



Episode 25: "A Well-Rounded Approach to Behaviour Change"

with Adam King, Founder & Chief Behavioural Strategist for BeThink Solutions.

The Adam King's education and career have crossed disciplines and sectors in the pursuit of understanding human behaviour. Adam recounts his journey, including what led him to found BeThink and to recently start an Interdisciplinary Sciences PhD. Along the way, he shares insights about differences and commonalities between disciplines and sectors, as well as opportunities for us all to dive further into the well of behavioural science.

Transcript:

KIRSTIN APPELT, HOST: Welcome to this edition of Calling DIBS. I'm your host, Kirstin Appelt, Research Director with UBC Decision Insights for Business and Society, or DIBS for short. Today, we're calling DIBS on Adam King.

Adam is the founder and Chief Behavioural Strategist of BeThink, a Vancouver-based behavioural economics consultancy. He's also a few months into an interdisciplinary PhD at UBC, where he's split between working with the amazing Dr. Toni Schmader in UBC's Psychology department, who's also an affiliate of DIBS and the equally amazing Dr. Kate White, who is at our Sauder Marketing and Behavioural Science division, and another DIBS lead researcher. So I'm really excited for us to have Adam on the podcast today.

Since Adam is a new arrival on the UBC scene, we haven't had much chance to connect. And I'm really looking forward to learning along with our listeners. So welcome to the podcast, Adam.

ADAM KING, GUEST: Thank you, Kirstin. Pleasure to be here.

APPELT: Great. We're excited to have you. So, can you start us off by just telling us a little bit about yourself?

KING: Sure. I am a local boy here from the west coast of Canada and have a family here with two little kidlets. I spent several years abroad working in international development, global health, and then when I returned back, it's been about 10 years of being based back out of Vancouver.

I think one of the defining characteristics, I've learned about myself, is that I am very curious about what it is to be human and what we can do to leverage that insight to support our own development, empowerment and also support others. And so that's kind of what drew me into the field, from a young boy, into the field of learning about whether it's through anthropology, whether this was through sociology, whether it's through health sciences or whether it's through behavioural economics. The question of, you know, what does it mean to be human and what can we learn about that and how can we apply that to be effective agents of change in the world?

APPELT: That's really interesting and it really segues nicely into my first question, which is I noticed in my pre-research that you do have this interest in crossing disciplines with your degrees in sociology and systems design and population and public health and business administration. So, you mentioned the ongoing interest in behaviour change. But why the interest specifically in approaching it from different perspectives?

KING: I think that the world, including academia, but other parts of the world, has created these different perspectives to suit different purposes. But really we're all looking at understanding the same fundamental question of what it is to be human. How are we operating in this world? What can we learn about ourselves and others? And how can we apply this?

Now, if you're taking that from a population and public health perspective, you're going to try to answer that with different methods and different goals in mind. If you're going to look at that from a customer psychology or consumer insights, you're really looking at the same question, but trying to answer it with different methodology and the same with behavioural economics or even cultural anthropology.

So, I kind of feel that the more meta question of what it is to be human and what we learn about that and how do we apply that for positive change, actually crosses all those disciplines. And the world has chopped things up into a little sliver. So, I'm happy and very comfortable jumping between them because I kind of see them for what I think they are, which are unique ways to explore and try to answer that same fundamental question.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. There's so many commonalities. And like you said, the broader questions are the same, even if we use different lenses to approach the question. So, what do you see are some of the common threads other than the big picture common thread?

KING: What really landed for me, to organize how I approach my lifelong experiment of self-awareness, is really thinking about the kind of cultural anthropologist, that is the kind of pyramid of mental programming, as you will. And, you know, at the tip of the pyramid, we would have something like personality, and then lower down, we would have something like culture, could be family culture, could be broader culture. And then the kind of largest area is really around human nature.

And I felt like when I did my undergrad in sociology and anthropology, I was really interested in the cultural component of how we're wired by our cultures, not wired, bit of nature nurture, but how we're supported by our cultures to approach and experience to life in a certain way, and behave in certain ways, and value certain things.

