

## The future of work reimagined with Justin Marcucci and Peter Newhouse - Part 1

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SETH CLIFFORD (SC): Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Tech Reimagined podcast. Today, we are going to be exploring the innovative ways that technology is reimagining the way that we are going to work in the future. My name is Seth Clifford and I'm joined today by Justin Marcucci, Chief Digital Officer of Endava, and Peter Newhouse, Global Head of Reward at Unilever. Hi, guys. How are you?

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PETER NEWHOUSE (PN): Very well, thank you.

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JUSTIN MARCUCCI (JM): Yeah, I'm very good, Seth.

[00:00:32]

SC: Let's get started with some background introductions. Justin, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

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JM: Sure. As you indicated, I'm Endava's Chief Digital Officer, been with the business for about five years and have been in IT for a little over 20 years. I am based out of New Jersey and have the pleasure of driving and leading Endava's close-to-client group. And in general, participating in helping our clients utilise technology to really accelerate their businesses.

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SC: Alright, and Peter, how about yourself?

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PN: Yeah, thanks. Yeah. So as it says on the can, I'm Unilever's Global Head of Reward. In fact, I'm coming towards the end of my career. I started in 1980 and it's about time I stopped. So, interesting vantage point, having worked with a lot of different organisations over many years and for the last 10 years have been with Unilever. Fantastic company, really enjoyable. So, yes, reward is my thing.

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SC: Alright, fantastic. So, yeah, today we're going to talk about the future of work, and that's a pretty broad topic, right? So, right now in society, there's been a pretty big change in the way we've had to work over the recent weeks. You know, in light of the global pandemic and everybody self-isolating. So there's a ton of speculation that this period of time is going to drive additional change in the way we work in the future. So, let's talk about the dimensions to that question about how will we work in the future, right? There's a couple of things we can talk about. We can talk about the where. We could talk about the how. We could talk about the when. There are different ways to kind of slice and dice this. So, let's start with probably the most salient one for right now, which is the where. Typically we move about our business day in, you know, various ways. Some of us go to the office, some of his work remotely, but right now everyone is working remotely. So, let's start with you, Justin. Do you think that this particular period is going to create a completely different way of thinking about the necessity to go to a place? Or do you think that there will still be plenty of reasons to be in a place with other people collaborating and such?

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JM: I think that this is absolutely going to drive a surge of change in the way that we work. I think overall, a lot of businesses that previously were reticent to allow their staff the flexibility of working from home more regularly, we're now in a position where they didn't have the ability to lock down that option. In lieu of wanting to keep their businesses afloat, people have had to let their entire staff work remotely. And as a result, I think it has broken down a number of the barriers that previously would have prevented that activity from happening. I think what we'll end up seeing is that it won't drive a complete shift in the way that we do things, meaning that all businesses will now be remote in perpetuity moving forward. I just believe that it will have highlighted the fact that organisations can still operate productively with their staff working remotely a higher percentage of the time or working remotely sometimes at all. And as a result, it will start to free up and expand some of the flexibility that staff have globally.

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SC: Peter, do you have any ideas on that? The split between offices and remote work, given what we're going through right now?

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PN: Yeah, I mean, I very much agree with what Justin said. I think, you know, a lot of these things are the acceleration of trends that we've already embarked upon. I don't think there's going to necessarily be anything that suddenly is totally new—but certainly, acceleration of this trend to work from home in the first place. So, those companies that have been more familiar with that approach are going to adopt that approach even more vigorously than before and make a success of it. I think those companies who haven't done much of that in the past, for whatever reason, they're going to have to adjust quite quickly. But there'll always be businesses and activities that won't really work like that. So, we're going to have a mixture of things as we always have.

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SC: Yeah. I mean, one of the things we've seen a huge uptick in, obviously, is collaboration tooling and, you know, the stuff that we use internally, the stuff that the rest of the world is using, it's all centred on connecting individuals as closely as possible. But there is something about that dynamic of being in a room with people and, you know, being able to see them and gauge their reaction and see body language and things like that that just can't really be replaced over remote tools. But it is interesting to think of the ways in which we're currently adapting to this to kind of get over those hurdles and embrace the tools that we have just to be able to kind of keep going. So, with such a distributed workforce that companies are embracing right now, do you think that teamwork is going to be different or do you think that individuals on a team are going to interact in similar ways? I mean, there's certain things that we could point to very easily in terms of, like I said, those close collaboration efforts. But do you think that this will enhance the way people have been working or fundamentally shift it?

