


# Episode 77: "How to Make BI Projects & Partnerships Work"

*with Ammaarah Martinus, Senior Program Office at UNESCO MGIEP*

*Ammaarah Martinus has applied BI in large organizations based in South Africa and India. Ammaarah shares how starting small, but strong helps build the necessary BI appetite and awareness for project success. She also shares other key requirements for rewarding BI project partnerships, including having unlike minds at the table, being willing to learn from and about each other, and sharing the same definition of success.*

*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 Ammaarah Martinus.

Ammaarah is a Senior Program Officer with UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Education for Peace and Sustainable Development. Whether now in India or previously in South Africa, Ammaarah always does really amazing and impactful BI work. She also really puts the 'insights' into behavioural insights. I find that she takes away and shares such clear, useful lessons from her work. So I'm really thrilled to be talking with her today. So welcome to the podcast, Ammaarah.

AMAARAH MARTINUS, GUEST: Thanks so much, Kirstin, and very happy to be here and for all your listeners as well.

APPELT: And maybe we can start by just having you tell us a little bit about yourself.

MARTINUS: Sure. So I started my career in behavioural science really in my previous organization. So when I was working with the government and really sort of fell into it by accident, I think we were sort of very focused on policy development and implementation, and so using innovative methods like behavioural science was kind of a no brainer for us. And we got into it by sort of really starting really big and going into quite a lot of different types of projects in different sectors. And I was sort of predominantly working within the social sector, so sort of education, health, cultural affairs and sport. So this was kind of how I first got into it.

Most of my life has been working in the civil service, public service in South Africa, working at various levels, both national and provincial, and then also sort of working with some sort of political organizations in my youth. So it has always been a love of mine in terms of political science and trying to figure behaviour out in some shape or form. And yeah, I think it was a natural progression to move from that into how to use behavioural change and behavioural science to think about human behaviour and how that links to public policy and implementation.

APPELT: Yeah. So interesting. I always love to hear about people's journeys to BI because I feel like everyone is different, so it's always fascinating to see how people kind of found the field and fell in love with it. So last summer you appeared at one of our seminars and shared some of your work, and I was really struck by some of the takeaways you shared about your work using BI and large organizations.

And I'm not usually one to jot down quotes, but in this case I actually did, because I felt like you really captured some really important ideas in quite pithy manners. I feel like we could start a T-shirt business with some of your quotes printed on the front. So I'd love to share some of those quotes and have you expand on the meaning behind them. So the natural place to start is your quote about starts. So you said, "Start small but strong." Can you elaborate on what that means, starting small but strong in the BI context?

MARTINUS: Sure. And so just to give you a bit of context, so I found myself working in a policy unit as a Policy Analyst and then sort of moving on to head up Policy Research and Analysis section. A lot of what we used to do was many big things in many different departments. So looking at anything from the policy design, conceptualization, implementation and then also evaluation.

So that was kind of like the policy development cycle and we actually did the entire cycle ourselves. This is quite unusual because a lot of the policy units in the world are sort of just focusing on policy formulation or policy design, but don't take it through to the implementation phase. So why I'm saying this is because even though we did this whole process, we were a very small team, the entire sort of policy unit was about ten people. And my team has probably never been more than five people. And so I think for the work that we were doing, it was quite a small number of people to do such a large portfolio.

But what I did find was that we were very sort of excited about doing new things. And even though we were so few and at some point they were only like three of us, we were able to really garner the expertise that we had within the small team to be able to do something. And I think starting small was really about it doesn't mean that because you're a small team that you can't do big things and especially BI one of the things that we've always sort of said was that even though it seems sort of quite a big hill to climb, we just did it. And I think that, you know, starting small is not a bad thing and also making sure that we just started something. So even if it's in the BI space, you know, don't try to always do ten or 15 or 20 projects at a time, you know, sometimes and actually wears you quite thin. And even focusing on one or two priorities and going deep in that is actually quite a godsend.