And then, of course, through leadership development, training and a lot of self discovery, you focus on that personality bit. So, what kind of programming is kind of written into my characteristics, my personality that I can learn about and then apply to drive positive change. And then the whole part about human nature, though, was always fascinating, and the only folks, as a young, curious fella growing up through the world, was like poets and philosophers and theologians, they were talking about these deeper questions of human nature.

And then when I stumbled across a lot of the behavioural science and behavioural economics, it really looked at human nature and started to put some harder edges around it by running these kind of randomized controlled trials and looking at how we tend to act, not because of our gender or age or our cultural background or our self-control or personality, but because we are evolved as Homo sapiens. And so, what can we learn about our patterns of behaviour in certain circumstances of uncertainty?

And so that really like kind of dual model of cognition, thinking fast, thinking slow. So all this really for me was a fascinating way that was not touched upon in some of the other disciplines that I looked at around behaviour, experiencing the world, such as in health sciences. And I did a lot of work in global health with the World Health Organization and Aga Khan Foundation, and I loved it. But the health belief models and the

behaviour change models and stages of change when I did my grad program and that they really focused on behaviour change. But they were working a lot on System 2.

Then, of course, there was environment design and policy levers and stuff, but they were really looking at System 2 solutions. So how do we persuade people to change? How do we inform them? How do we educate them on what they need to do to meet their own goals? And I think there's a lot of value in that. But it doesn't cross that intention-action gap that things like behavioural economics and other parts of behavioural science really focus on that, "Okay, now that I have awareness and information and motivation, why am I still not changing my behaviours?". And that's largely because of the insight around these heuristics and biases and how that is running largely unconsciously. So I've noticed there are differences between the disciplines. They're all focused on the same larger question, but depending on what objective you have, you know, I think different disciplines and different value.

And for me to unlock so much so that I quit my career in a leadership position to start my own shop is that I just became so enamoured with helping apply the behavioural science side, the behavioural economics side to help other people solve the problems that yeah, I got bit, and I'm still stung. And I don't think there's any way out of that for the next couple of decades at least.

APPELT: Yeah, I think I really like how you've kind of compared and contrasted and I think echoes a lot of my own experiences having some interdisciplinary background. And so how, now that you have this cross training, how do you think the perspectives combine? Like do you use the different tools together? And how so?

KING: Yeah, 100 percent. I think most, because we're in applied, we do a lot of applied projects where research isn't the focus. It's usually trying to solve kind of real organizational problems or policy problems. We often have to look at a couple of different behaviour change levers. Everything from, you know, do you restrict behaviour? Do you market certain things? Do you use certain incentives? Carrots and sticks. And do you use things like choice architecture and nudging.

So we often have to leverage, when we do our research for clients, we look at the behavioural science research for sure, consumer psychology, economics research. But we also dive into, you know, management sciences and best practices if we're doing organizational transformation one. We look across a range of disciplines that I think probably go outside of the behavioural science, using human-centered design research in order to create remarkable experiences for customers or patients, whatever it may be. But we're definitely interdisciplinary, but our strong slant and the major focus of the insights that we apply are definitely pretty clearly under the behavioural economics, behavioural science umbrella.

APPELT: Nice. I'm excited to hear more about that. But first, I was just curious a little bit about on your personal journey side is what made you add the PhD in interdisciplinary sciences based on your already impressive set of credentials and your varied backgrounds? What was the draw to add this piece?

KING: The more I age, the more I know myself, the more I realize that, you know, doing a PhD was inevitable. I am a lifelong learner. You know, I have a high need for cognition. Yeah, I've flirted with it since my undergrad, and I always was really interested in practice rather than being a researcher per se.

So I went into practice and went back to a grad program. But it was mostly about applying research to solve problems. I was very much in that lovely spot between bridging academic research and kind of practical program design and implementation evaluation. That was a lot of my global health work was using the kind of best practices and evidence base, but contextually localizing it to Syria, to Tanzania, to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka,

wherever I was working. And that's where that cultural component was co-created with their local team, contextualized, culturized the evidence base.

