



Resilience in the face of uncertainty

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Burt Rea: Hello and welcome back to Capital H, a podcast that's breaking down the top trends and developments associated with work, the workforce, and the workplace. I'm your host, Burt Rea. I lead Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital Research & Sensing offering, and I'm excited to be here to kick off Season 6 of Capital H. This season, we're taking a deep dive on resilience.

The pandemic has changed almost everything about work, accelerating many workplace shifts that were already underway. There's never been a more critical

time for companies to join their employees in prioritizing health, safety, and overall well-being. And this prioritization can only help organizations foster more resiliency and trust among their workers.

In fact, research shows employees are 2.2 times more likely to go beyond what's expected of them if they believe their employer is capable of meeting their expectations as employees. To help us explore this paradigm, I'd like to welcome Figure 8 Thinking's Natalie Nixon and Deloitte's Jeff Schwartz. Natalie is a creativity

strategist, global keynote speaker, and the president of Figure 8 Thinking. She helps leaders apply creativity and foresight to achieve transformative business results that amplify value. Natalie is the author of *The Creativity Leap: Unleash Curiosity, Improvisation, and Intuition at Work*. She is a regular contributor to INC magazine and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Jeff Schwartz: Welcome to the Capital H podcast. And thank you for joining us today. As you know, our guest today is Natalie Nixon, somebody I met, I think, about two

years ago, Natalie, we met at an event at Columbia University, I think their inaugural event on the future of work. We were literally sitting at the same round table and we started a discussion, and I'm delighted to be able to have this conversation with Natalie today. Can you start, Natalie, by just telling us a little bit about yourself, a little bit about your role, and also what is and what do you do at Figure 8 Thinking?

Natalie Nixon: Sure. Well, Jeff, thank you for having me. It's great to be part of this production that Deloitte broadcasts. I'm really excited to share some ideas with you today. So, I am a creativity strategist, which means that I advise leaders and executive leadership teams on how to get to more transformative business results, specifically by applying creativity and foresight. In my view, there's a solid bold line between creativity and business impact. It's not a fuzzy dotted line. And it's really important that we start with creativity, especially as so many organizations are seeking to build cultures of innovation or innovation cultures at the core of what they do and how they function.

And I got to this point in my business as president of Figure 8 Thinking really on the laurels of a very loopy background. I have a background in cultural anthropology and fashion. I always say that cultural anthropology equipped me with the worm's eye view of understanding society and framing questions very differently. I like to think of other social sciences like sociology and economics and poly psy as giving us the bird's-eye view, which is equally important. And in concert, it's a really dynamic delivery.

Jeff: Thank you, Natalie. I love this story, and I really love phrases like creativity strategist. As I was mentioning to you, as you know, I'm about to publish a book in the next eight or nine weeks, and one of the things I say in the introduction is I'm very fortunate to know a bit about, or a lot about, the future of work, but I didn't study the future of work in college or graduate school. I'd like to

get a sense from you as to what does one study? How does one become a creativity strategist? And I'm really interested in your background in cultural anthropology.

Help our audience tie together two ideas, one, your perspectives on creativity and design thinking, and how does that relate to the future of work? And then maybe follow on that and help us think about, in the last six or seven months, how is the whole scene around the future of work and the work that you're doing changed as we're in the middle of the COVID-19 health and economic and now also social crisis?

Natalie: Great. So, I guess I should also clarify how I'm defining creativity. I've spent quite a bit of focus and energy, especially the last three years, in really developing a definition for creativity that would hopefully be accessible, simple, and my contribution to hopefully democratize how we think about creativity. So, I think about creativity as our ability to toggle between wonder and rigor to solve problems. Full stop. And it was important that I arrived at that sort of definition because I observed that we often ghettoize creativity and the arts, and in a lot of my client work, as I would introduce processes, experiments for organizations and teams to try, I would hear utterances like, "Oh, I'm not a creative type" or "The creative team will handle X, Y, Z," and "I'm not a creative because I can't" fill in the blank, draw, paint, sing, act, dance.

