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Welcome back to a new episode of Engage, a podcast from The CIPR. In this episode, our hosts and guests discuss the concept of the war for talent, the extent to which this is happening in PR and communications, and the steps organisations can take to attract, recruit and retain talent.

John Clegg

Hi there, and thank you for joining us for today's episode. We're talking today about the war for talent. My name is John Clegg. I am the internal communications and engagement manager for HR Wallingford, been in communications for about ten years, and I'm joined today by a couple of panellists who I'm very excited to be speaking with today. We've got Christine and Toluwani.

Christine Yuan

Thank you, John. Hi, I'm Christine. I am currently a senior talent acquisition partner at BCW PR Agency. I have been with BCW about 18 months now, but I have been hiring talents into the communication industry for about seven, eight years now. I'm really looking forward for the conversation discussion today. Thank you.

Toluwani Omotoye

My name is Toluwani Omotoye. Thank you so much, John, for the introduction. I'm a communications coordinator at Global X ETFs, and I've been there actually just over a month. I recently joined from spending a year and a half at communications consultancy which I joined straight out of university. I'm really looking forward to discussing with the both of you today and just how the conversation is going to go.

John Clegg

Something that Toluwani and I have in common. I started my new job about a week and a half ago, so we're both still reasonably new in the game, which is actually really pertinent to today's topic I think, because we're talking about talent, talent retention, and the war for talent.

Now to me this is nothing new, and people have been changing jobs for decades. Within the last 20 to 30 years though there's been a lot of shifts when it comes to talent and the approach to talent retention. What are the tactics that companies and organisations are doing to keep their people? Because effectively an organisation as a whole does not exist. An organisation is made up of people, so people are what are driving these companies and organisations. Christine, have you noticed any significant changes or trends?

Christine Yuan

I think with recently? Probably for the biggest change that we've seen for the past couple of years, this year, last year is due to the microeconomic climate or due to a lot inflation, cost of living change. There is quite a lot unease with employees, not just within the PR industry, but I can tell from the wider industry there's quite a lot uncertainty with different organisations.

Then so at BCW, how we keep the talent is because we are quite decent sized companies, so there's actually quite a lot different opportunities within the agencies itself. Like for example, if people working on the consumer team and they want to try collaborative with the healthcare team or the corporate team, if there's chance, we will support their movement within the organisation.

Also BCW, we're quite fortunate enough to have a variety of clients, variety of different innovation work, so we try to be able to shape the role for our talents, to try to keep them within the organisation as much as we could. Also at the same time, we have really good benefit within the company. We have great flexible working policy, we provide a mental health airline wraparound, mental health care programme, and also we have really great pension schemes.

All these benefits, what we do for employee, how we shape their role and how we support them with their career progression, the training, we use all these to help as a retention, if that makes sense.

John Clegg

Completely makes sense. Wow, there's a lot to unpack there. I mean, you hit on all of the key sort of elements from benefits to talent retention and career development, keeping people in the organisation. I think one of the things to really highlight there that you again touched on is the scale of the organisation. BCW is a reasonably large company, you have the ability to be flexible and you have more resources to examine and have a better benefits package than a lot of smaller organisations may do.

I also chair the not for profit group for the CIPR, so I do a lot of work with not for profits and small charities, smaller organisations, government organisations, things that places that may have less resources to be able to throw at employees, to try and keep them to stay, to keep them in the organisation. What would you say would be some of the challenges or some of the possibilities that smaller organisations could do with less resources?

Christine Yuan

I do think when it comes to bigger organisation, a smaller organisation, there's always pros and cons in different environment, right? Because sometimes in the smaller organisation, they do so many different things in their role and they can learn really quickly within a small organisation because they have to wear so many hats. That's how they progress quite quickly in their career as well.

But within bigger organisation, as you already said, we have quite big resource, we have different opportunity, but some people might you can't keep everyone happy as much as we try, there will still be

people saying, "Oh, I could have done that in a smaller organisation, or "I could have done that in a different size organisation."

