

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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**0:02:41 Jacob:** Well, hello everyone. Thanks for joining another episode of The Future of Work Show with Jacob Morgan. Those of you who are live, welcome, you get to see it before the podcast actually airs in a couple of weeks. And my very special guest today is Barri Rafferty, and she's the CEO of a company that, I'm sure many of you are familiar with, Ketchum. Barri, thank you for joining me.

**0:03:04 Barri:** Thanks for inviting me. Great to be here.

**0:03:07 Jacob:** So, we're gonna be talking about all sorts of really cool stuff, but I'm all... By the way, for people watching and listening, Barri was one of the CEOs I interviewed for my upcoming book, The Future Leader and she gave me a lot of really interesting insights, and ideas, and stories in there, so I thought it would be fun to also have her as a podcast guest and to interview her live. And before we jump into that stuff, I'm really curious to learn a little bit more about you. Going even like way back, how did you grow up? Where did you grow up? How did you get involved with Ketchum and being in PR?

**0:03:41 Barri:** So, I grew up in the South, which nobody really thinks I have a southern accent, but I always say, "My father was from Brooklyn and my mother was born and raised in Atlanta." So, we're three girls and we all kind of ended up in the middle. But I didn't even know what public relations was. I went to undergrad at Tulane and got an English major and psychology degree, and then I did an internship at the Super Dome and that led to my career in communications.

**0:04:11 Jacob:** Wow, internship at the Super Dome.

**0:04:14 Barri:** I did, it was in their travel and tourism department for New Orleans, and I still love it down there and try to go. I never miss... Try to to either Jazz Fest or or French Quarter Fest, you can find me there, for sure.

**0:04:26 Jacob:** Very cool. And how did that eventually lead to Ketchum, to even becoming CEO of Ketchum?

**0:04:34 Barri:** So, I went to graduate school in Boston University and, you know those tours that they take you on to New York? I actually came to Ketchum on my tour to New York to visit a lot of agencies and Burson-Marsteller. And so I ended up taking a job at Burson-Marsteller out of school, it was my first big agency job. And then went from big agency to the client side, which is SlimFast Foods when it was still a privately held company, at the time, owned by a man named Danny Abraham, who also founded Thompson Medical. So, started in that kind of diet and weight loss area when it was a million dollars a day worth of powder and Tommy Lasorda was probably the first guy

ever on a diet and...

**0:05:20 Jacob:** Well, I remember that, I remember that.

**0:05:23 Barri:** So, did a lot of firsts back then. Put Pound, Wisconsin on a diet, had a lot of fun there, and then they moved the company to Florida. And I was about to buy an apartment, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have to find a job." And I ended up going to a great boutique called Lippe Taylor. And really learned a lot about mass, and cosmetics, and beauty. And then my first boss at Burson-Marsteller, Rob Flaherty, called me for lunch and he said, "Let's get a [0:05:50] \_\_\_\_\_," which doesn't exist anymore, but it was like a way fancier restaurant that we would ever usually go to, and he said to me, "You have to come to Ketchum." He had ended up here, and I built my career really here at every job on the org chart. I always say, "I didn't do it the easy way." I run a P&L. The first office I actually ran was our Atlanta office. So, ran Atlanta and Dallas before taking over the New York office way back when.

**0:06:00 Jacob:** So, how long have you been at Ketchum now?

**0:06:00 Barri:** I've been at Ketchum for 24 years.

**0:06:00 Jacob:** Wow.

**0:06:00 Barri:** I know, this generation is like, "Whoever does that?" But...

[chuckle]

**0:06:28 Barri:** I really was able to reinvent myself multiple times. And I started... I had a global brand practice job, when my kids were small, truthfully, and wasn't working for me, and that's when I went to run a P&L, because it was the time where... Now, we're doing this right on my iPad in the middle of wherever. But in those days, if you had a call like this, you had an IT person and you were in the office at 9 o'clock at night for it to be 9 in the morning and trying to pray that the call worked, and...

