and inspire others, to coach others, to think outside the box, to drive innovation, but you keep calling the manager and that's the association that they have, it's kind of conflicting.

So I think the language that we use inside of our organizations really matters and what you call people, uh, you know, if you keep calling somebody the same thing over and over and over, it's in their job description, it's in their email signature, it's on their business card. It's how you refer to them in their meetings.

That's ultimately how they're gonna think and how they're going to behave and what they're going to be associated with and manager becomes kind of like the core part of their identity. Similarly, if you change that around and refer to people as, as leaders and teach them again, not just a name change, but kind of the, the skill set, the mindset change of what that means.

And if you have that on their business card, that's in their job description and there, you know, you refer to them as that all the time, then that's the behavior that they associate themselves with. So I think there is definitely some psychology behind it, as far as. How you call people, uh, you, what you refer to them as on an ongoing basis is going to shape how they behave, how they think and ultimately how they act.

So, you know, I definitely encourage organizations around the world to rethink their, their job titles, and how they refer to the people inside their organization, who are actually running and leading people now, again, not every leader is going to be a great leader. And s the question that people always ask is, oh, you know, well, leader implies that everybody is great.

And so, you know, if somebody is a leader and they're not good at their job, how can they be a leader? You can have bad leaders and you can have good leaders. Uh, you know, the word leader does not imply that you are amazing. Uh, it does not imply that you were perfect at everything that you do. You can have good and bad leaders.

And I think that's something important for people to remember.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:18:46] So Greg how do you set up for a no HR approach though? I mean, what's acceptable and what's not?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:18:51] We've kind of got this frame, what we call freedom and responsibility. And I think it's really interesting. A lot of people hear the word freedom and kind of, that's very appealing.

And they forget about the word responsibility, but actually that's at least as important. And I think what that really means is having a company where it's understood that people are taking responsibility for their actions, for the things that we're accountable for. And for example, that means if you're a manager or leader of people, you're accountable for what's happening with those people.

And I think that is a critically important backdrop against which we build a company like this, and you have to do that really, with I think a very strong sense of culture. So, understanding, you know, what is the the Octopus way, what are we trying to achieve and how do we go about it? So for example, in our company that isn't results at all costs and in fact.

I'd rather, and everyone should know this. I'd rather a company where when someone makes a mistake, we put our arm around them figuratively and, uh, understand that, you know, what they need in this, that it's not as often support rather than admonishment. It's like in a football team, the teams that support each other even if they lose this game are more likely to win the next one.

So, I think that's a really, really important aspect. And then, knowing what the company stands for, you know, our job is using technology to drive the de-carbonization faster and cheaper than anybody expected, globally. Now, if you understand that and you understand how important people are and you understand our attitudes towards things like mistakes and failure, then I think you're in a position to take responsibility and therefore we can give you the freedom to deliver that in the ways that right in your area.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:20:32] But how do you then ensure that it's, it's not just a free for all and not effectively a recipe for disaster.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:20:39] Yeah it's really interesting, so I think, um, having this relentless approach to what is our mission, so, you know, we've all got to be pointing the same way.

Someone can't scurry off and decide that like we're going to invest a little bit of money and had to create new coal-fired power plants, and somebody can't create a pocket of the business, which is deeply political and kind of doesn't have the same set of values. Uh, you know, as I said before, uh, we get, the whole company together on a Friday evening partiality in person, partiality by zoom and share the stories and the important learnings from the week. And I think things like that and that enable us to ensure that there is this consistency and deeply understood series of values and behaviors that kind of define Octopus.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:21:30] Okay, I want to look at some of the discussion on social media, around, around your interview, on the BBC, Greg. There's a few that we've managed to sort of pick up on. So the first one here, HR grapevine.com they picked up on the fact that a few people posted on social saying that you do have various HR roles.

So there was a tweet from a Simon Jones and he tweeted, so we've lifted this, "This is an odd story even a casual LinkedIn search shows several people who described themselves variously as HR business partner, people director, head of talent acquisition. And then he's put maybe the CEO secret is that he is unaware he employs them " now, and I know you actually replied directly. I know you, you actually replied directly to Simon on Twitter. Do you want to share what you said to him and whether or not he actually came back to you after that as well?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:22:17] I can't remember if Simon came back but quite a lot of people kind of said the same thing.

I think the interesting thing for me, first of all, I've got to be conscious here. Yeah. We're talking about people who work in our company who do an amazing job. So it's important we respect that within the job titles. For example, one of them is someone that joined us via an acquisition, and that was the job title he had.

Now he joined our finance department we didn't set up a HR department and he does some incredibly important stuff within the finance function associated with employment, things like payroll and as an example. I think another one is, was one of our, um, operations team who looks after the people that do customer operations and, and he specifically has taken some time out of his direct line management role to work on training and development and improving our spaces, still working within the operations function.

