

# Learning Is the New Pension with Heather McGowan Transcript

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## PODCAST

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**Chris Congdon:** If you're like most of us these days, a pension is not in the cards. Today's guest says not to worry – Heather McGowan has a different idea about how to have a great future at work.

Welcome to Work Better, a Steelcase podcast where we think about work and ways to make it better. I'm your host Chris Congdon alongside our producer, Rebecca Charbausk.

Rebecca Charbausk: If you like this podcast, we would appreciate it if you rate and review it which helps others find it.

As I mentioned, today's guest is Heather McGowan. Heather is a future-of-work strategist and author. Her new book was just released. It's called "The Empathy Advantage: Leading the Empowered Workforce."

**CC:** Heather says there are 5 elements that make up what she calls the "great reset". She shares those with us – along with why she says "learning is the new pension."

After our conversation with Heather, Noga Lasser will join us. Noga is director of design at Steelcase and will help us connect Heather's ideas to designing a better workplace.

Heather, welcome to work better. Thanks for joining us.

**Heather McGowan:** Thank you very much for having me.

**CC:** Heather one of the things that I feel like you're so good at is taking a complex idea and making it more easy to digest and understanding and connecting dots. So one of the things that we've been thinking about a lot which is kind of a complicated or complex idea is about this contract between employers and employees and how that has changed a lot and in your new book you broke it down into like 5 elements I found that really helpful. I was wondering if you could talk about those 5 things that are happening that are converging.

**HM:** Sure. The one that's gotten the best marketing presence would be the great resignation. But I think that that is an element of 5 greats. So the great resignation is people quitting their jobs, people changing jobs and it's the phenomenon that's sort of been pegged as a 2021 to 2022 and potentially 2023 thing but in reality churn has been building since 2009. It's been an increase in turnover in organizations. So there's no longer the pressure to stay with an organization for five, ten or twenty years. Two or three years there and change so talent is mobile. We have to get used to it. Gardner thinks we're going to be up about 20% and with the recent rise in tech layoffs. There's an increased chance that that'll further push up the churn because when you start seeing leave you're more likely to leave yourself. So that's one piece of it. is also a great retirement. We have not paid attention at all to the fact that we have a lot of boomers and they're starting to retire. Then there's the great reshuffle: that's people leaving their jobs to go to a different industry. Between 2021 and '22 more than 50% of people who left their jobs went into a new role or new industry and there's some good news there because I think that means that people are rescaling and working to their potential and working where they want to work, so that's a good thing. There's a great refusal that's where people say, I'm not going to work under these conditions anymore, particularly low-wage conditions where we've been underpaying people for decades and there's the great relocation at work. Estimates are about 20,000,000 Americans alone were looking to move where they live for their life purposes and they're doing it because of the availability of remote work or hybrid work or just availability of work in general collectively that gives you the great reset. It's not about where work takes place. It's about where work fits in our lives.

**CC:** That is really helpful, just that whole framework. So when you think about whether you send it up like in terms of this contract if you will, whether they're actual real contracts or just kind of implied contracts, like how would you if you send it up. How do you think that's changed? It's that people are not feeling like they're committed to the organization for long stretches of time.

**HM:** Well, we originally traded security for loyalty so I will stay with your organization my entire career, I will give you all my loyalty but you'll give me the security that you're never going to change that relationship with me. That's long gone. And we started trading your share of mind for a career path. We could advance within an organization. Even if things changed if we gave them the share of our attention and then that started to erode. So it's sort of like we went from careers to jobs to gigs almost even if you were within an organization. So when that social contract frayed employees were like you know what? you don't get my loyalty anymore and I think the existential crisis of the pandemic when we felt the fragility of life is like this question of really what I'm doing with my life. So I think what we're having is a changed relationship between individuals and organizations and I think it's a huge opportunity.