And what happens when we silo and ghettoize creativity in the arts is that that's not fair to artists and it's not beneficial to our society at large. And artists just happen to be exceptional at what the actor Laura Linney has referred to as "wrestling with the discomfort of ambiguity," of really falling in love with process instead of a solutions orientation. So, when you asked about the connections I see between creativity and design thinking, well, design thinking, at its most fundamental level, is a problem-solving process. And design thinking is 50% cultural

anthropology, ethnography, qualitative research, and 50% the application of design principles like prototyping and visualizing data and concepts. And so, creativity, at the end of the day, is the means to innovation. It's the engine for innovation. Creativity is the means to becoming an artist, creativity is also the means to the end of becoming an exceptional engineer and scientist and plumber and entrepreneur.

So, creativity, similarly, is what fuels the incredibly ambiguous process that design thinking encourages us to engage in. And as a former professor and as someone who's been educated in the United States and also the UK, I can say that we have, unfortunately, really started to err on the side of being solutions focused in the way we educate instead of process focused. And when we fall in love with process, then we accept the ambiguity. We accept the mess.

You also asked what does one need to study and learn to become a creativity strategist? So, first, full disclosure, I made up my job title. I was going through my first world existential crisis when I realized that after, I was probably about year 15 and as an academic, I've never had a five-year plan. I've always followed my heart. And I loved what I did until I didn't anymore. And the sorts of things that were starting to bug me had nothing to do with the students, had nothing to do with the content. It had everything to do with the structures in which I was working. And so, I had to sit myself down and figure out then what's next? And I went through a process that I now actually teach and coach. I have an online group coaching course that I just launched as a companion piece to The Creativity Leap. It's called Your Creativity Leap. And it consists of all of the creativity hacks that I applied to myself as I was making the process of getting unstuck.

And then the last thing you asked me was about considering these past six months. Jeff, you and I are talking now a week before the US election. Today is October 27, 2020.

And how has thinking about the future of work shifted in my view now than six months ago? Well, starting in March, especially by June of 2020, it became so clear to me that we weren't only wrestling with the COVID-19 pandemic. We're really in this conundrum, this wicked challenge right now in our world of a triple pandemic, which consists of COVID-19, the revelation of systemic racism in the United States to the entire world, and the unsustainability of our earth. And we're seeing it now in the forest fires in Colorado and the states. We saw it throughout the summer in the Northwest. The unprecedented early arrival of hurricane systems in the Southeastern part of the United States.

And so, we're not, when we think about the future of work now, we must realize that we're not going to see our way out of these systems, design language, wicked problems, wicked challenges, with a linear Gantt chart. We will see our way out of these challenges through creativity, because creativity is a complex system. And the best way to navigate complexity is with complexity. I call it the chewing gum method, because if you get some chewing gum stuck on your skin, the best way to remove the chewing gum is with another wad of chewing gum. The best way to get through complexities is with another complex system, creativity.

Jeff: Fantastic. Anne-Marie Slaughter is the president of New America, I think was very early in saying in March of this year that the future of work has arrived, and the future of work is now. Actually, quite a few people have said that since then. And there's been a lot of discussion on things that have accelerated during the last six or seven months. And there's also been a lot of discussion, Natalie, and I think that I'm inspired to ask this question by your talking about the role of creativity and design and the future of work, which is, we found ourselves during the last six or seven months doing things that we sort of knew that we could do, but we actually didn't take the opportunity, or for whatever reason, we actually didn't make it happen.

So I'm interested in what you've seen over the last six or seven months, and what you think we might take from this period and hold onto as, hopefully, in 2021, we move into a post-COVID world and a post-COVID economy.

Natalie: That's great. I really love what Anne-Marie Slaughter called out and other people have called out, that the future of work is now. Back in 2014, I gave a TEDxPhiladelphia talk where I was basically proclaiming that the future of work is jazz. And now, six years later, it's here. It's time to improvise. And so, what does it mean to improvise? Improvisation has less to do with your ability to do an impressive jazz solo riff on an instrument, it has less to do with your ability to hop on stage and go at it with the best of them on Saturday Night Live and be that sort of virtuoso and improvisation. But improvisation in our ordinary daily lives is about being adaptive, self-organizing, emergent, embracing the build, saying yes. And instead of, yeah, well, we tried that nine years ago and it failed, or a flat-out no, but it's really about showing up over and over again and being hyper-present in order to build on what has come.