So it's not an HR department. And I think what you typically find is that the thing that's really critical, as I said actually earlier, is it's about not having a department. So, you know, someone whose job title is. For example, HR director, who then orchestrates an organization whose job it is to do HR, but exactly as we said earlier, and if managers within functions are carrying out some of those tasks related to people, then of course the function has responsibility for doing stuff.

And if a function chooses that someone's going to spend a bit of time dedicated to it that's fantastic, and we do the same on other things you know for example, in the UK, electricity and gas, smart meters sometimes need a bit of extra help. So some of the people from operations have kind of separated out for a short while to really blitz some issues. And then they'll go back into operations. I think the underlying thing that was interesting, there was the desire not to say this is interesting. Why do you not have an HR department or, hey, look it looks like you might have one help me understand it was to say, oh, you're a liar. You do have an HR department or you're a fool you've got HR department and you don't even know it.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:24:16] Do you think that's a typical kind of trait of social media maybe?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:24:19] Yeah, look, it's hard in 140 characters or 208, whatever the different media have got, but I think if you spend time on social media, you can choose to have careful conversations with people. Right? You know, we, we, we don't all have to join the sort of, you know, the anti humanity bit of Twitter.

Right, we can actually use it to have good conversations and many, many people did by the way. And I think it's interesting as well, that in LinkedIn, there were gazillions of very positive comments and quite a lot from people from HR backgrounds actually, and the medium lends itself to a different kind of conversation.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:24:48] Yeah. I agree with you on that.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:24:49] But on Twitter where I think, and particularly you know it depends on who kicks off a Twitter storm. There was a lot more of those kinds of very short negative ones, but actually once you've gone and washed through the immediate emotional stuff, I can understand by some people feeling that this is an attack on them.

Definitely not an attack on them, either their function or them as individuals. But, you know, Twitter doesn't necessarily then create the most grown-up conversations. One of the reasons why I thought, you know, having a chat with you, Russell and Jacob kind of gave us a chance to have a more, a deeper, conversation about topics raised.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:25:21] Well here's another one. So this is from Julia Fitzsimmons. She is partner at the law firm, FBC Manby Bowdler. Now she's written on the HR director.com and I'm quoting this "Business owners can't be the player, the linesman and the referee all at the same time, otherwise someone is going to drop the ball. Employers are currently trying to juggle unprecedented workplace challenges and the collective health and safety of staff has never been as important as it is today." And then she goes on to write" It shouldn't be a source of pride to not have expert help and advice on hand when you're working with 1200 people during a pandemic.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:25:57] Yeah, I mean, look, first of all, we went into the pandemic with about seven or 800. The success of all business is actually growing that number of people at a time when other companies are sadly suffering. And I think there's an extent to which the outcome demonstrates, some of this appears to work our Glassdoor rating last time I looked, I think it was 4.7 out of 5, and that's not a KPI. It's just an indicator that something works. Our retention rate is extreme. I think in our tech functions example, the CTO is telling me, I think we've lost one person in two years. There's a bunch of indicators there that something's working

Now it's that question though, about is it a source of pride you don't have expert help? Again, this is the nuance problem, right? Because we have tons of expert help. One of the great things about an enabled organization is I and everyone else in the company can reach out to external help when we need it. That means we've got tremendous external help, and we're not constrained by, for example, you know, one HR department and its policies.

You're actually able to say, hey, look, you know, as a manager, I think I need a particular kind of help and you can go and get it. And when we make use of external help, again, it's not that we don't value, in fact enormously value the expertise is we choose to access it in a different way.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:27:12] So a question and a thought. So what the thought is, um, I mean, I, I actually encourage and even challenge Greg, every executive should be an HR. I mean, that should be part of your function, right? I mean, uh, you're, you're in finance slash HR, you're in product marketing slash HR. Like, I mean, every executive should in some capacity be in HR.

And I think for executives and leaders around the world to say, oh, that's an HR thing. That's not my responsibility. Is that dare, I say a little bit ignorant and naive. If you are leading people, you are in some capacity in HR, because you are responsible for motivating them. You are responsible for understanding their needs, what they value, what they care about.

Yeah. That's an HR thing, but that's a leader thing. So, I mean, for any leaders who are listening to this it's I think it's important for them to understand that they are whatever their job title is slash HR. But I did have a question for Greg because I also remember seeing on LinkedIn. And I was just playing it up on my phone.

So you do have people who are in roles, like a talent acquisition, for example, or a recruiting per se, which a lot of people would associate with traditional HR functions, but it's not necessarily an HR team. So can you talk a little bit about how is that a function? Is that just a person who's responsible?