And then, you know, I'm a practical person, so let the rubber hit the road and let's see if we can move some real, real metrics in the world. So I felt like I was always in the middle, but I was always unsatisfied because I've spent many years applying other people's research and I've been a very passionate translator and applier of other people's research. And I always knew that I wanted to give myself permission to generate my original research, to really fall in love with a question and figure out how to ask it in the best way and answer it. And it wasn't really for the purpose of starting a career in academia, because that's not my goal.

So, I consider this my passion project, as crazy as it sounds, is to try to complete this PhD, while running a business, and having a young family. But, when I had my Saturday mornings by myself, which, you know, I get a couple hours out in the morning that I carve out, I'm sitting there drinking a coffee, reading really wild and trippy neuroscience research or different types of academic articles just for fun on my own. So, it's clearly in my nature. I might as well get a degree out of it if I'm doing it, anyways.

APPELT: I think that's the first time I've ever heard a PhD described as "inevitable". Well, I think that that sounds like such a good fit for you. And I think your point about being able to do your own research and contribute to theory is really what is part of what's exciting about a PhD. And you've picked really great advisors in Dr. Toni Schmader and Dr. Kate White, and they're both amazing scholars with really interesting and important research. But aside from their kind of general sterling qualities, what specifically led you to choose Toni and Kate?

KING: So I've worked with Kate for some time, and she's just a powerhouse thinker and problem solver and is definitely deep expertise in her domain. I really appreciate her focus on prosocial consumer behaviour and really trying to build frameworks and run studies around how we can nudge consumers to make more socially and environmentally responsible decisions. And I am particularly interested in, maybe it's through my passion for meditation and mindfulness, the idea of self-construal and how do we understand ourselves and how that concept of self impacts our decisions and behaviours in the world, and she's done some interesting research on looking at that and trying to kind of nudge self concepts to support these positive behaviours that the world needs more of. And just I really admire her.

And Toni also is for me, when I really started learning about what she's up to is just a powerful force of good in the world as well. Like, really trying to tackle gender bias. She does so many things, but really with her work in reducing or trying to understand, tackle gender bias in STEM, really fascinated me. She happened to have a project around leaders and trying to work on biases within leaders. And, you know, I have a deep interest in how these heuristics and biases show up in corporate boardrooms and nonprofit boardrooms and government boardrooms and how that affects leaders' behaviour and decisions. And so, yeah, her research was really fascinating. And she's just a wonderful human as well. So, we aligned on a couple different levels.

APPELT: Yeah, and I think in addition to what you mentioned, I think there's so much room for crossover between the two research streams, so I'm really excited to see what you do in that space, because I think that's really fruitful and has, like you said, so much power to do good in the world.

KING: Yeah, yeah. Well, you and I both. I'll let you know when I figure that out.

APPELT: Well, switching gears a bit and talking about, you know, what you do in the other however percentage of your time that's so tightly divided, you founded BeThink Solution three years ago. What was the inspiration there?

KING: So previously, after my wife and I returned home from our global health work, I ended up working with Provincial Health Services Authority, PHSA are kind of one of our global health organizations here, or sorry, provincial health organizations here. And ended up working in a role of Provincial Director of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

And so my role and my team's role was really to run a bunch of kind of systems change and behaviour change initiatives, evidence driven, of course, around things like diabetes, obesity, perinatal health, maternal mental health, a bunch of different change initiatives, and, you know, I kept using the traditional approaches that, you know, I was trained in during the grad program.

And I just kept coming up with - we're trying to tackle the same problem with the same solutions, and we're not getting the actual behaviour change that we're trying. And then I noticed this tendency in the field to move away from outcome evaluation and move to process evaluation, which for me, is understandable because there's many variables in complex systems change, or behaviour change across the health system or looking at the obesogenic environment. It's very complicated. So you don't always have the budget or the time to do these outcome evaluations.

But I also had a little bit of spidey senses that maybe we weren't actually using the right solutions to drive the change. Now, usually you need adequate intensity and duration of an intervention to expect behaviour change. And so I started looking around and exploring some of the research around behavioural economics and some of the kind of choice architecture and started playing with that in our own projects. And once I realized that it kind of put a little harder edges because of the quite rigorous evaluation. You know, once again, it's not rocket science, it's not the rocket equation where you just plug it in and you're guaranteed to get that satellite up into orbit. There's a lot of nuances and context matters. And it's not a silver bullet. It's not the right tool for every job, should be used in combination with other tactics.

