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IT leaders share lessons for overcoming communication barriers

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Contents

Series Introduction	3
Leadership Lessons: Themes	4
Leadership Showcase:	5
Rajamma Krishnamurthy, Senior Director of HR Technology, Microsoft	5
Wendy Pfeiffer, CIO, Nutanix	7
Karl Mosgofian, Chief Information Officer, Gainsight	9
Conclusion: IT leaders look to the future	10

Series Introduction



In our Cohesion Podcast, information technology (IT) industry leaders and change-makers from every industry share their observations, lessons learned, and predictions for the future of the internal communications space. Their insight and best practices provide a roadmap for other professionals to drive IT success.

This ebook series aggregates these interviews and highlights the battle-tested experiences and insights these expert communicators have shared.

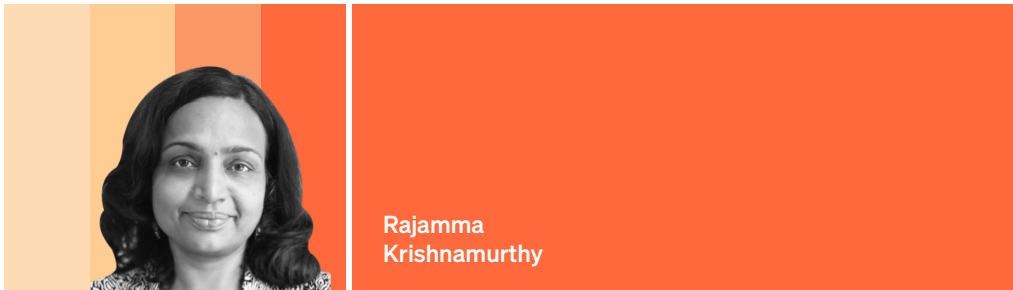
Leadership Lessons: Themes

Throughout the podcast series, some questions frame the discussion. Still, some of the most enlightening conversations are unscripted, uncovering stories that weave a unique tapestry that becomes an important part of the fabric of each company's culture.

These conversations have been organized loosely around a set of themes, and in this roundup, we focus on IT leaders and their observations. We invite you to explore further by listening to the full interviews on our [podcast page](#).

Below, we cover insight around digital transformation, recruiting and retaining talent, identifying (and being) mentors, and predictions around the evolution of IT in an IC world. And it all starts with staying ahead of trends . . .

Leadership Lessons: Themes



Rajamma Krishnamurthy, Senior Director of HR Technology, Microsoft, on leading global digital transformations, recruiting, staying ahead of trends, and helping marginalized communities.

Rajamma is a mentor who encourages women to enter STEM, as it can be rewarding work that will serve the world. This outlook flavors her big-picture thinking in many areas.

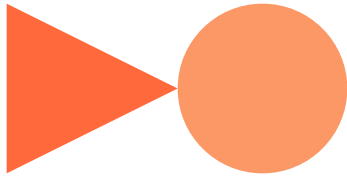
Leading global digital transformations

Meeting people's needs before they have them is crucial. "It's very common in big companies where you have massive HR organizations, massive technology organizations, to forget the person you're serving—the employee."

As part of digital transformation, employees need to feel like they're a part of the bigger picture, not struggling through things alone. "Have centers of excellence, talent, learning, recruitment, etc. We don't want employees to feel solo. So we are creating a singular experience."

And this directly impacts recruiting efforts.

Leadership Lessons: Themes



Recruiting and retaining talent

The challenge is twofold: Recruiting and keeping talented, skilled employees that meet your company's needs and creating an environment and culture that meets employees' needs. One can't accomplish this without understanding your needs and how to keep employees engaged and enriched, starting with onboarding, integrating into specific teams, mentorship, upskilling, and management.

How do you create a sense of connection and unity as employees continue to work remotely or in a hybrid model? The sense of community and water cooler conversations aren't there anymore.

How do you foster a sense of community online? This is where your IC data will drive your next steps as you ensure employees engage in meaningful communities where individuals feel supported and connected to the larger community.

And this is the challenge IC teams will face in the future—how to make hybrid workspaces work for everyone. Staying ahead of trends in HR technology will help here.

