

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, and welcome to another episode of The Future of Work podcast. My guest today is Teresa Roche, the chief human resource officer at the City of Fort Collins. Thank you so much for joining me.

Teresa Roche: Oh, thank you. I'm excited to be here.

Jacob Morgan: We have a lot to talk about during the course of this podcast, but as I always like to get started with podcast guests is starting off with some background information about you. How did you get into your current [00:00:30] role, and what is a day-to-day like for you?

Teresa Roche: Well, those are great questions, Jacob. I've been in the field of human resources for close to 30 years. Was always in the private sector, primarily in high technology. Back in 2008, as a citizen for the City of Fort Collins, I was in something called Leadership Fort Collins, which is the program that many cities have, and it's to expose you to information [00:01:00] about that city so that you can identify ways to volunteer your time. When I was in that program, I met several colleagues that worked for the city. I just watched how they interface, and I thought about how I felt as a citizen, and I said, "Some day, I hope I can work for the City of Fort Collins."

Then in the spring of 2016, the city posted this position, and I expressed interest, and it just worked out. It's been a delight for me to [00:01:30] be able to contribute even more directly to the community in which I've lived since 2001 and to work with a remarkable group of people serving the citizens and all of the businesses that are in the City of Fort Collins.

Jacob Morgan: What, well, not what is Fort Collins, but how big is Fort Collins? Maybe you can give us some information about this city, where it's located, how many people live there. I know that you have a big university nearby, lots of students. Any context around the City [00:02:00] of Fort Collins for listeners would be great.

Teresa Roche: Absolutely. Fort Collins was incorporated as a city in 1873, and it's in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. It's about 5,000 feet in elevation, and it's a remarkable state to live in because, as some people know that visit here or live here, we get sunshine around 300 days a year. Right now, we're at about

167,000 residents. Fort Collins is the Colorado's [00:02:30] fourth largest city, and it spans 57 square miles. At full build-out, which we're expecting in the next several years, we're supposed to reach a population size of 255,000 residents.

It is home to Colorado State University, so a huge part of our DNA is that we're a university town relationship, and that really is quite remarkable because of the innovation and the relationships and just [00:03:00] the culture that happens when we have students and faculty in the city. There's so much more I could say about Fort Collins, but let me just stop there and see if that's enough to give you a sense of this remarkable place that I live and work.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, no, that's great. I mean, it definitely sounds like you're passionate about the city. You love-

Teresa Roche: I am, I am.

Jacob Morgan: You love where you live.

Teresa Roche: [crosstalk 00:03:19]. You asked me earlier about what's a day-to-day, in my day-to-day life here. It's quite different than what I'd experienced in the private sector. [00:03:30] At some point, if you want me to talk about the difference that I'm seeing between private and public sector, I'll be happy to comment on that.

Jacob Morgan: Oh, yeah. That's one of the notes that I made is to compare those differences. We'll definitely get to that.

Teresa Roche: Sounds great.

Jacob Morgan: For now, just a day in the life of the chief human resource officer of the City of Fort Collins.

Teresa Roche: Well, Jacob, one thing that I think a lot of the listeners may think about is human resources spans all the way from the attraction [00:04:00] of applicants that become candidates that you hire to the transition in the employee experience of people that leave their employment with the city. It's compensation and learning and development and organizational development. I have all those functions that report in to me, and that makes up a lot of the day, just looking at what we're doing in those areas, are we pushing on the right levers, if something's off, helping it get back on track. A day will be meetings [00:04:30] with elected officials, my colleagues on the executive leadership team, the team that I have the honor to lead, many of the employees throughout, and the topics not only range on what I mentioned is in human resources, but there's such exciting things that the city's doing.

For example, some of my recent conversation that have been happening over the past several days is our rotors decided to say that they were in favor of the

city looking at starting [00:05:00] a fifth utility, which is broadband, and so looking at what will that mean to have a fifth utility, what will it look like because it's a different kind of venture for us. It is a full plethora of things that I deal with.

The last thing I just want to say is I can plan for my day and see that it's full and rich and juicy, and there are things that happen in a city that are emerging and you need to respond to. I find [00:05:30] that the new things that come up, just because of serving all the citizens in the city, things happen every day that I have to adapt and shift quickly to respond to.

Jacob Morgan: Are you usually working a set 9:00 to 5:00?

Teresa Roche: Oh, no. Oh, Jacob, I wish worked 9:00 to 5:00. No, I'm very intense in how I work. When I worked at a global company, we used to say the sun never set because I had colleagues and a team [00:06:00] around the world. What I tell people is the city never sleeps because certainly, our police officers are out there 24/7, our utilities people many times have to be out there. I actually work long hours, and I don't mind that at all because it's such a service orientation that I have. 9:00 to 5:00, I don't know that I've ever worked 9:00 to 5:00, but that's certainly not something I'm experiencing in my role at this very dynamic [00:06:30] city I work at.

Jacob Morgan: What's your typical schedule like? I mean, are you up at 5:00, 6:00 in the morning, into the office, couple of meetings, and just working until the wee hours of the night?