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PN: Well, speaking personally, I think it's going to enhance the way we've already been doing things. Those who are better able to make this change have already made quite a big change in that direction, and they'll probably find this a great opportunity. I mean, speaking personally, I like going to the office. I like the sociability of the unexpected—meeting people that I didn't expect to meet, hearing things that I didn't expect to hear. And of course, when you're working remotely, everything is that much more transactional, which I didn't particularly enjoy. But I do see already a change in the way that we interact with each other using the technology. It's become a lot more sociable and less transactionally formal. So, I think we're beginning to build into our day to day

interactions the same kind of spirit that we had in an office. And we're getting better and better at combining with each other virtually to recreate that same way of working.

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JM: Yeah, I would agree, Peter. I think what's funny is that as we've moved through the last couple of weeks, you know, the taboo of working from home previously was that the doorbell would ring or a dog would bark, or a child would burst in. And as we've gotten—we've kind of moved through that the last few weeks—not only has it become, you know, OK for that to happen, but it's actually been almost a warm break from that kind of transactional relationship. And I think that I've seen that within the teams that I participate in in this complete virtual environment now, it's actually increased the social fabric a bit of the relationship because there is a little bit more of a personal touch to some of the conversations because we're all dealing with the same things.

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PN: Yeah, I completely agree. It's very much like that. I mean, I'm old enough to remember when we first adopted things like open-plan offices, which freaked me out. You know, I thought, 'Oh, my goodness me. People are going to hear my private conversations. Am I going to manage like this?' And of course, after a while, it just becomes second nature, you don't worry about it at all. And just as you say, we're now kind of welcoming the extended family into our working environment, and it's OK. You know, it's really OK. And that makes it more enjoyable. And I think it does add a dimension. Well, I think we're all fascinated by each other's houses that we can now see on video. Although I have discovered in Teams that you can put in an artificial backdrop, which means that you can be in some virtual house rather than your own house, which is much better, of course.

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JM: Well, it's funny. A lot of those filters end up, like, cutting the ears off of the people you're talking to, as the edge recognition isn't that great. So, it has actually created some really bizarre imagery at times.

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PN: [Laughs] It's true. Yeah, it's true.

[00:07:51]

SC: Yeah, it's interesting. You know, thinking about the ways in which we're interacting right now and how that's changed and how we've gotten strangely closer to one another because we've had to be in this kind of very odd and off-putting, intimate place together, right? It's called a lot of things into question for me about the way in which we interact with one another, the way in which we build teams, the way in which we engage with clients. And I'd like to just kind of put this out there and get your thoughts on it. So, one of the things that's been interesting to me is how we establish personal trust between individuals in a remote setting. So, with all of the things that have been changing, especially, you know, being so far apart from one another, when we can't physically be in a room, when we can't look each other in the eye, really and, you know, feel that body language, how do we connect? Like we just said, there's a bit of intimacy that happens when we see into each other's homes, when we share those personal moments with family and things like that, but there's a level of interaction that happens in person that I feel kind of can't be approximated remotely, especially when we're meeting new people and interacting with new individuals either within our own business or with clients. So, I'd like to get your thoughts on how we create those levels of personal trust remotely for the first time when we can't be there to shake a hand or have a cup of coffee with one another. Justin, what do you think about that?

[00:09:19]

JM: Yeah, that's actually a really great point. I mean, so much of the relationship that we form with people are based upon, you know, non-verbal cues. Body language, the kind of energy somebody is giving off in a room: All of those things are incredibly difficult, if not impossible to replicate in a digital environment. I think some of the techniques that I think we've found ourselves using, probably not even purposefully, is that we're actually using more humour to elicit more genuine interactions at the beginning and ends of calls, because I think it actually allows somebody to engage in a more personal way outside of the topic of the discussion planned. And in doing so, I think it helps to establish a baseline of, and a spectrum of behaviours that you can recognise verbally or via the video screen. Right? And so, when you start to create that spectrum of response—you know, a serious conversation that you're having and you've kind of already established the other end of the spectrum as you're having like a, you know, a very light humour-based conversation—it gives you a better balance to be able to understand and map somebody's activities against that spectrum and understand the subtext of how they're feeling. So, I think humour has been a—for me—has been a big part of it. I mean, I've always used that as a business tool, but I certainly find myself using it more and more now.

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SC: Peter, what do you think about that?

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PN: Yeah, I agree with the wider spectrum of response. I think that's exactly right. And I think as we relax—and I see the key to this whole thing is that we are becoming more relaxed using this technology—and as we become more relaxed, we become more human. And as we become more human, the spectrum widens and we become easier to deal with. So, I think with anything new, we're a bit nervous and a bit edgy and a bit tight about the way that we respond to it, and that doesn't really help. But I can see already, it's really helping a lot. You know, the video on, for example, in the past we'd have video calls and not many people are showing their faces, but now everybody shows their face, and that's part of the enjoyment of the experience. So, I think the relaxation is the key for me.

