



Rethinking traditional value propositions: Episode 8

Asif [00:00:00] Welcome to The Art of the Impossible, a podcast for the design and manufacturing industry that explores how you can leverage technology processes and people to make the impossible possible. I'm Asif Moghal, senior industry manager at Autodesk, and each week I'll be joined by two experts from the design manufacturing world to discuss their perspectives on the challenges our industry faces and share what they're doing to overcome them. From smart products, mass customization, digitisation, supply chain resilience and the convergence of once diverse industries, this podcast is for anyone that runs a design and manufacturing business who's interested in making things possible. You can subscribe by following us on Apple, Spotify or via your favourite platform.

Asif [00:00:54] Hi, welcome to the podcast. Now, it feels like the world of design and manufacturing is digitising and connecting at a really exponential rate, and that is kind of alarming to some people because it could represent a challenge. How do you keep up and keep abreast of all these changes? But what's more exciting is this potentially an even bigger opportunity. And if the current pandemic has shown us anything, I think has shown us that it's possible to rethink our traditional value proposition and apply it to new products, new markets and even new business models in timescales that probably were ordinarily thought of as impossible. And this idea of an industry that's kind of always-on, constantly ready to respond to any challenge or opportunity with the same levels of agility as we've seen during the pandemic is kind of now become like a holy grail. It's something we want to hold onto. But if we do it, it requires us to think really differently about our businesses and potentially embrace digital in ways we haven't done before. It sounds easy. How on earth do we get there? So to help us explore that conversation, I'd like to welcome my guests for today's episode. So we have Charlotte Horobin, who's a regional director across the Midlands and East for Make UK. That's the national body for UK manufacturing. And Ralph H. Komor, from Komor Interim Management. And Ralph is currently working at Waldner Group. He's an interim manager there and he's a digital sales evangelist and also a BIM enthusiast. So warm welcome to you both.

Charlotte [00:02:29] Hi Asif, lovely to be here and thank you for the invite to talk about what is a really, really important topic.

Ralf [00:02:35] Hello, Asif. Thank you for the invitation.

Asif [00:02:36] You're very welcome. Ok, so Charlotte, I'm sure most people have heard about Make UK, but perhaps you could just help the audience to understand a little bit more about the work you do as part of Make UK for the industry.

Charlotte [00:02:49] Absolutely. Thank you. So, Make UK is the national body for UK manufacturers. We represent proudly over 22000 of our nation's makers and over 40 trade associations. And our role really is to understand the pains of the sector and to be able to signpost manufacturers towards support that either we are able to provide directly. We do a lot around training and legal advice and connecting peer groups. We signpost to other organisations such as Catapult centres, universities and other stakeholders that perhaps

have got funding and support available for those businesses. And where there are gaps, we make sure that we can advise and support government to make sure that they can enable an environment for manufacturers to grow. Our members are everything from small family-owned businesses all the way through to large original equipment manufacturers. We've got people making underwear pies all the way through to Formula 1 teams and parts for fast jets. So really very diverse and interesting membership.

Asif [00:03:51] A real cross-section there. I do like the side of the pie manufacturers. So Ralph, could you tell us a little bit about Waldner Group and kind of what they design, what they make, what they sell, markets they serve, please?

Ralf [00:04:02] Definitely. Thank you. So as you already said, I'm an interim manager and right now serving the Waldner Group. Waldner Group is a typical German, small-medium business. It's family-owned, something like fifteen hundred employees. And there's a description for these kind of companies in Germany. It's an English description. We call them hidden champions. Usually, they are very specialized in a niche and quite often they are market leaders. And this is also due to the Waldner Group. They are specialized in some very delicate things. And one of the big business divisions is the Waldner Lab company.

Ralf [00:04:59] So we are manufacturing and installing laboratories for pharmaceutical chemical companies, food companies, all around the world.

Asif [00:05:10] Fantastic. So two really great guests to help us discuss this topic. So let's kind of dive straight in in our normal style. So, Charlotte, I'm going to sort of come to you first. Now, we referenced earlier on this kind of this idea that's been planted in our minds now of what's possible. This always-on, digitally ready, agile industry. I mean, it's really exciting even talking about it. I'm finding myself feeling quite motivated. And you meet so many manufacturers, as we just said, a real cross-section of them in your role. How realistic do you think is it for us to be able to get to that kind of level of always-on digital agility and readiness?

