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NEWSLETTER · IN CONVERSATION WITH GERRIE HAWES

The space between people

Gerrie Hawes — corporate behavioural psychologist — on turning strategy into behaviour people actually adopt, why she loves barriers, and the art of naming the elephant in the room.

Gerrie Hawes is a corporate behavioural psychologist who splits her time between boardrooms and stages, helping leaders turn strategy into behaviour that people actually adopt once they're back at their desks. She works with senior teams on change leadership and culture across pharma, consulting and global organisations, and coaches speakers one-to-one. What interests her most is the least measurable thing in any company: the space between people — the pauses and side conversations that quietly decide how teams really work.

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Bring out the elephant — let's have a look at it.

— Gerrie Hawes, on Pharma Prescribed

Behaviour, not slogans

Gerrie's frustration is with change that lives on a slide and never reaches anyone's Monday morning. Leadership, she argues, must own the what and the why — the vision, the North Star — but her work is the harder, quieter part: what do you actually want people to do differently, and what are they really feeling about it? Strategy is easy to announce; behaviour is what has to change, and it changes in the human layer most leaders skip past.

In praise of barriers

"I love barriers," she says, and means it. Where visionary leaders find them frustrating and default to demanding more — more urgency, more delivery — Gerrie flips it: get the team to name what's actually stopping the strategy, and you've turned a motivational problem into a solvable one. The question becomes collaborative — do we knock it down, climb around it, or jump it — rather than a leader shouting from the front. And the biggest barrier is usually the elephant in the room: the thing Brits especially are too polite to name. Her craft is designing the conditions in which people feel safe enough to point at it.

The HOPE framework

Drawing on behavioural science and the Harvard research on happiness at work — which links it to better decisions, better outcomes and lower burnout — Gerrie builds it into

something organisational. Happiness matters but isn't enough on its own; her HOPE framework adds realistic optimism (not blind positivity, but a grounded belief that things can improve), a genuine sense of purpose, and, finally, an outward turn — from your own contentment to how you help the people around you. It's happiness with a job to do.



Listen to the full episode

Gerrie Hawes on Pharma Prescribed — at pharmaprescribed.com and wherever you get your podcasts.

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