So what we've always done initially started off, as you might know, quite big with a whole portfolio of projects, I think about 20 projects, but then really ascertaining that that's not necessarily the way to go with a small team and then focusing on one or two projects, but doing it really, really well and exceptionally, really getting into the nuts and bolts of it. And I think you can do that both in terms of the number of projects you take on, but also in terms of smaller things. So that's essentially what I meant with that.

APPELT: Yeah. And I think those are such important ideas because I think sometimes our excitement gets so big that we try to take on 20 projects at once, and especially if it's an organization that's new to BI, and so you're having to work with people to get them up to speed, if you're doing that with all the different projects, the bandwidth, like you said, just really goes quickly. So I love that as a starting message and I think I've seen that elsewhere as well. The other BI teams are kind of small but strong. And I think it is a model that works for BI.

And I think another quote that dovetails with this really nicely is the idea of, "it takes time to build appetite and awareness." And I think that quote can sound straightforward, but I think there's a lot in it. So can you unpack why it's important to understand that?

MARTINUS: Yeah, I think in government, instead of spending, most of my adult career within the government service, I think a lot of what you have to do is almost be a lobbyer, you know? And I think that one doesn't always think of your role as a civil servant or a public servant as a lobbyer, but rather as just doing. A lot of what we do and what we did was new. And so with anything new people are quite hesitant, they might be a

bit skeptical, they might not understand why we are doing this. “We've done it like this. Why do we want to change it now?”

And so it's important to be able to really hold that appetite and sort of pull that need for what you're trying to sell. Essentially, your role is about also selling something and making it sound appealing. And that can take a long time, especially if you're dealing with politicians, you're dealing with heads of departments that may think that this is not really a significant add on or useful for their work, and so I've really found that to be able to grow the appetite and to pull that awareness, you need to be able to show something. And so show the result of a pilot project, show the evidence, show the rigour.

And I think the beauty about behavioural science is that it actually is all about this. And so if you are able to really find something that is a niche area and something that's related to a strategic priority of the day or that particular administration or government, you are then able to really have a shoe in to be able to, you know, pull that out, pull the appetite, pull the results and then kind of say, “Listen, I've done this project. I think it could have value and these are the results”. You’re probably more likely to kind of have that appetite being built up because people are like, “Oh, she actually did this”. And, you know, it's kind of like “You spend time on it, you spent effort on it. So perhaps I should maybe give it a chance”.

It's not easy. And so I think it's also understanding that things are not going to happen in one month. This takes time. It takes a lot of trust. It takes relationship building. It also takes a lot of coffees, a lot of lunches. And eventually, you know, people will come around, not everybody, but I think you will have a few willing to listen to you. And as long as they haven't said “No”, I think that's pretty much a “Yes” for me. So that's basically what I mean.

APPELT: Yeah. And I think, like I said, that's a nice dovetail point because I think when you start small but strong and you have those projects you can use as demonstration, then it makes the next projects easier because you have that broader support. Whereas if you try to do a lot of projects at once and you're trying to fight to get that awareness and appetite while you're doing those projects, that is a really tough job.

And the other thing I like about what you're saying is it also reminds me that sometimes we forget to turn the EAST lens on our own work. So when we're trying to make things easy and attractive and social, timely, it shouldn't just be the policy, it should be the people making the policy, you have to make BI easy and attractive and social and timely for the policymakers, for the other folks who are having to work with you on the projects. And I think that's something that in our excitement we sometimes overlook.

MARTINUS: Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, we sometimes get carried away by "I want to do this pilot, I want to do this project," but we don't actually realize how we're going to execute it. What is our strategy? And I think, you know, you can have as many pilots of projects as you like, but it is about how do you land that which is probably more important, you know, especially within big organizations like government, it's important to understand that it's not always about the content necessarily, but about how you actually land the content, how you execute that and how you also position it within the larger organization that makes an even bigger impact.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. And one of the other quotes I really liked was, and this is one that could go straight on a T-shirt, "Unlike minds are key." Can you share why you think that's important and how it strengthens BI work?