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SC: You know, it's very interesting. You mentioned something about, you know, being more relaxed and being more human. And one of the things I have to wonder is, does this period that we're sharing together—where we're all a little bit more real with one another—does this fundamentally change the way in which we interact in the future, knowing that we've gone through a shared experience? For instance, people who are usually potentially more guarded right now are in a position where psychologically they can't be or they choose not to be because they don't need to be. And I'm wondering if the very nature of how we do business changes, having shared this. There's something to be said there, right? When you—I mean, I hate to say it this way—but shared trauma brings people together. And so, one of the things I've been thinking about is how do the conversations we have in the future with other people change when we have this subtext in the back of our minds? Always of, we went through that thing together and we also kind of, you know, cross through this threshold where we understood each other on a different level. So I'm just kind of putting that out there as a thought. If you have any comments on that, feel free.

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JM: Yeah, I certainly think that this will alter the relationship that we have with the people that we're currently working with. I mean, like you'd said, trauma—shared trauma—you know, actually brings people closer together. It becomes a really notable, if not monumental event that you've gotten through together. And, you know, you can see that through history and even just in our lifetimes, the trauma that we've had as different countries or different regions, it becomes

something that bonds us and ties us together. I think the difference with this one and why it's can be even more impactful is that it is global. Right? So, anywhere you go in the world moving forward, I bet you you'll have a common ground with people and talk about how they handled this event, how they handled the pandemic and how it impacted their lives. I can't think of something with such global reach, at least within my knowledge of history. I mean, certainly in the past, something incredibly traumatic like wars was often limited to a region or several countries or even something like a World War had much varying experiences, whether you were in Australia or whether you were in France. This pandemic seems to be driving a pretty consistent response in most cases across most countries in the world. And I think that that will absolutely drive common ground between people and it will actually make this generation, these generations that are impacted by this a little bit closer.

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PN: Yeah, I think that's really fascinating. I think also there's a bit of an issue here because it's probably the first really genuinely global crisis that's been facilitated by technology. You know, without the Internet, there wouldn't be such a uniformity in the way in which countries and governments have responded to the pandemic, you know, the fact that it is a pandemic. If you think back to the history of, you know, Spanish flu and previous plagues, for example, they were mostly local events. People were not aware of the spread of the disease in the way that we're aware of it now. You know, this is a global crisis that's facilitated by technology, and it's also a global crisis that's solved by technology. So, the technology then helps us to interact in a way that doesn't require physical presence. And then you think, 'Well, actually, that's a trend that we've been developing for a while, isn't it?' You know, so that we can both be intimate through the Internet and we have a certain degree of distance. So, although we think we're being sociable, we're also being very distant from each other and interacting with each other through the Internet. And so, that's really quite a big crisis and a difference and a change in the way that we do things. And I think that's quite profound. You know, so we can have this illusion of being together, but at the same time we're apart. I think pretty soon we may be moving into a, you know, what they'll call the 1.5 metre economy where people really won't be allowed to get that close to each other for medical reasons. And that will probably continue to accelerate this trend of being sociable as a distance through technology.

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SC: Yeah, it's interesting to see how this is going to kind of have ripple effects for years to come in how we interact with one another. I mean, I could go off on this tangent all day and think along these lines, but I want to bring it back around to something a little more concrete, right? So, you know, kind of the remote working models that we have, particular businesses have different ways of interacting. Justin, do you have any thoughts on that?

[00:15:56]

JM: Yeah, I do, actually. You know what? We've been talking predominately about businesses that can operate completely in a virtual environment, at least more or less operate in a virtual environment. We have to wonder the implication on the fabric of a business like a steel forge or something like that, where certainly you can't do those jobs remotely. And a large portion of those jobs will have to continue to happen onsite with heavy machinery and with heavy equipment. But an organisation like that, a portion of that staff is going to have the capacity to work remotely. I would be fascinated and really, incredibly curious as to when you have an organisation whose workforce is split, being able to work from home and others that are not able to work virtually, what does that do to the fabric of an organisation? Does resentment form that some of the staff can work virtually and others have to come in and put their safety at risk? Does it widen some of those

gaps already between traditionally, you know, roles that are more office-based versus roles are more manufacturing-based? I'd be really curious as to your, collectively your thoughts on that.

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PN: Well, we're there. You know, so we already have an organisation which has manufacturing sites. So we've got, you know, in excess of 250 manufacturing sites around the world. We also have, you know, people employed in 110 countries. So, you know, we've got office space people. We've got people who are busy in manufacturing. We've got R&D sites. We have a whole variety of different environments within which people work. Currently, people in the factories, you know, still keeping the factories going, people in the offices working remotely. I don't think it causes real divisions between those groups of people. Clearly, the priority for people who have to work in a manufacturing environment is safety, and so we've very quickly adapted our sites to be safer environments for the people who go there in the same way as we've helped people who have to work remotely to work remotely. And I think there is definitely that idea of the local, you know, people are very involved in the teams with whom they're involved, and that never changes. And so I don't think people look across those boundaries if they're treated properly and think that there's some kind of a difficulty or favoritisation of treatment.