Staying ahead of trends in HR technology

With 23 years of working in this space, Rajamma learned to make everything come to the employee rather than the employee going to it. Thanks to technological advancements, she can solve important challenges and create moments that matter. It requires constructing great teams, coaching employees, and up-skilling them, as this helps keep employees engaged and energized to come to work.

Creating a culture through technology where employees can flourish is entirely possible with the right systems in place. And the same systematic approach has helped Rajamma in her work with marginalized communities, including people over 50, the disabled, and the disadvantaged, find work.

“Luckily, I worked for a company that not only creates digital experiences for our own employees, but we also create for the enterprise outside of our company as well. We have tons of information that we gather. We do research. We understand everything and anything associated with people working in the future of work.”

Leadership Lessons: Themes



Wendy Pfeiffer, CIO of Nutanix, on the importance of identifying solid mentors, automating to enhance EX, and creating company culture and predictions for the future.

Wendy's mentors helped shape her future success, and she graciously shares some of that insight.

Identifying solid mentors

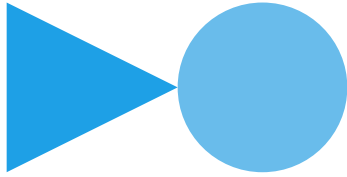
Wendy had a mentor who shared a powerful lesson that shaped her approach to challenges. She was encouraged to push her mentor, who was standing, to knock him off balance. Try as she might, he mostly stood firm, moving a little here and there, but it expended great effort on both of their parts.

Next time though, when she pushed, he bent at the waist. He didn't move from his stance but bent, explaining that "sometimes it's a stronger play to be flexible. And sometimes you can achieve what you want and stay in your stance by relaxing and listening and being aware of the situation and responding rather than reacting."

The second lesson was many years later. "This mentor would stop me in my tracks and ask, 'do you want to be right or do you want to be dead? Nobody wants to be dead. It's okay to be right. But you can give a little rather than dying on that hill.'"

Those were great lessons regarding listening, being flexible, and ultimately leading by providing clarity, not specificity.

Leadership Lessons: Themes



Automating to enhance EX

Automation is something they've implemented to drive efficiency and productivity.

For example, employees were working from different locations, in different situations, and using different devices, which became difficult to manage. "We had employee lockouts and a bottleneck for unlocking accounts that could last for days, so we automated the process with a natural language processing bot that works via Slack to reset passwords immediately."

They didn't anticipate it but took decisive action to address it. "As an operating system company, we have thousands of developers who constantly want us to build custom versions of something, and we build all of those systems autonomously now. We allow developers to make some real granular choices you might not normally see in these build environments."

Employees' contributions and expertise are appreciated and incorporated into the process, ensuring they feel seen and valued while decreasing frustration caused by bottlenecks. This automation frees IT to focus on projects worthy of their attention and helps everyone else get back on track quickly instead of wasting days being locked out of systems.

Company culture creation and future predictions

"We're never going to put the [digital] genie back in the box." We've grown accustomed to having our workspace exactly the way we want it, at home. Gen Z and millennials will drive changes guiding us toward more consumer-like, personalized experiences. Automation and machine learning will bridge the gaps, offering data to create highly personalized, timely workflow experiences at scale.

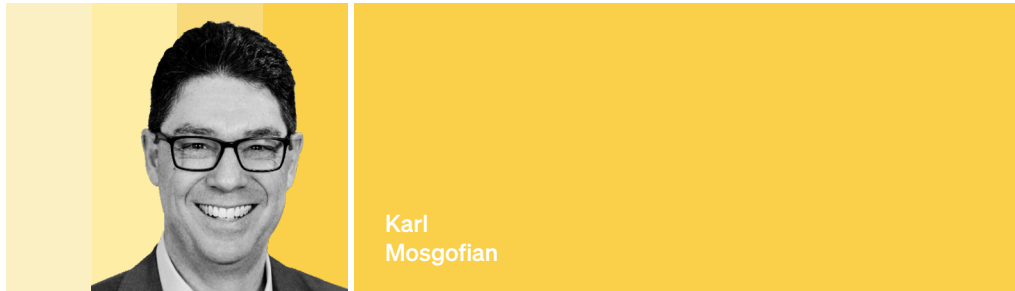
As CIO, there's a responsibility to ensure that technology is used and monitored in equitable and fair ways. We can use technology to enhance and magnify elements of our culture that will enhance the company's productivity while also supporting the company's desire to provide egalitarian access.