That's like my disclaimer, but it has an interesting perspective on this idea of driving change, even when people admit that that change is good for them. They're still having a hard time getting over that status quo bias. And I just became obsessed, once again, you know, trying to apply it in our department and our work. And I was taking an Executive MBA program through the Beedie school at SFU. And we're digging into economics and kind of decision sciences and a lot of executive decision-making heuristics and biases and it all just kind of clicks being like this. Essentially, you can read one chapter from many books, but I found one book that I want to read every single chapter in, and maybe even write a couple of chapters at the end.

And so I decided that, you know, to probably follow my calling, if you will, would be to focus entirely on trying to figure out how to be the most efficient and effective applicators of some of these behavioural insights work. And for me, you know, I met my partner in the MBA program, and he was also a leader in engineering and ran an organization there. And we both kind of jibed over this idea of trying to launch something new that was entirely focused on this and that we would work across private sector, public sector and nonprofit. And that was really important to us in that we were humble enough to know that we're not the experts, but we have access to experts and we built up our own expertise and that our clients, regardless of if they're nonprofit or government agency or for profit, they're experts as well in their business.

And I think we really found this exciting sweet spot where we wanted to work with really progressive people that actually care about making change. I was in the public sector for a long time, and to be frank, I worked with wonderful, inspiring people. But sometimes you wonder if, you know, the folks really high up do really want to drive change, or if they just want to reduce risk, and, you know, keep the boat afloat. And I got a little impatient, if I will, at the pace of change. And so working across sectors was very appealing in order to work

with folks that are happy to work fast. And, yes, sometimes, you know, it's not as rigorous, but you test, and you learn, and you iterate, and that sort of innovative spirit was really appealing to us.

So that's kind of our modus operandi is like we know the behaviour is complex, but it's not random. Like, you know, we kind of try to help our clients see the patterns and then we work together to, you know, experiment applying those to help drive goals and achieve innovation and change. So, yeah, that's what kind of inspired us. And it's been a wonderful three years, almost four years now.

APPELT: I love that journey. And I love a lot of what you said-- resonates a lot as someone who's also kind of cross-sectoral, what you're saying about how the different sectors work together and sometimes don't work together and that, yeah, it's all resonating a lot for me. So can you tell us a little bit about the types of projects your group tackles? Is there a favourite project you can tell us about?

KING: Yeah, sure. So generally, ninety percent of what we do is bespoke consulting. And then 10 percent is training. And then we also run some validated assessment tools. But most of it is on the consulting side. And of that, it's really split between internal organizational transformation initiatives, change management initiatives, where the goal is really around habits, behaviors, perceptions, culture change within an employee base or leadership teams, as well.

And then the other half is really around consumers. And so how do we design, you know, products and services, whether they be with a global retailer or whether it be a local, digital health startup, you know, we work across sizes and we're really trying to embed evidence-based tactics and insights and principles so that we can help people achieve the goals of creating remarkable value, helping their customers achieve their goals. And in that kind of leadership, part of, you know, we work in healthcare, we work in retail, we work in banking.

Now, because I worked in health care for so long, I'm really passionate about a lot of the wonderful primary health care work, transformation work that's going on, and specifically that the Rural Coordination Center of BC is doing. And they're just doing really, really important stuff for our province. So I want to give them kudos. Yeah.

So we really love working with innovation teams because to be quite frank, we have to sign NDAs, because they're launching really interesting new products and services that are really forward-thinking to solve a lot of consumer problems. Now, we can't speak about those until they're launched on the market, but they're really great because these R&D teams are filled with scientists. It might be, you know, fabric scientists or exercise physiologists or it might be different folks. So they really get the evidence base and they love digging into it.

Some of the other clients that are a bit more, we'll say on the practitioner side, they want to know the "why" to a certain degree. But they really want to see it in action and get results. So for us, we really have to learn through our discovery with clients what's their appetite for understanding the "why" we're recommending they do A, B and C, and why the tactics should increase their confidence that they'll help achieve those goals. Depending on that, then we kind of realize like, okay, so we might love all the evidence base, but they want a light version of it and they really want to start implementing and testing, versus other ones where we really dig into the research together.