Like how does, because again, people are going to see that and say, oh, that's an HR function. So Greg, you know, there is an HR team. Uh, so maybe you can unpack that a little bit. Cause I'm also quite curious.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:28:41] Yeah, that's a great question. So first of all, on your point about everyone being in HR. I think on one of my responses on social media and maybe several of them, it was exactly the point, which is people are so important that I don't want managers parceling them off.

You know, and forgive me if you use the word managers, right. But I don't want the leaders in our business kind of outsourcing that the people are more important than the problem in the business. Right? There's something I learned at Proctor and Gamble from that brilliant, inspiring HR director. It was when he talks about, you're not a leader, if you're delivering business rules, but you're not building a great organization.

Right. And I think that really is important. But I think then in terms of the recruiters and our business, what originally happened was there was an outsource recruitment company who, uh, did a great job of helping different functions in our business, recruit the brilliant, uh, woman that kind of mainly looked after us there decided she wanted to over the fence and come and work for our company.

And so she kind of now is a permanent employee and we've got a team of, I think, three recruiters. They're not part of a personnel function. And other functions decided whether or not to use them, but it just happens to be. Lower cost and better quality than using an, uh, um, a recruitment agency. But for example, our biggest function and operations uses, uh, an agency and a couple of agencies actually.

And so it's the choice for the functions and it was mainly a the opportunity to have a great talented person join us. And that's what she does. Full-time

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:30:15] So what about for stuff like, I don't know, interviewing, hiring, firing things like diversity and inclusion, you know, the employee experience stuff is all of that stuff.

Is all of that distributed amongst the different leaders in the company. And do they like come together to work on this stuff? Or is it all just everyone does their own thing? No.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:30:33] So that's, uh, with the leaders in the company and then they form working groups from time to time. So the working group on D & I, a working group on interviewing and those working groups can come together and then dissipate, once they've shared thoughts and worked hard on it as I'm senior leadership team, we'll talk about these things.

And we will make sure that we are comfortable with where the company is going. And if it's not, then we'll talk with the teams, but that's down to the functional leaders in terms of how they operate. And I think, again, part of it is again, Goodharts law. You know, it takes something really difficult, really challenging, like diversity inclusion.

Okay. Um, many companies are saying apparently appealing ways of doing this through targets and through having someone in charge of it. And then the opportunity to hit those targets without actually delivering a diverse organization, starts to become the way in which they do stuff exactly as you're describing that global functional lead earlier.

And I think, um, instead if we distribute among the company, a set of values around the kind of company we want to be, and then we are continually talking as a company about whether we're achieving that. It's a far deeper and more real delivery of what really matters than a box ticking exercise.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:31:51] I don't know if it's like a, an octopus energy question or if it's maybe like just a general how people perceive themselves question.

Cause I was looking on, on LinkedIn while we were speaking and I noticed that some, some employees at octopus energy refer to themselves as managers and others refer to them as leaders. And so I was curious to hear from Greg, if it's, are these people who you think are self-associating themselves with those titles or do you have both those titles at the company?

So for example, maybe. Somebody, his official title is team manager of operations, but publicly they refer to them as a team leader in operations.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:32:28] Yeah. So, um, first we don't have an organigram and we don't have any official job titles. Right. There's not a, there's not a level in a titling scheme. Um, so if people have got a job title is typically because that's one that is a reason within their function or it's one that they themselves have chosen.

And whoever is that leader or manager is kind of okay with, I think, well, for me, I, sometimes I see ones I don't like, but I recognize I'm running a de-centralized organization that decision-making is distributed. Things like that will happen. Now, what you then do then it's the only way we work is, I kind of keep an eye on it and see, and with other kind of members of the senior leadership team, we watch what's happening because there were signals in there and you start to see what's working and what's not.

And if you're finding something's really working or something's really not working, then you may start to have a wider conversation about it. But I think it's far better to watch what happens, learn from it, and then have informed conversations across the organization than it is to have a sort of top-down command and control 27-page PowerPoint that determines what we're going to do.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:33:36] Yeah.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:33:36] I also think it's important. I think for people to realize that it requires probably a lot of discipline for what Greg is trying to, because it's, it's hard to work, right? I mean, sometimes you do want to probably step in as the CEO and you, like you said, it's a decentralized company, so you need to have that, that discipline and the awareness to not want to just jump in and like shape things the way you want it.

And as you have alluded to it's, it's a very hard work to create this kind of an organization. It's not like you just let people run a muck. I mean, it's, it's very, very hard to give people the autonomy and the ownership and the responsibility and to keep it that way and to let people make their own decisions.

Like it's, it's a lot of work, uh, probably even more work to do something like that. Than to have a traditional HR department that you could just pass things off to.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:34:22] It's definitely harder work. I think it's hard to work for leaders throughout the organization. It's hard to work for everyone in the organization, but it's more rewarding and fulfilling because you're making decisions.

