

OCB PODCAST TRANSCRIPT Angela Lewis. Founder, Org. Culture Bites

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PODCAST: Who is Org. Culture Bites?

Introduction

Peter: Welcome to this Org. Culture Bites podcast, where today, we'll be talking to the founder, Angela Lewis. Through our conversation, we'll get to know more about Angela, her business, what she's trying to achieve through Org. Culture Bites and how she goes about doing that.

So, Angela, welcome! You're the founder of Org. Culture bites which you have been building over the past 2-3 years...Nowwith over 20 years' experience working for large global companies , could you explain for me what it is that you do and what are you trying to achieve through Org. Culture Bites?

Angela: Thanks Peter. Perhaps I can start with the purpose of Org Culture Bites and that is, to help improve our quality of life AT WORK and THROUGH OUR WORK.

We have this double focus because firstly, we want to build thriving workplaces where great inputs generate great outputs. Given that people are a key input, we want to ensure that the environment, or culture that they operate in, brings out their best – that people have a sustainable, quality experience at work that fosters shared results. This is where we see a huge amount of opportunity for organisations to **break down barriers** that get in the way of their performance.

These can be barriers like reactive and 'silo' operational practices, they look like inconsistent communication or lack of communication, dysfunctional behaviours, capability gaps or in fact lack of awareness of the critical capabilities that you need, and also talent practices that aren't driving the desired results, for example. We take a close look at alignment – in particular across strategy, culture, brand and also employment brand and performance – because I see these parts are the most common problems I see limiting performance. We also have solutions that evaluate how your brand delivers on the experience promises (or not). This is true for employees and other key stakeholders, as they really give you a real and true representation of their experience with your brand.

Secondly, we bring back the focus to the individual. We invest so much time at work, it's really important to us for many reasons – financially, professionally – our self-esteem and growth, as well as socially and for those great experiences we can have at work. More and more as we see a shift in societal values, people want to be working in roles that make them feel good about what they do at work, with organisations that they are working with. Knowing they are 'doing good' in our community. This is about leveraging that shared or connected purpose through work, as well as **building opportunity through people.**

Things I'm talking about here are practices that enable participation, the right targeted action and shared learning as an organisation, working with your employees to anticipate and build capability and careers for the future, so that you can all be competitive globally.

Importantly, all of our solutions are supported by a strong set of measures around culture, behaviours, engagement and talent practices so that organisations get a clear, transparent picture of 'what is' what actually is happening, in order to progress towards 'what we need to be' or their desired state.

And the bite parts, well. That's about having small, bite sized pieces of information that are broken down into easily digestible parts, so it's not so complex or difficult to act on, for everyone involved. Also, we know that culture, when it works well, can build traction in the right direction for your business. When you don't pay enough attention to your organisational culture and making sure it's relevant and well maintained, well, it can bite you in other ways that aren't so good.

So in essence, if we can help organisations build progressive cultures that demonstrate sustainable performance and fosters growth – growth not just for the individual, that includes personal, professional and business growth, as well as a sense of 'doing good' through these activities then, then we're doing our job.

Q: Peter: Well there seems to be a lot of organisations out there saying they do similar things... what are you actually offering or doing that makes Org. Culture Bites different?

Angela: Yes – look, it is a very big market for the work that we do, which I think is great! If we want to really break out and take some bigger strides forward in the global market, 5.06

I really believe that a focus on building progressive workplaces and building more people who are adaptive and can create new pathways for growth, that is Australia's competitive advantage. So, it's good that we have a pretty good focus on people here.

So what makes us different? (um) well, look I think first of all I think it comes down to our own personal experiences and what we can bring to our clients based on different projects I might have done in the past, big and small. But generally I have found that a lot of the time, there are very common problems that all organisations are facing, so I can bring a diverse array of experiences, case studies and examples to the solutions that I can draw upon.

Also, I believe that it's really important that all organisations, both large and small have access to affordable tools and solutions that can help them grow.

Really, having worked for and with big consulting firms in the past, it has always been a regret of mine that the smaller firms are really disadvantaged by the high starting price point of solutions. I find that myself - having a small business – it's expensive to compete with the big players. Size shouldn't matter.