**0:07:00 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:07:01 Barri:** Two small kids, that wasn't totally working for me, and all the travel. But the good news is I went to run a P&L, and from there had a route to CEO. That's been interesting. One of the pieces of advice I give to people is just put yourself out of your comfort zone and volunteer for things. I volunteered to run our digital business, when I was running the New York office, and they all said to me, "Well, what do you know about digital?" And my point was, "What does anyone know about digital at the time?" So, was always game to try new things, and be a learner and be a pioneer a bit, even... I call it entrepreneurial, right?

**0:07:42 Jacob:** Yeah, yeah, no, I think that makes a lot of sense. And so for people who are not familiar with Ketchum, can you give them a bit of background information about the company, how big are you guys, anything that you want people to know about the brand?

**0:07:54 Barri:** Sure. So, we're a global communications consultancy. I have had the pleasure this year of being everywhere, from Mumbai, to Hong Kong and Shanghai, to London, Germany.

**0:08:06 Jacob:** Lots of travel.

**0:08:07 Barri:** US... So a lot of travel, yeah. Definitely, Diamond on Delta, this week. So there you go. But the truth is, what I love about this business is we really have evolved from a public relations agency into a full 360 communications. If you look at the work we do today, we're earned at the core, but we're really a great combination of analytics and creative because I'm sure as you know, right, you've gotta build in and find that audience.

**0:08:35 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:08:35 Barri:** So very spending a lot of time on the front end on targeting who the audience is, what they're watching, what they're listening to, how to reach them, what their path to purchase is, and then how they engage with all kinds of content. And we specialize in earned content. And that can be through earned media, through influencers, it can be through a ton of social channels, right? Paid channels, owned channels for corporations, for non-profits, for all kinds of organizations. So today, we develop as much content. And down the hall from me here I have nine... I think in New York now, nine full-time video producers, animators...

**0:09:14 Jacob:** Wow.

**0:09:15 Barri:** And we have people like that all over the world, and we're doing really end-to-end, to full social commerce, which we're seeing a lot of in Asia and bringing this way as well.

**0:09:25 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:09:25 Barri:** So it's been an interesting ride. And then we do all the reputation work as well, so issues, and crises, and...

**0:09:31 Jacob:** Yeah, there's been a lot of those lately.

[chuckle]

**0:09:34 Barri:** Yeah, it's good for us when our clients can't stay out of trouble.

**0:09:37 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:09:37 Barri:** Not a bad part of the business either.

**0:09:40 Jacob:** How many employees do you guys have?

**0:09:42 Barri:** So we have about 2500 employees.

**0:09:45 Jacob:** Wow, these are...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:09:45 Barri:** And we're a people business. We primarily bill consultants on an hourly basis, so our workforce and talent are really what make up our company and what we have to offer.

**0:10:01 Jacob:** Yeah. But can you talk a little bit about your leadership style? How would you describe your leadership style to somebody you just met?

**0:10:12 Barri:** Yeah. So I... My goal is to bring out the best in the people that work for me. So I feel like as a leader, I'm very much of a coach. I go... I move really fast, so I have to trust the people around me. And I really encourage us to all collaborate and work together. We have a lot of debate on... Any leadership team I ever have, I always think if people aren't debating and pushing back on me and there's not a few raised voices, or curse words every now and then, that it's probably not a good thing, right? We've gotta get in it, but we lock arms when we get out. And I also think I am a very nurturing leader too in a lot of ways. I still write birthday and anniversary cards, do personal gifts for the holidays...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:10:58 Jacob:** Really, wow.

**0:11:00 Barri:** I do. I write a few. If you turned around here, you'd see all different size bags with cards attached. I've been... I write a lot of cards as I travel. I still... I grew up in the South. I do a lot of handwritten notes. I have to admit, I still like a good card.

**0:11:13 Jacob:** Oh, very nice. I like... Yeah, you don't hear that often, that many CEOs still spend the time to do that.