Charlotte [00:05:48] We're certainly seeing that manufacturers, the awareness really is building. So, two years ago, we found that probably three in 10 manufacturers were not really aware of what possibilities are out there and weren't engaging in what we would call industrial digital technologies. Today, that's now down to one in 10. And we've seen really a shift towards the other end, actually, those embracing technology in a new way of working. And there's a much greater proportion now, what we kind of frame the revolutionary. And they're employing these different methods, employing this different technology to totally change the way that they do business, what they sell and how they deliver revenue back to their own organisation, not just through products, but also that wider service offering, which I think is really important.

Asif [00:06:36] So it sounds like it actually is a realistic prospect if from what you're saying, it feels like we have a chance at getting this kind of digitally ready, agile industry up and running and perhaps we're almost already on the road.

Charlotte [00:06:47] I totally agree. I mean, in terms of it becoming true in and how near that is to us, eight out of 10 actually think that it's going to be a reality by 2025, which we know how quickly this year has gone. And that is not far away at all.

Asif [00:07:03] Yes, this year certainly has sort of flown by. So Ralf now I remember when I met you first we talked, you told me a really, really powerful story about the sort of transformation that went through Waldner Group as a result of the pandemic. Could you just tell us a little bit more about how the company responded to it and the new product lines that you developed as a result?

Ralf [00:07:25] Definitely. I just want to add one thing. The small and medium companies are mainly driven by their customers, by the big corporates. For us, it's, for example, a Roche, Johnson & Johnson or a BSF or by a company that is really demanding digitalisation and agility. So they really put us under pressure to transform ourselves. So it's a mix. Of course we want to, but it's always an investment. It's a family-owned company, so limited resources. But then the big players are pushing and just demanding, hey, if you were to get this contract awarded, you have to do this in that or be prepared for this and that philosophy or system.

Asif [00:08:14] So it's kind of really market driven. It's not a case of although we'd like to think it is a case of sort of forward thinking leadership. It's equally a case of being pulled by the market and the customers to say, hey, you know, I need you guys to be able to work differently and smarter and in these new ways.

Ralf [00:08:29] Of course, it's a mix. There are some things prepared, but then suddenly a big player comes and really asks for a different type of construction or a different type of managing data. So we have to deal with this and have to take this into account. And they are driving at the end the small and medium businesses.

Ralf [00:08:58] But you were asking about our experience concerning covid and this situation we had in spring. Yeah. So usually Waldner is, as I said, a market leader for laboratories, ordinary laboratories, for universities, for scientists, for pharmaceutical, chemical, petrochemical, etc., companies where the people go and do their science and develop new drugs, etc.

Ralf [00:09:34] So they are built into buildings at the end. And this is what we do since 1908. So more than 110 years now, nearly 120 years now. And the pandemic forced us, of course, all into lockdown. So it was really a story beginning in March this year. And the CEO of Waldner Lab asked me, what is this going to be for us? What is what does this mean? This coronavirus and covid thing? And I wrote a little strategy paper, and one of the points was, ok, at that time, it was clear to me that there will be a second wave, which is starting, let's say, right now or the last days, and before the second wave start, I assume, there's a demand, higher demand for laboratories for testing. You're living in the UK. You know, this is a big issue in the NHS, and so we thought, ok, but building a laboratory, it takes time, you need an architect, you need permissions, etc, etc. So this takes, at least in Germany,

something like two years, because this is not an ordinary laboratory. It has a high safety standards and some regulations you have to follow.

Ralf [00:11:18] And then we said, ok, what about containers? So we really developed a new business model. We developed with a small team. We have been, let's say, 12, 14 people, depending on the period of the project, and we develop within four weeks. Out of the Home Office, more or less. Everybody was in lockdown. The first concept for a mobile covid-19 test lab in sea containers or in containers.