Peter. No, I agree. One of the biggest problems is being able to afford these advanced ideas and appraisals.

Angela: Yeah, sure! So, what I've tried to do is bring a lot of tools and solutions that you'd typically see coming out of large corporates or from big budgets, out into a more open marketplace, at more affordable price, especially for small businesses. I can do this – it's fantastic that the internet has enabled many businesses to do this – so that you can have access 1:1 but also virtually through different workshops as well.

The other thing that we do differently comes from the **level of experience and focus you get at that price point.** So, either myself or the partners I work with, are all leaders in their fields of expertise. The tools I have developed come from both global and local experience, partnering with a really broad variety of global multinationals and local Australian organisations. I'm very fortunate to have been employed by leading businesses, where the work I have done has contributed to Australian Best Employer awards and I've really seen clients I work with really

achieve significant performance improvement and results. That's what I can pin my support back to.

This is my passion and I owe to my clients to be **continually looking for ways to stay at the forefront of the industry.**

I'm also really proud to be an Australian – I think we have a lot to offer in terms of the way we lead and help evolve amongst others in our global markets and community. I have a really strong focus on leveraging local Australian talent to build practices that are not just great here in Australia, but also globally competitive. That's the way the world is moving. I think we have a fantastic chance to look at the opportunities we have in Australia - from an employment and innovation perspective in particular, to really be a hub for growth. **It's important for me that the work I do contributes to growing the Australian economy and our community, in a sustainable way.**

Peter: I understand that's something you're doing with your podcasts – showcasing Australian Talent and sharing stories about others doing great things in Australian organisations? Can you expand on that for me?

Angela: Yes, that's right. You'll see some of this reflected in the podcast series I'm doing with local thought leaders, experts and people making a really positive impact in Australian workplaces.

Often when you're working with consulting firms you can get these different examples and share them with your client bases. But if you aren't working with a consulting firm, you don't really get to hear about that information. What I'd like to do with the podcasts, is bring a greater exposure to the great practices that we are doing and the people that are making that happen in businesses here.

It makes me feel good to share stories with and about local heroes – so we can all benefit from them. They are very generous in talking about their personal experiences, they describe pivotal insights and case studies and give examples of where great progress is being made. They're really inspiring.

Peter: I get the impression –this comes through quite strongly Angela that this is really about personalisation. It's about exposing members of the wider public to systems that they wouldn't easily get access to. I think that personalisation that obviously Org. Culture Bites holds to heart.

Angela: Absolutely, I think you have to have that personal touch. There's a lot of great talent out there, we should be putting them on a platform to shine and also have others learn from that as well.

The other aspect I mentioned was focus. With Org. Culture Bites, being a small service business, we have to really differentiate through our focus on the customer. Making sure our clients get what they need... and a little bit more. I like to try and find ways – and they may not always be financial – to help the people I work with 'get ahead.' This is something that's not always afforded in larger organisations.

Sometimes clients just want the basics and the transaction, that's fine – and we are developing our online shop and membership access to cater to that. Other people want more of a coaching, interactive approach. They want to talk through the issues, challenges and personalities their facing, the obstacles, to get that objective third party view or have the

presence of additional support to help them deliver 'on the ground' like workshops. The important thing for me, is to understand the people we're working with, as well as their influences on performance and challenges. **This helps us offer flexibility across solutions, to help them thrive in their role and workplace, whatever that means for them.**

Peter: That's great Angela. Interestingly, you've shared some information with us about Org. Culture Bites and what you're aiming to achieve. You've obviously had good jobs in the past and to go out on your own, is something that's quite a big commitment. So what is your **'why?'**

Angela. Yes, it's also really risky! There are a few parts to that. I think firstly, as I mentioned before, it's really important to provide broader, fairer access of information and tools like mine and make sure it's not just something that is only available to larger organisations or bigger budgets. If we want to prosper as a shared community, we should really be sharing our knowledge more, or at least make it more accessible. That's what I'm aiming to do, particularly through the online part as well.