Teresa Roche: Jacob, oh my gosh, okay. Brené Brown has that great quote about vulnerability is the birth place of innovation, creativity, and change, and so I'm going to be vulnerable. I actually get up sometimes as early as 3:00 or 3:30, and I don't mind that because it's the hours that [00:07:00] I can do some deep reflection and think about the patterns and signals in my life and in our work. I usually start calls or meetings at 7:00, definitely by 8:00. Because there's so many events that the city has, many times, I go into the evening with community events or our city council that happens every Tuesday. I can put in really long days, but right now, since I'm on a steep learning curve and because [00:07:30] my passion is so intense and high, I don't mind that at all. If you would've talked to colleagues that knew me for all the years I worked at other places, this is not unusual for me to work like this.

Jacob Morgan: Well, you must have to go to bed pretty early to be able to wake up at 2:30 or 3:00.

Teresa Roche: I know. I do. I do. I get, I'm not one of those people that would ever say I sleep on a few hours. That is not me at all. I know how to find ways to rejuvenate myself. [00:08:00] Let me just pause there, my friend.

Jacob Morgan: No. It sounds like a fascinating and dynamic day, and you're probably going around to ... Are you centered in one physical space in Fort Collins, or are you going around the city, going to different meetings, traveling all over the place, or are you just fixed in one spot?

Teresa Roche: Jacob, thanks for that question because it's a first time in forever that I am co-located with many colleagues. My last company [00:08:30] at Agilent, I was a virtual executive so I had a team around the world, and I worked at home for almost 15 years and traveled all the time. Here in the city, we have multiple buildings. I, often, am walking between buildings, which is great, or I'm driving to the police services or to get to our wastewater treatment or to our fleet services. We have a number of buildings throughout the city, and then, of course, we have amazing parks that are part of the city. [00:09:00] I could spend all day traveling to multiple places that the city has, which I actually like because that variety of having to walk and go to different places is very exciting.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah. It certainly breaks things up a little bit. How many employees are at the City of Fort Collins. I know it's not the traditional way to think about it, like a corporation, but how many people work at the City of Fort Collins?

Teresa Roche: I'm going to give [00:09:30] you an approximate number, about 2,400, and what is very different about the city that I want to point to is we have a huge volunteer contingent. The city, in fact, this department reports in to me. We have a strong volunteer program, and our volunteers are a huge part of getting many things done. For example, in our natural areas, we have people that give some of the [00:10:00] trips and educational tours for the schools. The volunteer's a big part.

Then the city, because of our governance, we have, I think it's 22 boards and commissions. We have many citizens that service on the various boards and commissions. When I think about the employees, there's definitely the group of 2,400, but these other groups that I mentioned that I think are unique for a city government, I consider is a big part of work force as well [00:10:30] because they're so critical to what we're trying to do.

Jacob Morgan: From that group how many are part of the HR function at the City of Fort Collins?

Teresa Roche: Sure. I have 28 wonderful people that serve on the team of human resources.

Jacob Morgan: Very cool. I'm sure a lot of people are familiar with, of course, with human resources, and usually, inside of an organization, human resources, I think people kind of know what HR does inside of a traditional [00:11:00] company, but how or is human resources on the government side, like the City of Fort Collins, is it structured differently, or is it still very much the same as you would find human resources in any other company?

Teresa Roche: That's a great question, and let me just think for a second how I want to respond. Certainly, all the functions are very similar whether you're in public or private sector, and [00:11:30] many of the ways that the team is designed aligns with the ways that I have led teams before. We're still in the process of a lot of re-imagining of some of our roles, just given all the changes that are happening, but two things I would share that are different than when I was in the private sector, I have a remarkable team that's called the Wellness Team, and they really focus on the well-being, and it's a huge part of our strategy. The city just [00:12:00] won the Colorado Highest Award for well-being of our employees that are working here.

The other, as I mentioned before, having the volunteer program manager that manages all of our volunteers across the city, working with various coordinators in the different departments is a little unique. I never experienced having these two teams in my past life.

Jacob Morgan: But as far as the looking for talent, hiring, [00:12:30] attracting, retaining, a lot of that sort of stuff is pretty similar, right? In other words, HR inside of a public company versus a private company isn't that different.

Teresa Roche: I think that's a very fair statement, Jacob. Thinking about attraction strategies, thinking about developing diverse talent pools, thinking about how to recognize and reward people, how to develop people to reach their highest potential and bridge that to ambition, I think those are all very much the same.

Jacob Morgan: [00:13:00] Okay, good, and, but is it a little different in that, well, I guess in an organization, it's pretty similar when you're looking at different roles across different sectors, different teams. For you, it might be utilities, it might be, I guess, around safety or parks. That's kind of your equivalent of different departments or roles, I guess.

Teresa Roche: Absolutely. If you think about it, it's interesting, Jacob, because I was a little concerned [00:13:30] that I would miss the wonderfulness of the complexity of serving countries around the world and having colleagues around the world and just the nuances of dealing with all of that differences and customers and whatnot. I have traded that off for this portfolio of services that one needs to have to run a city, and I think I could be here for 20 more years and not know all that we do.