MARTINUS: Yeah, absolutely. So I have had many heated discussions with teams and my team members, a lot of them coming from very different fields. I've had a lawyer in my team, I've had a town planner, I've had an

environmentalist, you know, just a broad range of behavioural scientists. And everybody comes with a different vantage point and with a different perspective experience. And everybody also comes with their own way of doing things. So whether it is a methodology or whether it is a way of working. And even though we've applied different approaches to a particular topic or came from different points, it was so crucial to be able to understand the other, you know, and I think really emphasizing this point about empathy and how that plays into how we think about problems, seeing problems from the other side and really thinking about the perspective taking from others.

And I think this is important in gathering teams but also having these discussions and debates and sometimes fights because it does make a difference to the product. I think if everybody's a behavioural scientist with everybody sort of a political science person, you'll get the same results. And I think having these sort of diverse team members and diverse groups of people really enhance the product at the end of the day. So I would almost say like my first point of hiring in terms of working on a team is probably somebody very different to who I am because it's important to also get others views and yes it can be a bit messy, but I think it can also be quite rewarding in terms of what the product looks like at the end.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that's one of my favorite things about behavioural insights as it's often practiced, is that it is folks coming from different backgrounds. Like you might have two people who both described as behavioural scientists, but one's from anthropology, one's from psychology, or they could be business or economics. There's just so many different backgrounds. And I find, like you said, it makes the conversation so rich and you really get at different understandings of the problem than you would otherwise do, because you're having people who just think with different frameworks, different background experiences. And I think that it really strengthens all the work that we do.

Building on this idea of unlike minds and thinking about people coming from different perspectives, you recently wrote an article in Nature about partnerships, bridging policy in academia, and you talked about what the different partners bring to those relationships. Can you recap the value of those partnerships and what you think the different sides bring to the table?

MARTINUS: So I really had fun writing that because it was something I'd been thinking about for quite some time and really thinking about the role that academia plays and the role that policy people play and sort of what happens in between. You know, I don't know if there's a lot written about it, but I think just that the very practical steps about how do you actually do this, right.

And one of the things that I kind of see is that academia really brings that sort of rigour to the conversation. They bring their academic lens to the conversation. They bring the evidence to the conversation, which I think is really powerful. They also provide a space for public policy officials or even the government officials or people in big organizations to carve out a little bit of space and time that you don't need to really think about that. So the benefit of having a research partner or an academic partner on board is that they can kind of spend time on doing data analysis, they can spend time on doing evidence synthesis, evidence reviews, which is really powerful. That takes a lot of time.

And of course, you know, being in this sort of fast paced environment whether it is in the private sector, or whether it is in government, you do feel like there isn't enough hours in the day. And so having a trusted partner like that with you really takes off that load. And, you know, it's kind of a symbiotic relationship because you do feel as though as part of running BI experiments, you need that expertise and you need that kind of space to be able to do that.

And of course, sitting where we do where for example, in my context, while I was heading up the Behavioural Insights unit, I was also doing many other things with within the policy space. So having time to actually just apply my mind to certain things was quite difficult. And having a partner who I trusted and who was there made a huge difference to what the project looked like and also the rigour and really sort of seeking evidence because ultimately I think our sort of politicians, they want to know what the evidence is, but you also need the time and the energy and bandwidth to be able to do that. So that was really powerful in terms of being able to do that and also picking up things that perhaps you were not able to do.

And similarly, I think when we think about the inverse, I almost feel and I mean the conversations that I've had with various sort of academic partners was that they found this sort of lens into the public policy world to be quite fascinating, a world they perhaps didn't understand before and just what happens behind closed doors. So people have the perception about government officials and what we do, but they don't really know the reality. I think sometimes that is just a bit of a wake up call that sometimes for us a minister wants something tomorrow, like literally, and we don't have the luxury of always waiting three or four or five weeks. So it's about understanding that sometimes that turnaround time needs to be flexible. The ability to kind of be like, “Okay, I can do” attitude rather than “I can't do this” is also so essential. And I think the best sort of perspective is so important within that space.