**0:11:19 Barri:** No.

**0:11:20 Jacob:** Where... How did you learn to lead? Is it something that you studied, you took courses in, or did you have to evolve your leadership style over time? And maybe, you can talk about how it's evolved, if it has evolved?

**0:11:34 Barri:** So I think it has evolved a lot. And I think all of the above, right? I think sometimes you learn a lot from the best bosses you have, and sometimes from the worst bosses you have, what you wanna be and what you don't wanna be. I often say, one of the hardest things for me to learn and... Was that it's better to be trusted than to be liked. And I think particularly as women we grow up, and there's a lot of peer pressure, right, to be in that big crowd and be liked. And as you go up the rank, sometimes you have to make tough decisions.

**0:12:05 Barri:** And I remember, when I went to run the Atlanta office it was post the Olympics, post the dot com boost... Bust and I had to go in and make some really hard decisions on how we were gonna move forward, and lay people off, and getting people engaged, and walking them through the process, and understand what I was doing, and how we were moving forward, and what that vision was gonna be and bringing people along was a great learning for me. So I think through all those experiences, you become better. I've learned as a communicator, you can never communicate enough.

**0:12:26 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:12:41 Barri:** It's just you need to communicate it, and communicate it again, and communicate it in different channels, and different forms, particularly when you're trying to change an organization as we've been doing over the last few years. And to be really present, I think that you have to... I

still work with clients, I'm in the business because I think people value me because of that. And we did a worldwide call yesterday. I do my worldwide calls on Workplace and they're live with video, and went all over the world and shared our proudest moments from the year.

**0:13:14 Barri:** But what I started, the first slide I started with was pictures of me with our people and with clients from all over the world. And I talked about that really being in it with them, is how I learned. I see what clients are buying, I see what's winning awards, I see where frustrations are in our own organization and with our clients, where the gaps are and what we need to create and productize. So I think you gotta be out there and be in it with our people in order to be a good leader.

**0:13:41 Jacob:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I don't think we have enough human leaders who are out there. When you think about work now, obviously you have a workforce of 2500 people, what are you hearing from them as far as what they care about most at work, what they value? What are they asking you for as far as how to create a great place for them to show up every day?

**0:14:05 Barri:** We do Glint Pulse surveys actually three times a year, and the last two years we've launched full-time, we have flexibility year round, wherever you work in the world. And it's the number one thing by far, that people say on our employee survey, they value at the agency. It took us really about six months to allow people to understand what that meant, and people have good intentions. And I went to our DC office and at one point they were like, "We've given everyone one day to work from home a week." And I'm like, "That's not full flexibility."

**0:14:41 Barri:** But it really means now that... I have young people out here, and they do early morning monitoring for clients. They come in early at 7:00 in the mornings, so the clients have their report before 9:00 and they're at the gym from 9:00 to 10:30 and back in the office at 10:30. Some of our people are showing up at 9:30 'cause they drop their kids to school. Some people are working from home. One of my favorite, at Thanksgiving a mom came up to me, it was here, and said to me, "I am so happy you have flexibility 'cause we see our daughter so much more." And I said, "What do you mean?" And they said, "Well now, on Thanksgiving week, she actually comes home and works the whole week from home for the three days before Thanksgiving, and it costs us a lot less and she doesn't have to travel from Wednesday to Sunday."

**0:15:27 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:15:27 Barri:** So I look at it as a work-life integration, and when you can have that, it's important. And I also talk about leaving loudly, so if you have to leave and you're going to coach your kid's game or running to the doctor or you need to take your dog for a walk in the afternoon, to actually tell people because that's what actually makes the culture real.

**0:15:50 Jacob:** Leave loudly. I haven't heard that before, I like that a lot. I like that phrase. So don't just sneak out the door, just... It's okay to let people know that you're going.

**0:16:02 Barri:** Yeah, because that way it's true flexibility and people are proud. We do Flex February and everyone shows pictures of where they work, on our channels and...

**0:16:10 Jacob:** Wow, so you really, really embrace that work... So I'm curious, there's actually been... And I'm sure you've seen, and have heard this and maybe even some of your clients have said this to you, but a lot of organizations have actually been pushing back on workplace flexibility.