You look [00:14:00] at the fact that we run the transportation, so the bus system, the MAX, which is this really cool public transportation system we have, the police, the street operators, the removal of snow, the park rangers. It's really a different portfolio, and the complexity of it is a trade-off for me from not being a global executive anymore.

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, yeah, I mean, that makes sense. I think it's a pretty fair comparison. Earlier in [00:14:30] the podcast, you mentioned the differences between public

and private. I think that would be a great time to touch on those. How are ... A lot of people listening to this podcast probably are working in traditional companies. I'm sure we have some listeners that are in government, but by in large, I think most are on the traditional corporation side. Now, you've had the opportunity to work on both sides: the public sector and the private sector. What are some of the key differences [00:15:00] between the two? The reason I ask is because I think it would be really helpful for people in the public sector to understand what the private sector people have to deal with and people in the private sector to get a sense of what the people in the public sector have to deal with, take the other person's perspective.

Teresa Roche:

Of course. No, I love that. I've thought about this in preparation for sharing my thoughts with you, and it's interesting because I remember when I was interviewing, I thought I had a sense of what the differences would be based on the [00:15:30] research I had done, but one has to live it to really understand it. Let's start with our stakeholders. Certainly, in the private sector, you think about your shareholders, your employees and customers, and in the public sector, our stakeholders are community members, which are our residents and the various businesses, the employees in the organization, and elected officials. The whole concept of stakeholders is still very real and important for us.

[00:16:00] The customer orientation, here's one that I think has some pretty big differences. When I was in the private sector, we would look at our core competencies and our products and services and where we wanted to focus based on customers whose needs we thought we could meet. You focus yourself a new segment, and you target who you want to sell to. Here, in the public sector, you are serving your entire community, so you don't say, "We're only going to serve [00:16:30] these people." Certainly, we have to make trade-offs in terms of investments, but there is an accountability and a passion around meeting all the citizens' needs in the community. As I said, it's residents and the businesses. That's quite different. You don't normally say no when you are aware of the services that you're providing for your community.

The profit orientation, in a private sector, [00:17:00] you earn profit. Here, we get our revenue through taxes and use fees. We have a revenue that comes in. What's really different, though, Jacob, is we have a huge philosophy around transparency and open data, so you could actually go on our city website and you could see every dollar that we spend across the city in service to our community. There is a huge [00:17:30] transparency in what we take in for the revenue and how we spend. That's really different than the private sector.

Another big difference that I thought about is at the private sector, you have a board and you usually will recruit for the board members unless your company's in trouble and people try to get on not necessarily at your request, but all the companies that I've served at, we were able to go recruit the board, and you choose based on capabilities and what you think you need, where here, it's elected officials. [00:18:00] We have a mayor and city council members that are elected by the community.

The other thing I thought I would just mention is two more things about where I'm contrasting and comparing is collaboration is essential, certainly within the city organization, but I mentioned earlier, one of the compelling parts about the City of Fort Collins is the fact that we have Colorado State University in our city, which is a remarkable university. Collaboration [00:18:30] takes on a different form. The city works at what we call co-creation, so whenever we're doing something, we co-create, and we have huge engagement with various parts of the public. It's a little different than in the private sector. Certainly, we collaborated there, but there's a difference in a depth than a breadth that I've noticed being here.

The last thing that we talk about, but I see this as being very similar [00:19:00] to private sector, is we have what's called the triple bottom line, and it's a lens that we use that's social, environmental, and economic. At first, when I came here, I thought, oh, that's so different, but then as I thought about it, the companies that I'd worked for before, like Agilent Technologies, we cared about the communities that we were doing business and where we operated. We were very much into thinking about sustainability for the environment, and the economic aspect was important [00:19:30] too. Even though we don't say those words in the private sector, at least where I've worked, that orientation of looking at those three aspects of your triple bottom line, I feel like there is some parallel between the two of those.

Do those make sense, or does that cause you to have any questions about anything that I've shared?

Jacob Morgan: No, I mean, I think it makes complete sense. I know when I, for example, interviewed the deputy director for the National Institutes of Health, he was telling me, we were talking about physical [00:20:00] workspace design, for example, and he said, "Yeah, in a traditional company, you convince the CFO, you have some meetings, and you can budget for it," but when they wanted to redesign their new campus, they had to get congressional approval, it took 10 years. It seems like just the budgetary side of it and the decisions that you make, that whole process is also very, very different.

Teresa Roche: Oh, Jacob. You're hitting a, you're resonating [00:20:30] with a strong chord, and I can't believe I didn't think about this. You are absolutely right, and the city, about eight years ago, I think, started this remarkable process called Budgeting for Outcomes. With many inputs, there was a set of outcomes that represent the portfolio of services, and we actually get citizens on committees with us where you make, and I'm going to be going through this [00:21:00] next year, so it's going to new for me, but you make proposals as a seller, and people have to basically decide if they're going to buy that. There's a whole set of processes to determine what the two-year budget's going to be, and we're held to account for that, and of course, the city council approves that, so not going to congress, but the whole way that we budget is quite different.

