

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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Jacob Morgan: Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of The Future of Work podcast. My guest today is Tim Munden, the chief learning officer at Unilever. Tim, thank you for joining me.

Tim Munden: It's great to be with you, Jacob. Thank you for having me.

Jacob Morgan: Oh, of course. So, I was just saying that we had Leena Nair the HR officer of Unilever as a previous podcast guest and we had a wonderful chat. Talked about all sorts of really cool stuff that Unilever's doing. And so you're responsible for all the learning aspects, [00:00:30] so I'm super excited to talk to you about some of the programs you have going on. But before we jump into that, why don't you give us a little bit of information and background about Tim. So, how did you get involved with this, what are you currently doing at Unilever and what does a typical day look like for you?

Tim Munden: Sure. So, how did I get into it? Well, I didn't choose to. My career's kind of unfolded. But I guess it's unfolded because of purpose and because of a conversation I had as a 22-year-old. So, [00:01:00] my first career was with the army in the U.K. They sponsored me through my education, but unfortunately I got injured playing soccer of all things, and I had to leave the army. And I was kind of lost. Somebody who changed my life by asking me two questions, what do you really love, what do you want to learn about? His advice to me was if I did those things through my career, if I followed those two things, I would be motivated because I [inaudible 00:00:14] learn about it. And to be honest, I followed that all my working life. It took me into Unilever. I didn't intend to stay. I thought I'd just stay a little bit. But I stayed because what I really love is human beings, and what I wanted to learn about is how we can create companies and communities [00:00:30] that allow people to be their very best. I follow that, Jacob, and it's kept me in Unilever and brought me in the end through a lot of HR business partnering jobs around the world. It's brought me to learning, and helping other people to connect a purpose, work from purpose, in a company that's purpose-driven. So from that point of view, it's been a perfect match.

What am I working on? I'm Chief Learning Officer, so I'm responsible for building the leadership [00:01:00] that we need in the 21st century in a disrupted and digital world. I'm responsible for trying to create that purpose-driven culture by

connecting people to their purpose. That's the first block. The second block that I'm really focused on is wellbeing, the energy for performance. That's a really big deal for us. Connects to our purpose as a company, connects to our values, but also energy is ... wellbeing is the energy for performance. And then the third block is really about helping people [00:01:30] to learn, to be constantly curious, exploring and upgrading their skills. Because the world we're in, obviously enough ... And this is a Future of Work podcast, so everybody listening gets this ... the world is changing at a rate which means that we have to learn faster than ever before. So we're working on that. How can we inspire people to do that? That's kind of what I'm focused on.

Jacob Morgan: Sounds like a pretty cool job. What does a typical day look like for you? You [00:02:00] know, people are always really interested not just in your work day, but even before you get into work. What time are you up? Do you have any particular routines or rituals that you practice? What does your day look like?

Tim Munden: I wake up at 5:30 every morning. [inaudible 00:02:17] got myself ready, I go downstairs and I drink a cup of coffee and I meditate. I meditate for about half an hour. I read a little bit for 15, 20 [00:02:30] minutes something to inspire me, something to stretch my thinking. Could be something I'm really working on at that point. At the moment, I'm really working on presence. I'm working on how to be present in the moment to really give my very, very best as a leader. So I reflect on that. So that takes me about 45 minutes, an hour. I talk to my wife. And then I get off to work. I'm usually in work by 8:00. That's the kind of [00:03:00] start to my day.

After that, I try and protect time for thinking. I was really [inaudible 00:03:07] reminded by Cal Newport's book on Deep Work, that we need to create space to really think, if we're going to solve the world's complex problems. So I try and protect time for that. Other than that, I spend most of my time in meetings with people, either the team at Unilever, clients within Unilever who we are working closely with, and a lot of time externally trying [00:03:30] to learn, trying to figure out what the very, very best is that I can bring into Unilever to either share through learning or to inspire our learning or inspire how we learn, or in wellbeing to work out what other people are doing and other things that I can take, build, and create off, that are going to help our people to be their very, very best. So no day is the same after that kind of start, but those are the kind of general things that I do. A lot of time outside, a lot of time with my team, time to think, [00:04:00] time with the people we're serving in Unilever.

Jacob Morgan: I love that you start each day by a 30-minute meditation. I can maybe meditate for two to five minutes, and then my brain starts going a little crazy. The fact that you can do 30 minutes is very, very impressive. I might need to get some meditation tips from you later.

Tim Munden: Happy to help. I didn't say I found it easy though, Jacob.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah. For me, it's very, very hard for some reason. Okay. For people that [00:04:30] maybe are not familiar with Unilever, maybe you can give us some background information about the company, what do you guys do, how big is the organization as far as employee size.

Tim Munden: Yeah. Unilever is a fast-moving consumer goods company. We operate in over a hundred countries with 160,000 people. The most important thing probably to know about Unilever is its purpose. Our purpose is to make sustainable living commonplace. That flows through [00:05:00] everything we do. We try and flow it through the brands, through brands like Ben & Jerry's, with people we know are ... And obviously also in the beauty and personal care business brands like Dove, which has a very clear purpose. We're in the home care business, brands like Persil and Comfort in the UK, Skip and Omo.

And so that's basically what we do. We meet people's everyday needs through this massive [00:05:30] team, fantastic team of people around the world. And the way that we bring that purpose to life, is through our business model. The business model is the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan. That's what basically turns this really deep purpose of trying to make sustainable living commonplace into specific targets and things that we can really get our hands and our minds around. They're still challenging, but that's what basically guides us, and guides us into how [00:06:00] we can meet people's needs whilst also meeting the needs of the societies in which we operate, and the boundaries of the resources of the planet. So that's basically who we are, Jacob.