You know, it's like if you ever seen those videos on YouTube, of an animal that's been kept in captivity and then they take its cage out into a field and they start opening the cage and the animal tip toes up to the sort of edge of the cage that sniffed the air. And 9 times out of 10, it, it tiptoes into the field looks around and then prances off, never to be seen again, to enjoy freedom.

1 time out of 10, it looks around and says, I'm going back in the cage. And I think, you know, freedom comes where that animal has now got to find its own food. It's got to find somewhere to sleep. You know, it's not going to get veterinary treatment, but in return it has freedom. And I think a lot of that here is about like our freedom comes with enormous responsibility.

It only works if people choose to deliver and relentlessly deliver, it's not for everyone, but in our experience, I think 95 people out of a hundred after a somewhat of an immersion period, really grasp this and do well with it. And for the few that don't, you know, there are many organizations that are better places for them, and that's cool, no judgment.

And back on that bit about sort of, you know, the discipline it is hard, but it's incredibly rewarding because half the time I see stuff happening that I could never have, I would have been uncomfortable with. And it's worked really well and seeing kind of leaders at every level flourishing in the organization.

I mean, it's tremendous. And if you're going to scale a business quickly, whilst delivering outstanding service, whilst focusing on a really big mission, I think this is a lot easier than having a rigid command and control structure where we'd have to continue to be redefining it.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:36:14] Yeah totally agree.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:36:19] Greg your PR team had an, a whole load of emails sent to them and questions from various publications around, around the world. Actually, after, after that article was published, I've got a few that they've sent me ahead of the podcast that I want to fire at you and it's regarding the productivity issue.

And obviously it's going to be great to get Jacob's views on these two. Before I do that, there's a recruitment company, ASL recruitment, they're UK based business, and they discussed your BBC interview back in February on their own weekly HR in ten shows that they stream live on YouTube. I'm keen to get your response to what they discussed Greg.

So, um, I CA I got in touch with them. They very kindly given me permission to play this little clip, which features their managing director, Jason Perry. And he is speaking to HR consultant, Kimberly Bradshaw.

**Audio Clip - Jason Perry:** [00:37:05] There was two departments. He singled out which I think were HR and IT. And he's decided they're not necessary to business success so he hasn't got them

**Audio Clip - Kimberly Bradshaw:** [00:37:14] And that says to me that he has never experienced good strategic HR, the way he was talking about it was very much, you know, beating with a stick type approach and very technical. So I think if he'd experienced a good strategic HR specialist, he would have a completely different view because of the value that HR can bring to the business.

**Audio Clip - Jason Perry:** [00:37:40] Yes. I also suspect he's not yet had a serious employment crisis of some time when that value really, really is shown.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:37:49] Greg. So on, on that little clip.

**Greg Jackson:** [00:37:51] Yeah, I think there were two things they went wrong with was whether or not this was the reaction to having not experienced a good strategic HR look, I experienced Dennis Schuler, the unbelievably strategic, brilliant HR director, at Procter and Gamble, who taught me the value of people and the value of everyone in an organization, essentially being a people leader or focusing on people.

And so actually some of the ideas came from my experience of strategic HR and say, do you to steal the phrase? And Jacob, you know, instead of making that a separate function, make it everyone's responsibility. I think the second question was about crises that I've been running businesses, various sizes.

Since I think I was 27, I've dealt with everything from an alcoholic forklift driver in a factory. Believe me, that is difficult through to having to close down offices, having to run, move three figures and numbers of people from one office to another buying and selling businesses, dealing with health, safety issues.

Then with very complex interpersonal things and plenty, more redundancy programs, you name it, I've kind of been through it. And I think one of the things I learned from that was how, as a manager, you can make sure that you're taking responsibility for what's happening there rather than kind of parking it off.

You're thinking it through in a way that is right for the, all the people remembering sometimes where people based on each of these things and customers and shareholders and everyone else. Now, I think taking that kind of vary a bit like Jake said earlier, it's hard. It's not easy to do it that way. And there are certainly times when you work with tremendous external experts and in doing so I'm bringing consultants to help that process.

So I think the answer really is, yeah, those crises are sometimes the best ways for a manager to learn. And by the way, once you've been through them, you know, the things that caused them as well. So to me, I think they're quite right that these are things that report, but there are many ways of dealing with them and an HR department isn't necessarily the only one.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:39:51] Okay. Here's some more of those questions that we received. Um, do you think it's possible for an HR department to increase the productivity of employees? And if so, what steps should CEOs and HR leaders take to achieve this?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:40:03] Yeah, I mean, first of all, you know, as you spoke earlier, productivity as an outcome is obviously incredibly important, but it's not necessarily the reason to do great stuff with people is not just for the productivity.