What I love about it is I love being accountable. [00:21:30] I love having clarity about what the results are supposed to be in having to work your way to that.

Jacob, I love that you asked the question referring to somebody else that worked in a public sector role, having to get approval from Congress for things like a workplace reconfiguration. It made me realize that is a difference I'm certainly experiencing here in the city. It was about eight years ago, I think, the city started this remarkable process called budgeting for outcomes, where there are clearly defined outcomes [00:00:30] that the city is holding itself accountable to for our community. The process is for a two year cycle. I'll be going through it for my first time next year. You basically are a seller that is trying to find a buyer to listen to what you're proposing that you think something that needs to happen in the city, for our community, or for our own internal organization. Against a set of priorities, the discernment [00:01:00] is made on what's going to be put forward, and then the council has final approval for this.

I love it, because I love having that kind of clarify of accountability and results, and having to be discerning and prioritize. What my struggle has been that's quite different than when I was in the private sector is, because it's a two year time frame, there were times in my first year where I said, "If I can't do this, can I do that and use those dollars?" I wasn't able to make those kinds of rapid decisions [00:01:30] just because of this whole setup called BFO, or budgeting for outcomes. That is a difference, but again, I think the positive parts of it certainly outweigh the rapid fire decisions that I would sometimes make when I worked in the private sector.

Jacob Morgan: Fair enough. Now I'm also really curious what trends you're paying attention to. Obviously, you're running all of human resources for the city of Fort Collins. What trends are you [00:02:00] paying attention to, technologies, practices? What's on your mind as you look at this world of work that we're in?

Teresa Roche: Jacob, I'm going to answer with responses that you may hear from colleagues, and then I want to go to something that's a little bit more deep and personal that I've really been thinking about lately. Certainly the trends and patterns, the exponential pattern of technology change has been tremendous. There are so many disruptions through technology breakthroughs. [00:02:30] I actually was at our futures committee for the city council and we had the dean of engineering and computer science from the University of Denver, J.B. Holston, and we talked about artificial intelligence. He was brilliant in the way he talked about how there's a group that says it's the best thing possible and it's going to make our lives all better, and then really remarkable thought leaders who say, "We should all be scared. It's not something [00:03:00] we should be so excited about." He gave us a very good understanding of the different ways to look at it.

He shared with us this concept of smart city. Certainly, we're looking at what does that mean. Driverless cars, how will it change the nature of work or how we work with our citizens. That's a huge one. The next one that I think about is



something that I think is huge, is how to ensure that we have [00:03:30] an inclusive, more diverse talent, not only just mirroring the diversity that we have in our community, but I really am very interested in and we talk a lot about how do we make sure that people truly feel connected to one another and to the organization. Something related to technology is how connected the world is. Again, that is not only on how we relate to one another across the city in [00:04:00] our various organizations, but with our customers.

Technology is huge, the demographics are something to constantly be aware of, and really thinking about new ways that work can be done through the connections that are possible and as I said, through the technology. Those are ones that we pay attention to. The one that's more personal that I've thought a lot about is the relationship of [00:04:30] one to leadership. I think that there is so much change happening that we know we do not have the capacity in our brains to be able to read it quickly enough and respond. I think that I say to people that leadership begins within, and knowing oneself and building the capacity to stay centered and calm in the midst of so much change, and particularly in the city, as I mentioned [00:05:00] there's a lot of emerging things that keep happening, that's something I've been doing a lot of work on personally, but also with my colleagues at the city.

Do you know who Meg Wheatley is? She wrote the book 25 years ago that was inspirational for me called, "Leadership and the New Science," where she was looking at quantum physics and how it would teach us about leadership.

Jacob Morgan: No. I'm actually not aware of that book.

Teresa Roche: Meg Wheatley came out [00:05:30] with a book this year called, "Who Do We Choose to Be?" The tagline was, "Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, and Restoring Sanity." What I love about this book is, given all the changes that are happening on the global level, the unpredictability, how we all need to get more comfortable being uncomfortable, we have to live more with discomfort, Meg's book is a realistic book that is calling [00:06:00] us up to lead in a time of profound disruption, and to basically reclaim leadership. Jacob, why I'm talking about this is it's not so much just what I pay attention to on the signals and patterns and how I look at setting up a system to accomplish something. I think the experience of the individual is becoming increasingly more important. I think very seriously that how I show up as a human being, as a leader, [00:06:30] really makes a difference in how I not only can anticipate change, but respond as opposed to react.

Let me pause and see if that stirs anything for you. That's just something I think a lot about and do a lot of work on.

Jacob Morgan: I definitely wrote down the name of the book. I'm going to have to take a look at that. I know the leadership component is always very, very big for a lot of people. It's been a topic of conversation on the podcast and a lot of listeners really care about the leadership aspect as well. [00:07:00] Let's start off with the

first thing that you touched on and then we can get to the leadership point. You mentioned artificial intelligence. I know a lot of organizations care about artificial intelligence because they're looking at it from a jobs perspective, a productivity perspective. Is it the same angle for you in government? Are you looking at it also from a jobs and productivity perspective or are you [00:07:30] looking at it from a different angle?