We're currently working with a financial institution that is very passionate about redesigning the investment industry that was built for old, white men, to be quite frank, to focus on women and specifically around that kind of millennial age. And how do we meet the needs of millennial, women investors that are starting to get into their investment journeys and how to redesign the entire online and in-person experience leveraging

human-centered design. Speak to them in their voice. Meet their needs. But how do we kind of bridge the gap around that financial services built for female investors.

And it's interesting is there's a lot of customer consumer insights built into that. There's lots of different kind of nudge messaging and choice architecture. We're doing matching between advisors and there's a lot built into in education moving into like peer coaching and accountability devices and commitment devices. There's a lot kind of built into it with, you know, the consumer journey, but under that, you have to empower your own staff to change.

So there's actually, you know, it's a nice wrap around project where there's the kind of consumer experience design, leveraging behavioural science. But there's also the staff behaviour change and culture change in order to kind of meet the promise that you're making. You make this great promise to consumers, but your staff can't follow through on it. Then, of course, you know, you've failed your customer and their vision is very noble. And they really want to kind of redesign that banking experience for female investors. So that's a really cool one as well.

APPELT: Those sound so interesting. And what is really resonating for me is, as you were talking about it, things that often on the face of it seem like a simple problem, like, "Oh, we just need to make it more welcoming for female investors". And then you dig into it and it's, you know, there's so much more to the problem.

And like you said, you can't just approach the customers. You have to approach the employees. And so I think for me and I'm curious if this is what's true for you, that's part of both what's challenging about BI, behavioural science projects is that they it's never as simple as it seems. There's always so much more going on. But that's also what's so rewarding is that you're really getting into the heart of it and you're always learning yourself and then getting to figure out how to apply all of those insights. So do you find that challenging and rewarding or what's your reaction there?

KING: We find that we are now a little bit more honest, confrontational with clients that you can tell they want an easy fix, but they don't realize they always want other people to change, but they don't want themselves to change. And we just kind of call BS on that. Just say, "Listen, we don't want to take your money to do this".

APPELT: And I assume "BS" there stands for behavioural science, we call "behavioural science" on that?

KING: That's good, that's good. Well played. When leaders slow down enough to think about a problem holistically, they realize that they're mission-critical and that they can't just mandate change. They need to be active participants. And in fact, if you're really trying to drive organizational change, there's a bunch of different levers that go far beyond, you know, nudge methodology that are required to sustain, first to dampen the current habit cycle, interrupt it, and then to create momentum for a new habit cycle. There's a lot of different levers and a lot of those have to be initiated and modeled through leadership.

And so part of the thing I like about behavioural economics is if it was an easy problem, they would have already have solved it. So, they wouldn't have come to us or they wouldn't have taken our call if we connected with them. So clearly they're working on problems that are sticky, and so generally, there is an openness to realize that, you know, there's something challenging here that we haven't been able to crack on our own. This methodology might be the solution or it might not. But we're willing to engage in a discovery call or to start exploring it together and set up a project to see if this methodology can help us bridge that gap and crack that tough problem. And so we kind of have to say, you know, "We're not a marketing company. You know, if

you just want a marketing campaign, you can go to other places they'll do a way better job than us. We're really looking at driving behaviours and sometimes perceptions and awareness are part of that”.

But, yeah, I just really feel that, at this stage, we're just not willing to, you know, I don't know, I guess, simplify a problem so much. And if they don't have adequate resources, I'm like “Don't do this. You're not gonna do it well enough to make any change. Like, just stop. Keep your money, put it somewhere else. If you do really want to address this, once again, we're not, you know, we're not a firm that wants to work three years on a project. We want to do things within three months, six months”.