APPELT: Yeah, it's definitely like you said, unlike minds and unlike contexts coming together and then being so mutually complementary by the different work they do, the different perspectives they bring, and just the richness of the work that comes out of it. I think one of the challenges when you do have these unlike minds and like you said, different timelines and maybe different perspectives, priorities, you have to think about when do you compromise and when do you hold firm? And I know that's something you talk about in the article, so can you share your perspective a little bit on that?

MARTINUS: Yeah, I think even within an organization. So I can think about an example where we ran a pilot with the Education Department and we had the pilot, which is obviously made or sort of made up in a specific way. We then moved to scale, which obviously looked a little bit different just by virtue of the fact that going into a much larger scale. And so I think some of the challenges that we face is that perhaps the organization or sister organization asks you to radically change an intervention. So I think for me, when we kind of ask them to change things, it's okay. Tweaking here and there, making changes maybe to the context and making it a bit more culturally relevant, maybe a different use of language or dubbing videos or whatever it may be, might be useful.

But when we're talking about a complete sort of intervention change, there needs to be some sort of pushback. And I think I've been very firm in the work that we've done to say “We can tweak things, but we cannot change an intervention because that means it's not the same intervention”. So whatever you are doing is not what we are doing, and the pilot that we tested the evidence that we gathered and also results, so then it becomes very difficult. And I think it's important from an academic perspective and also just to ensure the fidelity of the pilot that you do, you know, hold firm on this because this is critical.

And so I've been sort of very firm in many instances to say, “Listen, we are going to do this and we are not going to do that”. I think there's a fine line between wanting your pilot to be scaled up, but also kind of realizing that if you scaled up in such a way that you don't even recognize your pilot, then what's the point? Then it's actually not scaling in that it's another program that's being implemented altogether. If it's, for example, the pilot happens within an urban setting now, it needs to be adapted to be a rural setting. I think that's great. And I think also one of the important things is then when that adaptation does happen, the pilot group, for example, my team, would be wholly involved in how the scaled up version looks like. This is not only

to ensure the fidelity, but also to say, “Listen, this is not going to work. That's not going to work. This is not what we thought”.

And I think that relationship is important to cultivate and also nurture because some people just don't understand that if you're changing an intervention so dramatically, it's actually not the same intervention. So I think it's also being that educator of what it means to actually scale up, which is not an easy thing, but taking into consideration the context and the culture, but also being very firm that the fidelity of a project is critically important in order to scale.

APPELT: Absolutely. And I think going back to some of the other things you've said around the communication and understanding, different points of view, it's also sometimes when you're having these disagreements about what can be changed and what can't be, maybe different understandings or different perspectives. Like if someone's not in the behavioural sciences, they might not realize the importance that wording can have from a motivating change perspective. And if you're from behavioural science and not company marketing background, you might not understand that certain brand colors and logos have to be used. And so if you start to explain to each other why you want something to change or why it should stay the same, I find that you often can get to a place where you satisfy both parties.

But when you first come in, often each side is very firm on their ideas and doesn't understand the rationale for the other. So I think, like you said, having those conversations and figuring out what the pieces are that need to change and what can stay the same is really important.

MARTINUS: Absolutely, I think it's also, you know, these conversations, again, it's not going to be a quick fix. You know, it takes time to also I mean, coming back to this point about being able to listen to others and, you know, I think compromising, there's nothing wrong with that. But I think there's a limit to compromising. And I think that as long as you are not spoiling the fidelity of your pilot or your program, I think that's okay, because cultural context or the context changes from country to country, but I think that the fundamental sort of thrust of an intervention will remain. And so it's just that understanding that needs to be shared between both in order to be successful and just patience. I think that's also a really key thing that I've learned. Just be patient and eventually if you start saying the same thing over and over, the penny does drop.