Teresa Roche: Jacob, I think the angle that we're first starting at is what does it mean for our community. How is it going to change how the city operates and we serve the businesses and the residents. For example, since streets are a big part of our service, our traffic signals, and making sure that the roads are clear, so transportation is just huge. [00:08:00] Looking at driverless cars and what will that mean as they come more and more into a city. We are looking first from the perspective of how can artificial intelligence change the city that we all live in and work in? Are you understanding how I'm responding to that?

Jacob Morgan: Yeah, yeah. Please, carry on with that thought. I think it makes a lot of sense.

Teresa Roche: The speaker [00:08:30] I just mentioned that came and spoke to us in our futures committee brought up a number of some of the new ways that people are looking at smart cities. I think he said that Google had actually formed a relationship, and I can't remember what city it was, to just help them think about how to connect people. For example, another way is our utilities that we provide. We have four utilities that we currently provide, and the fifth will be [00:09:00] broadband as we potentially move into making that a reality over the next couple of years. How do you connect using artificial intelligence to read meters and to be able to see if there's breakdowns in smart homes? Again, the whole perspective is what does it mean for the city that we're serving. It doesn't mean that we won't look at it internally, but that seems to be the bigger play and the bigger attention for us right now.

Jacob Morgan: Got [00:09:30] it. That's on the artificial intelligence side. It seems like there's also a lot, and you touched on this a little bit in your response, using artificial intelligence to for example, optimize traffic, optimize smart homes, the flow of electricity, the flow of water, all that sort of stuff. Smart cities, are of course, becoming a very interesting trend. I think there was a Korean city, I think it was called Sungdo, where they are trying to build a complete [00:10:00] smart city where technology runs everything, from traffic and optimizes everything. It's really an amazing concept. Are you potentially looking at something like the city of Fort Collins and having that become a smart city?

Teresa Roche: I'm going to pause and think about it. I would say we're in the beginning of a conversation. My sense about this city, is given how innovative [00:10:30] we've been and are, that we just talked about how do we embrace this conversation even more seriously to look at that. I read a lot and I don't remember the story that you're specifically sharing, but it is amazing what some cities are doing to enhance the quality of life and the experience of their residents through how they're designing a smart city.

Jacob Morgan: The technology piece, I think, is really fascinating. [00:11:00] We also hear about things like drones and augmented reality and virtual reality and big data. Are you paying attention to all of that sort of stuff as well, just technology in general and how it might impact the city?

Teresa Roche: I'm going to say yes to that, because one of the things that we are in development on, and it was with an organization. I think it's called What Works for government, in terms of [00:11:30] looking at all the data that we have that we are making available through this new open data system, where people can actually get the source data and do something manipulation of it. Again, I think our first viewpoint is always from how does it affect or how can we serve the community. I would say that the big data that we have, that we have collected, we're looking at ways to allow people to have direct access to it.

Jacob Morgan: I know that you're [00:12:00] also pretty passionate about this notion of creating a culture of innovation. Whether you looking at government or a startup or a big company, that culture of innovation is huge when we think about the future of work. I'd love to hear your thoughts on that culture of innovation and how are you creating that and what can other organizations do to help foster that culture of innovation?

Teresa Roche: I want to share something as [00:12:30] a context and then specifically answer what the city is doing around a culture of innovation. Jacob, we just were announced to be the recipient of a Baldrige Award. The Baldrige Award has been something in existence for a number of years. We're the third city to have ever received it since its inception. I think it's about 30 years now that Baldrige has been a part of many sectors. We're the largest city to date. Why I say that is [00:13:00] Baldrige represents a beautiful organizational framework to see if you're focused on your stakeholders, your customers, are you developing a strategy, do you have specific plans, what's your leadership system. I call it OD system to make sure that all the elements are aligned and congruent to turn something out.

Innovation was something identified in earlier conversations on the journey to this performance excellence the city's been [00:13:30] on since 2005. Many of the things that the city does are similar to what I experienced in the private sector. A group of people that ensure that there's development to build the capabilities around innovation. This year we had Roger Firestien, who's a thought leader in the world of creativity, to come and help us understand how we can build practices to do different kinds of brainstorming [00:14:00] that was quite unique for innovation, looking at how do we recognize it through nominations and sharing stories around it. Very similar to what I did in the private sector.

The one thing I wanted to point out to you is the vision that the city set has a brilliant polarity in it. Our vision is to provide world class municipal services through operational excellence and a culture of innovation. Think about that. Within [00:14:30] that vision statement, is the polarity of operational excellence

in a culture of innovation. We just had this brilliant executive retreat, where those of us that serve on the executive leadership team, we have two times a year that we look at strategy and culture and our results. Barry Johnson, who is the author of, "Polarity Thinking," and again, a global thought leader this space, came to help us look at how to leverage that polarity even more, [00:15:00] because certainly you want to have excellence in what you've committed to in your community and what you have said to your employers you're going to. Yet, you also want to keep growing and have that innovative approach.