We can only try our best and try to make sure we offer what we can offer to the employees. Then at the end of the day, they still need to make the best decision for themselves, what they want to learn, if they can learn from this organisation, or if they have to go somewhere else. Could be smaller, could be bigger to develop their specific skill set they are looking for.

John Clegg

Completely agree and I think for me, I am very mission-driven, so that's one of the reasons why I love working in the nonprofit sector, is that they tend to be companies that are less focused on profit, but they do tend to be more mission-focused.

You do have places like charities, the NHS, government organisations, religious organisations, all of those places where education, where there's a real concrete understanding of how your role helps society. I think that really resonates with me and personally, and I think with a lot of other people as well, in terms of how they can move their career and the types of organisations that they're likely to go to.

Now, Toluwani and I have both recently moved jobs. What was your experience? Were you looking, were you on the hunt for the next move? Were you trying to progress your career? If you were, what attracted you to where you are now?

Toluwani Omotoye

I was previously employed at Kekst CNC, which is a strategic communications consultancy, and I joined there straight after I finished university. Personally, because I'm quite like development-focused. When I did join, I told myself, I'm giving myself a year of learning and working with my head down. Then after a year, I wanted to sit and reassess. What have I learned? Do I think I want to stay here long term or is there things that I've picked up that I could possibly take and develop even further elsewhere?

Obviously, working at an agency was great because I feel like you learn loads of the foundational skills needed for a career in PR communications. But by the end of that first year that I gave myself, I realised that I didn't see a long-term career for me on the agency side of things. One of the big things for me in my move was that I wanted to go in-house. I think agency life is great for many different reasons, but I think it's also one of those things that either you really love it or it's not really your cup of tea.

For me, I felt like I'm constantly on the outside of bigger-picture things. I felt like I was constantly wearing loads of different hats for loads of different industries and I wasn't able to really focus and be committed to one specific organisation, one specific sector, and learn more and then constantly think about how what I'm learning can develop that strategic vision further.

I decided that the big thing for me in moving was I wanted to go in-house so I could have a more holistic view of strategy. All my work is going towards thinking of, how can I improve this. How can I make this better, how can we develop this even further? That was like the big drive behind my move. I did start seeking after I think after about a year and a few months I started looking and I came across my current job on LinkedIn.

John Clegg

I think that's a really interesting point in that we all try to find the job that suits us, right? Your job needs to support your life, not just earn you a salary. You need to enjoy what you do, you need to enjoy where you work. That's more than just the company. It's the type of organisation, it's the type of role, whether it's mission-related, like it was for me, or whether it is being in-house.

By the way, I completely get that I'm not an agency guy. That just does not work for me, but it's about knowing what works for you and you don't get that initially. I know from my experience earlier on in my career, I shifted roles a few more frequently to find what worked for me. I needed to have some of those other experiences to really then find where I fit. Then once I found that and the type of organisation, I tended to stay for longer.

Christine Yuan

To just agreeing with both what you guys saying. But on top of that, I also want to mention it's so hard what is really important to find the people you enjoy working with. It doesn't matter big organisation or small organisation, because you see them more than you see your family. At least that's why I talk to them more than I talk to my family.

You want to make sure you find the organisation has really good culture that can resonate with you, the environment that resonates with you, which I think, fortunately enough, like BCW, we have been able to provide quite a lot of diverse culture or diverse work environment for all the different people from all sorts of different backgrounds. That's why I'm still here for 18 months. I think that's a good thing, isn't it?

John Clegg

Personally, from my experience, there have been times where the team that I worked with were so great and we got on so well and we were such good friends that that kept me in the job probably longer than I should have stayed. Thinking about it from a career progression perspective or even a culture and fit. The rest of the organisation wasn't necessarily right, but I really enjoyed the people that I worked with, so I stayed there probably longer than I should have done.

That's a fascinating point as well, but I think one of the interesting things that we have sort of skirted around and haven't really addressed is the diversity and inclusion angles. It is really important when

organisations are recruiting to make sure that they recruit a diverse workforce and that definitely for me plays into the people that I'm working with.