Jacob Morgan: I know Paul Polman has also very much been a vocal and kind of advocate CEO for a lot of these initiatives for sustainability, for not focusing so much on just shareholder value. I mean, he's very, very outspoken about it seems like just trying [00:06:30] to create an organization that has a positive impact on the world, not just an organization that's all about making money. What role does Paul play in this? Do you think it's important for other organizations to specifically have their CEO kind of driving these types of things forward?

Tim Munden: It's absolutely vital for us. It's been massively influential for Unilever, the leadership that Paul has given inside the business, but also [00:07:00] externally. But I wouldn't want somebody to listen to this and think, "Well, the senior leadership of the organization I'm in isn't like that. It's different to Unilever, so I can't act." I think it takes the whole organization to mobilize. I think what we're seeing in the world, is the power of people. The digital age is unlocking the power of people in a way that we haven't seen before.

So I think that every person in an organization [00:07:30] has influence, has the opportunity to try and make sure that their organization is purpose-driven, and at the very least, they are purpose-driven in what they do. I think that's one of the things that's so encouraging about the world we're in. Organizations need to compete for the very best people. People want to work in purpose-driven companies, companies that care about, as well as the performance of the business, also for the society, also for the people [00:08:00] that work there,

also for the wider world. I think by choosing to work for those companies, we will get more and more businesses working in a purposeful way. So I think we all have power, and we all have influence.

Jacob Morgan: Purpose is, as you know, a topic of discussion among many organizations all over the world. We keep hearing about this word, purpose. But I'm curious, how would you explain or define purpose, and [00:08:30] what are you guys doing at Unilever to try to help create or connect that sense of purpose between the employees and the work that Unilever as an organization actually does?

Tim Munden: Purpose, I think, is why. Very simply, it's why. I think this is very important, because sometimes when I travel around, I go to conferences, I try and hunt down new insight about purpose. I hear people actually talking about purpose as what. It's almost become the new [00:09:00] mission statement, the company purpose. And it isn't that. A purpose answers the question, "Why? Why are we doing this? Why are we in business?" Or at the individual level, "Why do I come to work?" So I think the answer to, "What is purpose," is it answers the question, "Why," and keeps answering it. So actually, purpose, if you take at an individual level, if someone says to me, "Tim, why do you go to work?" It's because I want to make an impact on the world. I want to help people's potential. I want to help create communities and companies [00:09:30] that help people be the very best they can be.

Someone says, "Why?" Why? Because I really believe human beings are the ultimate force for anything in the world. Why do I think that, and why do I care about that? Because I want to make the world a better place. And so my purpose as a person, is to create lasting change for good. If you then say, "Why's that?" That's just what I care about. It's what I've always cared about, to create lasting change for good. [00:10:00] So that's what purpose is in my view. It's for the individual. It's who you ask, "Why? Why? Why? Why? Why," and it's the point at which they say, "Because I just do." So what are we trying to do bring that alive? We're trying to help people to be able to describe their purpose.

So just as I've described it to you, to create lasting change for good, we want all of our people to be able to describe it easily, as a way of making sure they're bringing it to work, putting it at the heart of their career plans and what they do. And so far, [00:10:30] we've taken 14,000 of our people through that journey. And included in that is all of our senior leaders, but we're now taking that right across the Unilever organization, across the world in many different environments. We're starting on working on it in our factories, in our offices, in our sales forces, in our research labs, to help everybody know the answer to that question, and give them permission to bring it to work.

Then what we're trying to do, is to make sure that once you have people in work with that purpose, we give [00:11:00] them the opportunity to create a team purpose, and that's almost the next level up, if you can imagine that. We want to try and make sure all our leaders are purposeful, so we've embedded purpose in the language we have of leadership. We talk about leadership as

having an inner game and an outer game. In the inner game, one of the core components of that we think is purpose and service. So in our leadership programs, purpose is absolutely embedded. And then we want to make sure that it's embedded across the organization [00:11:30] as we shift and change Unilever, which every business has to do. We want to make sure that purpose is embedded through the Sustainable Living Plan, and then that it flows through our brands into what we do out in the world. There should be a perfect flow, Jacob, from the individual through to the impact on the brands.

Jacob Morgan: You mentioned that 14,000 have gone through this. I'm assuming it's some sort of a workshop or training, or some kind of education around purpose. Can you give us a sense of how that [00:12:00] works? Obviously, you don't need to give us every kind of granular detail, but what does that entail? For example, if I'm a Unilever employee, do I sign up for something and then everybody gets together for a day and we go through some kind of workshop? Or what is this process that these 14,000 people have been going through?

Tim Munden: Yes, it's a workshop. It's a slightly different kind of workshop because there's hardly any PowerPoint. One of my objectives in life is to try [00:12:30] and minimize the use of PowerPoint at all possible. It's a very interactive workshop in which people share their experiences in small groups. We facilitate this ourselves. And that's a very powerful thing too, because what's happening is Unilever people sharing their journeys together. And we ask them particularly about experiences they've had. So they spend the day in a small group reflecting, for example, on times that have been really difficult for them that have shifted and change them. We ask them to reflect on their [00:13:00] childhood, and things that they love to do, about their values. We ask them to reflect on their strengths. And what we find out of that series of conversations over a day working together in a group of four or five, people generally come to this sense of what is really at the core of their motivations, the core of their emotions, the stuff that puts them into motion. And when we spend time sharing that.

I think some of the very best workshops that I've facilitated ... And I've facilitated [00:13:30] over 20 of these myself when we were developing the approach ... some of the very best workshops are where people who work together a lot share that purpose, with the line managers in the room, everybody together. That's a really powerful moment. So we really, really get to know each other by knowing what's on the inside, what's in the core of their inner game. That's basically how it works.