And so, for now, I would just really extend this idea about the future work is now to it's jazz. It's about our ability to be improvisational. And like you, I observed that what the COVID-19 quarantine has compelled us to do is to pause, is to sit ourselves down. And for many businesses, that's incredibly hard for them to do. But if we don't do that, we just get enmeshed in this horrible churn, and we end up being reactionary instead of creative.

And so, what the COVID-19 quarantine has made me astutely aware of is that we always had the opportunity to redesign our relationship with time, for example. We always did. But we were just in this churn where we didn't pause and we didn't rethink, how could we meet differently? Do we really need all of this real estate? What are ways now that I can start to have these existential questions about my own purpose and meaning in life?

So, one of the ways that I've seen some interesting shifts is, I'll go back to this example of meetings. And I've been encouraging my clients to really put boundaries on the ways that that happens because of Zoom-palooza. And I don't want to pick on Zoom; it could be whatever platform people are using. But we need to put structure and boundaries on those rituals of meetings so that people don't burn out. And one way to inch your way into that is to do an experiment. Try it for a month and say on Tuesdays, we will only be on Zoom from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. And if in the morning you want to reserve that time for your kids, to take a walk, to sleep in, to do more heads-down work, cool. Same for the afternoon. And then the pushback is, oh, but what if our clients need us?

Well, what's interesting is that when you put those boundaries on the time and the value that you can then produce for your clients because of that space, clients will actually respect that. One of the companies I interviewed for The Creativity Leap is a small tech firm in Philly in the old city neighborhood, Arcweb Technologies, and they started experimenting two years ago with this idea of Tuesdays and Thursdays working out of the office, Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays working in the office. And what they soon discovered was they used time with each other, the high touch points time, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in a much more meaningful, intentional way. They began to discover that they really appreciated the time away from the office to do that heads-down work. They reserved and edited and refined questions for the times when they would be with each other in teams. So, work became a lot more intentional.

Jeff: It's interesting, you talk, in the work that you do, with leaders and organizations, and I want to turn for a few minutes to leadership. You talk about helping leaders and organizations become more dynamic versions of themselves. What does it mean to become a more dynamic version of yourself,

and are there fundamental mindset shifts or belief shifts that you think are important to helping people make these changes?

Natalie: Yes, absolutely. In terms of leadership, I think of leadership in terms of emergent leadership, not only leaders at the top of the helm. The opportunity right now, and we're already seeing it through these virtual lenses of connecting to each other, the opportunity now is to not show up to work in drag. What I mean by that is pretty much you get Nat's greatest hits, best stuff, you kind of have a surface version of me, but what's happening now is you see the child in the background, you see the spouse interrupting and asking a question, you get a sense of what their home is like. Sometimes people have real interpersonal breaks and connections and just confessions to each other about how's it really going.

Natalie: What I've observed is that when, as leaders, we invite people to show up as their true, fully human selves, it actually contributes to productivity, because when we are in environments where we feel seen, where we feel heard, we are more likely to contribute far beyond what is expected. Productivity begins to lag when we feel discounted, when we perceive that we're being ignored. This is a bold statement I'm making, when I'm suggesting that one of the things leaders can do is to lean into really being more curious about who people are and encouraging that they bring that element of themselves to the work.

Jeff: We've talked about different mindsets. You've given us some great expressions to think about. I'm going to come back to them in a few minutes, but one word I wanted to explore with you, and it's one of the words of 2020, is the word resilience. There's a lot of discussion about resilience for us as individuals, resilience for organizations, resilience for leaders. What does a resilient leader look like, and how do some of the discussions we're hearing about resilience connect to what we've been talking about

on this podcast today? How does resilience tie into improvisation? How does resilience tie into context? How does resilience tie into functional, social, and emotional perspectives? I can see—I have a whole bunch of ideas about how they tie together, but I'd really like for you to help us make the connection between resilience and some of the ideas that you've been talking about.

Natalie: Sure. I'd love to hear your ideas, too. In thinking about resilience, I'm reminded of how sometimes when I am advising leaders to make time, design time and space for rigor, and they think that they have, what's in fact happened is that they've conflated rigidity for rigor. They're not the same. Rigidity might be an intense adherence to procedure, to the rule book, and the shift we have to make as a way from the rule book to the playbook. That's one of the leaps that we have to make in this future of work that we're in. A playbook helps us to plug and play, it helps us to be adaptive. Resilience is less about being stalwart in the face of the forceful winds of change. Resilience is about being incredibly adaptive and flexible and being able to build on what has been put in front of you.