APPELT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that goes back to sometimes timelines aren't exactly what we hope them to be, right? Sometimes that patience has to be factored in. Well, maybe on a similar vein, something else you mentioned as a key element for success and again, for your eventual T-shirt shop, you said "valuing impact over output." And I think that is a really powerful phrase, and I'd love to hear you unpack it a little bit.

MARTINUS: I think it also links to this point that we were talking earlier about sort of breadth vs. depth right? So thinking through what or how you want to position yourself as an organization or somebody sort of starting up whatever it is. I think it's important to know what you're doing and not do everything under the sun. I think that sometimes we're so kind of keen to get our hands dirty with so many things, but we don't focus.

And I think that that could be a danger. You're doing too many things and you’re spreading yourself too thin and so you're not actually getting the impact that you want. And so I think it's also about understanding that, yes, you may not be doing 20 or 30 BI projects at a time, but actually doing your “do you really need to do that?”, and your power really lies in the quality of your output. And so this is why I'm saying, you know, when you're doing fewer things but doing it well, the impact of those fewer things will be much higher than just saying, you know, “Yeah, we've done 20 or 30 projects”, but actually did we see results and has it changed people's lives?

And I think that's the fundamental question that I always ask myself is about the people that you're working with and the people whose lives you want to change through BI, are they actually being affected or not? And I always think if they're not, is it really worth doing, and if we are not able to show that again, is it really worth doing? So that is really how I sort of see it that I would rather do this, but do it exceptionally well and get the impact that I want than spreading myself too thin and just sort of running on the treadmill, but getting nowhere.

APPELT: And I think going back to this idea of compromising and holding firm, that's something where both parties need to be on the same page about impact over output, because I think that's where some partnerships really go awry is where one is focusing on, like you said, depth and one is focusing on breadth. And then you really are going to have a lot of conflict there when you're not on that same page. I think just to add to that is the point about choosing your partners very well, you know, and being clear about, I think, you know, starting any kind of BI project or program or unit, you need to be very clear about who you want to partner with, who shares your values.

So, for example, if I'm into quality outputs and I'm sort of thinking about impact, that's my main thrust, then you need to find partners that match that. Otherwise you will have this tussle about, no, I want output as opposed to impact. I want to see a thousand projects, but not really sort of making any difference in people's lives. And I think that this is important.

MARTINUS: Choice of partner is so critical as well.

APPELT: Yeah. And that goes to the next point I was going to draw on from the article, which is something we talk about, is both the value of the academic policy partnerships, but also a requirement for the success of the partnerships is that both parties have to be willing to learn from each other, but also about each other. So I'm curious, what are some of the key lessons? I think we've already started to talk about a number of them, but what are some of the key lessons there, what are some of the ways you've seen it done well?

MARTINUS: I think the first thing is about just sort of setting the rules for the game, if you like. And I think that this is important. So whenever I work with academic partners or anyone else for that matter, I'm always clear about this is our vision, this is what we want to do, outlining that very, very clearly so that there's no ambiguity and sort of, you know, reading between the lines, I think that's very important. One of the things I also find pretty useful is just to be upfront and honest about what's possible and what's not possible.

So if, for example, it is a case of, you know, you not being able to, you know, find a space five or six or ten months to do a project, then you have to say so. I think often these sort of conflicts come into play because perhaps there was an unrealistic expectation that we had 24 months to do this project when in fact, we only have eight months. And I think that this is very important to be clear, even though it might feel a little bit like "This is virtually impossible", but just to be fair and to be clear so that whoever you're working with is not under false pretenses and under stress when things go wrong. So I think this is something that I've seen quite a bit of, where these kinds of setting the ground rules is not. So this becomes extremely important just to set from the very, very beginning.

APPELT: Yeah, I've definitely seen a number of times where it's been kind of like you said, where it started out on one timeline, then it gradually shifted. It doesn't end up going well. If you can start with being honest and upfront, I think that people can be creative and come up with plans to work around it. But if you don't start and you just slowly change things, it makes it a really rough, rocky road. Are there any other key elements for success or even barriers to success that you can think of when it comes to partnerships, either with policy in academia or any other partnerships? Because you've done a lot of different types of partnerships.