Jacob Morgan: It's really interesting that you kind of get to that deeper [00:14:00] level ... It almost makes me feel like ... I don't want to call it a therapy session ... but some sort of like an inward reflection process, which can be hard. Do you find that some people are either uncomfortable or really challenged with this, and they're maybe not able to do these types of things? How do you kind of coach them or walk them through this, if they may be a little bit outside of their comfort zone?

Tim Munden:

[00:14:30] The first thing is that we have facilitators in those small groups who've been through the journey before, so there's another Unilever person who's experienced who's there. That really, really helps. Ideally, we have leaders present who are role modeling and sharing their purpose openly. So that creates a really safe place. Then I think the other thing that I try and do whenever I facilitate this is to say to people, "Switch off that bit of your [00:15:00] mind that judges and assesses. It's not your friend. It really isn't your friend. The bit that says, 'Oh, I didn't see that quite right,' and, 'Should I share this?' Just allow yourself to voice freshly what you're feeling."

Whereas people tell the stories, we ask them to prepare beforehand, but we also ask them not to read it, but to speak it freshly, because what happens is, people connect, and as you say, reflect as they speak, and they find new insight. We [00:15:30] ask people to listen generously and supportively. And because the whole group are doing it, they help each other. I find it generally happens naturally. Now, some people find it difficult on the day, other people find it easy. But to be honest, either of those groups could find it the opposite on a different day. And so we tell people not to worry about that. This is not a one day in which we're going to talk about purpose, we're never going to talk about it again.

I would really warn anyone who's listening and thinking, "Oh, we'd like to do this," you've got to have the environment right. You've got to be [00:16:00] a place where people cannot just talk about purpose for a day, but can then talk about it in the days afterwards. When they're talking to their line manager about what work they want to do, about what career they want to have, they must be talking purpose. Otherwise, this does I think come across as either a one-day therapy which we all know is pointless, or it will come across as being slightly manipulative at worst.

So I think you've got to embed this in a culture that's embracing purpose. Why would you embrace purpose? Because when you embrace purpose, you [00:16:30] give the people the permission to bring their whole ... pursue, allow people to respond to the needs of the organization, to the consumers in our case. We talk about consumer love in our business as one of our standards of leadership. You can only really engage in consumer love when you really have a deep purpose that is around caring and serving people. That's why I think purpose is important. We find the process on the whole works pretty well.

Jacob Morgan:

[00:17:00] I love this ties back to consumer love. So it all has a purpose, so to speak. It all has kind of a way that it ties back into the business, which is great. You mentioned something that I find particularly interesting, which is that it's not just kind of a one-day thing, it's you need to create that culture where you can have that ongoing conversation of purpose. So let's say today, Unilever, a bunch of people went through this workshop, this process of identifying [00:17:30] their purpose. How do you then kind of encourage it and support it over time and allow that conversation to take place? Do you do like regular purpose check-ins? Does the manager have to constantly get back in touch with

the employees and ask them about their purpose? Or how do you get that to stay and kind of keep going over time?

Tim Munden:

Yeah. That is the big question. There isn't one way, I think is the answer, Jacob. [00:18:00] On the one way, we do really, really want to ... we really want to embed this in line management. We've just started ... And we've got further to go on this, to be honest, and we've got further to go on all of it. I don't want anyone listening today to think, "I think Unilever's cracked this." We are a work in progress on all of these things, but we're working on very, very hard.

So what we've tried to do, is to get people to use that purpose statement [00:18:30] then as the basis for their career planning and their development planning. Because I feel that for years in HR, we've asked ourselves, "Why have people not done their training and development plans?" I think the answer was, "Because it wasn't their plan. It felt like the company's plan." We've got to put them, their purpose at the heart of things, because then people will do the things that are in the plan. So we try and do that. We've got that hardwired into our people systems, but that takes a bit of time to get going. We're trying to build it into line management. So the first line management training talks [00:19:00] about it.

I had a new colleague within Unilever move into my team. We had our first meeting today. I started with, "Can you share your purpose," because I need to understand that so that I can help to guide her career, guide her development, help her land in the team. So we try and build it into line management. We have follow-up workshops that help to support those things. How do you as a line manager build a development plan based on purpose with somebody? So they work on it themselves, and then they think about their team members and how they can help bring out purpose [00:19:30] for them. We have workshops on how to create a team purpose.

And I've done this with people, for example, a customer director who serves one of our groups of customers thinking about, "What is the purpose of my team? What is the purpose of this type of shop that we serve? How do they serve the community? How can we serve them so there's team purpose?" As I said, it's built into our leadership, and increasingly is built into our brands [00:20:00] as well. So there are many ways, is the short answer. Part of my work is really to work out how we can keep really getting those flames burning so that this is a fire that continues to fuel the business.

Jacob Morgan:

We talked about purpose for a couple of minutes. I kind of want to transition a little bit to just broader learning inside of Unilever, and maybe what that looks like. You've been at [00:20:30] Unilever for a few years now. Have you seen Unilever's approach to learning evolve over time since you started working there, up until now? And I know you have a couple initiatives, the C4G program, which I want to ask you about, and you have something I believe called My Learning as well, which we can touch on. But how has learning changed at Unilever since you first started?

Tim Munden: So hugely. [00:21:00] I've been in Unilever 25 years ...

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:21:04]

Tim Munden: Usually. So I've been in Unilever for 25 years this September. So yep.

Jacob Morgan: Congratulations.

Tim Munden: Long time. Thank you very much. So I joined as a graduate trainee and a Unilever future leader, and then I've moved through the business since then. So yeah, lots of change. Interestingly, when I was a trainee, I did a project on employee development as we called it then.

What has changed? So [00:21:30] at that point, we were realizing we needed to encourage people to learn and we had learning centers and places they could go learn. I think that was a step forward in trying to get us all the think, shift the responsibility for learning onto the individual. But I think technology has allowed us to go a step further with that. So my learning that you referred to is a social media type platform powered by Degree, which is a partner we work [00:22:00] with, which really allows people to drive their own learning, to find learning that they need internal to Unilever, external to learn, to become part of groups that share learning. I think that's the biggest shift.