**CC:** Okay, so the other thing that you said that really stuck with me is an idea that learning is the new pension. I don't even know if people know what pensions are anymore. I was talking with my son about his career. I don't know that that's in Gen Z terminology. But this idea that learning is the new pension. Can you talk a little bit about what you mean by that?

**HM:** I just came up with that in a riff when I was on stage once in Paris where you know they have pensions and then I started using it. I call it a superannuation but then I sat down and calculated at the time and this was like 2018. I said you know what? Okay if we work every day for you take every dollar you work for every day some percentage of that you're putting away for the future in a retirement 401k what do you have, and it's something on the neighborhood of 15% and then I looked at IBM's prediction on what it would take to change the skills gap. So in 2014 I think it was three days. 2018 or 19 it became thirty six days. Now it's grown since then and if you count up the number of hours you work the number of days you need to put into retraining. It actually worked out then now I think it's even greater than that that you're spending a certain percentage of your time building your future value. Whether it's the dollar you put away or the learning you do to make yourself more valuable so it became even more of a true thing. So if you just continue to dine out on the skills you had yesterday, you're going to be irrelevant tomorrow. But if you spend a certain percentage of your time focused on how to become even more valuable in the future, which is not unlike a pension, it is interesting. Pew's research of people leaving jobs between 2020 and 2021 turns out the same top 5 list pretty much exists today in 2023. No. 1 of course is compensation. But tied with No. 1 in their net score between first and second choice was career mobility and advancement so people are starting to see if there aren't learning opportunities here I'm not becoming more valuable and that may be as important as what you pay me.

**CC:** Okay, so in terms of our individual development, you know one of the things that has been such a big topic of conversation that I just got to ask your opinion on this is chatGPT. What do you think that kind of AI is going to do to interrupt our learning? Do I need to learn or do I just need a really great chat bot that can help me figure it out?

**HM:** I think the tool is only as good as the hand that uses it. So I think we should think about it not as automation but augmentation. I am not an expert in GBT, ... ChatGPT, I can't even say it.

**CC:** They didn't spend a lot of time on marketing for that name. So...

**HM:** I made it easier to just roll off the tongue but I have played around with it. I do think it's compelling and very helpful. So I think it's going to be as helpful as all the other tools we've adapted to. I mean you take somebody's phone you say can I have your phone and wipe out your contact list? No one would say yes because we can't remember single phone numbers but we've already outsourced that so we adapt to outsourcing over time and we will adapt to whatever this presents in our lives as just another augmentation.

**CC:** But, when we think about all these ways that we're talking about how work is changing and how we need to learn and adapt, it feels like we're in this really fluid time in terms of the adoption of hybrid work or the interpretation of hybrid work. It's being implemented in so many different ways around the world in different countries, different companies, etc and I'm just curious what you think about the advent of hybrid work is really going to mean in terms of how people are developing their skills and back to this whole idea of the employer-employee contract.

**HM:** I think the honest answer is we don't know yet and if you're old like me... I'm 51 if you remember the first time you went on the internet and you searched for something and the answers you got were just a pile of drunk. Or the first time you tried to use an ecommerce site and it was just this jumble of links and it was hard to navigate. That's kind of where we are, I think with hybrid and remote work. We went through about a thousand days of a forced social experiment called the pandemic from which we found out what we're capable of and we use tools that have been around for a very long time. Zoom is 10 years old. So McKinsey said we leap forward 5 years in our digital transformation. Those first sixty days why because we just started using the tools that are around us. So I think when it comes to hybrid remote work, we are in our infancy. We don't know yet what works best and where we have a lot of biases and opinions. I think we need a lot of experimentation. A lot of improvement in tools and a lot of hard adaptation. Both about how we work, and how we organize work and manage and lead folks whether we're with them or we're digitally connected.