Is it a good culture, is a good fit? Am I working in a place where there's a lot of different perspectives and viewpoints? PR comes under a lot of flak for not being in a specially diverse industry. Christine, what is your experience with trying to recruit a wider diversity?

Christine Yuan

That is a million-dollar question, isn't it? Yes. To your point, that's something we've been working on, or I have been working on personally since I've joined the PR industry. It's never easy, but I think step by step we are all making progressions. Compared to when I first joined PR industry about seven, eight years ago, compared to nowadays, you can see a lot of change. It's probably not enough, but we all working towards the same goal as a wider payout industry.

With BCW we actually have entry entry-level programme, we call them Propel. It is a programme to cultivate or to support underrepresented talent, to kickstart their career in the communication space. Last year we partnered with Televerde Foundation to broaden our outreach for the wider audience instead of just go on LinkedIn, just put on our website.

We partnered with them to bring in the people from other representative talent. They might not heard about us, they might not know about PR. How we work on this programme is we post our jobs and then we don't ask for their CV, we hire them based on the potentials.

We wouldn't know where they come from, what background they have. We only ask them a couple of questions like for example, if you were to cultivate creative exhibition, how would you do that and what would you do? What items would include? Questions like those and based on the answers, we invite them in into assessment day.

Assessment day would be different presentation, different activities and based on those we made the decisions on who we hire, so we don't see their CV, so we don't know where they're coming from. We thought that that would be help us to break down the barriers because some people might not have PR degree, some people might didn't know about PR, but they do have the potential. We purely hire them based on potential.

With the programme we offer them competitive salary plus sign-up bonus to overcome the salary barrier. Because I know sometimes within the PR industry the starting salary could be not as helpful as someone want to step into this industry. We try to overcome that barrier and it's throughout their time here we offering training programme, mentoring programme to give them the tool to learn this industry.

Either they want to stay within BCW afterwards or they want to go out to different organisations within the PR or they might have decided PR is not for them after they join this programme. But that's fine, we just want to support them to at least start somewhere.

John Clegg

I think salary is a big blocker and barrier at times, so in places like in the City of London, you have corporate organisations which have even entry-level jobs that have very high salaries comparatively. You find other organisations where entry-level roles are less than half of the salary, and you just think, how can people survive on that much? It is a challenge and a blocker. I think we have to recognise that the people who can accept roles on that level of salary are privileged and come with that privilege. We need to address that.

From an employee experience perspective. I'm not trying to do a product placement, but I've been reading a fantastic book called *Building a Culture of Inclusivity* by Advita Patel and Priya Bates, and it's all about internal communications and how internal communications can help to create a more inclusive culture within the organisation and the benefits of that. It's filled with some really fantastic tactical frameworks that I recommend people to look at.

But I think one of the things that has struck me about the book is the way in which we are able to sort of keep people once we get them through the door, and what we need to do and how much work we need to focus on keeping them there by making them feel that they belong.

I think there's a massive problem with belonging in PR for people of colour, from people of different classes and socioeconomic background, for different orientations, sexual orientations, all sorts of different people who are outside of the norm. There's a lot of work to be done, definitely.

I think one of the other things to consider around talent, talent retention, is what else are some of these other perceived barriers to joining PR and comms from the new starter's perspective? I mean, we've touched on salary, we've touched on some of the DNI barriers. Are there any others?

Christine Yuan

I do think another barriers. What at least I've seen for PR is a lot of people didn't actually know about PR or they didn't know you can go into PR as a career because based on the conversation I've had with some young generation candidates or my friends there's, a lot of people didn't know what does PR do? What do we do? They have no idea. They just thought, oh, it's PR, but what do you do? They probably don't know. They didn't think about going to this industry.

Actually, something we're working on, trying to support this is we do have ambassador from our companies to go into talks with the charity, to go into the talks with the school or write a blog with the university, write a blog with the newsletter. We also try to host Insights Day or Masterclasses with

different organisation or school students to help them to understand a little bit more what is PR and what actually happens in our world.

Give them a bit flavour of this could be an industry or this could be something, you might be interesting. They might just didn't know about it and I think that's one of the barriers, I think. But I don't know if that's something similar to what you guys have seen on the market or your own experience.