The other aspect is about being able to produce high quality work and valuable support to clients at a strategic level, whilst also at the same time being a parent and person I feel good about. I've worked with some very supportive employers and clients in the past and I've held leadership roles where you really feel and know you're really making an impact. But unfortunately some of my relationships and family have been a casualty of those work commitments in the past, especially when you're working full time and I really wanted to change that. It's ironic but at times, in order to 'get ahead,' I was actually sacrificing the very things that I wanted to get ahead for. I needed to find a better way to 'be my best' at home, as well as pursue my career, grow professionally and earn the income I needed to support us.

By having my own business, I feel I am able to offer better quality solutions, a really clear focus and also partnerships with clients I work with 1:1 are really getting the best out of me. At the moment I'm not getting caught up in the politics or daily travel routine and I can be so much more productive at work. I can also be there for those special moments with my family. That's really motivating for me.

Also, it is risky, but you've got to do it, you've got to try. Also, I think it's really important to sometimes take risks in life, have that belief in yourself or something you're really passionate about. To follow that... and I'm taking that chance, and hopefully this will be something that I feel proud of and other people can benefit from as well.

Peter: That's great. The ideology of being able to provide high service products for a wide range of people at a cost base that's affordable, is really good quality. I hope Org. Culture Bites is able to achieve this.

You've worked for the government overseas in the past, Japan in particular. Has that had any influence on the way that you operate today?

Angela. Well yes, of course, and perhaps it's not always obvious. Not everyone knows that about me. I have spent 5 years living and working in Japan, for the government and also later for consulting firms. I actually started out there on a scholarship, studying over there. I think this experience early in my career was really quite defining. You realise very quickly that **'your learned way' is not necessarily 'the best way'** especially when you're trying to figure things out in a very different world! In the beginning, a completely different language. I had to be really open to change and this is about people getting outside of their comfort zone, putting

themselves into challenging situations, or new worlds, taking on new mindsets, for example and developing their ability to adapt and survive. There were definitely many difficult and challenging times when I did that early on but the benefit of having immersed yourself in a completely different environment and making a success out of that has been a really rewarding experience in my life.

Another thing I found was that a lot of the assumptions we have about different people, nationalities or races, religions, circumstances... they can be quite distorted from the truth... and in fact when you become more familiar with 'the unknown' you get to understand just how similar people really are. Sometimes it's easier to fear others, distance yourself, rather than seek to understand them. I certainly learned that, moving around Western Australia when I was younger with my Dad's work and also later as I lived in Japan and also travelling overseas. That we are all made of the same things. We all have hearts and mind and emotions. The more connected we can be, the greater benefit to humanity. But, that's quite a philosophical approach but that's essentially some significant experience that I had earlier on.

And essentially, what comes out of that is the sense that **'closing the divide' is a great opportunity for all of us**. Not only when I look at removing silos in businesses, resolving conflict, being more inclusive or participative environments in our workplaces, but the its about breaking down some of the stigmas we have in society as well. Businesses can play a great role in leading this shift towards a greater 'human' connection.

Much of my earlier career was also about 'bringing people together' and creating a shared understanding across different cultures and walks of life. I see that that is a theme that has followed me. This has really helped my work now, especially when we look at organisational cultures and connection to strategy, vision and purpose and bringing people on the journey with you. For me, a lot of it is about finding common ground and something bigger than yourself that you're all working towards, to really create and evolve something together. Sometimes you have to compromise, see things from a different perspective, to adjust how you do things in order to make greater strides, or adapt to different technology, values and shifting environment factors in order to make and progress. I love being able to facilitate that and **help people move forward to create bigger, better things together and be that success, make strong progress**.

Peter: Well, Angela, thanks for sharing this information with us, I think it's really important that current clients and people who may be considering working with Org. Culture Bites get a good idea of who you are and what they can expect when they work with you and your organisation.

Angela: Thank you. Yes, it's something I always talk about in my work so I need to practice what I preach I guess! It is about making sure you have a clear purpose that emanates from things you feel passionate about and who you are, your experience and what you believe in. I talk about this a lot, about purpose in my leadership workshops so I need to make sure that I do it myself. Essentially this is something then that your partners and clients can expect from you and hold you to account for. So, there you have it!

Peter: Well thanks very much Angela. I look forward to some of your 'up and coming' podcasts. Thank you very much indeed.

Angela: Thank you.