**CC:** Yeah, you know we feel like we're seeing whether I use the word tension or a little bit of a kind of tug and war back and forth navigation going on particularly in the U.S. and Canada globally a lot of companies are back in the office full time most of the time they've got kind of what I'd call very light hybrid in the U.S. and Canada. It's a lot more robust right now and a lot more of the experimentation that you're talking about going on and what I'm curious about is if you think as people are trying to navigate what their expectations are around hybrid work. Do you feel like people really have a good sense of what they actually want? and what do they want from this whole experience? Well, it depends on who you're talking about. So I think the workforce the people who are resisting a return to office had in 2019 had their professional life and they had their personal life and their professional life often eclipsed their personal life. It often came first. Their personal life was the only area in which they had agency over their time and what happened over those thousand days is that we merged our personal and professional lives. You had agency over both and what a return to the office is it's not about the place. It's about the loss of agency over our time and I think what people want is some sense of control and ownership over what is our only non-renewable resource which is our time. I think many of our managers and leaders grew up in an era where they put their time in the office they sacrificed and they're not comfortable when people are not with them, we don't have great ways to really understand what people do and work. We can pay attention to how often their mouse moves. We can use surveillance software and I'm against all of that stuff. I think it erodes trust but we don't even actually know what people are doing so when I talk about the experiments I mean really need robust experiments not a whole bunch of people's opinions.

**CC:** That's creepy.

**HM:** But what are the things that are getting done? What are the kinds of things we need to get done? What are the tasks? What are the environments? What are the fairnesses? What are the preferences you know working women have dropped out of the workforce working moms and dads? A study done during the pandemic found raising a child is 90 hours a week. That's two and a half jobs and those two and half jobs are hard to fit in around a commute in a lot of office time and once having control over that agency again. They don't want to give it up. So I think what people want is a sense of trust.

**CC:** Right.

**HM:** Agency autonomy now what we need managers and leaders to do is have training on how if you didn't grow up in that experiment in that environment. How do you create social capital and it is possible. How do you manage? How do you lead? If some people are never in the office or some people are in the office three days a month and it's going to be different and I think the interesting thing that happened in the beginning for six months of the pandemic Microsoft study found that it was boomers who were least comfortable and gen z were the most comfortable go you know, go forward another six months or a year and it was gen z that was dying to get back into the office because they want they were there at the start of their career. They wanted more in-person relationships. They wanted more serendipitous networking. They wanted to build their network in person and boomers got really comfortable and they're like hey this is pretty great I got a house in Santa Fe - I don't want to give up the agency I now have over my time and the freedom to live where I want to so I think that it's it's been an evolving process and the the big answers we don't know yet. But I think there are different constituents with different desires.

**CC:** We just got some data back in our research which showed exactly what you just talked about Heather that gen z is coming into the office at a much higher rate than any other generation and the baby boomers at the lowest level I mean they're still coming in a fair amount. But there's definitely a generational difference going on there. One of the things I worry about which is one of the reasons why I come into the office four days a week most weeks is who's going to mentor Gen z. Like, if all the Gen x and the baby boomers decide they're going to stay home, how are those younger generations of workers going to get development? Yeah, all right, big question. Okay.

**HM:** Yep I agree.

**CC:** Let's talk about your work with so many different companies around the country around the world and so I'm just curious if there's companies that you would point to that you know they're doing something right here. They're learning. They're creating some of those good experiments. Have a sense of that.

**HM:** I've had talks with them. But this is not one I've worked with closely but I am encouraged by the statements by the CEO of Citi who said for people who are not doing well by our measures. Whatever they are, they have some productivity measures. Working from home. We were going to call them back to the office but what they said is not to penalize them. We're going to call them back in the office so we can coach and champion them to how we need them to work. What our expectations are so that they can be successful if they want to return to remote or hybrid work. I think that's a much more positive sign than declarations and demands that's listening. We have our needs and there are expectations and their accountability 100% and people aren't meeting them. We need to bring them back into the environment coaching and champion them so they can meet them. I mean I'm encouraged by those kinds of things.