"One of our responsibilities as technology is to understand the ecosystem that we are a part of and add healthy elements to that ecosystem to support the health of that ecosystem."

Key intranet criteria

Employees know how to use apps productively but require access to top tools that offer flexibility, with open APIs that enable easy integration with other apps. "Ultimately, what I needed for our intranet was like that old-fashioned portal idea with information that could be quickly found and manipulated to meet various purposes. Something that allowed people to connect to it, add to it, and interact around it without changing the in-place workflow."

Leadership Lessons: Themes



Karl Mosgofian, Chief Information Officer, Gainsight on the evolution of IT and comms

Karl understands the importance of interpersonal connection and seeks to recreate that in a hybrid workforce.

The evolution of IT and comms:

Focusing on how to communicate on a large scale and undoing poor communication behavior of the past are challenges to overcome. Having several places to communicate but no central location exacerbates the problem. Solving it requires reshaping the structure of internal communications to help employees accelerate their careers.

Writing programs to organize or automate workflows is not the hard part; understanding what people are trying to accomplish and actually doing that specific thing is what's hard.

As Carl points out, "There's this idea of just throwing technology out there and then walking away. That doesn't work. You don't get adoption; you don't get the value; you don't achieve your outcomes." The IT relationship and strategy are mission-critical for a quality experience and internal culture.

Wherever companies land on a hybrid or virtual workplace model, the platform hub and tools chosen to communicate the technology are insanely important. They make or break both the content you deliver and the experience you'll create.

And this is a challenging hill to climb because, typically, companies have too many tools. The struggle lies in working together to create communication standards for tools like Slack, Teams, email, and other content repositories.

Karl notes that this is where IC folks are absolutely key. "And that's why I think this is a role that needs to be really taken seriously in a company because without it, you've just got a bunch of technology and people running around all over the place."

How can IT leaders head off this chaos? We've summarized some closing thoughts on the next page.

Conclusion: IT leaders look to the future

In our online age, there are so many ways to be successful in various businesses, but they all hinge on the foundation the company is built upon. A sophisticated IT department is essential, but so are the IC and HR teams working with IT. Having one pillar standing alone without the support of the other two is a fatal flaw that inevitably catches up to even the top companies. It's just too much weight to place on IT alone, and leaders in the field are speaking up about it.

Some have yet to identify the missing pieces, but they know they're faced with chaos and need help. An employee experience that creates a strong culture with invested and valued employees will face fewer unnecessary threats. Everyone in connected organizations is clear on the mission and how things work, and this frees IT to focus on areas where their expertise is required rather than putting out self-made fires. It's straightforward when you think about it. Empowering employees to *Simply Flourish™* makes sense. Reach out, and we can show you how!

Check out the full interviews on our podcast page. They're fast-paced, always insightful, and will keep your interest as no two executives are alike, offering fresh insight to reframe your thinking and help you propel your IT efforts and achievements.

About Simpplr

Who we are

Simpplr is the modern intranet that transforms the work experience for all employees — wherever and however they work. Simpplr is the only platform that unifies employee engagement, enablement and services, leveraging state-of-the-art AI models to deliver a seamless, cohesive and personalized employee experience.

Trusted by over 700 global brands, including Moderna, Snowflake, Splunk, Penske, Eurostar and AAA, Simpplr customers achieve significant improvement in their employees' productivity, retention and overall satisfaction. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA, Simpplr is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Sapphire Ventures, Salesforce Ventures, Tola Capital and Still Venture Capital. Learn more at simpplr.com

Benefits

- ↳ Designed for the way you work
- ↳ Ready to use in weeks, not months
- ↳ Built for business users
- ↳ Unified, engaging experience across mobile and the web
- ↳ Powerful integration
- ↳ Secure and scalable platform

Trusted By