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SC: Alright. So, one more question specifically about kind of the shape of future work comes down to the timing of it, right? So, in a global economy, time zones are things we have to contend with. But traditionally there's a there's a sense that a 9 to 5 day is pretty much what we generally put in. And we, you know, individually may time-shift it 8 to 4, whatever. What do you think about the timing around work? Do you think that as we move more to a globalised economy that we will just simply have to adapt the hours in which we work? Or do you think there'll still be kind of a localised standard as to when a workday begins and ends? Justin, what are your thoughts?

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JM: I think that there will continue to be a localised standard of kind of start and end times for a workday. I think that the social conventions that drive those exist outside of businesses itself and traditionally has been lined up with, you know, when child care is going to be available, with school, and those sorts of things. I think what we're seeing now is that because so many portions of our society have been kind of thrown into a bit of a change right now is that we are seeing far more flexibility and a softening of those kind of hard start and hard end times of work across the board, because people require more flexibility because they don't necessarily have the child coverage. They don't necessarily have the ability to focus completely during the workday. I'm hoping that as we as a society move through the impact of the COVID scenario and some portions of our lives return into something that resembles kind of the new normal, that there will be slightly more adherence to acceptable start and end days of time, because I think that actually ends up having a really negative effect on the psyche and mindset of those individuals that are working if in fact there is not a clear start and end to their day. And I think that's one of the biggest things we've seen within the industry is managing the emotional state of people because they're not sure when they can turn on or turn off. So I am hoping that it does return to something that is slightly more acceptable from a start and end date standpoint.

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SC: Yeah, agreed. Peter, what are your thoughts on that, that the terms of a working day given your background in reward?

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PN: Yeah, I think the key note is flexibility. And of course, you know, it all depends on who you work for and what you do. You know, because we're quite a global company operating in different time zones, we've had this difficulty already before and we had a great phrase for it, which was the technology should enable us to work any time from anywhere. But that doesn't mean we should be working all the time everywhere. And I think this is a question of people being able to put down boundaries. In fact, it's absolutely necessary to put down boundaries around your own working life, especially when you're working from home, in order to be able to be clear about what it is that you're doing, where you're doing it, and when you're doing it, because otherwise everything becomes a big blur and a bit of a soup, you know, because you're kind of working all the time and it's all a bit messy. So, I think boundaries, setting personal boundaries, is very important, whatever they are to suit the work that you're doing and then staying disciplined. I mean, you know, anybody who is self-employed also has to operate with that level of boundary discipline, because if you don't, then work can take over your entire life. And so I think those people who've never had to worry about that because they have fixed working hours or relatively fixed working hours, have now got to think a little bit more carefully about how they recreate those kind of boundaries.

[00:21:47]

SC: Absolutely. Alright. So, we're going to pivot real quickly before we wrap up. We're going to play a little game called 'This or That'. So, I'm going to ask you a question and I need you to weigh in on your preference, this or that. We will start with Justin and go to Peter. Ready? Here we go. Justin, early bird or night owl?

[00:22:07]

JM: Night owl.

[00:22:08]

SC: Peter?

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PN: Night owl, too. Yeah, I'm also a night owl, yeah.

[00:22:12]

SC: I used to be a night owl. I can't hack that anymore. It's too hard. [Laughter] Justin, coffee or tea?

[00:22:18]

JM: Coffee. Always coffee.

[00:22:20]

PN: And definitely tea for me.

[00:22:22]

SC: Alright. Justin, handwritten or digital notes?

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JM: Digital notes.

[00:22:27]

SC: Peter.

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PN: And I try really hard to take no notes whatsoever. Even better.

[00:22:31]

SC: [Laughs] I kind of split the difference. I actually handwrite notes on my iPad these days. And I feel like that's a good balance.

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JM: My handwriting has gotten so awful from not using it that I don't think I can go back right now. It's going to have to be digital from here on forward.

[00:22:46]

SC: Yeah. And this last one, I mean, based on our discussion is almost moot. But video on or off during team calls?

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JM: Video on.

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SC: Peter?

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PN: Yeah, definitely. Definitely, video on. Absolutely, yeah.

[00:22:58]

SC: Yeah, of course. Alright. So, thank you both for joining me today. I appreciate the time. In our next episode, we're going to hear a little bit more from Justin and Peter about their backgrounds and how they came to be at the places that they are in their careers. So, if you like this content, please make sure to subscribe to hear more of this podcast.