**HM:** Another one. This one I have never worked with but I read about Cockroach Labs which I thought at the time was a terrible name for a company. Realize they're in the data business. So what's going to happen if you know, after Armageddon is that the cockroaches will be here with my data. That's a very interesting name for a company. They set forth a policy that said tell us where you want to work – home, hybrid, office. If you work at home, we will help you so give you a budget to get set up if you want to work hybrid. We can give you a hot desk. We can't give you a dedicated Space. You want to work in the office, we will give you a dedicated space. We will have equal learning opportunities and advancement opportunities for everybody. We will have pathways your preference is what we want to support your success is what we want to support. That's a very positive message to me. I think the folks who are listening to this, this is why we named our book The Empathy Advantage, are the ones who were advantaged in leading the empowered workforce by trying to understand what they want and how it helped them be most successful.

**CC:** So another thing you've talked about that I'd love to explore a little bit is this idea of collective intelligence versus individual intelligence and I think this issue of thinking about whether we're part of a collective or part of a group is at play during this whole hybrid work experience and I'm just curious what you what you're talking about what you're thinking about in terms of collective versus individual intelligence.

**HM:** So I discovered this probably more than ten years ago. I was doing some work for a biotech company as a consultant and I was talking to their head of HR and the company is so technical that with the exception of me who's came you know few folks like me who came in as consultants most of the people there have a doctorate at minimum because it's a high tech company. So when you have a group of people who have doctorates they are trained in some very specific expertise. They're basically trained to be unquestioned experts. They are the experts in their tiny very clear niche of knowledge. They discovered that actually became a problem because this particular company provided products and services for a complex disease state, a chronic disease. And they said we need people who can see the chronic disease holistically in order to develop the products and services we need. We need them to empathize with the user and see whatever the solution is as part of a system because that's what it is. Problem is that our experts tend to see it through the lens of only their expertise. So what they started to do was to get above I think it was like on some manager level. You had to be screened and you had to go through training. If you were over reliant on your expertise you were less likely to experiment you were less likely to see things holistically and that's when I was like aha something is going on here in this particular space. And then as I went on and worked for more industries for another decade or so and then started speaking more, internationally I started asking every single audience starting in about 2018. By a show of hands, how many of you have people reporting to you that have skills and knowledge you don't have. Almost every day the number of hands that went up increased and it made sense because and now I say to folks if you don't have your hand up you either are not managing people or you're not honest because you cannot be an expert in cybersecurity machine learning data analytics. So even just the baseline of the plethora of skills and knowledge that are necessary to run any group today. So that means that we've brought these people along as leaders promising them that they could be this unquestioned expert and now we need them to defer to the team because a lot of times the team has skills and knowledge they don't have. Also the team members have unique skills and knowledge. They don't have redundant skills and knowledge so you can't create an environment as I say peers as competitors have to move to peers as collaborators so forced rankings and all this stuff which were never a good idea. A really terrible idea. So now you need to create an environment of supportive collaboration where you've got a humble curious learner who's comfortable saying I don't know as your leader.

**CC:** I don't know what I would do if I had to bear the pressure of knowing everything that my team knows. It's like I can't possibly maintain all of that in my mind. But fortunately I've got a bunch of people who are really smart and capable that I could draw on. Okay, so that's good advice. Again I kind of want to circle back to the conversation about hybrid work and there does seem to be a tension again if you will, that arises you know more people are distributed spending less time together like what thoughts do you have about it when people are spending less time together. We're trying to create collective intelligence. For example, how do we do that in our current environment?