MARTINUS: Yeah, it comes back to the point about impact and impact for who, right. I've worked with some partners who were quite sort of fixated on maybe the monetary aspects of the partnership. You know, “What can I get out of this? I have targets to meet. I've got this to do”. And then sort of thinking about impact on people's lives as secondary. And so this is normal. I think it's about, you know, “What is your goal?”. And I think that this is important. So if your goal is profit, fine, you know I think that that's great. But then it doesn't necessarily chime, for example, with people who are doing their work for good, so impacting lives.

So I think this is always this tussle, I think between, and maybe this is controversial, the tussle between sort of private sector and also public sector and I think or the development sector. So thinking through, what is our bottom line? Is it profit or is it people? And I think that sometimes those two can coincide, but it does take a little bit of a dance to understand, “Okay, how can we make the profit work but also benefit people?” And I think that this is something that, you know, some people can make work and others can't. It just depends on how far you are and trying to understand that perhaps yes, we are also sharing the same goal and perhaps the means to get there might be different.

So I think this is probably one of the most critical things that I've seen in terms of partnerships not going well and people just not understanding the importance of either profit or people. And I don't think it needs to be mutually exclusive. I think it can work together, because sometimes you need the profit to be able to help people. But it's about really coming together to understand that, and that it's not one or the other.

APPELT: Yeah. And then it's also reminded me, too, that we always have to be clear with our terms at the beginning of a project because like you said, one person might define, they might say, “Oh yeah, we totally impact over output, that's us too”. And then you dig in and you realize you have very different definitions of impact and so you're not on the same page at all. So especially when we have all these unlike minds together, it's very important to define terms and make sure that you're using the same term in the same way or different terms in the same way, whichever it is.

And the other thing that is making me think about is that because of the way our minds work and we think, you know, chronologically, we often start the project and start and get into it without thinking of the end. And like you said, we have to think about the end of the project at the beginning to make sure that we are going in the same direction and we both want the same end whether it's impact on people or profit or both.

And so one of the things we sometimes talk about in the program is backward thinking, where you kind of run through the project in your mind forward, and then you also run through it backward. Like “If we want to be at Z at the end, how, what are the steps that would get us there” and then make sure everything is in alignment. And I find that over time I spend more and more time talking about the end at the beginning than when I was first doing projects and just eagerly jumping in. And then you realize, oh, we ended, we're at like different definitions of success. And we didn't realize that until too late.

MARTINUS: Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, often these are not comfortable conversations to have and can be quite sticky and it can put some people off. So I think it's just about, you know, figuring out what that delicate balance is and just being honest and upfront about how your perceptions of what quality is or output is, what impact is and what success might look like for you. Because often a lot of the times things don't work out simply because of lack of communication or a lack of understanding. And so it's important just to kind of upfront that as far possible, because otherwise it just becomes really messy. And then in the end, we just, you know, there's a bit of kind of bad blood at the end, which really doesn't help you for any future work.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And it's interesting because there's obviously the natural tendency to just put off difficult conversations, but also sometimes you want to build, you know, trust and rapport before you have

them. But then if you wait, then you can just totally decimate any trust and rapport you've built. So I think you're right that even though it may not be the fun thing, it is more conducive in the long term to have those conversations earlier. Well, I've taken up quite a lot of your morning slash my evening with our timezone difference here. So I'll move towards our last questions and I always like to ask folks if they have a message for people who are new BI practitioners in training.

MARTINUS: One of the things that I can say just because I almost wish that I had done it was to just get involved a bit more so, you know, go to as many sort of webinars as you can, conferences you can, informal meetings with people. One of the things that I found in the BI community is that people are really open to communicating. And I think this is important, of course, in the space that we're in.