Generally, we do longer projects. But still, there's like actionable results that we're monitoring as we go. And so sometimes we have to say, “I don't think you have the resources financially or the willpower politically to really solve this problem. So if you just want, like a surface solution, you know, we're not the people because, you know, it's not worth it”. I felt frustrated many years in my life trying to solve problems with inadequate intention and appetite and resources and, you know, it's just frustrating because you work so hard and you don't actually see a change and you wonder, “What am I doing all day, working so hard, and it doesn't seem like your organization really wants to solve this”. And so it's quite disheartening. So, we try to move away from those clients and we're learning as we go. But we've found some wonderful partnerships that we keep working with because I think we're really value aligned and they're very committed to actual change. And so it's always a wonderful partnership.

APPELT: Yeah, I think that's very true. And that's something our Certificate students do: a capstone project, and having the client be really committed not just on paper, but being actually committed to the various components of the project and actual change, I think they're finding what you've mentioned is that that's just a huge piece of the puzzle.

And so I was wondering if we could pivot just a little bit and talk about, as you've mentioned, you work with the different sectors, and I was wondering if you've seen differences in the pace of uptake of behavioural science across sectors, whether that's some government, nonprofit, private. What differences do you see?

KING: We have purposely focused on private sector, nonprofit, and those smaller government agencies that are a bit more nimble just because I think, as I said, I left a career in the public sector and I was a little burnt out with slow paces, so we really wanted to work with folks that were really hungry to drive change. And we found that in certain sectors.

And so we felt that as we started talking to people about behavioural economics, you could tell that the people that we were really resonating with already knew what it was. They just didn't know how to do it, and they didn't have the time or the interest to build their own expertise, but they were innovative thinkers. They were progressive by nature. They already read the pop science books, they've watched the TED talks, they understand the concept. They realize that it's something potentially useful, if not intriguing, and they want to know more. And they're kind of frustrated with the way they currently do things in their own organization. And because they already have a natural interest in psychology, just like they're curious people, they're essentially people that would be one of my good friends, most of our clients are.

So previously we would go and we'd kind of say, you know, “We understand you have a problem, here is behavioural economics. It might be a potential methodology that we can apply together to solve this”. And a lot of them got lost when they didn't know the basics around BE. And so we'd go into the spiel and you could tell their eyes glaze a little bit because we weren't very good at landing it in a practical way. We got better over time. But generally now when we work with R&D teams, you know, these are very progressive,

innovative people that are responsible for innovation in their organization. So they already are bought into what BE is and they're probably aware of some organizations that are already applying it.

And in the private sector, there's a lot of organizations, especially larger, global organizations. And so they're just like, let's get to work. Like there's no long dating period. It's like "Here let's start with a small project to see if we're a fit. Let's get some tangible outcomes". We run a sprint with them. And then, you know, as we prove value, they're like, "Okay, well this is really useful. We need to, you know, implement these recommendations, let's work together. Let's test them. But I think you should talk to our VP over here, because they're working on a totally different topic that has nothing to do with the new product or service". It has to do with, you know, organizational change management, the methodology of looking at behaviour in this way, they see and they buy in to the value, and so we find that we get a lot of organic growth within large organizations very quickly.

And that's why we probably never will be just a customer experience design firm or just a change management firm, because, you know, when the problem is based on human issues, there's no shortage of problems that organizations are working on. And so, I find that very interesting.

In the nonprofit one, we found a lot of interesting traction in board decision-making and supporting strategic planning initiatives, trying to kind of create new habits of decision making among boards to de-bias it and to improve the quality of those decisions. So that that's been really fun. We do some executive coaching with folks and largely it's around, you know, building self-awareness and then building processes in place that you don't have to rely on your willpower or your System 2 to kick in. But they're kind of built into the process, natural debiasing techniques. And so that's kind of fun.

In the public sector, our healthcare work is great. I feel like there's a lot of innovators in health care. There's more in the States, obviously, because it's private sector. But there's a lot of innovation in digital health in BC, which is really, really inspiring. But I do feel like the large RFP work, we haven't really jumped in to yet. We've done some for sure. We're doing one with Fraser Health right now. We mentioned that was around kind of return to work, and absence and disability management, applying behavioural economics. And it's a wonderful, wonderful project. But yeah, so I guess we're prone to want to work more with folks that already know a little bit about what it is and actually already have a sticky problem that they're aware of.