Ralf [00:11:58] And also the first contract was given to us after the fourth week, we finalized the design and the next day or the day after we got the first order. So it was really a very motivating success story for us. And it was also a very interesting time because, you might remember the lockdown, everybody. It was a strange atmosphere for everybody at the end.

Asif [00:12:31] It still is a very strange atmosphere.

Ralf [00:12:34] And everybody in our team really wanted to help. They wanted to do something special and extraordinary, not the normal lab, which they did the last 20 years. So they saw this as something really threatening. And maybe we have something here that can help. Help people at the end of the day. So out of that, we developed more and more solutions. We have a container solution, which is really a mobile, it is fully equipped turnkey, you just buy it, including all the devices, put it close to a hospital and then you can test there. Increasing test capacity was our goal.

Ralf [00:13:25] And we have different solutions. Also, we put some test devices into a camper. So, like Breaking Bad, kind of, we had a big camper with test devices that can really drive to the hotspot and test the people there in the hospital or in a small factory where you have an outbreak, you can isolate them, test them, and everybody that is negative can go home and the positive ones can be sent to the hospital, etc. And so three weeks ago, the last idea was a vaccination centre, because once we have this vaccine, my guess is, not before mid-2021 at the end of the day, my personal opinion, but how to vaccinate 40 million Germans four zero million, and most of them have to get two shots. So you have to get 80 million times a shot. So we also developed a solution there. So this is really new. It was within four weeks full of enthusiasm. It was a great experience out of the Home Office. And this, of course, could never have happened without digitalisation and all the tools we know we have right now, also all the platforms you are delivering. So this is very interesting and was a great experience for the whole team.

Asif [00:15:03] It's a great example. And so thank you for sharing that with us. And I just keep coming back to that sort of, the sound bite, the sticking in my head is, four weeks, in an ordinary situation, if somebody said to an engine director, you've got four weeks to develop four new product lines and new business streams and new opportunities, again, not in any way kind of downplaying the impact that this pandemic's had and some of the tragic consequences of it. But this idea of doing something so fast, so agile, so literally on point, responding to a real problem, it's just phenomenal. And so, Charlotte, from the work that you do with the companies you meet regularly, how ready and willing do you think they're

able to make this new way of working normal? I promised I'd never say the word 'new normal', but here I am saying it. But that could be the new normal for our industry. But do you think we're ready and willing to kind of get there?

Charlotte [00:16:05] I'm not sure if we'll ever get back to a position of normal now. And the pandemic has really challenged and perhaps opened the eyes of manufacturers as to what their teams have been able to do and how quickly they have been able to respond and turn things around. And I think that kind of blueprint can be applied for future instances. We don't face them, but I think practically we all know there will be future recessions, there will be geopolitical events, there will be tragedies that are out of our hands. And I think it's given that structure, perhaps some of the business planning that may have perhaps not been at the forefront in the boardroom, I think that type of scenario planning really is at the forefront, that this is a reality and we are in that kind of VUCA world. It is volatile. You know, it's quick-paced. And we need to be agile and fast afoot.

Asif [00:17:03] And I can imagine some very cynical people listening to this and thinking, well if you're in the medical sector, or if you were involved in ventilators and PPE, these opportunities exist. But it just strikes me that this new normal, this new way of working, could apply across kind of all industries. So, again, Charlotte, do you think there's any industries that probably this would work particularly well for or do you think it's equally applicable across all sectors of the industry?

Charlotte [00:17:29] I think it's not necessarily equally, but I think it is applicable across all industries. We've seen that challenge, not just market demand, also supply chains in the way that businesses are thinking about where they have had to get their components. As we saw the pandemic break out in Asia, that firstly disrupted those supply chains. But we then saw in times it came to Europe that then perhaps other parts of the supply chains were disrupted. So as an ultimate kind of finishing point, we've now got people reassessing their supply chains and perhaps bringing things in-house, perhaps finding and sourcing different types of suppliers and also changing what it is that they do for the market. What is the value that they bring to the economy? So I think it's given a lot of businesses, almost a bit of a fresh sheet, a blank piece of paper to think about what their capabilities are and not just think, I'm an aerospace or automotive supplier, but these are my capabilities. This is what I've got the possibility to do. And this is how I'm going to go out to a global market to be able to bring revenue to my business and the people that work there.