It's because. Businesses are an incredibly important part of people's lives that people can have fulfilling lives. Businesses have got to kind of play that part in delivering that. Um, it's a massive devotion that people have in terms of the amount of time they spend at work. Let's respect that in terms of what HR palms can do.

If a company was established and built around an HR department. And for example, you know, you may have a CEO who didn't grow up with the kind of inspiring leadership that I saw as we talked earlier and that needs an HR department to kind of compliment them in the space. Then, you know, I think the most important thing is recognizing that valuing people for themselves and building an organization where you're asking people to do what they're good at and what makes them happy and giving them the opportunity to deliver that.

It's dramatically more important than box ticking or veneers, or kind of ra-ra or kind of broadcast, command and control. It's a deep and meaningful thing. And I think helping CEOs understand that and then delivering it is critical,

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:41:24] I'm going to put this one actually to Jacob next, I know, obviously came in, you know, to your team, but does the HR community generally lack influencing, uh, skills when it comes to being more strategic or are management leadership resistant to the idea of HR supporting the productivity agenda?

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:41:41] Yeah, I think HR is definitely lacking in this area, um, because this is not what HR people are traditionally taught. Uh, so for example, I, um, interviewed the CEO of Unilever a little while ago. Her name is Lena Nair, and I asked her, how does she spend her time? And she said, she spends 20% of her time on traditional HR in 80% of our time on transformation.

Whereas if you look at most HR organizations, they probably spend 90% of their time on traditional HR and maybe 10% of their time thinking about transformation. You know, I think we need a little bit of a tough love approach to HR where HR needs a seat at the table. Uh, how many times have we talked to HR teams?

And they say, well, we want to get this through that. We don't get support for it. Well, guess what your job is to get the support, build the business case, be the squeaky wheel, go back, convince people, understand why things aren't working, understand their objections. These are things that HR is not traditionally used to dealing with.

HR is used to dealing with taking orders from other teams and other departments in the companies, and then doing what they're told. Um, you know, we need to hire somebody, create the job descriptions. We need to fire somebody take care of this. We need to do a performance review. Go handle it. Yeah, HR needs to not view themselves like that.

And I always say, when I give my talks to organizations that never before have, we needed HR professionals to not think and act and be like HR, and this is why I think there is just in general in the community a lot of people are starting to question HR. And some people don't take HR, um, seriously. And some people say HR doesn't deserve a seat at the table.

That's because HR thinks like HR, it's not about human resources anymore. It's about human transformation. And so, if you view yourself, if you're an HR professional listening to this and you just view yourself as somebody that's, you know, that that's what you're responsible for. I think you're going to be in a lot of trouble and there's definitely a new set of skills.

And you set of mindsets that HR professionals need, uh, things like selling things like being able to have that tough love approach. Things like negotiating. I, right. I mean, this is, this is not stuff that HR usually deals with. So, I don't think it's a good excuse anymore for an HR professional to say, well, my company, you know, my, my leaders told me no.

So, this program isn't going to happen. Hey, you know what? I run a business. If I just ran away, whenever somebody told me, no, I wouldn't be in business. And as I'm sure Greg would as well, if, uh, every time somebody told Greg no about a project or an acquisition, you know, he wouldn't be in business anymore either.

So HR definitely needs to evolve and change the way they think about their function and what they do. Um, and you know, the other thing that Greg mentioned that is important, which oftentimes reminds me of, um, you know, whenever you have like a, a fitness regimen or whenever you put something up online, people always critique it.

Right? And they say, oh, what do you mean? You're, you're a vegetarian who you, you need your protein. Or if you eat too much protein, people say, what are you nuts? Protein is bad for the environment. Like just, eat all vegetarian. But that misses the point, right? I mean, the point is, is that Greg found something that works for him and for his company.

It's not about critiquing it or pointing out why it's, why it's wrong or what the flaws are. There's something that you can learn regardless, right? I mean, you don't have to adopt a no HR policy, uh, or no HR team in your company. If you don't want to do what Greg is doing, that's fine. But clearly it's working for Greg.

Clearly, it's working for his company and they're going to keep doing it, your job, if you're listening or watching this isn't. And I always say this don't copy what another company is doing. Don't copy Google. Don't copy Facebook. Don't copy Octopus Energy, learn what these other organizations are doing.

See what might make sense for your company, what you can learn from them, apply it. And if it works, keep using it, if not try something else. And I think the assumption that people keep making, uh, when they listen to these types of interviews or discussions, is that, oh, you know, we, we got to get rid of HR or Greg is saying we got to get rid of HR and it's nuts, right?