I think there has been a shift in technology. I think we were getting into elearning. There were CD-ROMs 25 years ago, for those of you who remember those. But I think the sophistication of the virtual learning has gone up considerably. I do feel [00:22:30] that we're now in a place where we can honestly say as learning professionals that there are a whole range of ways of learning from individual, totally virtual through to team based and face to face and in between that a whole set of different methodologies, all of which work when used in the right way. I think that's a shift. But I think we're only just seeing the beginning. I think the power of technology to have people learn socially learn together in groups [00:23:00] but still virtually, that is a huge potential, which I think is coming through now, which I think will unlock so much. Because if you can imagine the big ... We know that people learn brilliantly from each other. Putting different people from different experiences together, but that costs a lot of money a lot of time in travel. If you can do that virtually, that is really, really powerful.

So I think technology shifted. I think our understanding of how people learn and the need to learn by doing [00:23:30] as well as just learn by studying or reflecting, I think that's improved. So I think learning is in a better place. I think the other thing that's changed honestly is that the rate of change in the world has meant that we are waking up to the need to people to learn at the speed they've never done before. I think that that rate of change plus the length of lives that people are going to lead and the length of careers that they're going to lead is really going to drive the next [00:24:00] phase of change in learning.



Jacob Morgan: Let's say I'm an employee at Unilever and I've been there, I don't know, one to two years, and I want to learn something new. What is that process or experience like? Is it my responsibility to figure out what I want to learn? Does my manager encourage me to learn something new, and then once I know what it is that I want to learn, how do I actually go about doing it? You mentioned 25 years [00:24:30] ago most companies, like you said, you'd have to kind of book some sort of a learning course, you might need to fly somewhere for a couple days, you sit in a darkly lit room or dimly lit room, and then we have those overhead projectors and people explain stuff to you.

Tim Munden: Acetate slides.

Jacob Morgan: Exactly. Exactly. I remember those. So what is it now at Unilever for an employee that wants to learn something new? What does that experience look like?

Tim Munden: It's all kinds of different [00:25:00] things. I think it should be. I mean, let's face it, when I'm at home and I want to learn something new, I basically get to Google and I search for it. I watch a video, and then I go do it. So using my learning, the social media platform, I referred to earlier, you would do the same kind of thing. But what Degree does is it searching explicitly for learning content. So you know you're getting something, which is recent and which is specifically designed for learning. So some of the experience is exactly [00:25:30] as you would expect it to be based on how you learn at home. That's really, really important because I think one of the other things that's changing in big companies is that once upon a time, only a few years ago, I think we were content to offer our employees IT systems that were really not very sophisticated and weren't consumer grade. I don't think people accept that anymore.

So I think we're offering much more consumer grade tools and people are going finding what they want. When they go looking, they might look [00:26:00] for a course that needs to be booked, in which case, they can book that with the agreement of their line manager if it cost money, and there can be a face to face course. They can book onto a virtual instructor lead course. They could follow a course that is a learning pathway, which they can do on their own time, at their own speed, or they can just look into individual nugget of learning, of film, an article. All of those things exist. So from face to face through [00:26:30] to driving their own learning.

Jacob Morgan: Who's responsible for it? I talked about this with Lena as well, and actually this seems to be ...

Tim Munden: So the individual's responsible.

Jacob Morgan: No, go ahead. Please.

Tim Munden:

I'm sorry. He individual's fundamentally responsible for driving their learning, but the line manager is also responsible for supporting their people to build the capabilities they need. So there we're overlapping responsibilities here.

[00:27:00] You need both parties, don't you? You need somebody who's hungry to learn because you can't make anybody learn. It has to be one of the most challenging things for learning professionals is that you cannot force people to learn. So I think that's a really important part of this. They've got to be hungry, and my job is to try and create a culture that encourages that curiosity and that hunger, but you've got to have it.

But on the other hand, you also sometimes [00:27:30] need to help people to know what to learn. So one of the piece of work we're doing right now is trying to think about what are the absolutely critical things that we think this business, which is in a disruptive and digital world, what are the things people need to learn most, try and sign post some of those things to people. But we're trying to do that in a dynamic way. If I think back on my time in this business and from earlier roles thinking about learning, we used to write books of skills and say [00:28:00] the skills for an employee relations manager with ease and the skills for a sales manager with ease. I think if we get back into that writing catalogs of skills, we're going to be too slow because the world is changing so fast. Business is changing so fast, technology so fast. So I think we need to empower the individual and we need to empower experts to share with each other and we need to sign post people to the things that are really important right now, realizing that those are going to change four, [00:28:30] six, 12 months from now.

So two groups of people are responsible. The individual, the line manager with experts in learning and the subject matter fueling them with really new, current, and exciting material.

Jacob Morgan:

Have you seen this at Unilever as far as how fast things change when it comes to learning? When you started there 25 years ago, did employees have the luxury of waiting to learn something new? Maybe a couple years and now [00:29:00] are you seeing that it's much faster as far as the need for employees to learn something new?

Tim Munden:

Without doubt. Without doubt. So the rate of change I think it's a common place, isn't it? People say it a lot. The rate of change has never been so fast and we'll never be so slow. I think there's some truth in that. The rate of change does appear to be exponential and it turns into really practical things, doesn't it? There are [00:29:30] new ways of doing jobs that we do and there are new jobs that we didn't have before. We didn't have nearly as many data scientists or a need for as much data. The tools that people are using evolve so fast. So absolutely we see that. Therefore, we can't have people waiting for the next program to be offered to them. We do need people to be hungry to learn themselves, but also, and this I think is a really new thing to answer your question in learning, Jacob, we [00:30:00] need people to be hungry to share

with others. Just as we share things we experience through Facebook and Instagram, we need to share things we're discovering quickly around the business so people learn together. That I think is the exciting unlock. I think we are on that journey. I don't think we've cracked it yet. But certainly my goal as the Chief Learning Officer is how do we unlock that speed of sharing and learning together virtually, globally. That's the big thing that allow people to learn at the speed of business.