Asif [00:18:37] Great. Thank you. So Ralf, the companies that, beside Waldner Group and the work that you're doing, the companies that are successfully changing their model in the way that sort of Charlotte described, they're sort of looking at their capabilities and their value-add and looking where else they could apply those in adjacent markets and innovative new markets. What is it that they're doing so well that you think perhaps other companies aren't doing so well? What's the difference between the really great companies and the companies that perhaps aren't really adopting this?

Ralf [00:19:08] The difference is, let's say leadership. Of course you need C-level that is open, that is giving the freedom to the to the designers, to the engineers to really do what

they think they want to do. So we really have no limitations. We had no given framework. So we had the idea and we also stopped when we said, ok, we thought this is, let's say 90 percent. Something like this. A typical German engineer only stops when he has 100 percent or 99.X, and I really had to stop and think, hey, this is our idea. And let's just present our idea to the customers, to the world, what they think of it. And we have to adapt it any anyway, because our business is always a project business and this depends on local regulations and everything we have to take into account if you want to sell this on a global scale. Of course it's different. But the basic framework, the goal from our CEO, and you said, yeah, just go for it and we see what happens. And we had those four weeks. We could really play. And we were very disciplined, also. We had every second day we had the meeting. So it was really also a scrum project management approach. Also new to the company, some kind of and yeah, agile, scrum, all these buzzwords. We really tried to adapt here. Charlotte just said VUCA world. We are living in this world. And the interesting thing is that the rest of the company, of course, looked at us and said, hey, how is this possible? Within four weeks, usually it takes 12 months to develop a new idea to this stage. And we just said, ok, yeah, we were brave. Yeah. We also allowed mistakes and we were very open giving feedback and continuously working on the project. So we never stopped. Every second day we increased the level of confidence in the technology, in our solution. And still today we are learning every day concerning this pandemic. How to deal with it. So this is the difference in my head. Leadership, getting the fields to play.

Asif [00:22:07] So there's this sense of leadership empowering the rest of the business to kind of have an idea and go and play, using your terms, and stopping when you get to I think you said 90 percent, 100 percent is not the goal. This is just to be good enough to get going.

Ralf [00:22:23] To be perfect is a killer for this.

Asif [00:22:25] They do say that perfection is the enemy of progress, or something like that. I think I can't remember who said it, but I'm stealing that quote from someone else.

Asif [00:22:33] Really interesting. So Charlotte, let's imagine now we go to, taking Ralf's prediction, we go to mid-2021, vaccines available, and we're using the Waldner Group vans and containers to make sure we're tested and vaccinated. Do you think that there's a danger at that point where leaders could sort of slip back in to, phew, the pressures off me now? Perhaps I could just go back to the normal way of doing it. Do you think we're in danger of sliding back to just kind of accepting the status quo, or do you think that we're going to continue to push forward?

Charlotte [00:23:07] It's a pretty difficult guess, really. It's a great question, though, I guess there will be that sense of almost business leaders wanting almost to break. One thing I think we're particularly concerned about is the bandwidth of our leaders at the moment. Naturally, we're rightly concerned about the mental health and the wellbeing of our workforces. But I personally worry that we've got some very stressed business leaders that are dealing with phenomenal challenges, keeping their business alive, making sure that the people that work there and their associated families are paid and that they can keep the lights on, the mortgage paid and feed coming in. I think that's enormous pressure whilst

through a pandemic, but also facing some quite unique and significant sort of geopolitical changes as well. So what next summer will look like, I think is very hard to tell. Naturally, sat right now, it would be, I think, obvious to say it would be great to pause and take a breath. But who knows what we might be facing next summer? So, I'm afraid I can't give you a conclusive answer. But that kind of point that we mustn't forget about the mindset and the wellbeing of our business leaders and make sure that actually they they can just take the foot off. But again, that comes back to Ralf's point about great leadership is the ability to have the foresight that this is a team effort and the even embedded processes and technology in your business today. It's not just all on your shoulders and to be able to trust and empower your team to be able to deliver your vision. It shouldn't just be on your shoulders, alone as a business leader.