I mean, I think it's very, very easy to critique and nitpick and to point out flaws. In anything in our personal lives or onsite of our organizations and people who do that, I think are definitely missing the point. It's an interesting story. It's an interesting case study, whether you like it or not, it's there, it exists and it's working. So I think that that is an important thing for people to remember. It's not touting be like Octopus Energy. We have everything figured out as Greg admitted, they're still learning a lot. They're figuring things out. It's hard work. It's a lot of discipline and it works for them. So if it works for them, I think why would you want to change?

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:46:14] You made some brilliant points there. I've got one, another one here for you, Greg. This one directly lifted your quotes about how HR teams in fertilize, if I've said that, right. Their employees and drown, creative people in process and bureaucracy. And so they've asked, what steps would you advise those CEOs take, who feel that HR teams do exactly that in order to transform the HR department?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:46:36] It's funny, isn't it? Um, the infantilization is, if you're doing something for someone or if you're not like letting them take a risk. And so, you know, if there's an HR function and organization, one of the best things that can then by the way some of them do this, right? And I'm not here to exactly besides your perspectives.

And people got to draw their own lessons and build their own solutions. But in that scenario, it's rather than doing something for a leader or a manager, it's letting them do it for themselves. Uh, perhaps giving them a couple of watchouts or pointing them at the right source of information, but they'll let them do it and let them learn.

And you know, one of the other things I learned early in my career is there's a phrase at Procter and Gamble," make yourself redundant". You know, the more that you can make yourself redundant, it's not that you lose your job. It's that you move on to more interesting things. You can create an add more value. And so I think that applies, uh, in this scenario as well, uh, in terms of not joining people in process, it's not necessarily HR do that.

It's so many functions do that to each other, especially service functions. And so the bit where you can't hire someone because you've got to get sign off from 17 people and you see companies that do all these work arounds, you know, they'll acquire a company just so that they can get around a hiring rule or whatever it will be.

And I think that's the kind of thing that means people spend so much of that time trying to achieve stuff that the systems and processes won't let them do when the systems and processes really ought to be there to facilitate them doing it. And we just gotta, to be honest and open with ourselves when we create certain processes and say, is it actually having that effect?

Or have I just done something that's going the wrong way?

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:48:10] One more point to add to that. I mean, we should also be honest that HR isn't exactly silver bullet. I mean, HR has had lots of problems over the years. How many stories are there of HR teams who have failed when it comes to diversity and inclusion?

When it fails to hiring new people? When they bring in people who are ended up, uh, wind up being the wrong fit, HR, I think is actually quite broken as it is today. And I, and I hate to say it if you're an HR listening to this, but you know what, I think there's tremendous opportunity for HR to evolve, but let's not assume that HR is this magical silver bullet HR very much needs to evolve and adapt.

Uh, and unfortunately, I don't think HR is there yet. Uh, there's definitely a lot of work. Like I said, there's a lot of opportunity to be done and look, there's some fantastic HR leaders out there. Uh, like the, the HR leader of Cisco, the HR leader of Accenture, of lots of organizations, Unilever, as I mentioned, but guess what, there's also a lot of, who are not doing a good job who are failing and there are a lot of HR teams that are struggling because they're not able to adapt and evolve and think outside of their traditional HR box.

So I think that we just need to be realistic about it, that there's no one size fits all approach. And as much as we talk about the value of HR, I think there are also a lot of challenges in HR, but again, I'm optimistic. I think there's also tremendous opportunity and I hope people can learn from one of the things, you know, from what Greg has been able to accomplish.

It, it, uh, his organization at Octopus Energy and maybe bring some of those insights into their organization and not. Not be so judgy.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:49:43] I've got, I've just got a few more questions. I want to fire at you, Greg. So we're coming to the end of the podcast, but this, these are kind of, I guess, a little series of tough HR related questions.

I'm not going to lie. I tapped up my brother here for these now. Um, my brother, Jerry, he, the reason why I went to him is he coordinates and chairs, a whole load of sector, specific HR director and HR management forums. And I PR I did promise him a shout out. I'm going to take the opportunity of the host of this podcast.

So his company is Endeavor Search and Selection, but I promised him a name check in return for this, which I think is a pretty tough set of questions. So I'm going to fire them at you. Let's let's go for some quick answers on these. So first up, how are you planning your people strategy for the next two, five and 10 years?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:50:26] I mean, we don't have one. We look after our people, we give, we hire great people, give them great work. We train leaders to lead.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:50:33] Okay. That's pretty simple. How do you know what your skills gaps are now and will be in the future and how are you planning for them?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:50:39] Yeah, we don't, I think in every function they know what their gaps are and those functions have got different ways of filling.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:50:45] What succession planning strategy do you have in place?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:50:49] So each function is responsible for making sure it can get his work done. And so each function will manage succession planning in different ways. If you're talking about the top of the company, well, that is always a tough,

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:51:02] We'll leave that one for another podcast I think

**Greg Jackson:** [00:51:04] No I'll tell you what Russel say in all seriousness, in all seriousness, like, uh, one of the things, if you create a company of leaders, it's amazing how able you are to fill gaps when they appear, whether they appear because you're building a new initiative, entering a new market. Or indeed, if someone, if there's a need for succession planning, because someone's moving on or you're having to reallocate them, build a company of leaders and that problem is dramatically smaller. Then it is when you're in a command-and-control structure and, and you know, the job in traditional organizations half the time, the job of managers trying to suppress people, right? This is the opposite.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:51:39] Okay. Just a couple more. How do you ensure your reward strategy is competitive?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:51:43] Yeah I mean if a function can't hire people and these do something different, but like it's not about rewards.