**HM:** I think we have to acknowledge our biases first and foremost so one of the ways I ask people as I say, by show a hands, if I'm in an audience or I'm having a conversation with people and I share the data if you were under a certain age chances are good you met your spouse or partner online and you didn't just meet them online and then immediately meet them in person you often had many conversations with them that created an emotionally vulnerable and an intimate connection before you ever met them in person and the stats are somewhere with forty, fifty percent of heterosexual people and eighty plus percent of LGBTQ+ community meets all that says to me we can form social capital virtually so it's just how we do it and how we harness it. I mean I say my greatest learning community is probably LinkedIn so that's a place to connect to me, follow me, talk with me, and people post articles about what they're reading. There's a number of people all over the world, some have met in person, some have never met in person. I talk to people every single day through Whatsapp, LinkedIn chat, Slack, what have you and I know their whole life story and I may have never met them. I feel very connected to them – if something happens in their life I'd send them flowers. I think it's possible. I don't know if it's for everybody. I know that it's optimal. But I don't want to just assume we cannot do it because I think there's some evidence that we can do it and we do need better tools and I think we're getting better tools I mean Zoom was a huge leap forward. I remember what you'd have to do to go to a doctor for something really silly. You drive somewhere, park waiting in an office to see someone for 5 minutes who could see just as easily over the rash on your arm and prescribe something that gave us a lot of our lives back on it on both ends some types of education some types of meetings where you don't have to take all that time. So I think there's an opportunity here. We do have to drop our biases. We do have to be intentional about it. There are some things that work better in person. But there's quite a bit we can do digitally that I think we haven't given ourselves credit for.

**CC:** I don't disagree with you, I think there are things... I think there's a balance that we need as human beings like one of the things that I discovered when I was working away from the office for a long period of time ... I went through this initial literal anxiety to walk back in the door. But then once I did like I saw somebody that I would have never thought to set up a structured meeting with her but I was just so happy to see her and you know we chatted for a while and she gave me some advice and it struck me how important it was to me to have those kind of casual interactions with people that I don't set up a meeting with and I don't you know interact with on LinkedIn or something like that. But I feel the importance of their presence in my day. You know the people I chat with in the cafeteria or the nice woman who makes my tea, those kinds of relationships feel like those are important too.

**HM:** Hundred percent human connection. I don't want to diminish that. There's something about a grocery store the other day that put in slow lanes. There's a slow lane where you can have a conversation with somebody as they're checking you out and a lot of people are choosing that connection.

**CC:** Oh I Love it.



**HM:** I speak for a living. That's my primary vehicle and for more than a year, I did nothing but Zoom and Teams. people are dying to get back out there. So I am a road warrior again. I got in at one o'clock in the morning last night from a series of events across the country and I got to tell you it's a different energy when I'm on stage. I Love that energy. I Love interacting with people. But then there are some days where I'm like you know what? I really would love to have dinner with my family and see some of my friends so this is kind of great. So it's a mix and I think we'll figure it out. I think to be honest, we need to be intentional and then when it comes to the workplace we need to rethink what that is in our lives because the idea of making people go in the office three days a week to sit on Zoom is really depleting our energy. So what is it? We do when we come together. How do we encourage more of those serendipitous collaborations or running into people I know. The buildings have been designed where bathrooms are in a certain place and the coffee pot has been moved so that people run into each other. We have to think so much more intentionally about that.

**CC:** I completely agree with you on that so you know it's everybody talks about how the pandemic has accelerated all of these things just like you talked about Zoom had been around and then suddenly we started using it so when I think about you know that digital transformation if you will that's taken place, what do you think that means in terms of skill gaps or finding the right talent like can you talk a little bit about that for organizations.

