- [CC] Hello and welcome to Episode 2 of Engagement Matters. My name is Christina Canters and I am joined today by Mr John Williams. Now, tell me, most podcasts start off Episode 1 with an introduction to who they are and why they started the podcast, but we're actually doing that in Episode 2. Now, why is that?

- [JW] We think it's pretty important to explain who we are and where are we coming from, but probably more important for you, the listener is to get your teeth into some of the content, so the last episode we did around preparation for meetings and call plans is something where you can get real, immediate value.

So, sample what we do first and then if you're interested, understand who we are and where we come from. That's what I think we're going to try and cover today.

- [CC] Absolutely, and that episode 1 was a very meaty episode, so if you haven't listened to that, I recommend you go back and listen.

Today we will be sharing with you why we started this podcast and a little bit about John and myself and where we come from and what you'll get out of this podcast as well. Firstly, John, can you give us an introduction to yourself and I know you're the founder of JHW which is what this podcast is a part of. Give us an introduction to yourself and what you do.

- [JW] Sure, I entered the corporate workforce in the 1980s, so I'm a little bit gray-haired or no hair than most of our listeners. But I've spent 25 years in the corporate sector in sales roles initially, account management roles, major account management roles and later into the consulting industry dealing with difficult situations and large contracts with experienced and senior executives.

For the last 12 years, I've started out and worked in my own company trying to pass on some of the lessons I learned during that time and in particular focused on improving productivity through building better engagement with our stakeholders. Whether they be internal stakeholders or external stakeholders.

- [CC] I know you explained this a little bit in the first episode, but just so we're all on the same page, how do you define engagement? 'Cause that's something that will come up quite a lot on this podcast, so let's get a real clear definition of that.

- [JW] Engagement by our methodology consists of three key elements, trust, rapport, and perception of value. We believe if we're gonna be successfully transacting business with stakeholders whether they be internal or external, if we have all three all of those in place, trust, rapport and perception of value, then they will share with us the information we need, they will be open to our suggestions, we will have constructive discussions, why wouldn't they want to cooperate?

We also believe that if only one of those three is missing, then that's a good enough reason for them not to cooperate. We think it's important at every touch-point with a stakeholder to consciously improve our level of trust, rapport and value with every stakeholder and that will pay massive dividends in short, medium and long-term of our relationship.

04:14 - [CC] So, if you're JHW, who are the sorts of people that you work with?

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- [JW] We work with a lot of accomplished and emerging mid-level professionals. We also deal with a number of senior executives. Our focus is around helping them improve productivity through building better engagement and we run two-day and three-day workshops.

Highly experiential, lots of practice and techniques as we go, but also, consistent frameworks that help us understand what most of us have only learned growing up at the age of four, five, six and seven, i.e., how to relate with people.

Our focus on productive through better engagement is really kind of switch away from where corporates have been for the last 30 years. With the advent of mass computerization, there's been massive gains built in productivity through efficiency. Computerization has largely been about reducing the number of manual tasks and replacing it with computer techniques.

We're engineering the way processes are delivered through the application of more technology and for the last 30 years, corporates have been mercilessly flogging the efficiency angle. To the extent that we are now getting some processes within major organizations, highly efficient, but highly ineffective.

- [CC] Can you go a little bit deeper into that?

- [JW] Sure, sure. I think, you, the listener may have at some point in your history been talking to a call-center that supports perhaps a financial institution that you deal with, maybe TelCo, maybe utility, and at some point in the discussion, you've thrown the phone down in disgust and thought, "I never want to deal with this organization again."

Let's see what's going on here. The corporate response to dealing with massive numbers of customer enquiries has been extremely efficient in well-scripted, often off-shore call-centers. And in that way, they can deal very cheaply or much more cheaply with massive volumes of customer enquiries.

If the outcome of each of those enquiries is somebody throwing down the phone and saying "I never want to do deal with this organization." We have built a very effective method of driving our customers away from us. Was that what we were trying to achieve?