That right there is improvisation. I mean, if you've ever tried to improvise, whether it's been in contact, post-modern dance improv or just improvising with a team on a new model, a new process, it requires a fundamental amount of resilience in terms of being flexible on building on what is before you instead of being reactionary. Resilience is an incredible component of creativity, especially because I often also think about creativity as being about resourcefulness and being able to make something out of nothing, engaging in the remix.

Jeff: I want to try to pull together the discussion that we've had today. Some of the listeners will maybe make the connection to some of the work that we've been doing on the future of work, and we talk about the three things that are really relevant. We

talk about cost, value, and meaning. And meaning is the one that sometimes we don't quite get to.

When you talked about how we're working on Zoom and the different technologies, you talked about work in the flow of life. You talked about—I'll be presumptuous—bringing life that was in the background into the foreground. We were all there with our dogs, with our friends, with our kids, with the doorbells ringing. We didn't need to hide because we were actually working in our homes or living at work, depending on how you think about it. And then, the notions that you've talked about, being hyper-present, the idea of jazz. And the one that I think has really resonated with me the most, which is one I've heard us talk about before, which is that the opposite of reacting is creating. That's where I'd like you to talk, for the final question, to help us think about, as we're looking forward to this transition from a COVID to a post-COVID world, and we'll get there, the workforce and the workplace and the work that we're doing is going to be different.

What recommendations do you have? And again, I'm really thinking about this shift from reacting to creating and how I see that as being central to what's happening right now, and that the opportunity that we have potentially to go forward is to really have a creative era, not just a creative moment going forward. So, I don't mean to shape your answer, but what recommendations do you have for organizational leaders and for us as workers on, how do we navigate this uncertainty in terms of what comes next?

Natalie: Thank you for that question. I believe fundamentally it comes down to ritual. It comes down to deconstructing what our current rituals and past rituals have been, unbeknownst to us, because they are actually our rituals. We haven't called them rituals, but we're confronted with them as such because they don't fit anymore. They don't quite work anymore. And so, whether those are rituals around how we meet when

we meet or they are rituals around who we say is deemed worthy to be a potential employee and maybe we mix up the way we do our hiring, who we hire. Maybe it's also shifting the ways that our rituals have been constructed around the ways that we work with our clients. It's all about now having the opportunity to redesign our rituals around work and to bring in more of the human to really lead with the wonder and to make time and space for the rigor.

And that's on two dimensions: temporally, in terms of time and how we're using our time, and on the dimension of space, spatially, of how we use our space on the digital plane. There's going to be a whole lot more that's coming down the pike in terms of augmented reality and virtual reality, but also in the physical domain, how we're using space. So, in my view, the opportunities to shift away from being reactionary to being creative can be rooted in how we are designing rituals for our work, for our lives, in our companies, in our organizations, for our teams. It really stems there.

Jeff: Natalie, this has been an amazing discussion. I'm going to add one phrase to the list that I was just summarizing a minute ago, or actually, two, the importance of mixing it up and the importance of redesigning what we're doing with humans at the center.

For those people who have been listening to the earlier series of podcasts that we've done at Capital H and have been reading the Deloitte Human Capital Trends report, one of the things that we've been focusing on really very intensely this year has been, how do we maintain the human role in business and life in an age that is very much driven by technology? And you've helped us see how that might work and what does it mean to really keep humans at the center.

My final comment, in addition to thanking you, is you've given us both ways of thinking and you've applied language in ways that I

hope will be very provocative and inspiring for our listeners. We've been talking about very familiar subjects, but we've been discussing them from new perspectives, and I think that really is the big opportunity that we have right now.

Natalie: Thank you. The last thought, a provocation, to use your language, is that 10, 15 years ago, definitely 20 years ago, if you weren't a tech company, you were in trouble, no matter what sector you were in. What I assert is that now in 2020 and beyond, if you're not a creativity company, whether you are in education, learning, the food industry, travel, tech, you're in trouble. This is the shift that we have to make. You have to be about creativity to your core.

Jeff: We have to keep on creating. Natalie, thank you so much for the conversation today. Thanks very much, and thanks very much, everybody, for listening to our conversation with Natalie Nixon, the author of *The Creativity Leap*, about what we can learn and how we can think about the role of creativity, and what's coming next, and how we're working through what's happening right now. Thanks very much.