**HM:** Sure. First and foremost I think digital transformation is simply human transformation. We don't get digital transformation and then humans tell us humans start adopting and using the tools. So that's why we leap forward in the early days of the pandemic because we started using tools that were around us. That's why some really smart companies have made their CHRO and their CTO or CIO – however they're structured – to be inextricably linked because it's the human and the tools and they have to work together. When it comes to a skills gap I think we're completely wrong about this. I think a skills gap is actually kind of a good thing. A skills Gap forms when a human demonstrates a skill and a market values that skill in excess of supply. That's actually progress. So if we presume that learning is part of work. We will be constantly chasing a skills gap that hopefully will never close if we close it. We've stopped making progress so we need to make learning part of the work and if you think about how I spent more than a decade in higher ed, here's a new skill out there that we need and we need an undergraduate curriculum for it. For example, it takes about 10 years so it takes a couple of years to build the curriculum. It takes four, five, sometimes six years to get people through the curriculum and they're out in the workforce. So, a decade to a deployable workforce is way too long now you can compress it to five or two years or what have you if you do it through boot camps. But if we start assuming learning and certain types of learning are part of work and that we educate people with foundational skills, fundamental literacies so they are ready to learn, ready with the baseline understanding of things and some set of entry level skills that are expected – particularly technical skills – expected to be perishable, and we really lean into the durable skills which are the uniquely human skills. But have a workforce that has the mindset of expectation like when you do an undergrad if you finish your undergraduate or your training program. Whatever it is, that is not the end of the race. That's the beginning of the race.

**CC:** Before I let you go I just want to circle back to you. You got a new book coming out titled The Empathy Advantage and like can you just tell us why? Empathy? Why did that title emerge and what's so important about empathy right now?

**HM:** Well because I think the workforce is empowered and will continue to be even if we have an economic recession and we have those rapidly emerging skills and knowledge the leadership profile has to change. So we can't have that unquestioned expert who leads with domination. We basically have to make four fundamental shifts to leadership from a mindset perspective. You're not managing people's processes anymore, you're enabling their success. They used to work for you now you work for them. Success is your yes from a cultural standpoint. From a peer's competitors we would pit people against each other. They have unique knowledge. You need them to need each other and you need to orchestrate it. So it's peers as collaborators from an approach standpoint. We used to be able to get people to learn and adapt with simple extrinsic motivation. Now we need to do intrinsic motivation so we can move away from extrinsic pressure. We cannot get people to learn and adapt at the speed scale and scope we're going to need through punishment threats. And then from a behavioral standpoint. We used to encourage a myopic focus on driving productivity with domination and even sometimes fear and sometimes even humiliation. That won't work anymore. Now we need that person who's a humble, curious learner who can create effectiveness through inspiration, avoid burnout, and unleash the potential in their teams. All of that really leans into empathy.

**CC:** I think that is so helpful I'm just going to recommend to everybody that you hit your rewind button a few times and re-listen to what Heather just said because I think it's really important for any of us who are leading people or who hope to lead people in the current environment that we're working in and moving forward. So Heather thanks so much for being with us today. This has been a great conversation and I have really enjoyed it and I've learned a lot so I've contributed to my pension. So thank you.

**HM:** There you go. Thanks so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

**Chris Congdon:** So I wanted to talk to my colleague Noga Lasser and she is a director of design at Steelcase based in Munich. Thanks Noga for joining us today. Well what I really wanted to get your take on some of the things that Heather had to say and particularly this idea about learning is the new pension.

**Noga Lasser:** Yeah Chris, it's really nice to be here.

**CC:** That really struck me and you know we've seen other data out there that says that if people aren't learning, some of the things where they might leave and we certainly don't want that to happen if we can avoid it and so I'm curious ... a lot of people think about learning in a very formal way and we do need to have classrooms in those kinds of spaces but are there other ways from a design perspective that you would try and foster learning within the work environment?

**NL:** Absolutely Chris. I have to say that point really resonated with me. It kind of brought me back to also thinking about how Heather was talking about the slow lanes in supermarkets, which I found super interesting and so I would say we try to do something like that in our spaces as well. Quite intentionally. So you know Heather was talking about intentionally locating kitchenettes or bathrooms so people bump into each other and of course we strategically have these great work cafes in all of our spaces and those do a really great job of bringing people together. But one of the things that we've found quite recently working on a large project in the Munich LINC is that we also have these teams that are what we call these communal attractors that people are quite intentionally going to, so teams for example, like marketing that need to collaborate really with all of our different teams across the board people are coming to their space to have these work-related conversations and then when somebody else is coming by to have a conversation with someone else in marketing suddenly that conversation is this great opportunity for exactly what you're talking about... that informal learning like hey I didn't know you were here, or you were working on that or hey that's a completely new topic for me and what we found is that those conversations are kind of more deeply effective in business related learning than perhaps the more casual work cafe encounters where you might ask about family so that's been something quite new that we've just highlighted recently.