I think if somebody wrote to me and said, “Listen, I'm so interested in behavioural science, I really want to find out more. Can we have a 15 minute chat about it?” I'll be like, “Yeah, sure, I'd be open to it.” And I think it's important just to kind of get out there to find out what's happening, what's the latest trends. Read up, listen to podcasts like this. I think also just being aware of what's happening within the space. So whether that is, you know, joining an organization or an informal behavioural network or even starting your own network would be really great. So really get people talking about it. And I think that, you know, almost sort of jumping into paid work sometimes is not always that useful because I think that a lot of what you learn is informal and then you kind of pick things up. You see what's happening trend wise in the BI space, who's doing what, you know, what are the key things people are talking about.

And I think, you know, have a solid grounding of what behavioural science is. So read up on the famous books and kind of be clear about System One, System Two, what does it mean? And also just, you know, if you haven't been trained in behavioural science, I think it's also important just to do as many kind of courses or things that you can to really understand the science of it as well, because that's actually the beauty of it is to understand how the brain works, how people work and why they do the things that they do. And I think ultimately, if you understand that and know that, you'll kind of understand what's being put out there and how you can apply it, not only to your own life but also in your work when you eventually get back.

APPELT: Absolutely. I love that. And I think you're absolutely right that the community is very pro-social and that most people if you go up to them and ask them for what's their top read, or “Do you have 15 minutes”, they're very welcoming and very willing to pay it forward. I think that's how a lot of us got into the field. So we are happy to do it for others. And I think as the pandemic winds down, hopefully fingers crossed, a silver lining is that there is so much that's online now like conferences that used to be only in-person, now they do have online elements or are totally online. And so you can be in India, and I can be in Canada, and we can be on a podcast together. You can do a conference, a webinar. And so I think that is great advice to get involved. Well, any last questions? Any last thoughts? Anything I should have asked you about and didn't?

MARTINUS: I think one of the things that I could probably say is that so, for example, I've been thinking about sort of the work that I do here, at UNESCO, and one might not necessarily think about sort of behavioural science within the field that I'm in now, but every single thing that you do could have a behavioural lens, right. So it's about no matter where you are, so even if you're not doing work within a behavioural science firm or in academia or in the government, wherever you find yourself, I think the important part is that behavioural science can really be done as a methodology and as a framework in every single thing that you do and I've certainly done that was in my space, to be able to say, “When I'm starting a project, do I consider those behavioural elements? Do I think about the target behaviours? Do I define the topic, do I diagnose”. So kind of that lens stays with you no matter where you go.

And it's almost as if it doesn't mean because you're not completely in the field, immersed in the field, that you cannot interweave that into your daily work. I think you can. And so for me, it's important to always keep that lens because at the core of it, you're always going to be a behavioural person and it's just about how you apply it not only in your everyday personal life but also to your workspace.

And I think that is very powerful because of the value, and I think also when you start thinking about this, it's not, you know, yes, of course, there are structural problems that require a different solution, but there will always be a behavioural issue that you might want to address within that structural problem. And so thinking about it with that lens is always useful. So, I mean, I've always said that, you know, there must be a behavioural problem within this problem. And I think that that's the beauty of what I've seen so far.

APPELT: Yeah, I think that's a perfect message to end on, and I think it really resonates with me as we think of, you know, the various structural problems. Usually structures are built by their like calcified behaviours that have calcified over time, centuries. And so they started with behaviours. And behaviours may not be enough, but behaviours are a key part. And like you said, every day in every part of our jobs, there's usually some element of a person or behaviour we're interacting with pushing against or something. So behaviour pops up in lots of different ways with lots of different opportunities to use the skill set. So I think that's a perfect note to wrap up on.

So thank you so much. It's so special to find a time to chat with you literally because of the time zones and oceans between us. And I'm just such a fan of all the neat work you do, and I'm excited to see how you continue to make an impact. So thank you for taking time out of your busy morning to chat with us.

MARTINUS: Thank you so much, Kirstin, and thanks for having me. It was really fun doing this. So thank you so much again.

APPELT: And thanks to our listeners for joining another episode of Calling DIBS.