Asif [00:24:44] Yeah, so just taking Ralf's example here. I can't imagine the amount of hours that the team must have pulled, four weeks of working very intensively like this. It does sort of take that toll. And perhaps that's kind of why, it's one of the reasons why that level of agility is so difficult to adopt for an SME. And maybe one of the misperceptions about it is you've got to be on 24/7 as opposed to understanding that maybe this just goes in sort of cycles. There's a period of being really busy and a period of sort of downtime, and a period of really busy and downtime, and maybe sort of a cyclical approach.

Asif [00:25:23] Ralf, do you think that leaders can really understand that things like that will come in sort of flow, levels of intensity will go up and down, or do you think that people just think, oh, my God, I'm going to have to be pulling 12 hour shifts every day between now and the end of the year?

Ralf [00:25:41] No, I don't think so. There is an expression that came up at the beginning of this pandemic. The Black Swan event. Is this a black swan event or is it not? And honestly, it is not, because there's an official document from Deutsche Bundestag's, so the German government. Out of 2020 and there is a risk analysis on the risk of water, floods, etc. And in the same paper, 50 or 60 pages, they are discussing a new coronavirus. And what will happen if this will lead to a pandemic? No, it was 2008 already, 12 years ago. And they had this. So the politicians had this. And if you read this today, unfortunately, it's in German, but I can tell you the link, of course, if you read this, this is exactly what happened. So more than 90 percent, they were right.

Ralf [00:27:02] So they could have been prepared if they said, ok, how likely is a pandemic, zero point whatever percentage, we don't take this into account. But in the future they will, I think, think different. The leaders will think, ok, maybe not as a big impact as the covid-19, but it could be different. It could be something else, whatever. And only yesterday I read there's a new virus in China coming. A swine virus, also difficult. So it is going on. What I want to tell is, yeah, they will be prepared better in the future, but they won't ask for 12 hour shifts or the day. So be clever, be prepared. Maybe follow a plan, set up a plan. Set up, let's say, a pandemic plan, for 2025 and the next one is coming and stick to it, or write it, and then look at it. Can we adapt it? Can we use it? Do we have to change it? So be prepared for whatever comes.

Asif [00:28:15] I don't think we could never get away from this this subject, no matter what topic we discuss on podcast. But there must be an element, Ralf, of surrounding yourself with people with the right skills and capabilities to help, because you don't have to do it all on your own. So Charlotte, from your work, how critical is skills as an issue to kind of our industry?

Charlotte [00:28:38] It kind of feeds into the last question. I was just thinking actually I've been at Make UK for seven years now and there has always been something, there has always been a priority of the day, something that has been challenging the manufacturers. And if we go back to when Make UK was officially formed as the Engineering Employees Federation, at the time it was really around the labour force became organised, the trade unions were born and the employees recognised that they needed a joint, coherent voice to be able to engage with the trade unions to ensure that they had a positive outcome. So you have the formation of the EEFN over the years. We've then responded to the needs of the sector. So over the years, we've developed into one of the largest employment law firms in the country because we house a team of experts to provide that people advice to the manufacturing sector. And that then fed nicely to be able to provide health and safety and sustainability advice. And until recent times, the biggest consistent issue for our members has always been skills. So actually today, if Make UK were to be formed as he left it 125 years ago, we'd have done what we've done in Birmingham and invested 40 million pounds to train literally hundreds of specialist apprentices. So taking what the sector needs and investing what really is needed. So skills, absolutely, remains at the heart of the challenges for manufacturing. And it's a real big concern right now through covid-19. What we can't do is see a hollowing out of our technical training provision, particularly our apprenticeship. So we've seen a massive downturn. I think we're at 79 percent decrease of apprentice starts between the ages of 16 to 18, I think, and 40 percent across the wider age categories for apprenticeships. And what that they will do is, it will stop, particularly those capital invest intensive training programs. It will be really hard for the training providers to make sure that they're keeping their kit up to date and investing whilst the cohort remains so small and we mustn't allow that to happen. So I think for the manufacturers to remain competitive, we've got to keep that eye on the ball for the future that once covid passes and other big hurdles in our way, skills again, once it will boil back up to being the big priority and the big challenge. And yes, we've got to focus on having those technical apprenticeships going through. We must make sure that we're training the right roles, that it's right to go to university for. We've got to make sure that we engage our schools and make sure that they see manufacturing is an exciting, highly productive, highly paid career that offers global travel and loads of other benefits. And also back to that leadership point, we've got to make sure we invest in our leaders and train those people and make sure that we do so throughout their whole career. It can't just be a quick injection of knowledge. It 18 to 21 and you're on your way.