We were talking about how do we dance in that beautiful leverage of that polarity. What is different and I don't think we've cracked the code yet on this, is in the private sector, we could take dollars and [00:15:30] fail. We could experiment and take intelligent risk and mitigate them. Failure was such a wonderful option that we would consider and embrace. With citizens, you have to be very conscious of their dollars that they've entrusted you to and how do you innovate and how do you fail fast, fail early. I think some of the constraints are a little different. I haven't figured that out yet, but it's [00:16:00] something that we're in conversation about. I know I've just said a lot and I hope it made sense and I don't know if you have any comments or questions about it.

Jacob Morgan: Fail fast and fail early, I suppose it's easier for a traditional organization versus a government entity, where budgets are perhaps a little bit more scrutinized and paid attention to. Maybe that failure isn't as comfortable [00:16:30] in government as it is in the traditional organization. It's a fair and pretty accurate point.

Teresa Roche: What I will tell you, Jacob, if there's any city that I think is going to figure it out, and it's not like it hasn't somewhat, it's this city. I know a lot of people have impressions of what they think the public sector is like. I want to tell you one thing. My city manager said that years ago, he was presenting to a group of people [00:17:00] and he asked the audience, which had a lot of private sector people, "Can local government be great?" People said no. That began a quest for us to say, "Absolutely." Jacob, one of the things that inspires me to be here is I believe as we change the cities, we change the world. Us figuring it out on a local level, I draw a line of sight to what's possible for the entire planet.

Jacob Morgan: To have that culture of innovation, [00:17:30] obviously, a lot of it depends on having the right leaders in place. That's one of the things that we touched on, is making sure that you have the right leaders to have that mentality. Can you touch a little bit on what's required from a leadership perspective, and what do you and your team look for in those leaders?

Teresa Roche: A lot of what we talk about, I think you would say is very similar. The ability to have a clear vision and [00:18:00] to set specific goals with others that accomplish that vision, and to be able to measure it, and to attract and retain a team that is constantly growing to help you deliver on those results, and the ability to listen to your customers, whatever grouping that is. I think that the basics of leading others to accomplish results, there's a great deal of parallel. I

think the differences perhaps, [00:18:30] for us in the public sector, is how do we begin to anticipate even more the changes that are occurring and how do we respond when things happen rapidly and our emerging? That whole ability to watch patterns and signals and still be able to respond long term and short term, I think is really critical.

I think it takes a very special individual to be a leader in the public sector, to listen so deeply to diverse [00:19:00] voices, because not all groups agree on the same thing. How do you dance between listening deeply and responding so that polarity between helping the one versus helping the many. One of the reasons we brought in polarity thinking in our executive retreat is that we just feel we're faced with that constantly. How do we help ourselves get out from an either/or conversation [00:19:30] to an and? The signals, patterns, and anticipation, and then the embedding of polarity thinking are two things that I don't know that necessarily make us different, but I do think they're areas that we're emphasizing here in the public sector.

Jacob Morgan:

You mentioned the signals and patterns, and that sounds a lot like what futurists talk about, people that have studied forecasting and stuff like that. It seems like some of that mentality certainly permeates in the work that you do, [00:20:00] looking at the future, looking at scenarios, looking at patterns, looking at signals that might be a little bit on the fringes, and how they might potentially impact the work that we're doing. How do you look at all that stuff? Do you just look at a bunch of news outlets every day? How do you pay attention and find those signals and patterns?

Teresa Roche:

It's like breathing for me, Jacob. I couldn't be some place if that wasn't part of what was expected of [00:20:30] me because it just is inspiring for me. I do a number of things. First off, I read on the edges. I've been a long time subscriber to Wired and Fast Company, and I get a number of different e-news letters sent that help me see what's on the fringes that's coming in. I had the opportunity when I was at Agilent to work with The Institute for the Future. I still read their website [00:21:00] to look at what they're doing to see the forces of change. I love talking to people and I love talking to people that are not in the roles that I am, or not in the sector that I am. Through conversation, I think you can make some great meaning.

Jacob, the last thing I'll tell you that I do is I'm still very fortunate to be connected to external groups. I have a lot of my colleagues from the private sector [00:21:30] that I still go to some of their peer meetings. I'm on this remarkable group at Harvard University called The Learning Innovation Laboratory, where every year we look at a theme and we explore it with complete curiosity to make meaning. This year's theme is called, "Emergence in Organizations," which is quite interesting. I have a local tribe here in Fort Collins. It's called HR 100. It's through reading, [00:22:00] through conversation. It's just kind of how I breathe. I can't imagine not doing that.

Jacob Morgan: Fair enough. I think it's one of those things where, when you're in that space, it's almost part of the job, so to speak.

Teresa Roche: I agree with that, Jacob. That's why I've been a long time follower of yours. I forget how I first heard about you, but I've read both your books and I just love that you're constantly searching and trying to help the rest of us see [00:22:30] by what you're doing. Thank you for that. That's a real contribution.

Jacob Morgan: Oh, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Teresa Roche: Reading your stuff is one of the ways I stay current.