John Clegg

From my own experience, I've seen a lot of people don't set out to work in comms. They don't go and study a communications degree. We have a lot of people in PR who have an English degree or a literature background because we write. There's a lot of writing involved in corporate communications.

It is a common pathway, but I don't think it should be the only pathway. I think there should be a lot more engagement with school leavers, with colleges, with apprenticeship programmes, all sorts of ways that we can attract people. Because you don't necessarily need a degree once you are in an organisation or a role. There are trainings that are available.

One of my first roles in communication, in fact, my very first role in communications, I got because I was doing a business development role and they were setting up an internal comms function in the organisation. I had been working with a specific team and I had those connections.

I was approached and they said, "Would you be interested in working in the new communications team and having responsibility for that function because you already have those connections, you have those relationships? We can train you to learn how to communicate and to understand what internal communications is." That's how I ended up segueing into a more formal internal comms pathway.

Toluwani, what was your experience of getting into the industry? Because you're still relatively new in your career, aren't you?

Toluwani Omotoye

Yeah. I would say my experience is very linked to the DEI conversation that we had before. I studied international relations at university, and I went into my degree thinking that I wanted to work in politics. After my first year, I was like, "No, I don't want to work in politics. This is awful."

I basically came across Taylor Bennett Foundation and their summer start internship programme. I heard about it through a friend who was also doing the programme. I applied because I had a look at what PR as a career entailed. It was things that I'd thought PR was and things that I learned PR did that I was like, "This is something that I could do."

There's a common misconception that PR is like just social media and public image. While that's a large part of it, I think a lot of people don't realise that it actually does go beyond social media events like glitz, glamour. I don't think a lot of people actually realise that there's also a very corporate side to PR. There's a charity side to PR. There's so many different angles.

I did the internship programme, and it was really great, really insightful. We had a boot camp week where we heard from loads of different people in the industry, working in house, in agencies at different levels, doing different types of roles, and it just made me realise how broad that career is.

Then I did an internship with Freud Communications. It was really insightful and really great. Then after that, I did decide that I wanted to actually work in PR anyway. In my final year of university, because this was during COVID, I did a virtual internship with a housing PR agency based in Birmingham called See Media. They were so lovely. I reached out to them and just said I wanted a bit more experience before I graduated, and they were willing to take me on and make me their first intern.

Then applying for graduate roles, I applied to Kekst CNC, and essentially, that's how I came into the industry. When I got to Kekst CNC, I did realise, though, that I stumbled across it, as you guys have both mentioned, and I did have a very big part in trying to make people aware that PR is actually a very viable career path.

You don't need to have studied PR or comms at university. I did IR and I still ended up here. Loads of the people that I worked with at Kekst had studied history, politics, business, loads of different things.

One of the roles I took when I was at Kekst CMC was leading our relationship with the Taylor Bennett Foundation because I think especially people from diverse backgrounds aren't as aware of the career opportunities that are available in this industry. I said it wasn't just from an offering jobs to a more broader audience, but also an education point of view where we need to actually host people and let them know this is the work you can do in PR.

If you're interested in politics, for example, you can work in public affairs. If you're interested in finance, you can do financial communications. If you're interested in just more the corporate business side of things, you do corporate comms. There is a bit of something for everyone. I think that was what I had learned in my little experience that I was really keen to share with the people that I knew would be coming into jobs after me.

John Clegg

That's definitely one of the things that I love about working in communications, is that to an extent, we are industry agnostic, so the communication skills remain the same, whether we're talking about marine engineering or financial services or whatever.

The theory and the framework remains the same, but we have the opportunity and the ability to switch between industries and organisations and really have an understanding and an opportunity to learn so many different things.

I think one of the things that I really want to make sure we get covered on this podcast is hybrid working, and as much as I hate myself for saying this, the new normal. Now that the pandemic is technically, officially over, we're all starting to settle into the new normal.

Everyone said right after COVID first happened, in the early stages of the pandemic, "Oh, this is the new normal. This is the new normal." No, actually, this, now that the pandemic is over, this is the new normal. Because the pandemic has completely shifted the way in which we work as a society.