Jacob Morgan:

What's your big challenge? [00:30:30] So obviously Chief Learning Officer at Unilever, big global company, you're personally and your team are tasked with keeping up with this rapid pace of change, and I would imagine that it is freaking hard to do it. So what's your biggest challenge? If there were maybe one to three things that you could solve just instantly. A little genie pops out of a bottle and says, "Tim, I could solve these three big problems for you instantly," what would [00:31:00] those three big challenges be for you that you wish you could solve right away?

Tim Munden:

Okay. So if I could solve something right now today, where are we? Third of July. I would like to solve number one, I would like to unlock this characteristic of learning of I discover, I share. I rate the learning of the people share and together we learn faster and faster. I would like to unlock that [00:31:30] thing right now. We're not there yet. We're not there because people don't have that way of thinking about learning. You see it evolving in their personal lives. We're not yet there. That, for me, would be the point at which this catches fire.

So let me make that practical using an example for myself. Now I discover a new piece of learning tech that works really well or a new trick in Degree that I can use. I share it, it goes viral because it's rated highly. Other people build on it. That's [00:32:00] learning really fueling the business. That's really number one.

Number two, I would really would like to in the leadership space, I think that unlocking what we call agility. We call that a bit of fun as being constantly curious and courageous. This ability in leaders to search out in the world for new insight and changes that mean we can serve our customers and our consumers in [00:32:30] new ways. That hunger for searching and the reason it's courageous is the willingness to give up stuff that used to be true but isn't anymore. That's really difficult. Those of us who get to a certain age ... I've been working for 25 years. There are things that have been true along that way but to no longer true. Our ability to shed those, to open up new possibility, I wish we had a button for that.

Jacob Morgan:

What might be an example for people listening? What, if you can think [00:33:00] of any, what might be an example of something that used to be true for a long time in the world of business that is no longer true? That people are having a hard time shed?

Tim Munden:

So again let me use a personal example. There are all kinds of statements people make that really aren't true. So let me give you an example. It's just on

my mind at the moment. May not be the best example, but what we hear people saying is the millennials are like this, older workers are like this. Many [00:33:30] of these platitudes are not true. So for example, millennials like to be lead in a certain way and they are really motivated by purpose and by experiences. I'm 48 years old. I'm pretty motivated by purpose and experiences too. So I think we need to not allow ourselves to take assumptions unchallenged and just accept them because that way businesses don't unlock. [00:34:00] So we see new technologies arriving and eCommerce and to really understand what that is, you have to look at it with fresh and unencumbered eyes, not bound by your history.

Jacob Morgan:

Yeah. That's a great example. That's a very common one that we keep hearing about, and I get lots of emails around that as well. Organizations are it seems like pinning younger versus older workers against each other and then when you look at a lot of the data and research, it actually shows there are more similarities [00:34:30] than differences. So I'm assuming this is a challenge, not just the millennial thing, but getting leaders are Unilever that have been there maybe for a while or that have just been in their careers for a while to get rid of kind of old ways of thinking. Have you had any success with that? Any tips or advice that you can give to people listening for what they can do inside of their companies? Because that's a very frequent question that I get asked [00:35:00] as well.

Tim Munden:

So I think there are several things. Again, there's not one answer. We've had some of our Unilever organizations around the world engage in reverse mentoring. We're now putting that in place for a large group of our senior people. Reverse mentoring, which is a funny expression because it's not really reversed, it's just actually mentoring in which one party is younger than the other, and they're giving some mentoring and coaching. That's really powerful. [00:35:30] But just mentoring unlocks for you seeing the world through other people's eyes. So we have business leaders being mentored with university students, young people in the business. So you get this exchange of views. That's so important. It's always been important. Haven't we always been better when we've engaged in dialogue. But I think we're seeing the power of that. So we've been trying that.

I think we talk about it. So in what we call the standards of leadership, which is our language and our [00:36:00] view of what leadership is, it's there. Agility, constantly curious and courageous to talk about it, and I think it's about building the learning habit, Jacob, which is you got to learn something every day. We're discovering so much about the neuroplasticity of the brain and this is our friend. It's our friend at any age. So building the learning habits is really, really key.

So just those three things. Find ways of making learning every day [00:36:30] part of the culture and equip people to do it. We've done it through social platforms, not done yet, but we're working hard on it. Really, really pushing things like reverse mentoring. Really reinforce the leaders that you have to learn all the time. Those kinds of things. It's not one thing.

You asked me about things if I could fix. I just want to add one more, if I may.

Jacob Morgan: Yes, please.

Tim Munden: As I mentioned before, but part of my role is about well being. If there's one thing I could fix, [00:37:00] it would be the stigma around mental health. I would wish that anybody experiencing challenges with their mental health feels free to share it with their line manager and to get the help that they need. I would love to change that, Jacob, because we know research in some countries suggest that 90 plus percent of people who call in sick with a mental health issue describe it as something else. [00:37:30] We at Unilever do everything we can to break down that stigma. I would wish for that to change everywhere. That will lift human misery. It will enable people to get the help that they need, and it would unlock a lot of human potential that we need to fix the world's problems. I would really want to ... If I had a magic wand from you, I'd like to wave it over the problem.