And the large projects with government bodies that I think are a bit longer in timeline haven't been the ones that we really focused on. Maybe just because I needed a break from that type of work, potentially. But it's certainly interesting, the policy work is fascinating and other people, folks like, you know, lots of wonderful folks do it so well. I'm realizing that we can't be everything to everyone. So where are we naturally inclined to add value, and then just see how that works organically grows.

APPELT: Yeah, and I think what you're saying is true across sectors is that it's the folks who are in the innovation space, whether literally in their jobs or just mentally in terms of being curious and open. I think those are the ones who, regardless of sector, the ones who make it easy to work on the projects of that natural curiosity and willingness to try this relatively new approach.

KING: Yeah, yeah. Interesting.

APPELT: Do you have a message for our BI practitioners in training?

KING: I would say that applying it in your own life, I'll say it from my perspective, practicing applying these insights and tactics and strategies in my own life with my own habits, my family's, with my own business,

really, you know, I believe in randomized control trial, I believe in meta analysis. But if you really want to be an effective communicator to the people you work with, humanizing it and using an experiential perspective. I find some people like me are really motivated by the evidence. A lot more people are motivated by a personal story of how it's impacted an organization.

And so I feel like thinking about practicing experience in playing with it, appreciating what works, what doesn't work, even if it's an "n" of 1, yourself, I feel like it really does help bridge the divide between those people that are not academic by nature, those people that aren't used to understanding research or the evidence base.

And at some point, you know, a lot of people are pretty skeptical, like you can use evidence to argue that coffee's great for you or that coffee is terrible for you, that climate change is happening or it's not. There's so much skepticism around science these days that I feel like the power of the personal narrative and lived experience, I find, when I talk to leaders and clients that, you know, opening with my own lived experiential understanding of catching my confirmation bias as I'm trying to make a decision, or telling these stories around it, I think has made me a more effective communicator and been able to bridge the gap. If you're just working with other academics or you're working with a team that is happy to play in that space, I think you may not need it.

But I still think, regardless of your profession, that behavioural science is a very useful tool to understand ourselves and how we're wired to experience and act in the world. And that self-awareness leads to self empowerment and makes us better change agents. And so for me, it's more of a practice, like a meditation practice, practice being aware of how this interacts in your own decision-making and behaviours. And I feel like that lived embodiment of some of the behavioural science insights and tactics, that makes you a pretty powerful change agent and a pretty powerful communicator with others around it.

You know, there's lots of methodologies that come and go, you know, Lean, the others. You can name all these methodologies that people are really interested in for a short bit, and then organizations get bored with it even though the problems still exist. So, you know, I would say, yeah, just think about creating this as like a deep perspective shifting practice.

And then regardless of how many jobs have behavioural science or behavioural insights or economics in the title, which there's a lot more in the title, but there's still a lot of programs pumping out people in the market. So I think it's wise to think about the deep problem of human challenges and decision-making, and then you can be more agile in how you apply it. And you may not always have to wave the flag of nudge methodology. You can wave the flag of an effective project manager or a manager or a change agent or an analyst, whatever it may be.

I kind of feel like that is the long cut, as Seth Godin would say, a lot of shortcuts but the long cut is really to really fall in love with the field and realize that it's probably going to be a very long journey as it is for me. I still feel like a baby, especially when talking with Kate and Toni and their expertise around this stuff. I feel like a baby in it and I know that, you know, it's a deep well. And so I hope that everyone that jumps into it finds some love for it and that it's not a quick fix to a miraculous career, but it certainly can be a wonderful methodology to be a really powerful professional in the world. And I hope everyone lots of luck and people can connect with me on LinkedIn if they want to chat more about anything with me, I'm more than happy to.

APPELT: Well, thank you. Yeah, I think that's a perfect note. I love the optimism and the way you phrased everything and the deep well, I think that's a perfect way to sum up what we've talked about. So thank you for joining us today.

KING: Of course, Kirstin. Thanks for the invite.

APPELT: Yeah. It's been so neat to learn about your background and what you're doing and all the different directions you're going in, so I think our listeners will have a lot of food for thought. So thanks again and thanks as well to our listeners for joining another episode of Calling DIBS.