**CC:** And how is that different from designing a typical marketing department – the way we might have in the past?

**NL:** That's a really great question. I don't know what a typical marketing department would even look like. I guess they do vary but I guess any department is different from the way we might have designed for teams in the past? A few things that we're doing... so first of all is the location of the team within the larger community. So how do you place them in a space that kind of filters more people to that area?

**CC:** I get it so they're less isolated from other parts of the organization. Got it.

**NL:** Exactly, but then the other thing that we do quite intentionally is you'll have a cluster of desks but we'll plan a leaning place to lean near those desks, so you come in, you see a person you need to talk to and you'll have that leaning post and they'll come up and come towards that leaning post and then if a third person comes along, you've created this little destination.

**CC:** Got it.

**NL:** In addition to that and adjacency to all these spaces we always have these communal tables where we find more that the leaders sit so you know if I'm walking by and I'll see our director of marketing sitting there I might actually sit down next to him and be like hey I wanted to chat with you about this thing and then again that becomes this conversational destination which is a great opportunity for learning.

**CC:** I get it. So Heather also talks about this idea of collective intelligence which I also found really intriguing because a lot of us became leaders earlier in our careers. There was always this notion that the leader is supposed to have all of this expertise the leader supposed to know it all and yet what Heather talks about is like that's just impossible and that you really have to be a little bit more vulnerable, and acknowledge that the the collective wisdom of the team is what's going to be really important to continuing to move any work forward and so I'm just curious – it sounds like this idea that you're talking about ties to this idea of how a physical environment could help build this collective intelligence that Heather was talking about what do you think?

**NL:** I think what I was just mentioning is kind of one – certainly one aspect of that, bringing a lot of voices to the table in a kind of more casual way. And then another thing that we do is when we plan spaces for people to come together and we really plan those spaces in a way that gives everyone an equal seat at the table right? So you know there won't be a head of the table. Someone who controls the technology in a way that then monopolizes the meeting. We find that that's really helpful especially when you're trying to get through hierarchy so you know if you've got a director in a meeting together with a younger person, if they want to speak up then their voice is equally heard so I would say in Steelcase generally if someone has value to add in a meeting, the space will support them – in speaking up or being equally heard to all the others in that space.

**CC:** Yeah, it's interesting. How space can communicate that hierarchy like who is the person who's in charge and it's really interesting to think about how you design a space that doesn't have all of those symbols about hierarchy that tell you to be quiet sit in the background and let the boss talk but rather create this much more communal environment where everybody is invited. I think that's a really interesting concept. So thanks again, Noga. We could talk about this forever. But I think you've given us some really interesting ideas to think about so thanks for joining us today. Thanks.

**NL:** Absolutely, it's good being here Chris. Thanks.

**CC:** Thank you for being here with us. If you enjoyed this conversation – please rate or review it so more people can find it and visit us at [steelcase.com/research](https://steelcase.com/research) to sign up for weekly updates on workplace research, insights and design ideas delivered to your inbox.

**RC:** Join us next week for our conversation with Robin Dunbar. You may have heard of Robin. He's famous for something called The Dunbar Number – which is how many relationships our brains can manage. We're going to explore how relationships are changing in the era of hybrid work and what we need to know to make work more enjoyable. We hope you join us.

**CC:** Thanks again for being here – and we hope your day at work tomorrow is just a little bit better.

## **CREDITS**

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