

Mike Merrill:

Hello and welcome back to the mobile workforce. Podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill and today we are continuing our conversation with Mr. Gustavo Rosetti. Gustavo was a guest on last week's episode and we had a fantastic conversation talking about culture within your business and uh, dealing with a hybrid workforce. Um, Gustavo is one of the world's leading most experts in workplace culture. Her and uh, just has a great mind for this stuff. Has written four books and is working on a fifth, we found out on last week's episode. So, ah, super sharp, ah, individual on this topic. Very knowledgeable. Um, today Gustavo and I are going to be talking about managing asynchronous communication and also facilitating those courageous conversations that you really need to be having within your company with your team members and, uh, coworkers. So today we're also going to talk about how to define the right hybrid work model for your particular organization. Thanks again for coming back and joining us again, Gustavo. Looking forward to another great conversation.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Hi Mike. Great to be back and looking forward to continued conversation.

Mike Merrill:

Perfect. All right, well, last week we discussed Asynchronous communication. Can you touch briefly on what that actually is?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Sure. Uh, to make sure sometimes people get confused because synchronous and asynchronous look like pretty much the same and they're not terms that people use on day to day life. But basically we're talking about real time versus not real time. Real time is the default mode in which most companies tend to communicate. So let's say that, ah, most, uh,

construction companies meet once a week. Once a day, they bring all the team together to discuss what are the projects, what need to happen, what's the schedule for the day, and divide and conquer, so to speak. Well, you don't necessarily need to do that in real time. You can do that. You can record a video if you are the head of project management and you can tell people, hey, these are all the projects that we have for tomorrow. And um, people can watch them the night before. So when they show up to work, they actually go to the site rather than have to spend that half an hour or an hour going through basics. So in the end, there's a lot of communication that has to do with information sharing, project status updates and so on that don't need people to be in a meeting, in a call in real time, but can be delegated and managed via other medium.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, and what I like about what you just said is there are certain roles within a company that might need to know something, but they don't need to know now. And, uh, I'm sure like most of the listeners, we've all found ourselves in a meeting where we're thinking halfway in, like, why am I even here? I really don't care about this. I don't need to deal with it, I don't need to know anything about it. And I got three other places I need to be right now. So really this meeting is a waste of my time. But maybe that information is helpful and could be good for me to be at least aware of. And so what you're advocating is use some different methods to share that information so that people can appropriately listen to it or pay attention to it when it is appropriate from a schedule standpoint. Is that right?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. And also, it can work when it comes to interaction with clients as well. So, construction companies, I mean, you're busy, you're dealing with lots of things, and then the client wants to have a meeting or they want to talk about this. Well, you don't need to get in real time to interact with your customers

to keep them abreast of what's going on unless there's an issue. So real time is good for things that are urgent, things that are complex and solving tensions, but then the majority of the things can be managed asynchronously love.

Mike Merrill:

Mhm that so obviously, I'm with a software company that's a, uh, big part of my expertise, um, software for construction specifically. But, uh, in your world, are there some software solutions that can help companies best manage these things the way that you see them?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. There's a tool that's called Notion that's really good for documentation and you can structure every project that you're running and all the pieces and who's doing what needs to happen. So it's, uh, one source of communication in which anyone can get input, can update information, can get up to speed without having to interrupt other people or without having to have a call or, uh, meeting with your colleagues to know what's going on.

Mike Merrill:

Love that notion. I haven't heard of that before, but I'll definitely check it out. What do you think are some of the biggest mistakes that companies are running into and encountering when they're trying to work within a hybrid model, where some people are there in front of them and maybe half the other people are not?

Gustavo Razzetti:

The first thing is you mentioned the word model. I think that when it comes to a hybrid, people think that hybrid means like three days in the office, two days from home. That rigid arrangement. And there are countless ways that you can basically build a, uh, hybrid model. The most important thing is, rather than work around a schedule, you should work around the work. So in many companies in construction, it's different because most of the time you need people to be working on site when you're building. Right.