Asif [00:31:45] Yeah. So this sort of sense of continuous professional development, as opposed to a I've got on a course and that's me done the kind of thing, particularly around leadership.

Ralf [00:31:55] Yeah. This brings me to my profession as an interim manager, I am always learning new trades, new businesses, and I'm also coaching the teams. And you can see this Waldner project also as a coaching project.

Ralf [00:32:16] I'm an external guy helping them to develop in a very short time a new product line, a new business model. So the leadership here is also to accept somebody from outside the company going in for some weeks, some months or even a year or so to support my professionals that are there.

Ralf [00:32:42] But they are so stuck in their daily business. And I'm sure this project would not have been that fast and that successful if a Waldner employee would have done it as a project manager, because he's so in his daily business. And I was not free. I also had different things to do, but I was really focused on this. I had more time to focus on this project. And this is also important. So, as a leader, to give somebody, either inside or coming from outside, the time and the freedom to do it.

Asif [00:33:27] It's a really good point, because from what you're both saying, leadership is kind of almost like a juggling act. You've constantly got to juggle a number of priorities. And as nice as it is to say you can only have one priority, I don't think that that truth exists anymore. There's what's important right now. You've got to get it done. And if you do surround yourself with the right people and maybe, Ralf, what you're saying is kind of have the trust to bring in someone outside with a fresh perspective, potentially, that might be a way to enable some of our SME mid-market customers to achieve the same kind of results.

Asif [00:34:03] And that kind of brings me onto the last of the big questions. So let's imagine that, you know, we're all sat in a room and we've got 10 managing directors from companies in the room. And they're saying to us, and I've heard what Charlotte has to say and I've heard what Ralph has to say, 100 percent agree. These are leaders we're talking to. Their question is, where do I start? Charlotte, what advice would you give any managing director in terms of this is the first thing you should do?

Charlotte [00:34:35] I think you've got to start with small steps. I think, going back to our discussion around digitalisation and technology, I think one of the barriers areas, we think about some great big grand blue-sky thinking that really is quite intimidating for the business leadership. But when we break it down into two little bite-sized steps, I think it becomes a lot easier. I think having that want and the ability to go out and to ask the questions and not be scared to ask questions and take advice. So engage with universities, engage with the Catapult centres and experts like yourself Asif, go and ask those open questions and be prepared to listen, but also challenge those concepts because they might not always translate directly into your business, but then take them to business, to the people that know it best, your employees, and get the best out of them. I always think it's amazing when you pass a problem to people without structural constraints. Some of the ideas that come back can be absolutely phenomenal. So I think it's got to be that leadership position. Try and do it in a step by step basis, have a direction. But don't tell yourself to a really structured plan because that might change. But go out, seek the advice and then employ it amongst your teams, the people that are there to, you know, the great talent

that's in your business to help it succeed and thrive because it's in their best interest for their employer and the place that they spend the majority of their time to do really well.

Asif [00:36:06] Great advice. Ralf, what would your top bit of advice be to this kind of this group of managing directors that we might be talking to?