- [CC] Sometimes you think that's what they do want. We just want to make our customers really angry.

- [JW] So, we think another productivity proposition and one that was very prevalent in my early years in my corporate life was effectiveness. Not just how cheap can we make this damned thing, but also how good can we make it? Our whole focus around the stakeholder and providing an exception stakeholder-experience is about lifting our value with that stakeholder.

And you know, when stakeholders are getting great results, they are prepared to pay premium rates for it. An example that we will cover in another podcast is service divisions being outsourced or offshored to lower-cost countries. Sure, that's a great efficiency measure, but then when we've got different cultures dealing with our problems, and remote access and different time zones and no face-to-face meeting between service provider and stakeholder, we're hearing heaps of horror stories about how things aren't happening quite as effectively as they need to for us to run a good business.

Now, those offshoring decisions were made based on efficiency model, but the effectiveness is letting down the

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productivity gains we were hoping to gain through efficiency. I suspect that had the locals that were doing those offshore jobs previously built strong stronger relationships and provided higher value to their stakeholders, then the issue of offshoring would never have come up and high value would've been a core for the local business, rather than low cost.

- [CC] And it seems now that the average consumer or even people in business are so used to this efficiency model and they are so used to poor customer service or poor relationships with people, seems like if you can focus on your engagement levels and being more effective in that, you'll actually stand out a lot compared to the majority of people.

- [JW] Exactly.

09:52 - [CC] So, personally, John, what is it about, 'cause you've worked with thousands of people, right, you've trained a lot of people over the years, what is it that you love about helping people in this way? 'Cause there must be something there if you've been doing it for over a decade.

- [JW] Sure. Businesses can become a very cold and unfriendly place when all you're trying to do is cut costs, rationalize here, cut heads there, off-shore here, off-shore there, focus on efficient process. There is very little warmth in that environment, there is very little security of future, of tenure.

And there is diminishing returns to be got from that approach. Each time we take a layer of cost-out, that's less to be taken out next time. If instead we're looking at being more effective for our stakeholders, building stronger relationships, providing higher value, then there's a tremendous upside to the morale, the individual achievements, the relationships and the warmth of the organization. It can become the sort of place where people want to come to work rather than otherwise.

- [CC] I think that's awesome, that that's what you help people to do. The workshops go for three days and is that enough time for people to actually come in from a place feeling like it's soulless, like they're stuck in a soulless machine and then to go out and then be like, "No, actually, I feel like I enjoy coming to work now." When you work with people over those three days, is that all it takes for that change to occur?

- [JW] The three days is really a catalyst to the change. We can continue incrementally improving on that as individuals and I should explain it, as well as the three-day workshops, we look at ongoing coaching, reunions afterwards to help embed the principles, the techniques, the tips into daily life.

We're looking for a change in behavior in order to get a return on our investment in the workshops and change of anything takes a while to work through. The three days is the catalyst that gets us started on that journey. It's the next 6 and 12 months of putting it into practice that really starts to reap the value of that and fine-tune, hone, improve on our techniques as we go.

- [CC] The things that you share on the workshop and I have been on your engagement skills workshop and even though I do communication skills work anyway, I still got so much out of it and it sort of opened my mind to a lot of things that I wasn't aware of before. And I find simply being aware of those things can really help you make a difference in the way you communicate, in the way you see the world and the way you can understand better how other people view you as well, which is really interesting.

- [JW] That's really pleasing to hear and really interesting. That's what we are aiming for. It's interesting to note that

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the majority of what most of us do is right. It works well, it's quite small things often that cause what could've been a great success to go pear-shaped. Or to take longer to sign off or longer to implement than what it should have.

Our workshops try to take us back to brass-tax, to thinking about how we relate to other people. To get people on side rather than opposing what we're trying to do. To try and talk their language rather than our language. To try and actually be solution-providers which obviously entails understanding the stakeholders needs rather than just trying to push our technology or our solution for the sake of it.