However, in many other organizations, there are sometimes that maybe people don't need to see each other, they don't need to be in the place. Right. However, there are other moments in which you need people to be there, like every day. So, for example, here in Chicago, because of the weather, most of the months, people cannot build outside, but then on the other month, they're building like crazy to catch up. So what happens is many companies still expect employees to follow, ah, a nine to five, whatever schedule during the time, like winter, in which they're not building. Because why? Because that's how the way you do it. Why don't let people work from home or at least partially work on the building, manufacturing, all the things that they can do when they're not in that production kind of time because of the weather. So my question, why not? Right.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. I love that. It sounds like what you're saying is for some reason, as a society, we have stuck with this old model of nine to five or eight to four or seven to three or whatever it is that this 8 hours per day is the default and we all have to do this. But what you're advocating, it sounds like, is there's a lot of ways to do this and uh, your current way is maybe not even likely the best approach for your particular business. Is that right?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. I think it's important to challenge that. In our previous episode, we talk about what you're not trying to do in a different way someone else is going to do, and it's going to get you out of business. So if companies want to experiment with different ways of working, someone else is going to do and they're going to attract your best talent.

Mike Merrill:

Okay. So they're going to take your customers and take your employees by offering a.

Gustavo Razzetti:

More sorry, not your employees, the good ones, the best ones.

Mike Merrill:

The ones you don't want to lose. Right, exactly.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

That's a great key, uh, point to make. So what role can managers play within a company to help companies take advantage of this and really access the opportunity that's there.

Gustavo Razzetti:

One thing that's important is to understand how people want to work together. Managers tend to impose their approach to work. And in the previous episode, you mentioned something about, hey, I would like to work maybe 3-10 days or four days of 10 hours and then have a free Friday. Other people might not. So it's important to understand people's preferences because some people are early rises. Some people may want to start at five in the morning. Some people rather get into the job at eleven, but then they stay until nine. So be flexible if, of course, the client permits you to work in a flexible but the point is managers to have this conversation with people to see what works best for you rather than have a one size fits all approach for everyone.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. So do you have some examples you can share of either customers that you've worked with or companies you're aware of that have done a great job of adopting a hybrid model where they have different types of schedules for different employees?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. There's, um, a M software company called go to. They have the go to meeting and many other kind of collaboration kind of tools. And one of the things they realize is that they tap into the different groups of the company. For example, younger employees have certain preferences, people with kids or caregivers and other. So basically, they create like five options based on people's circumstances

and people could choose from those. And that really created a lot of excitement from people because they could adapt their life challenges and preferences to their work life on their hand. The company realized, hey, we also need to create connection because sometimes people are not getting together, they don't see each other. So they started organizing fundraising and volunteering opportunities, for example, helping build a school in one of the neighborhoods. And people voluntarily could join any of those community efforts or joining a food bank. And then they got to meet colleagues in a complete different context, but was so meaningful that create that sense of belonging and connection between colleagues.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's beautiful. I love the idea of, uh, teamwork being, um, brought together for a good cause, for something that was, uh, again, more of a humanitarian or a serviceable charity, um, that they're able to kind of work hard and work through together. Um, the fact that it's volunteer also makes that a lot more meaningful. And that is very attractive to certain types of employees. And, uh, I think as companies, we're often scared that nobody's going to want to do that. We can't even get them to work a full 40 hours week. Why in the world would they actually donate some of their free time and do it for this cause for free? Um, but what you're saying, and I believe to be true and accurate, is, uh, a lot of people might be excited and interested in doing something like that. And it would really build teamwork and collaboration and synergy so that when they go back to work, those employees would have a different relationship working together professionally, just like they built, uh, while they were doing that, um, charitable work. Is that right?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. And that plays also like a ritual because it builds people together. And I was thinking of another company.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that word camaraderie is a great word. And, um, I think it's something that's missing in a lot of companies. Um, I think it's there in most companies in small doses, but I think it's in silos. Um, a lot of companies don't

do a great job of making that a company thing where everybody, uh, recognize the value in each other as appropriately as they should. Um, so as we talk about this, uh, I'm envisioning, as you were describing, where you've seen companies give an option, like go to. Maybe they have five different, um, schedules that somebody can choose from, like a menu in and out, burger or somewhere where they get to decide what maybe somebody loves hot dogs, but they really don't like hamburgers. Or maybe somebody's, uh, vegan and they don't want to eat any meat at all. Do you have a veggie burger that's available? Um, I love the idea of coming up with some distinct ways that will work for the company, but that will also allow the employees to have a lot better lifestyle by choosing a schedule that makes more sense to them. Um, so within this type of framework, what do you think down the road and into the future? How do you think this type of adjustment could really impact us as a society and our overall productivity within our communities and our companies?