Now, looking at that, different generations have taken that to mean different things, and different generations have different needs in the workplace. Some of the generations, like Generation X and the Baby Boomer generation, prefer to be in the office more and are more familiar with being in the office. Generation Z and the millennials tend to skew towards working from home or having a more hybrid mix.

That means location comes into play, where do you recruit from, where can you live and commute from, that sort of thing. What are your experiences with hybrid working and the impact that that has had on your ability to recruit or the way where your colleagues are coming from in your own organisations?

Christine Yuan

That is a really good point. Then, as you said, this is a new norm. Now we all trying to adjust to the new norm. I came from back in the day before pandemic. I was in office five days a week, which is absolutely fine, but now, two days, three days. Really happy with it. I really appreciate the flexible working that we all have right now.

From my own personal experience from BCW, we are really flexible on the working pattern. We are operating as a hybrid model. We do encourage people to come in because we still really value the time people spend together. We try to make the environment worthwhile for you to come in.

I know some people, they don't live in London anymore. They live a bit further out. For example, if you come in on a Wednesday, we have a voucher to support you on the launch, so it can compensate a little bit on your travel cost. I know the train cost is ridiculous, over the roof, nowadays. We're trying our best to help.

When you come in, maybe there's a team social, there's a team meeting. We try to make the environment to support employees when they come in because we have really nice working office. It's really like as a hot desk. You can sit by anyone. You can sit by anywhere. Some days you want to sit with your own team. Some days you want to sit with different team.

It's really flexible, and we do really appreciate when you have face-to-face conversation or brainstorm sitting in a room altogether, discuss a project, discuss a pitch. That's exciting. That's a momentum you can't really create over Zoom. You can only see people face to face to have those.

Yes, of course, all the conversation can happen virtually, but when there's a face to face, there's more bounce on the discussion, on the brainstorming, which is really valuable. But also, we appreciate everyone has different personal situation. Some people might be working parent like myself. I need to do pickup and drop-off.

Even though when you come into office, it's not like you have to clock in at night clock or at 6:00. You could come in when the hour works for you. I can usually come in a bit late. I leave a bit early because I do pick up and drop-off. But when I go back home, I still log online after my kids gone to bed.

That really works out for me. I can be the most productive during the hours I choose to work. I think that works well for majority of our employees. But of course, there will be people want to come in four or five days a week. That's completely fine as well because we do have the space for people to come in. Yes, we are quite flexible, which I think that's something the new norm, as you said, and then we already appreciate it.

John Clegg

I think the interesting thing around that is the new norm is flexible now because we're trying to skew towards a more hybrid situation. In some ways, people might have said that there was more flexibility when we were fully remote because then they could live anywhere, and you didn't have the barrier. Salary wasn't as much of a barrier. They could move to a cheaper part of the country and still work remotely.

That was definitely one of the issues that I've seen emerge from my own experience in an organisation that wasn't based in London. When you're trying to attract talent outside of key talent pool areas locations and you're trying to get people to commute, it's difficult to recruit, and that becomes a challenge.

Whereas during the middle of the pandemic, it was easier, you could recruit people who lived further away because there was no expectation of them having to come into the office. Now we're in this situation where we've got one foot in and one foot out and we're not entirely sure, I think, that the dust still hasn't settled.

Toluwani Omotoye

I've obviously only known full-time working with a hybrid situation. One of the big things for me when I was looking for jobs is that essentially, it's actually very expensive for me to go into the office more than three times a week, even more than two times, because two times a week is £44. That's just on commuting. That doesn't factor in lunch.

Again, my actual door-to-door commute is about an hour a half. That's an hour and a half both ways that I'm losing from my day. As we all know, especially from the agency side, it's not a 9:00 to 5:00. Sometimes I would be doing 7:00 to 7:00. That was another big thing for me. I need to have a flexible situation that does allow me to work from home. If I know that my schedule is going to make me run work later or work earlier, or if I need to come into the office a bit later because I may have meetings that start later on, just based on my situation, it works best for me.