Jacob Morgan: The podcasts are a lot of fun, because I always learn a lot of from them as well. Since I do get so many organizations that are on the podcast, I get emails from people that say, "You should get somebody from government, somebody from education, somebody from this space." I thought, "We're connected on LinkedIn. You represent the city of Fort Collins. That would [00:23:00] be certainly, a unique thing to talk about." I actually did have, a couple years ago, the head of innovation for the city of San Leandro. She was talking about how things like Wi-Fi are important and transportation, and how those things contribute to having a city that's helping drive and shape the future of work. It's all related. People aren't [00:23:30] just moving for a job anymore. They're moving for quality of life.

I would imagine that a city like Fort Collins ... Part of what you guys are trying to figure out is isn't just the employees at Fort Collins, but how do businesses in Fort Collins also attract and retain top talent. Maybe you guys help them with that as well.

Teresa Roche: Jacob, you're on to something that's very special. The city of Fort Collins recently was a partner, for example, [00:24:00] with some others to create the first ever, it was called Talent 2.0, to look at what was changing in our region, what were the capabilities and how were we going to continue to attract and retain talent as the years go by. One of the things I feel very delighted about is, because of the things that we do around neighborhood livability and social health and culture and recreation, for example, and [00:24:30] what we do in environmental areas really appeals to many people. I don't know if you saw anything about Fort Collins was named fourth happiest city in a study that National Geographic did. Time, in May of 2014, we were America's most satisfied city, as reported by our citizens. Best college town to live in. In the top 10 best cities for small business owners. Top 10 digital city. [00:25:00] Best place to live. All those things we don't seek, but they are validation that we are creating something big and wonderful here that does want people to live here.

Our school systems are wonderful, the medical health facilities are wonderful. You're absolutely right. I feel like the city has a bigger play, not just for the employees that I have the honor of working with, but how we create the

community [00:25:30] for people to want to be here. Thank you for bringing that up, because that's a huge part of what happens.

Jacob Morgan: I totally agree. It's a pretty interesting shift that we're starting to see when we think about work and life, because work and life are blurring. Work life integration and where you live and the city that you're a part of and the community that you're a part of is also just as important as the job that you take. [00:26:00] That's a pretty dramatic change and shift that we're starting to see.

Teresa Roche: Jacob, I have to tell you, I don't say work life. I say I have a life.

Jacob Morgan: There you go.

Teresa Roche: It's like a dashboard. Years ago I said to people, "I don't have work and then I live." I actually think you're onto something. The fact that we want to look at broadband, so that we can have a completely connected community, is another aspect. When you said the woman from [00:26:30] San Leandro talked about Wi-Fi and the streets, she was absolutely right, that all those things add up to make some place where people want to come.

Jacob Morgan: Absolutely. I know we're near the top of our 60 minutes for the podcast. Are there any, I guess you can call them parting words of wisdom or any pieces of advice that you would give to listeners about how they should be thinking about [00:27:00] the future of work or things that they should be paying attention to in their city, or even if people that are listening to this work at traditional organizations, is there anything they can learn from a city like the city of Fort Collins that they can apply into their companies?

Teresa Roche: As you were asking the question, my mind went into different paths. I'm just going to say two things. If anybody's listening to this, realizes what's possible for the [00:27:30] city or town that they live in, and to demand more of their public servants, then I say yay, because I think everybody deserves to have an organization providing services and resources for its citizens and businesses or residents and business. I hope people are left with the demand that all of us should be asking for, to call up the organization that serves us [00:28:00] day in and day out, behind the scenes and obviously, in the forefront as well.

The second thing, Jacob, as I thought about what you might ask me, I've been thinking a lot about the three P's. The first that I think is important is the whole concept of purpose and aligning purpose to what the organization's doing. I think there's some cities out there that are looking at the purpose of the citizen to the city, [00:28:30] and Richard Leader, who's a very big expert in the concept of purpose, was telling me about a city in Minnesota that was actually looking at the purpose of the residents and the business to the city. I think there's something up with that.

The second P I talked about is presence. With all that's going on, it gets back to that leadership I was talking about. For any of us to find [00:29:00] that port in the storm, to remain calm, I think is important. One of the things that I thought about mentioning is my third P is practice. This came from Bob Kegan and Lisa Lahey in their brilliant book, "Deliberately Developmental Organizations," I think it was called. Instead of us looking at work as performance, like how am I performing, to look at work as practice so that there's no separation between work [00:29:30] and learning. Those are things that I personally think about and have brought into the conversation at the city as well. I think that those are three things no matter where somebody's at in the world or what sector they're working in, feels to me just to be really important right now.

Jacob Morgan: I think that's a great way to wrap up. I have a couple of fun questions to ask you, a couple of rapid fire fun questions for people to get to know you. First [00:30:00] one is, what's the most embarrassing moment you had at work?

Teresa Roche: Oh, my gosh. I've had so many. Do you mean recently or in my whole work career?

Jacob Morgan: If it's a good story, it can be recent, but just a terrible embarrassing moment for you.

Teresa Roche: There are times, and I have numerous examples I could give, where I really thought that I understood what was being discussed and I can see the non-verbals on people and I'll make a comment like, "Am I totally [00:30:30] off," and people are like, "Yeah." Fortunately, I'm able to have compassion and laugh at myself, but a lot of times I think I know something and I don't. At the city, because it's been so new, it's been good jokes for what I think something is, and I find out that I'm totally off.