Gustavo Razzetti:

I think the bigger conversation is that, uh, we used to think that work was the most important thing, and people, because of a pandemic, realized, hey, life is too short to just work. So now people want to design their work around their personal life and stop basically postponing their personal life because of work. One of the biggest shifts, and this of course, affects construction as well, is that people want to move farther away from cities. People want to move in places not only that are cheaper, where they can actually have a home to live in, but also they have a better environment. They can have good educations for the kids, they can have, uh, maybe healthier space, maybe more sense of community. And that's going to affect because the US. In particular, is built around huge cities. If you take Germany, for example, when they developed the big companies, it was developed about smaller communities. They never had these gigantic cities. Every company is built around smaller communities, and people are used to that stuff. I think in the US. People are going through the process of maybe I don't want to be in the city anymore. I want to work in a more communal kind of space. And that's going to affect a commute, that's going to affect housing, that's going to affect industries, that's going to

affect cities. There are cities that are really starting to turn office space into hotels or other type of activities because take Manhattan, they say that the empty space is equivalent to 2030 Empire State Buildings.

Mike Merrill:

Wow.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Because people are not working there at all or they are not going more than once or twice a week.

Mike Merrill:

Wow. So the resources that we've built, the buildings that we have that we're still running electricity for, we're still, uh, managing the climate of the temperature, the air, we, uh, still have to maintain those buildings. They're not being even fractionally utilized. Is that what you're telling me?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. So when there's a huge demand for new living spaces, working spaces, co working spaces in the suburbs or in smaller cities, but then the bigger cities are suffering from lack of customers, so to speak, people are not.

Mike Merrill:

Wow, that's interesting. So is there some advice you would give to maybe somebody that is either starting a new company or that has recently, uh, started their business that they could, uh, approach this topic from an effective angle?

Gustavo Razzetti:

Yeah, I think that for many segments of population segments, hybrid and flexibility are a, uh, must have. It's no longer a, uh, perk. It's no longer something frivolous that, oh, I want to do that like it was in the past. So if you don't include that in the sign of your company, in your jobs, then you're going to miss out a lot of talent that already want that and they're not willing to give it away. And as I mentioned yeah, there's

always going to be people that are going to take your job, but the great people are not if you don't offer them flexibility.

Mike Merrill:

M, yeah, uh, I think that's a great point. So you're really saying that regardless of where you are at in your business, even new old, uh, long standing, now would be a great time before you lose those key employees to take a look at that structure that you have. And maybe they could have some surveys or do something to start the conversation to find out are there some more desirable schedules. Are there some different structures, uh, that might look a little different than today that people would get excited about versus we're just going to keep going 40 hours work week and paying overtime when we have to. And, uh, it ain't broke. We're not going to fix it. We're not going to change anything type mentality.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely.

Mike Merrill:

So, um, as far as advice to other companies that really were forced to adjust, you're talking about the Empire State Building, you're talking about vacancies in office space. Um, what can they do now? Um, they're already wherever they're, ah, at, maybe they've already figured this out, but they're, they're struggling or maybe they, they've still maintained and they're fighting against their employees. I mean, what's the middle ground to get to a place where this conversation can be had effectively and they can get to a better place soon.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Yeah, I think that one of the biggest challenges is that companies are not being honest with their companies. So take Google. Google provided a lot of flexibility to their employees. Many people actually moved away from, let's say San Francisco, one of the um, New York, their huge headquarters, to live somewhere else. And now Google is saying, hey, I want everyone back into the office. Not only people feel, hey, you gave me permission to change my lifestyle, now what I'm going to do, sell my house, go back to a two hour

commute to more costly kind of living lifestyle, what I'm going to do? But also the company is not offering any particular or concrete reason why people should do that. And you mentioned earlier that people are, ah, afraid or worried that, hey, if we are working a more, um, flexible environment, culture is going to suffer. Interesting enough, the head of Google, head of culture at Google and Human Resources mentioned that funny that, yeah, we know the water cooler conversations are really not effective. Not even they were selling the same BS that they used to bring people back into. So it's like, uh, if you don't listen to people, people are going to basically, once again, going back to my favorite book, they're going to do whatever pleases them. Because people want to be autonomous. They want to be told what to do, especially if it doesn't make sense for them and for the company.