And when we start to be able to do that, then the level of cooperation that we get from our peers, from our staff and our stakeholders, all of a sudden starts meaning that the environment in which we're working becomes a more cooperative one, rather than an antagonistic one. That makes work much easier to achieve.

- [CC] Oh, yeah. When you're there and actually having fun and enjoying it and you like the people that you work with, that makes an incredible amount of difference. And like you said, sometimes it can take only a small tweak to improve one relationship here, improve one conversation there, but all of those things, if over a course of a year, or two years, five years, whatever it is, that totally adds up.

I like the saying small hinges swing big doors. And by making these little tweaks with how you communicate, how you treat someone, how you start a meeting, or whatever, how you shake someone's hand, right, those all seem to be little things, but they will have a big effect in the long run that can lead to having a project signed off faster or getting you picked first for a promotion or an opportunity.

- [JW] Exactly. One of the things that we talk about and I'm sure that our listeners can relate to this. We all have stakeholders of one sort or another, if we lined our stakeholders up, pitching our best ones at the left-hand end of the graph, down to our worst ones at the right-hand end of the graph, ranked on the basis of the productivity that we get out of them, the amount we can achieve in a one-hour or two-hour meeting with them.

Then, at the left-hand end we've got our best stakeholders, and just to give ourselves a measure, we might call that level of productivity 100. As we climb down the less productive stakeholders, we get to the right-hand end, the ones that we don't enjoy so much productivity with. I wonder what productivity we would attribute to that person if the best one is 100, what level of productivity are we enjoying with the worst one?

At some situations that might be as low as 0. If I'm a salesman, and I get orders off of my best stakeholders and I never get orders off my worst ones, then proportionately, the outcomes are 0 compared with 100. In a lot of other roles, it might be a bit better than that, but it could be as low as 20, 30, something like that.

What if we could lift the productivity of all our stakeholders to that of our best stakeholders? We know we can do it because we're doing it with our best stakeholders, what are we doing right with our best stakeholders that doesn't seem to be working with our other ones and how could we correct that?

We can't lift everybody up to the 100% level, based on a three-day workshop, but that's the prize that we can start to address. If we get half of that, if we get 30% of that gap, then there's a massive lift in the productivity that you're gonna enjoy from each stakeholder. What we might do, Christina, is on the blog page include a few visuals to help people think through that whole format.

18:34 - [CC] Yeah, sure. We can pop that in the show notes. If you go to JHW.com.au/intro, we'll call this the Intro Episode even though it's Episode 2, JHW.com.au/intro, we'll put some, we'll put some images in there that you can

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download and you can share that with your manager if that's something you want to sneakily share with them. Go, "You might want to think about improving this." Or maybe you should share this with the team.

Anyway, let's talk about the podcast because you've been running workshops for quite a while now and you've actually approached me and said, "Hey, I have this idea for a podcast and I was thinking maybe we could do something and share a bunch of excellent content with people." What's the main goal of this podcast for you, John?

- [JW] Okay. There's two main goals really, and they apply to the two main stakeholder groups, the two main types of listeners that we might have tuning into us. Our first goal was for people that have already attended one of our three-day or two-day workshops and need that little refresher, to keep it front-of-mind type thing on an ongoing basis, just to keep it on the straight arrow, just to keep them practicing the techniques, just as quick reminders, stop this stuff evaporating through oversight and give them something to do a little bit of revision with.

That was our primary audience and primary objective. Hopefully all those people that have been on the workshop, you probably know me already, recognize my voice and might find that a useful resource to keep things front of mind.

I think there's a second audience that you've introduced me to, Christina, which is people that just love listening to podcasts and using them for self-improvement. And welcoming those people into our fold and helping them improve productivity as well.