Jacob Morgan: That happens to everybody.

Teresa Roche: Yeah.

Jacob Morgan: If you were a superhero, who would you be?

Teresa Roche: Wonder Woman.

Jacob Morgan: That's [00:31:00] what Jenny Dearborn picked, a previous podcast guest.

Teresa Roche: That's right. She did. I have to tell you, one of the reasons that I love Wonder Woman is talk about a polarity and living it. Her quote at the end of the movie about love really speaks to me because I think that is underlying everything. Wonder Woman would be mine.

Jacob Morgan: What's a book that you recommend?



Teresa Roche: What book would I recommend?

Jacob Morgan: Can be business or non-business.

Teresa Roche: [00:31:30] One of the recent books that I just read was Dan Brown's "Origins." I love Dan Brown for fictional, but he does a lot of research, so it causes me to think and to actually travel to places in the world to see some of the things that he has written about. That book just came out. A work book ... Gosh, I feel like there's one that I just finished. I read a lot, so I'm trying to remember.  
[00:32:00] Meg Wheatley's book is one of that I have found to be very inspiring, and it wasn't easy to read because I had to constantly stop and think about am I living the way that she's talking about leadership. The book I mentioned by Meg Wheatley that just came out in June of this year, "Who Do We Choose to Be?"

Jacob Morgan: If you were doing a different career, what would you be doing?

Teresa Roche: Oh, gosh. I think I would love to be an anthropologist.

Jacob Morgan: Anthropologist. Wow. It's [00:32:30] not that different to what you're doing.

Teresa Roche: I think that the study of cultures and other people ... I actually also think that something I would love to do and it might be a chapter I still pursue is to write.

Jacob Morgan: It's a lot of fun. Takes time, but it's a lot of fun. If you could have dinner with anybody alive or dead, who would it be?

Teresa Roche: Wow. I'm going to give you two answers. One would be my mom. She died [00:33:00] when I was in my early 20s, and now that I'm 61, I would love to have the benefit of asking her questions, understanding how she thought. She had seven children and she went back to work when I went to kindergarten. I was the youngest of seven. There's so much about my mom I would love to ask. For the person not my mom that I would absolutely cherish to have dinner with would be Eleanor Roosevelt, because she stood so clearly for principles and she did so much [00:33:30] for the universal rights. Talk about finding a way to co-create and collaborate among such diverse opinions in a very challenging time. She held true to herself and I admire her greatly and I would love to understand how she did that day in and day out.

Jacob Morgan: Both very good and noble people. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Teresa Roche: I'm going to give you two answers to that. I love where I [00:34:00] live and it just feels so heartfelt for me. Let's say you said, "Teresa, Fort Collins is not possible," then I would consider Ireland, because that's my heritage. I was in Ireland on my 50th birthday to touch Irish soil, and it's a wonderful country. I could imagine living there.

Jacob Morgan: Wow. I've never been to Ireland. One day.

Teresa Roche: You're going to have to go there.

Jacob Morgan: I want to. If you could eliminate one workplace practice tomorrow, which one would it be?

Teresa Roche: [00:34:30] A practice. I don't know if this is a practice. It might be. Some people's bent is entitlement. I think every day we should earn everything that we get and so, I don't know if that's a workplace practice or not. I guess if I was bringing it home to a real workplace practice, I would eliminate every possible piece of paper and make everything digitized and paperless just for the planet. [00:35:00] That would be a workplace practice I would eliminate.

Jacob Morgan: If you could introduce one new workplace practice, what would that one be?

Teresa Roche: It's one that we've started to introduce in the city. It really has taken route, is meditation. I just did an offsite with my team and I had our chief sustainability officer come in and do a very profound meditation for the work that we were doing. It really helped us [00:35:30] gain more clarity and it was helping us lead. I know that's one that's out there, but if I could do it every day to begin the day with my team, I would.

Jacob Morgan: Very cool. I like that. My wife meditates quite a bit. I've tried. I suppose I should still keep trying. I find it very hard, but she swears by it, so maybe I'll have her help me out with that. Thank you so much for taking time out of your [00:36:00] day to speak with me. Where can people go to learn more about you, the city of Fort Collins, any sort of stuff that you're involved with?

Teresa Roche: Certainly, the city of Fort Collins in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn. I'm personally on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, but I don't post a lot on Facebook that's work-related. Our website fcgov.com is a tremendous place to learn more about the city. People, if they wanted to contact me directly, [00:36:30] troche@fcgov.com. Happy to get any questions or respond to anybody. As I said, I learn from every conversation, so I would welcome that.

Jacob Morgan: Thank you very much. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me.

Teresa Roche: I'm honored, and I was very humbled by the request, Jacob. Thank you so much.

Jacob Morgan: My pleasure. Thanks for everyone for tuning into this week's episode of The Future of Work Podcast. My guest again, has been Teresa Roche, the Chief Human Resource Officer at the City of Fort [00:37:00] Collins. I will see all of you next week.