Natalie: Thank you.

Burt: Thanks so much to Natalie Nixon for sharing her insights not only on how her organization helps companies boost their employees' creativity and happiness, but also her thoughts on the recent disruptions to work and how we can drive organizational culture in a more human direction. And now I'd like to welcome today's Deloitte roundtable speakers: Jeff Schwartz, Melanie Langsett, and Jannine Zucker.

Burt: Looking back on 2020, almost everything about the employee experience has changed. From furloughs to remote work, today's employees must navigate a constantly changing environment while simultaneously prioritizing their own health and safety. It's a situation that requires

resilience and that's exactly what we're focusing on in Capital H: Season 6. Join us as we explore how, despite historic disruptions, organizations are staying focused on the human experience to foster resiliency and build trust within their workforce. On the first episode of our sixth season of Capital H, Natalie Nixon, creativity strategist and president of Figure 8 Thinking LLC, discusses how she helps leaders design experiences to boost creativity, sustain innovation, and achieve priority business goals for happier employees and customers. We also explore how organizations can focus more on the human experience during times of disruption, putting health, safety, and well-being at the forefront of their workforce strategies.

Joining me today are Jeff Schwartz, Melanie Langsett, and Jannine Zucker. Thank you and welcome to the podcast. Jeff, could you say hello?

Jeff: Hi, Burt. Great to be with you today. Jeff Schwartz here. I'm a senior partner in Deloitte Consulting. I'm really privileged to lead our Future of Work practice, and I'm excited to be the author of a book coming out in January, titled *Work Disrupted: Opportunity, Resilience, and Growth in the Accelerated Future of Work*. So, looking forward to today's discussion.

Burt: Melanie, could you say hello?

Melanie Langsett: It's great to be with you, Burt. I am Melanie Langsett, and I lead our Workforce Experience storefront within our Workforce Transformation practice and also lead our services related to well-being. So, I'm very excited about this topic today.

Burt: Thank you. Thanks for joining us. And Jannine is joining us as well. Jannine, could you say hello?

Jannine Zucker: Hi. Nice to be with you today. Jannine Zucker, and I'm a leader in our HR Transformation practice within Deloitte Consulting based here in Miami.

Burt: Wonderful. Thanks, Jannine. So just a few moments ago, we heard from Natalie Nixon, who discussed the role of creativity and how creativity plays in handling uncertainty and building resilience. Jeff, that was an interesting conversation that you just had. We'd love to start this conversation with your thoughts on that and open the question to the broader topic of resilience. Jeff, how would you define resilience in the workplace? What does it mean for organizations, leaders, and workers, particularly as we face this continued environment of uncertainty on so many levels?

Jeff: Well, Burt, it's a great question. And the interview and the discussion with Natalie was really phenomenal. And I think the discussion of creativity and where creativity fits into resilience is a very important topic. But just to go to the first part of the question, what is resilience and why is it important? Resilience is clearly probably one of the words of 2020, probably right after COVID-19, if you were to sort of list them in priority order. And when we think about resilience, when I think about it, I really think about two sides of resilience. One is resilience as an attribute or a trait or a behavior. And we can think of that relative to an individual or to an organization or to a community.

Can we flex? Can we adapt? Can we bounce back? I think of bamboo when I think of resilience. But resilience is also, in addition to being a trait, resilience can be an actual capability. It can be an actual strategy. And I think one of the things we're also seeing is both individuals and organizations asking themselves, what can I put in place to be more resilient? What can I build in my organization to be more flexible?

Jeff: An example would be you put shock absorbers in your car, your car is more resilient. It can actually withstand what's going on. And one of the things that we're looking at now are, what are the different things like shock absorbers, how do we build adaptability, not just as a trait, but literally into the way that we've structured our organizations and we've structured our careers. And to tie that back just for one moment, as we're getting started, to what Natalie was saying, creativity is really central to this discussion because creativity helps us focus on what people and organizations can do, what they're capable of doing. We talk a lot in Deloitte Consulting about the role of potential. And I think that there's a very interesting relationship I'd love to explore with Melanie and Jannine and you on resilience, potential, and creativity, and how these things come together.