- [CC] Yes, I might just interject here, if you are listening to this and you have found us through iTunes or maybe through my website or somewhere else, just know that you don't have to have attended a workshop to understand the content that we will be sharing in the podcast.

- [JW] That's right. We are hoping that each episode will provide you some insights and thoughtfulness, some things, some tips, techniques that you can actually go away and practice and lift your productivity just by listening in. But I don't want to miss-step the expectation here.

I don't think we can achieve in this series of podcasts what our participants in a full, three-day workshop are likely to be able to achieve with all the role-plays, practice and feedback, etc., that they get online. It's a taster, I hope it provides great value for your time in tuning in, but let's not oversell the value of the podcast. It's not gonna give you the equivalent of a three-day course.

- [CC] Because like you said, in three-day courses, I found the role-playing extremely helpful 'cause it's all well and good to talk about the concept of having a great conversation or running a meeting or asking great questions and you, "Yeah, yeah, I got it, I got it." But until you're actually in that situation and you got someone staring you down and saying, "What's the costing of this, why is this not running on time?" And you have to answer with conviction, that's when you really learn, when you're put in those situations.

What I love about it, it's a safe environment, you're allowed to mess up, you're allowed to stumble, you're allowed to practice and go, "Okay, I didn't do that quite well that time, but I know what I need to improve on for the real thing."

- [JW] That's true. Nobody ever got promoted or sacked on one of our workshops.

- [CC] No, they didn't, no they didn't.

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- [JW] So, so far, Christina, I've introduced myself, we've talked about the company and we've talked about the productivity through engagement, but we haven't heard from you yet, how do you fit into all of this?

- [CC] Like I mentioned before, you brought me on board to help you with this podcast and I thank you for that. This is a really great opportunity and I'm really excited to be doing this with you. This is not my first podcast; this is actually the third podcast that I've been involved with.

For those of you who don't know me and haven't listened to my other podcasts, I run a company called The C Method. And I work with business professionals to help them be more confident and effective when public speaking and when they're communicating with others.

It's not quite the same as what John does, we've figured this out already, we've said, no, there's no conflict of interests here. I work more with individuals, working on their confidence, and helping them with public speaking rather than the stakeholder-engagement side of things. And my podcast is called Stand Out Get Noticed.

And I've been doing that for just over 18 months now. I'm actually up to episode 80 as we record this episode. Up to episode 80 and that podcast came after my very first podcast which was for architecture, students and grads because I actually used to be an architect, that's my technical background and as an architect, I saw how bad technical people are at explaining what they do and talking to clients and speaking and presenting their work.

And I had a real interest in it, so I thought, you know what, I want to help people to be better at their jobs and fulfill their potential so that we can get more nice-looking buildings going up instead of ugly ones built by architects who are bad designers, but can talk really well.

So, that's a little bit about me, I do mostly individual coaching, and I do workshops for other companies, but I don't run group workshops in the same way that John does. That's a little bit about me and I'll be joining John as, I'm co-host, right?

- [JW] Sure.

- [CC] Co-host? Yeah. But John is still the star of the show, he's the one who's got all the knowledge and I'm just as excited as you should be about learning from John's experience 'cause there's a wealth of knowledge in there, so I thank you again for having me on the show. I look forward to recording many more episodes with you.

- [JW] Thanks, Christina. The next podcast we're gonna be talking about things like the personality compass, how to read other people better, the engagement model. We're gonna talk about handling the price objection. And many other things, so hopefully when I get to episode 80, like you've achieved, there will be a wealth of important information out there.

- [CC] Perfect, awesome. I think we'll leave it at that for this episode. If you're listening to this and you want to learn more, you want to read some more resources 'cause John has a lot of content on his website, go to JHW.com. au and also, if you haven't done yet, please do subscribe to the podcast, and please share it with people who you think would also find it valuable. It's the best way to get the word out about the show. Alrighty, thanks so much, John.

- [JW] Thank you! Bye, bye.