I do think hybrid is the new norm and it's here to stay. Again, from a Generation Z point of view, looking at roles, I would never consider a role that's not hybrid. I wouldn't say I don't see the value in being in every day, but I don't see the complete positives of it in the sense of, I don't think it allows for people to work in a way that best suits their schedule if they have other commitments. I don't think it takes into consideration that some people's commutes are way further and way longer and way more expensive than others.

I do think that it can sometimes be quite draining as where, again, I feel like when you're in the office all the time, everyone always wants to chat, which is great, but then sometimes you do need that deep focus time to actually think and do work that you get when you're at home. I'm very fortunate to have a really nice work from home set up, and I do appreciate that not everyone does have that.

I can understand why some people do prefer to be in the office more often if they feel like they work more productively, but I definitely think flexibility allows people to figure out what works best for them. How can I make sure that I'm still being as present as I need to be for work, but also allowing it to fit into every other responsibility I have and also not burning myself out at the same time?

John Clegg

Right now, I live in rural Oxfordshire, so completely understand what you mean about going into the office in London. That's why I don't work in London. It doesn't work for me.

I think going back to something that Christine earlier you said in the conversation, it's about the complete package, it's about the flexible working, it's about the development opportunities, it's about the benefits package. To me, I almost see the flexible working and the hybrid setup as being part of that benefits package. To me, personally, I see it as indispensable. Having that personal flexibility is absolutely paramount for organisations today.

Christine Yuan

In your experience or in the organisation you guys work at, do you guys have any suggestions on how could we all, as a paid-out industry, to attract diverse talent, or what are you guys seeing are really successful, what are you guys seeing are you would recommend, or is any suggestions on how can we help the PR industry to do better?

Toluwani Omotoye

One of the things that I'm really big about is not just talking about doing things, but actually doing things. I'm a Black woman, and one of the things that I do look at when I'm applying is like, "Will I be the only black person in this space? Will I be the only Black woman?"

I am very aware that the PR and communications industry is not hugely diverse, so that's something I already know. But it's also that if I join a company, what am I seeing that they're doing to make sure that I feel included despite my diverse background, despite my different identity?

I think a lot of organisations aren't completely aware of how they can actually attract more diverse talent and retain it. I think while they're not aware. A lot of them aren't actually bothered to make the effort to find out how they can do that. There's amazing organisations and charities, again, like Taylor Bennett Foundation, the UK Black Comms Network, I think people like us, there's loads of organisations that if you don't know how to reach this diverse talent, they can put you in touch with them.

Not just at a junior level. I'm also finding that I want to see diverse representation at a senior level as well, which I think is a huge challenge that a lot of companies have. I'm happy to see that there's loads of different people at a junior level, but then, as someone who is from a diverse background, if I'm looking at my career path at a company and I don't see anyone who looks like me, I begin to think, so where do I fit in here?

I think it's one looking and really being quite intentional about making sure that you are reaching out to people from diverse backgrounds in any way you can, and then also making sure that there is representation across the full company, like all the levels and not just at a junior level.

John Clegg

Completely agree with you, Toluwani. I think making sure that you have leadership that reflects the diversity of the organisation is absolutely key. It's a challenge because oftentimes you find that leaders have been in those posts for a number of years, or are the people who were hired, perhaps, when there was less diversity in the organisation and they've worked their way up, that sort of thing.

But it's definitely one that I think we can all overcome, or at least all organisations can overcome. I myself am a gay man, and I know that looking at where I work, I want to be able to bring—I hate this phrase—but I want to be able to bring my whole self to work. I don't want to feel like I have to go back in the closet, in the workplace, face discrimination or anything like that.

For me, I look at their Stonewall standing, Stonewall ranks employees or employers who register with them based on a number of things, like their policies, all of those the recruitment policies, their HR policies, all of that stuff, and it ranks them in terms of their LGBTQ diversity.

Now, Stonewall also has a job board for those partner organisations where they can list jobs. You know by applying for those jobs, that you're going to an organisation that values diversity and where you would be safe. Whenever I have in the past looked on that job board, I've never once seen a communications job listed on there. That could be because it's an additional job board.