Burt: That's a really interesting point, Jeff, and I'd love for us to zero in on that. I'm also intrigued by the concept of flexibility and your analogy of bamboo bending with the environment versus the sort of traditional concept of strength, which is unyielding and unmoving. And I think we're really contrasting that with this idea of flexibility and resilience. Melanie, I'd love to bring you into this. Give us your impressions of this concept of resilience. How are you seeing this play out in the organizations that you're working with?

Melanie: Thanks, Burt. And playing off what Jeff said, I love the bamboo analogy as well, and it created a visual image of elasticity, which I think is really important when we think about resilience. When I think about resilience, I think about both the elasticity but also the toughness and not rigidity, but toughness and grit, if you will. We don't know what we're capable of until we're put into the situation to have to really dig deep. I remember my father talking about, "You really don't know what you're capable of until you're challenged," and to always stay on that leading edge of being challenged.

And I think that's what we're seeing with the workforce more broadly is that when we went into the current environment, the speed at which change was occurring, we all maybe had a little bit of self-doubt of what we would be capable of handling. And I think now what we're seeing is that organizations are adapting very quickly. Individuals are adapting. And that—I love also what Jeff said about creating those shock absorbers. So, we've learned a lot about what are the things that we need to put in place in order to maybe not ride the bumps quite as acutely in the future, as we continue to need to be resilient as change continues to occur.

Burt: Well said. Jannine, your thoughts? I know you lead our human experience team. I'd love to also bring in this concept as part of resilience, the idea of empathy and how do we not just take care of ourselves, but take care of others? Your thoughts?

Jannine: Great point. I'll take it back to, this is about a two-way street right now. And when we talk about resilient leadership, it really is about being empathetic, being authentic. You've seen just a lot of companies right now not know the answers and have to be able to work through this together. And leaders really stepping up to translate their goals, their values in the organization in this time that they have to really elevate those individual needs and preferences, right now more than ever. And it's been interesting to see many of our clients talk about—we get on these calls with our people to understand their needs right now. And we don't always have the answers to the questions. And we've seen where it used to be very command and control types of leadership. And we're really seeing that being broken down and really just that authenticity and empathy really coming through in organizations, and this is what people will remember. They will remember what organizations do during times when they need it. Each of our needs are really individual and different during this time right now. When we talk with HR organizations

and HR leaders around how they're navigating and working with their C-suite and leadership teams through this, it is about, Jeff, what you were saying, it's about being adaptable and agile. But what's also interesting is they also have to play this role of architecting the human experience during this time that's going to continue to change. It's going to be a hybrid environment, a lot of the research is saying for the next year or two, and how to continue to navigate.

Jeff: I think, Burt, just to build on this, the discussion that Jannine and Melanie and you were kicking up here. I was inspired by one of Jannine's comments. I'm inspired by many of your comments, Jannine, but one that I was inspired on was really reminding ourselves of the context in which this discussion is happening, which is obviously COVID-19 and the global pandemic. One of the questions that we keep coming back to with our clients and our own organization is how do we think about COVID-19? This helps me think about the role of resilience. Is COVID-19 a detour, or is COVID-19 a fork in the road and a shift to a new way of leading, a new way of learning, a new way of working, as we talk about in Deloitte, a new way of thriving. And early on—by early on, I mean, April and May and June—I think we were all hoping it was a detour. It's now clear, we're recording this late in 2020, that COVID-19 is a shift, it's a fork in the road.

When we think about how we will lead, how we will manage our careers, what does it mean for organizations? Actually, one of the ways I looked at this and in the book that I have coming out, I actually have three chapters on resilience. And one talks about resilience in careers, one talks about resilience in organizations, the shift to teams and networks and platforms. One talks, as you were mentioning, Jannine, about resilience in leadership and management and how this is the time to shift beyond supervision and control as the main approach to management and leadership, and to move in an approach that's focused

on coaching, on listening, on designing, on inspiring, on teaming. A lot of the things that we've been talking about for the last couple of years. So, everyone has to ask themselves, is this a fork? Is it a detour or are we on a new path?

Burt: I love that analogy, Jeff, because it really is, I think, a new reality for us, it's going to persist for a while, and frankly could happen again in the future. But yes, we've tested that in ourselves and I think we've found a new path to navigate and thrive, as we say, in this unprecedented environment.