Jacob Morgan: It's interesting because a lot of the things you talk about and describe basically sound like it's important to make organizations more human, [00:38:00] focusing a lot on just the way that you would act in your personal life almost with friends and with family members as far as how you treat people, how you engage and interact with people, how you might learn stuff in your personal life. I'm really curious. How do you think we got to a point ... You might not have an answer for this. Most people don't. But it seems like just in the business world we've got to this point where so many employees around the world are unhappy with their jobs, their careers, the managers they work for, the organizations [00:38:30] they're a part of. Now, collectively, a lot of companies are saying, "Okay. We need to fix that." But I'm always curious, how did we get to this point to begin with? I mean, why is it that so many organizations are like this, and why is that so many employees feel this way? Have you ever thought about that? I mean, do you have any ideas or theories on how just the collective business world got to this point where we've just, I don't know, made things miserable and unhappy for so many employees around the world?

Tim Munden: [00:39:00] Yeah. Look, I think we forgot the point of all of this. One of the reasons I love working for Unilever is we are constantly reminded by our CEO, by our purpose, by the sustainable living plan that we are here for the good of humanity as a whole. Yes, that does involve being profitable. Yes, that does involve growing, and that does involve, of course, the financial responsibilities that we have. [00:39:30] But you can only do those things and do them sustainably if you also meet the other needs, the needs of society for employment, for respect, for opportunities. Only if you meet the needs of the physical environment to be respected for its physical limitations, only if we do all of those things can we have any of those things. I think we lost that at some point. I think what's happening is that we're coming back to the need [00:40:00] to care for the human, as you say, and you've had Lena on your podcast. I'm sure she talked about this. I know she did. This is our HR strategy is to be more simple in what we do, to be more human, and therefore to have more impact.

I think we're coming back to it. I think it's a massively, massively encouraging thing. It's not business or human. it's business through human and it's business for human. [00:40:30] I feel that's something that's happening now. We're getting our eye back on the ball, and that is a ball which understands that we're in an interconnected hole in which the human being has a really prime place. These are great times to be in the people profession, Jacob.

Jacob Morgan:

Oh, yeah. I couldn't agree more. I think anybody that's involved in the people space, managers, HR leaders, just anybody that is constantly working with people, it's never been a more exciting time to be in that space.

So a lot of [00:41:00] people around the world look up to Unilever, right? I mean, you guys have done a lot interesting, interesting things. Paul Polman is a globally admired CEO. So I thought maybe we could talk a little bit about some of the things that Unilever is doing internally and maybe just spend a minute or two on some of any key initiatives that you might want to talk about as far as what it's like to work at Unilever. So we talked about my learning. Maybe we can talk about the C4G program. I know you guys are big champions for [00:41:30] flexibility as well. So what are the key kind of pillars or initiatives that you think are worth sharing about Unilever that other people might be able to take and bring back into their own companies?

Tim Munden:

Yeah. That's always the key, isn't it? So look at ... Thank you very much for being kind about our business. We try very hard, and I think we try with a lot of integrity, but I don't think it's by any means perfect. We've not cracked any of this, and, again, [00:42:00] I don't want for it to sound like I think we have.

I feel that because we are in this interconnected world, we talked about a little time ago, many people are trying to work on these great things and to really find a way forward for business and the world which leads to more real prosperity. But I think there's lots of things that we're trying. That's one of the things about Unilever, we're always trying a lot of stuff. I do think C for G, as you refer to it has been a very big thing for [00:42:30] us and it's being talked about a lot in the press. I won't go over it again, but I think at the heart of that is a really big idea that I think is coming out in lots of places. Which is people as professionals we think about, which is this that we need to turn hierarchies, not actually just upside down, but we need to dissolve them. And we need to realize that the world is moving away from structure as a way of organizing, and to networks and relationships and behavior as a [00:43:00] way of organizing.

I think that's a really big shift, and so for us, we've been trying to put power and freedom and flexibility and empowerment back in the hands of the people closest to the customer and to the consumer. I think that's really bearing fruit for us. I think that's something that a lot of us are needing to think about. For a while there, I think many people felt and organizations felt they were being designed for an increasingly globalized world. That whole kind of era of globalization [00:43:30] built all structures for stability and scale. I think we're now realizing in a fast changing world, we need to build organizations that are

flexible and fleet of foot and fast and to do that you have to empower. So rethinking the organization I think is one of the big trends and we saw it, we've seen it in Connected for Growth and I think we're gonna continue to see it. I don't think that job's ever gonna get done and I [00:44:00] think there's a lot of rethinking to the question. Not only about what stuff do we need to unlearn, I think HR people need to unlearn organizational design.

The way we used to do it, rolls and charts and lines, we have to just stop or instinctive response to do that stuff and to think about skills in a network and a culture that enables sharing. And whoever is most fit to lead, is the person who leads that task, and the leadership switches to whoever has the skill set for the next task. [00:44:30] I think that's the future. Again, what an exciting future.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, that's a very different role of the world than the one that so many of us are used to being in. And as far as some of the programs that you guys have at Unilever, can we talk about maybe, I don't know, let's pick your top three favorite initiatives or programs that you have going on at Unilever. Do you have your top maybe two [00:45:00] or three that you think you're particularly proud of that maybe other organizations can bring in house?

Tim Munden: So, I'm gonna repeat myself a little bit, but I think we've gone off the employee well being in a way that we've really tried to scale it. And-

Jacob Morgan: So what are you guys doing around well being? So what are some examples of things that you can get at Unilever for well being?

Tim Munden: So we just this month are gonna finish the job on making sure that [00:45:30] everybody in the Unilever family around the world is no more, as we say, than one chat, one click, or one call from the support they need. So that's a good old-fashioned employer assistance program, but it may be a staple but what we think is really important in this changing world. During this month, everybody in our business will have access via the internet or via phone to someone they can call and ask about financial advice or legal advice or counseling, so that everyone has that safety net, [00:46:00] which we think everyone needs in a fast changing world. That's one part of it.