Ralf [00:36:15] Where to start? It's difficult to say. This is really depending on the company and the business. But what they should do or what they should be open to do is be prepared. Charlotte already said it right now. So prepare some kind of, let's say, plan. Imagine what can happen. Also, partner. This is what they did not say yet. We had two partners in our team, external partners. We couldn't do it all on our own. We are specialist for laboratory infrastructure, but we are not specialists for laboratory equipment. So we partnered with the largest laboratory equipment wholesaler worldwide. So they gave their input, their advice about the processes, the testing equipment. So, partnering, be open, talk to other companies. Don't think you and your guys are the most clever on this planet. No, partner, collaborate, prepare. And also learn. Learn from others. Learn from the mixed teams. We had 65, the youngest was 22. Also, I strongly believe in a mix of culture, mix of colour, mix of age and experience, and this then makes really a strong team. And I would really recommend every C-level, including Covid, to allow this and to transform. Digital transformation is also organisational transformation. We're talking at the end about people.

Asif [00:38:12] Yeah. And there's another theme that does consistently come up in all of our conversations, is that sort of concept of surrounding yourself with a diverse team of people who could think completely differently to you and then combining all those views. And that may be where your plan comes from. So, Charlotte, again, I'm one of these fictitious 10 managing directors and I'm sitting there thinking I'm completely convinced by what Ralf and Charlotte are saying, where can I go to get some help? So where are some of the places that I could, as an SME leader, go and get some help to take this kind of first, second, third step?

Charlotte [00:38:49] It would be totally and go, Asif, if I didn't say, if you're a manufacturer naturally talk to Make UK. And we tend to enable a lot of what Ralf's identified as well, that that peer to peer sharing of best practice, almost being an industrial magpie is a phrase I crudely coined a couple of weeks ago. But I mean, there's a whole plethora of support out there, arguably there can be too much noise sometimes. But we've got some world-class universities. We've got some world-class, high-value manufacturing Catapult centres and wider sense in the catapult network. Asif, you do a great job, particularly supporting skills and championing skills for the manufacturing sector. But I think Ralf's point of go and speak to me, people. Don't just talk to people if you're in the automotive sector. Go and see the food & drink sector go. And actually one of the things we've done a huge amount around sort of the future workplace is talking to sectors that are not manufacturing. So, we've been taking manufacturers to the offices of accountancy firms because they're trying to recruit the same skilled people. Those with very strong maths and physics type backgrounds. And yes, you might not be able to employ all of that blueprint to a manufacturing facility. I can't see anybody flying around the shop floor on a Segway or, you know, a walking treadmill. But there certainly are some elements that you can, again, still with pride, and apply. So it's being curious, go be curious, but there's a lot of support out there. But do make sure you



talk to someone that you trust about what support's taken and how to open that door, because there's a lot out there and you could waste a lot of time.

Asif [00:40:30] Great advice. So I'm kind of trying to do my usual bit of summarising the key nuggets of wisdom that we've heard from you both today. And so let me give it a go. The key to attaining this type of digital agility and transformation that seems to start right at the top, it's a responsibility of leadership to kind of own this and drive it within their organizations.

Asif [00:40:54] And it requires an organisation to step back, take a good, long, hard look at their own capabilities and try and translate that into what value do these capabilities offer? And then just ask themselves, where else and how else could they apply? That value. And maybe unique and differentiated ways. Get a team of people together. Maybe these people are inside the business, outside the business. Some of your partners, some of your suppliers, other customers, not even sure it matters. But get this team of people together, surround yourself with people with the right levels of skills and perspectives, and go out there and try and solve a problem and also be prepared to take a lot of small steps and do lots, of course, corrections, you know, along the way.

Asif [00:41:39] So, again I really hope that something that you've heard on today's episode has inspired you to go out and do something, try something, ask yourself what do you think it's impossible that you could actually have a go at and actually do it. Because, as we heard today, ordinarily, the sort of transformations and developments that Ralf and the Waldner Group would have tried to have done would have taken at least 12 months, but they did it in four weeks. So go and ask yourself, what else do you think you'd like to do in that sort of dramatic point of time and and really give it a go. And it sounds like there's lots of help and support out there available for you.

Asif [00:42:20] So it just leaves me to say thank you to both Charlotte and Ralf for being such great guests. Thank you very much. Be great to have you on the program.

Charlotte [00:42:27] Thank you for the invite, Asif.

Ralf [00:42:29] Thank you very much, Asif.

Asif [00:42:31] And thank you for listening. And we look forward to seeing you on the next podcast. Thank you very much.