Sometimes organisations have to pay for the listings where they want to put their resources when they are trying to recruit, that comes down to an organisational decision. But definitely, I think there are different job boards and different charities, organisations that reach out to specific communities that companies and organisations can use to reach audiences that they don't normally try to attract or that they don't attract in a mainstream way. I think that's definitely something that they need to be considering.

Christine Yuan

I agree, that's really helpful because we are doing some of the things like exploring job wars, helping the retention. Because I'm Asian myself. Sometimes when I start a new job, I'm always worried. Am I going to be able to enjoy the culture with the people like me? Just interesting to know from you guys' point of view as well.

John Clegg

I think that's a really interesting segue into the whole debate around office culture and blending in and fitting in, having that sense of belonging. I'm American as well, so for me to come in and, am I working in somewhere that is visually diverse but also culturally diverse and has influences from other international colleagues, that sort of stuff, it's really important to me. I think sometimes companies disregard some of those aspects of corporate culture as well.

Toluwani Omotoye

I think from even a social point of view as well. One of the things I did find being early in my career, it's a very British social work culture is very big on pubs, drinking, et cetera, and I feel like there needs to be a lot more acknowledgment that not everyone drinks and that not all social activities should revolve around drinking.

It does exclude a lot of people who they either don't drink for religious reasons, cultural reasons, or they just don't want to. I think it then makes it quite hard for them to feel like they can fit in from a social point of view. It looks like they're not trying to be included when it's more of the things that we do from a social point of view. Just, unfortunately, they don't appeal to me, they don't attract me and they don't align with my values or culture.

While hiring a diverse background is one thing, I also think retaining that is also a completely different ballgame, where it's like, you need to make sure, like you both have mentioned, that people feel like they

can actually be themselves at work. It does sound cliché, but as Christine said earlier, you're at work all the time, literally more than you are at home, for being honest.

You don't want to feel that for a large majority of your life. You're shying and hiding parts of yourself because you feel as if this isn't a place that I can fully be myself and know that I'm being accepted despite my different background, or I'm having to kind of be one way at work and then be another way when I get back home.

Again, I do know that there are some things that are the easiest and the most cost effective way, but I also do think a bit more thought and effort can be put in to make sure that people feel as if, "Okay, cool, I'm in the door now. Now, to make sure I stay, I want to feel as if I'm being thought about as an employee in this organisation."

I want it to be clear that it's like, we don't just cater to one group of people or one type of culture. We're aware that we have people from all these different areas, all these different backgrounds, and we want to make sure that everyone feels like they're being included.

John Clegg

I think that was one of the things that it struck me as completely odd because after 7 or 8 years working in London, when I first moved up to Oxfordshire, where I live now, and I was working in a small market town, it's a completely different experience between working in a big city and a small town, and all of a sudden people are driving. When you have that many people driving, there's no drink culture or the drink culture is very different. There's the location difference there as well, to take into consideration.

But you nailed it. It's about building that culture of inclusivity, it's about making sure that we all have that sense of belonging at work. PR, I think it was you, Toluwani, who mentioned earlier, that it's a wide umbrella, right? There's so many different facets of PR. Internal comms has a massive role to play in terms of creating and building that culture. They can't do it on their own, but they can set up programmes and strategies and frameworks to help educate and to help thread that narrative and create that culture throughout the whole organisation.

This has been such a really fascinating discussion. I've really enjoyed our conversation. We've talked about employee experience, we've talked about talent retention, talent recruitment, diversity inclusion, hybrid working. We've covered a lot of ground here. I really appreciate your time today and I appreciate you coming for this conversation. Thank you again to Christine and Toluwani. Thank you so much for listening.

Christine Yuan

Thank you, guys. I really enjoy our discussion.

Toluwani Omotoye

Thank you.

Voiceover

Thank you for listening to this episode of Engage. We've included a link to the book John referenced in the show notes. Remember, the conversation doesn't stop there. If you have anything to add to our discussion or any hints or tips that could help other practitioners, please share them on LinkedIn or X, formerly Twitter, using the #Engage.