Jacob Morgan: Oh, wow.

Tim Munden: Yeah, I mean, that's not been easy to do actually. If you think about-

Jacob Morgan: No.

Tim Munden: ... the countries we're in and I really have to take my hat off to my HR team who manage well-being alongside our partners in occupational health. That's been quite a thing to do.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, and to make it easy, right? Not just to offer it, but to make it easy so that employees actually take advantage of it. I think you said like one click or one call, that in and of itself [00:46:30] is a challenge, let alone just having that infrastructure and program in place to begin with, so that's an amazing initiative to have.

Tim Munden: Yeah, so we're proud of that. That's part of the safety net I think you've got to provide. If, as I said, we've started to talk a lot about mental health in our business. So maybe I should explain, we have a model of well being, a way of understanding well being which is to have well being, a human being needs physical well being, mental well being, emotional [00:47:00] well being, and purposeful well being. The purpose we've talked about and we're trying to give you the opportunity to go through that workshop and to get clear about that, bring that in.

We also have a program which we've run now for years owned by our fantastic colleagues in occupational health of health checks. And I think over 70,000 people had a health check last year in Unilever. That's a chance to sit down with an expert and talk about those basics because whilst mental [00:47:30] health is a big issue in our world, second biggest cause of disease according to the World Health Organization, obesity and inactivity are also really big threats to people's well being. So having the chance to sit down talk about activity have the fundamentals of height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol checked, it's a simple thing but it's a big deal. And I think we've- so those kind of programs in a part of our well-being offering [00:48:00] which is something that I think we've really gone hard after in this world because we think it's a fundamental. We think it's a fundamental.

Jacob Morgan: A lot of these things that you're investing in are obviously expensive. A lot of time, a lot of resources, a lot of energy that goes into making these initiatives and programs happen. So for people that are listening to this that are thinking, you know what, why is Unilever doing any of this? They're profitable, they're big, they're making a lot of money, [00:48:30] why do they need any of this stuff? Because sometimes I hear this from companies as well where employees or managers work in an organization and they say that their executive team has a very hard time understanding why they should do things differently because things are already going so well. They're profitable, they're big, they don't have a lot of competition, so who cares about any of this other stuff that companies like Unilever are doing? I mean, how would you respond to something like that?

Tim Munden: [00:49:00] So it's the right question. We should all be asking ourselves that question. Why should our business do it? Because when we're doing this where we are using resources, whether it's people's time or there's money of the business, which we should only use responsibly and the only reason we do it is to drive the performance of the business, and how does all of this drive the performance of the business? Let me just pick maybe two ways. First is people [00:49:30] want to work for good companies. They want to come to work and be their whole self. Now we've driven it, you've asked about our programs,



inclusion and diversity is a huge part of being in Unilever. To make sure that we are gender balanced has been a mission that Paul [Pullman 00:49:49] has driven since he arrived and we've made huge strides, and that's part of this being your whole self in the workplace. Having the opportunities you deserve in the workplace and [00:50:00] being purposeful in the workplace, being values based. People want to work there. Unsurprisingly, human beings want to work in human places. So, this is how we will attract the very best and keep the very best. And I think that's an important part of our success.

Second thing is, our world is changing hugely fast. Our markets are changing fast. And part of the reason for C for G was seeing in the world that technology has [00:50:30] unlocked the opportunity for local competitors to arrive fast and compete hard in every geography that we are. And that's a great opportunity, the technology and demographics have unlocked and they're meeting consumer tastes which also have a strong local feel to them these days. And so in order for us to respond to that hugely changed business environment, we have to have people who have the energy to change. [00:51:00] And to have that energy to change, you need to have well being. You can't expect people to do all that learning that we were talking about ten minutes ago if they don't have the basics of well being and the energy. People gotta sleep well if you want them to learn well. So this is about equipping the business to change. And so I think, in fact we do do return on investment calculations on for example, our well-being programs and we find we get between four [00:51:30] and ten Euros back for every Euro we invest.

Jacob Morgan:

Wow.

Tim Munden:

That's a pretty good return.

Jacob Morgan:

Oh, that's-

Tim Munden:

That's a pretty good return.

Jacob Morgan:

Yeah, that's amazing. That you guys are able to calculate that. So how do you even get an idea of what those numbers are? Do you just look at like reduction in absenteeism? Do you look at turnover? Are those things you all correlate to your health and well being programs?

Tim Munden:

Yes, some of it is modeled, so there are people who have modeled, if you then feed in your data, they're able to give you based [00:52:00] on the number of times they've run the model, a kind of assessment. So yes, exactly those kind of things. It's now, what is the likely absence reduction? What is the likely improvement in presence? All those kinds of things. Now data and well being is hard to get, but by working with expert partners you're able to get some kind of feel for it. So for me, this is all about enabling the business to change. I say to my teams, we as a group looking after learning and well being, we have two

missions: enable this organization [00:52:30] for performance and for transformation. And I think these things that I've talked about are all about that.

Jacob Morgan: You mentioned diversity and inclusion and on the Unilever website, it said by the end of 2017 you had 40% of total management were women. That was 2017, I'm sure the numbers are probably different now, but that's amazing that you guys almost have 50% of total management at Unilever as being women. Which is in most [00:53:00] organizations, who knows what it is, like 90-10, 80-20 maybe if you're lucky? So, clearly, not only has this been a big initiative for you, but you guys are also pretty transparent about it. In fact, on the Unilever website, you can also get your Unilever HR metrics and so people can click on that and actually see a lot of the stuff that you guys are doing and what the numbers are. So you have clearly made not just an internal commitment, but a public commitment to kind of shaping these things. So [00:53:30] I think that's really amazing, the stuff that you guys are doing over there.