I love this idea of leadership, though, Jeff, that you mentioned. I've often reflected on a phrase I heard that "You can't be a leader and a victim at the same time. You have to choose." And in times of crisis, it's a natural human reaction to hunker down, withdraw, stay safe, and just take care of yourself. Leaders can't do that. How are you seeing leaders demonstrating resiliency, demonstrating these new behaviors in this new path?

Jeff: I'll make a brief comment, and I'd really love to hear Jannine and Melanie on this as well. I think that one of the big shifts we're seeing—we're seeing actually two things happen that are part of the same shift. One is the intensive delivered efforts on behalf of senior leadership and leaders at every level to communicate. The amount of communication going out, the amount of listening going on, we're working on the next Human Capital Trends report and one of the themes that we keep coming back to, we've interviewed several CEOs recently, is the roles that they're playing in listening and communicating, off the chart relative to what it's been historically, and how valuable that's been to the organization.

And I think the other, if I were to list the other leadership shift that we're seeing, or acceleration, it really is about the role of teaming and collaboration. Teams are the unit of action in companies today. The

way that we have responded both within organizations and across companies to the challenges, whether it's the automotive industry building ventilators or the pharmaceutical industry looking at therapeutics and vaccines, we saw two things happen. One was organizations formed teams of people who thought that their job was to do X and suddenly they were on teams that were doing Y, and that pivot, which is really about teams reorganizing themselves and focusing on a new mission.

Burt: Absolutely. Well, Melanie, I'd love to hear your thoughts in the context of the workforce experience. How are employees, how are workers responding to these leadership behaviors that we're seeing?

Melanie: It's been really interesting to watch the evolution. We did some research very early in the pandemic to gain human insights about their responses, and what we learned in that was, there's just such a low degree of trust in the information that individuals have for media and even for governments. Not a domestic issue alone, that's globally, and yet the much higher degree of support that the workforce looks for from their executives, leaders, and even direct managers. So, about a two to one from the external sources of information, if you will, and maybe in government to those that are coming from within their work environment. When I was listening to the quote that you had, Burt, about you can't be a leader and a victim at the same time, the other thing that we're seeing with the workforce is that the workforce has consistently wanted more agency, more control over their work lives. And I think what we're finding in this environment is that leaders are actually now providing more agency to their workforce because they have to. But what they're finding is that they can actually now trust that productivity is not going to tank, that the experiences for customers are not going to be negatively impacted, and that they can provide more agency and control to their workforce, which is heightening the workers'

experience and making them more loyal to the companies for which they're providing services and doing work.

Burt: I mean, this almost sounds like what we call a virtuous cycle, where that agency and trust perpetuates more discretionary effort, more caring for customers, which perpetuates more business results, et cetera.

Melanie: Said much better, yes.

Burt: We're seeing perhaps on the horizon the idea of reopening the workplace. How do you all think that's going to be different, even if we return to what we might think of as a new normal, or return to a steady state of this post-pandemic world? Jeff, start with you.

Jeff: It's interesting. I've been thinking a lot about the words of 2020, and I think COVID-19 is at the top, as we've discussed, and resilience is pretty far up there, and so is the new normal and the next normal. Or as we referred to it a few minutes ago, are we on a detour or are we actually on a shift? Are we on a new road going in a new direction?

Burt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeff: I think what's relevant thinking about the new normal or the next normal is for us to start thinking right now as we're going through what I would call the extended recovery. Because it's taking a while to get through this, and we'll figure out in 2021 how, with therapeutics and vaccines, we will get back to, at least from a public health perspective, a way of living and working and learning that is more familiar. But I think it's very interesting right now to think about what are the shifts that we need to make? And as Jannine and Melanie were summarizing a minute ago, the world is moving faster.

And I think probably I'd summarize it this way. The biggest challenge will be the pull that we have to revert back to things that we were doing before, that might not work as

well given some of the shifts that are going on. From predictability to unpredictability, from a known pace of change to an unknown pace of change. And in particular, we have seen a level of adaptability and growth and innovation among individual workers and teams that leaders and managers need to really run really hard to stay ahead and to work with the capability and the potential that we've seen. So, it's going to be an exciting chapter, but there's a lot of hard work ahead.