Mike Merrill:

Mhm, yeah, in the past, I think industry in general, it's been more of a chronotype set up where the business and the company gains the most and it doesn't necessarily help the employee directly or their family. And we think, oh well, we're paying their paycheck, they're cashing their check, um, we had an even exchange here. What you're saying is there's changes we can make and ways that we could do things differently, where the company still gets all the value because they're getting that work and that effort, that production out of the employees. But they could change a structure that would actually benefit the employee also and their family so that their life is better. Um, their lifestyle, uh, their life experience, their fulfillment is a little bit more in line with what their goals are, uh, personally, by just changing the schedule up and allowing them to have some flexibility.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Absolutely. When you give people, ah, context in which they feel good, they're going to give their best work. That's basic. Right. However, I understand that people say, well, but not everyone. Some people are going to try to abuse the system. Right. They're going to try to find the loop so they can basically loophole so they can get some benefits or maybe slack or cheat or whatever. Yes, that happens in every business. But often those people are under 3%, so it's a small percentage. So why would you punish the other 97%? Because just a few

people are being reckless, right? Have a conversation with those people, try to course correct or fire those people, but don't punish the rest of the organization that have good intentions. They're doing the great work and they're benefiting from a, uh, flexible environment.

Mike Merrill:

I love what you just said there, and I think that's important to reround and talk about. Again, most people are good people. Most people really do want to do a good job. Most people really do care. They are interested in feeling good about the effort they put in. But if we don't give them a structure where they can do that effectively and we don't allow them to have the tools and that process and structure within our company set up to effectively help us, then, yeah, I think, uh, production goes out the window, culture goes down. Um, people struggle to give an honest eight hour effort, so to speak. And really, as business owners and managers, that's kind of on us. I mean, that's something that we need to do a better job of giving them the tools they need to be more productive. And I think we'll get, again, like you said, maybe 97% are generally great employees, but it's the 3% that we're allowing to spoil it for the rest of them and for us. And also, we're steering the ship in a direction that is, uh, dealing with that 3% instead of dealing with the vast majority of our company. Ah, more appropriately.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Mhm definitely. And do you ask for advice for leaders either? If you're starting a company, if you're really running a business, trust is a two way street, right? If you want people to trust you, you need to trust them. And leaders need to take the first step. So if you are controlling your employees, you're showing them that you think that people are going to steal stuff, that they're not going to be good, then people are going to basically pay you back. I remember a story from a company that it was so toxic, the company was a mill, right? So people were working a mill and they started stealing tools from the mill. Not because they needed, because most of the tools they couldn't use at home, but basically they were so pissed off that they want to punish the company when a new leadership took over. Rather than saying, hey guys, who stole the tools? You're a thief. So they say, no, we're going to act smart and say, you know what next, uh, Wednesday is

bring back your tools to work. Probably you took them because you need them. Maybe you borrow them and you forgot to bring them back. Don't worry, no one's going to ask you if you forgot some tools at home. Hey, bring it back. And most of the people brought the tools back, they never stole and the manager started over. So you know what I mean? It's like when we tap into human basic human emotions. People react to the level. If you, as a leader have maturity and that level of self awareness, people are going to pay back. If you say, hey, if you don't bring back the tools, I'm going to fire you, not only people are not going to bring back any tools at all, but they're going to continue stealing more from you.

Mike Merrill:

Great, uh, that's a great analogy, great example. Thank you for sharing that. Uh, to wrap up the conversation today, is there anything else that you would say or like to leave with our listeners, um, that they can come away with from our conversation?

Gustavo Razzetti:

I think the leaders need to think, how can they help their team better? And of course, the leaders are not at the service of the people only. They are at the service of their own business and the company. But what I'm saying is simply asking, how can I help you? Try to understand, are there any speed bumps in the way that are making things more complicated that really don't benefit anyone? How can you remove those speed bumps to make sure that your team can focus their energy, their time, their passion in doing what they're good at, doing their best work?

Mike Merrill:

That's awesome. Well, lots of great advice, lots of great tips. Uh, lots to think about. I hope our listeners have the opportunity to check out Gustavo's books. And, uh, again, we'll leave the links to each of those in the show notes so you have an opportunity to check those out and hopefully implement some of the great, uh, knowledge points and wisdom that Gustavo has been able to accumulate and really, really is passionate about sharing with the rest of us. So. Thanks, Gustavo. It's been a lot of fun having you on. We sure appreciate it.

Gustavo Razzetti:

Thank you, Mike. I really enjoy the conversation and thank you for listening.