Tim Munden: That's really kind of you to say so. Obviously it's a huge team effort and a lot of people have worked extremely hard on making this a gender balanced organization. Still more work to do, but also to think about making it as inclusive as possible. And again, the business case for this is really clear. The diversity and inclusive businesses perform [00:54:00] better. And in fact, we talked about age earlier, that's also true. I read a study a couple of weeks ago that's also true of age diverse teams. They perform better too. I think we're starting to realize, and this is what drives it in the end, is yes, the commitment to it because it's the right thing to do, but also the commitment to it because it drives the best business outcomes we can. So as with all the things we talked about, you need that and-and. And we are fortunate to attract great talent [00:54:30] and we started to see that talent flow through the business and yes, it's diverse and inclusive. There's more to do, there's really more to do, but I think the key thing is flicking that switch in everybody's head so that they understand this is what drives performance.

Jacob Morgan: How big is your team, by the way?

Tim Munden: My learning team is around 50 people, but they're [00:55:00] the group who operates globally and aligns it to our organization. But in a sense it's a slightly misleading number because we also have HR business partners who have a major in learning. They have a responsibility in learning and of course every HR VP has a responsibility for capability building. So there are a lot of people who focus on these things. Only a proportion of those actually work directly with me.

Jacob Morgan: What do you think are- let me rephrase that. [00:55:30] What advice would you give to people listening to this podcast that are wanting to create a more human, purpose driven organization like Unilever? And maybe we can look at this in kind of two layers. So first is for managers and more senior level leaders in side of organizations, what could they do to kind of emulate some of these Unilever concepts? And maybe for more junior or entry level employees who wish that their organizations have this- [00:56:00] my dogs are agreeing with me

in the background as you can hear. So for more junior level employees that wish they had this inside of their companies but don't, and they feel like they don't have a say and they can't do anything, what could they do?

Tim Munden:

So let's start with the senior leaders. I think that is the place to really unlock it. And I think the starting point is, ask the question, what is the purpose of our business? That's the first question, and to [00:56:30] keep asking why, why, why, why, why, until that's really clear. And go on that journey as a senior leadership team because once you are able to be totally clear about what the big why is, because human beings are purpose driven.

We do things because we value them, and that's just a kind of human, I think human principle. And therefore, if you can make your business purpose driven, your reflecting the [00:57:00] kind of human condition and it will unlock great things for your brands, for your products, for your consumers and for your people. So that's the first, and we see that, the data's clear on that. For us our purpose driven brands grow faster than other brands. So I think that's the thing for senior leaders.

Second thing for senior leaders is asking yourself what is the business case for unlocking all of the capacity and the potential of your people? What would that business case be? [00:57:30] Imagine it. Imagine being able to get all of that what used to be called discretionary effort, all that passion, all that flexibility, all that energy. What is the business case for that? I think we should as senior leaders always ask ourselves what is the price of not doing this?

Secondly, then to come to a question about your kind of employees in a business, if you're sitting there thinking I want to be in a more human workplace, I think that's about making sure first of all that your [00:58:00] not checking your own humanity at the door. Sometimes I think we can do that a bit, think oh, they won't want this, or I'm going to not talk about that or not talk about what I do at home. Not talk about what I'm passionate about. I think we have to not repress ourselves. We've gotta bring our whole selves to work and talk about it. You asked me what I do in the mornings? I meditate. That's kind of who I am. And I think we need to [00:58:30] not be shy of bringing ourselves to work. Not be shy of your dogs barking in the background if that's how you work.

Jacob Morgan:

Oh, yeah.

Tim Munden:

It's who we are.

Jacob Morgan:

Not shy of the dogs barking in the background, that's for sure. People that have listened to the podcast know that they occasionally make an appearance. Naomi my soon to be two year old daughter, I think has made a couple of screams or cries in the background as well. She may even today, who knows? We still have a minute. But I agree.

Tim Munden: That reminds me of a film that went [00:59:00] viral at some point of a guy being interviewed, I think it must have been on the BBC-

Jacob Morgan: Oh yes.

Tim Munden: You get his daughter runs in and he's embarrassed, and I can understand that.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, you know-

Tim Munden: Obviously-

Jacob Morgan: It happens.

Tim Munden: That's a metaphor isn't it?

Jacob Morgan: Yeah.

Tim Munden: That's a metaphor.

Jacob Morgan: It happens and I love this message that you're trying to convey of just kind of speaking up and be yourself and let people know what you care about and what you value. So I think that's a wonderful way to wrap up. So where can people go to learn [00:59:30] more about you, some of the programs Unilever has going on, or anything else that you want to mention before we wrap up?

Tim Munden: So two places. Linked In, both Unilever on Linked In, which is a lot of stuff about us and also myself. We've tried to start to talk a bit about our purpose driven leadership and so we do share things there. And also, as you've found, there's lots of stuff on the Unilever website. [01:00:00] Last thing, as I've said, I don't think we've got all of this cracked, but I think we're making sincere efforts. But I think also we as Unilever, won't have made all the impact we want to make on the world if we are the only ones who, for example in our case, really focus on sustainability. This is only gonna work when businesses shift as a whole. So actually there is of course this competitive relationships and collaborative relationships, all kinds of relationships out there. [01:00:30] But actually what this is about is a shift in business to make it more human in organizations and to make the impact on the world. The one that we would all really, really want. I think we can join hands on that.

Jacob Morgan: Well, I love that kind of positive and optimistic message. So Tim, thank you so much for coming on and being a guest today. I really appreciate it.

Tim Munden: Thank you very much again for having me, I really enjoyed it.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, likewise. And hopefully all of you listening learned a lot, got a little bit engaged and inspired. [01:01:00] And again, my guest has been Tim Munden,

he's the Chief Learning Officer at Unilever and I will see all of you guys next week.