Burt: Absolutely. Jannine, tell me more about this idea of taking the lessons learned in the pandemic about resiliency and that capability, and now applying it to other business challenges that we're seeing in organizations.

Jannine: I'll call it the four A's. I think it's going to be important to continue to be adaptable and think about how do we keep some of that start-up mindset, that being able to work in these networks of teams in very different ways. We're going to need to continue to be agile. And everybody was talking about agile already, definitely an overused word. And a lot of organizations thought it would take a really long time to get there. Well, they have been there, they're really now taking the lessons learned from that and continuing to apply it. Letting people try new things, work in different ways, rapid decision-making without everything being so formal and in place. So many companies have been forced to do that even as they were listening and engaging within their workforce in a very different way. It wasn't as formal and structured as it was before. So how do you keep the lessons learned from that?

How to become architects and architecting journeys and outcomes and these experiences. That is just such an important lesson learned of being able to architect work in very different ways. Everybody got work done in a different way. And so, it could be done. How do you continue to

foster that creativity, bringing it back to that theme of creativity. Augment—you had to augment how work gets done, and people use technologies that they never used before, multiple technologies to be able to get work done, to be faster, actionable, have those insights. And so, it's taking the lessons learned from there around how to make people more productive in this type of environment so they could try new things, they could be creative, and we could keep that moving forward.

Burt: I love that model of four A's. It gives us some practical application tools to say, okay, how do I be resilient? That's wonderful. Melanie, to you. I'd love to hear your advice to leaders. How do they take these lessons learned? How do they take this idea of resilience, the four A's that Jannine just mentioned, and carry that forward? How do we make sure as leaders that we don't lose the lessons that we fought so hard to learn?

Melanie: One thing that immediately comes to mind for me is that we as humans have to fight the resistance to go back to the way things were, what was comfortable, what was known, and lean into what we've learned over the course of the last seven or eight months. I love the architect in the A's that Jannine talked about, but every architect will tell you that a solid building has to be architected upon a solid foundation. So, take those foundational things that worked for your organization and build upon them, architect upon them based on what we've learned in this time of disruption. I think the other thing that I would encourage leaders is to really trust their workforce and themselves, to be able to be resilient, to be adaptable, to be agile, to be all the A's that Jannine talked about. As I said at the very start, in order to grow, we all have to stay on that edge, use this as an example of, we grow the most when we are most disrupted. So, resist the urge to go back to what felt comfortable.

Burt: Wonderful. I love this idea of the four A's. Bring your A-game, we could call it.

Jeff: I'm totally with Jannine on bringing your A-game, there's no question. But I'm going to build on that a little bit. And I think we also have to bring our H-game and what I mean by that is, 2020 has been a very intense human moment. It's been a human moment as health and well-being have been absolutely at the forefront. And we've been talking today and over the last few months about the absolute centrality of the importance of well-being, of integrating well-being and work in our lives. And now that we've all been working in our living rooms and we've been seeing each other's dogs and kids and families on a daily basis, which is great, I think we really have an opportunity to bring that humanity, the integration of our work and our lives in a very positive way forward.

Burt: Yeah, absolutely. And, of course, we don't want to miss the point—that return to work. We've been working.

Jeff: We have been working. It feels like 24/ seven, but we have been working.

Jannine: I will just end with, it really, truly is about elevating that human experience.

Burt: Yeah. I think that's well said. And it's always been an inspiration for us. And I think this crisis has given us rocket fuel to accelerate that and to increase the visibility and the urgency for that. My hope is that we maintain that focus going forward. And that, as you said, Melanie, we don't slip back into the ways we've done things before.

Well, thank you all. This has been a fascinating discussion and really appreciate all of your insights. I love the ways of thinking about this and the positive optimistic view that you all have for our new future, our next steps, and our path forward. So, thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

Burt: A recent Deloitte survey from June 2020 found that 77% of employees would prefer to work from home even if they knew their employer had taken precautions to make the workplace safe during the pandemic. That's a telling revelation on how today's workforce is rethinking work-life balance and navigating a constantly changing environment. With this in mind, organizations must continue to focus on the human experience and find ways to connect with their employees on an innately human level. Thanks again to Natalie Nixon from Figure 8 Thinking and our Deloitte contributors for helping us explore the underpinnings of employee happiness and resiliency. And thank you for listening.



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