It's about the entire employment experience and that's everything from what is the mission we're on? How enjoyable is the day-to-day process? I think they're the two most important things. And then, you know, when it comes to the rewards program, it's actually, we don't have very many basically we pay people a salary.

There's not that much non-financial reward because I think people can choose how to spend the money themselves. It's part of being a grownup. And then, uh, every member of the team is a shareholder because at the end of the day, we're a growth business where building an innovative, disruptive business.

in one of the world's biggest and most important sectors and if we're successful, everyone should do very well out of that.

Brilliant. Um, um, I'd be interested to get Jacob's view on this one as well. With change being a constant these days. How do you ensure your organizational structure is effective and efficient?

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:52:39] Oh man. Um, so one of the things that I talked about in the book is this idea of the mindset of the chef, where, you know, if you've ever been in one of those fancy kitchens, you know, that there, uh, the chef is always in the kitchen, constantly tasting the food. They always have the spoons, right? So they always know if the food is too salty, too sweet, whatever it is.

And so I think as a leader. That's the mentality that you need to have. You need to be in the kitchen with everybody else in your company, constantly tasting the food, constantly talking to people, constantly getting feedback, asking what you can do better, trying to improve if you're simply sitting in your ivory tower or in the office, uh, just kind of pointing things out and not really being involved.

Then I think you're going to have a very hard time there. So that's probably the most important lesson is get in the arena, get in the kitchen with everybody else. The second thing that people need to realize is that things are never going to be as slow as they are now. One of the biggest questions I always ask CEOs, why interview them is how do you, how do you adapt and keep up with this rapid pace of change?

And they always say the same thing. They say that this is the new normal, we embrace that. This is how it is. Uh, you know, when people ask, how do you ensure, you know, how do you keep up? They assume that things are going quickly now, and that they're going to slow down.

And then when they slow down, everybody's going to catch up and catch their breath and everything will be back to normal, but that's not going to happen. You are on a perpetually accelerating treadmill, and as hard as you're running now, the pace each year is going to get ticked up a little by little by little.

And so the way that you keep up, you get in better shape you condition yourself, you eat healthy, so to speak. And from an organizational perspective, this means exactly that you focus on your people. You create better experiences for them. You get to know your people as human beings, you're in the kitchen with everybody right.

Tasting the food, right? It's, it's, it's part of creating that human organization. And I think in Greg's case, they found what works for them, right? It's that decentralized structure it's giving everybody that autonomy. It's making everybody feel like they're a part of HR and every organization out there is going to need to come up with their own.

Secret sauce with how they do it and how they approach it.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:54:48] Greg, final one for you in this little section then is how do you ensure your managers are correctly trained and informed? Given the constant changes in HR law?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:54:56] So first of all, HR law should largely be reflecting the right thing to do, right?

And I think, and of course the most technical point in there are specifics, but you know, the job of a legal framework is, is, is there to make sure that the right things are happening. So as a company, if we focus on making sure the right things happen, then you know, it doesn't need every manager to know every detail of law.

If they're getting into a difficult scenario, then they can reach out to peers who may have experienced that scenario before. And they can reach out to external advisors if required. But I think, you know, it's like, I don't know every aspect of common law in the UK. I can walk down the street without worrying too much.

That I'm infringing something. Right cause I'm not likely to do things at that, are that bad I have to worry about the law. And I think that's a really important concept, right. So I don't need to come see consult a lawyer before I go, going to shop. And I think it was same way if we have, largely, you know, an approach that is people-centric, those topics don't come up too often.

And when they do, you should know, you should know now is broadly the time to go and seek advice.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:56:06] Good stuff. I mentioned at the top of the show that we chat about. Jacob's a new book and we haven't really touched on it and we're almost finished. So Jacob, I did promise you that, that we'd give you a chance to, uh, to share a little bit with, with our listeners.

So, um, yeah. Tell us what, what we can expect from it.

**Jacob Morgan:** [00:56:23] Oh, you're very kind. So the new book is called the future leader and it was based on interviews that I did with 140 CEOs of companies around the world and a survey done of nearly 14,000 employees, which was done in partnership with LinkedIn. And really the goal of a book explores the foremost essential mindsets and the five most crucial skills that aspiring and future leaders need to possess if they want to succeed and thrive in this new world of work, that we're all a part of. So I, you know, of course I would love people to, to check it out. I think it's a very, very important topic.

I think leaders have never been under more pressure. It's never been harder to be a leader in inside of an organization right now. And that's one of the reasons why I wanted to write and put this book together is to really guide aspiring and current and future leaders so they know what they should be doing.

And I always found that the challenge with a lot of leadership content out there is that there's not a lot that's really based on data across, uh, a larger sample size of CEOs. There's some great leadership books out there, and there's some wonderful content out there, but it's usually based on observational data, maybe a handful of stories.

I really want it to create the definitive guide that brings in 140 CEOs from big brands. And, um, I hope people will, will get value from what I was able to create.

**Russell Goldsmith:** [00:57:45] Tremendous Greg, any last words from you on the topic before we, uh, wrap up?

**Greg Jackson:** [00:57:49] First, I can't wait to get a hold of a copy of your book. So thank you for joining us.

I really appreciate that. And there are so many things you said that resonated one just towards the end. It was one of our teams that were quite busy at the moment. And you know, the observation was, we'll never be less busy than we are today. I think it's getting your head around that. Isn't it? Um, I think we haven't sorted tags on a time about a couple of things.

One is. We tend to populate our organization with what we should call T-shaped individuals. That's people, who've got a deep expertise in one thing, and then a reasonable breadth across a number of things so that then they can kind of work very well across the organization. I think that lends itself to this management style.

I think for example, you've got lots of very narrow individuals, then you may need different ways of gluing them together. Uh, another thing was very briefly, I think, uh, honest conversations are incredibly important. And what that means is this isn't a world in which, you know, kind of everyone has to say it's all sweetness and light every day.

Having tough conversations when things are not working. Having open conversations when we need to do stuff better is a critically important part of working in this way. As part of the non-infantilization, you know, managers can't choose just to have nice conversations with people and then park the nasty ones for someone else or other more difficult ones.

And I guess, uh, yeah, the, the last bit for me then was, well, I actually, I don't want to end on a negative, so I'll come with something after this, but there was, um, one thing that did surprise me, I mean, it was a real signal here about an opportunity to change the world the better, which was certainly when we on LinkedIn, I counted the number of comments that came in.

It was saying, hey, really agree with this. And the number of comments that came in saying you're wrong and, uh, you know, whatever the format might be. And I love being wrong and we should talk about that sometime, but then yeah, that's how you learn stuff. But I think the, um, the sad thing was, I think 97% of the comments that came in were supportive of the idea.

And there were lots of stories there about where HR departments have gone wrong for people. And I think this sort of the understandable reaction of feeing attacked by HR people kind of anyway, maybe reflects that, which is they feel they're doing a really valuable job and they're not being appreciated.

And so right back to that question, you asked earlier about what can HR people do better to be listened to in the organization or to influence it? I think there was a signal there that says, look, this isn't an attack on the downtrodden function at all, but it can feel like that. And I think a lot of the ideas Jacob was espousing actually speak to whether you're a company with a big HR function, a small one, or not about how to make sure that you're bringing, you're adding value to the organization as the people within it. Rather than for example, I think when you talked about Unilever, it was the idea of spending she said, spent like 90% of the time on transformational stuff and 10% on BAU. And that's kind of, I think all the functions and organizations they're able to do that are the ones that, you know, kind of driving the organization forward.

And it's exciting to think about that as well. There's the kind of thing we might observe or learn from some of these conversations,

**Russell Goldsmith:** [01:00:59] Greg Jackson as always. Thank you for being so honest, in all your responses and Jacob Morgan, thank you so much for giving up your time and joining us. And I know we've, we've overrun by quite a bit.

So I really do appreciate that. Um, just a quick reminder that Jacob's own podcast is called the "Future of Work" and so I'm sure that's available on whatever app you are listening to this one on, um, or wherever you get your podcasts from. And also, uh, you can get his latest book, the future leader from well I'm sure it's on all good book sites, uh, you know, Amazon, et cetera.

**Jacob Morgan:** [01:01:27] Anywhere you can find it

**Russell Goldsmith:** [01:01:28] Any way, yeah. But I know the website address for your own organization, and I know there's a link to the book. There is the future organization.com. So Jacob, thanks again for, uh, for honestly it's been a real, real great and very different, um, episode this time. So really pleased that you're able to join us. That is actually it for this episode of Inside Octopus.

As always. If you do have any comments on anything that we've discussed today, please do get in touch by the website @octopus.energy or via the usual social channels, but for now from me, Russell Goldsmith. Thanks for listening and goodbye.