There are some like Ketchum who are very much embracing it and are all about it. And other companies are, like "I don't know, I gotta be able to see them working." Was this a challenge for you to move towards that environment? Did you get any pushback from other leaders?

**0:16:41 Barri:** No, we definitely have gotten pushback even within our own leaders. It took us really as I said, a full almost year and a half, I think before it was 100% embraced. And we train on it every January and as we bring in new employees. I think a couple things, one is we are a business where people... When you're in a client service business, our clients are thrilled when people are working nights and they're answering their phone at 10 o'clock at night and weekends when you need them. So my feeling is, now there's a lot less resentment for that. You work on a Sunday, and you don't need to get a comp day and you need on Monday morning to do your laundry and get your life errands run and come in and your clients are happy and we're happy, it's awesome. So to me, it's really given us the ability to, I think be better at client service put our client at the center of their needs, but also be able to tune in and tune out as our people need to rejuvenate and re-energize and just... Sometimes you know like get shit done in your life that you didn't do yesterday.

**0:17:44 Jacob:** It sounds like it's getting rid of the five-day work... Like there's no weekends and weekdays anymore, it's just like seven days a week. You just do what you need to do during those seven days, take off the days that you need, you make your own weekend, it's just up to you.

**0:18:00 Barri:** Up to you. We used to have summer Fridays and whatever, but now a lot of our people... I live in New York here and they go out to Fire Island in the Hamptons. They don't wanna travel on a Friday 'cause the traffic is miserable. They could go out Saturday morning and come back Monday afternoon now. And if that works for them, and it's better for them. Or they could go out Thursday, work from there on Friday, and as long as they're productive and meet their meetings and their clients are happy.

**0:18:27 Barri:** Now, a couple of things we do is we do a ton more video. So no one does a call with me and they're not on video unless maybe it's really early in the morning or late at night in Asia or something, I'm like, "Alright, you can be in your pyjamas, whatever." But the truth is we use technology, so people have to be present. So you need to show up in a certain way. We've also had to invest in technology so people can be mobile, and work remote and still be connected to all their files and their things so we do a lot of training. We use a lot of tools for team meetings and things like that and shareable files, so we definitely have shifted. And I think that's happening everywhere, but I could pretty much on any of my devices get into our systems, pull things up, have team files, do video calls, all of that. And so I think that's a big part of it too is it's not like you're hiding out behind the phone, but...

**0:18:42 Jacob:** Yeah. So aside from workplace flexibility, which clearly is something that a lot of your employees care about, are there any other things that you've noticed your workforce is wanting or needing for example, free food, gorgeous offices is that stuff that they ask about or is it what [0:19:42] \_\_\_\_.

**0:19:42 Barri:** So space is interesting I would say we've gone much more to open space to do with the Omnicom philosophy, so we don't control our real estate as much as we would like in some places but a couple other things I would say. We really look at what belonging at Ketchum means and when we talk about belonging at Ketchum, and we talk about diversity, equality, and inclusion and we have a very millennial group of people, so we've done a lot of things in that area.

**0:20:18 Barri:** One of my favorite is we actually created something called Launchpad, which is when we look at entry level people, it's a blind system. So if you're applying right now to our summer internship program, you will apply, we gamified it. So you go into a gamification process, in January, you put ideas in and your peers vote you up and we meet with the people who are on the top of the leader board, so things like that we're working on.

**0:20:44 Jacob:** So you don't know their age, in advance, you don't have all these details.

**0:20:48 Barri:** We don't know where they went to school, their age, because there's a lot of unconscious bias. People connect with people because... Oh, they went to a good school, or they were in my sorority or they were in... So we're really trying to work at eliminating that, and then once people join, we're really trying to look at inclusion. We created an external DE&I advisory board about a year and a half ago, and the first thing they did, they came to me, and they said, "Well in the US our maternity policy is biased", and I was like...

**0:21:18 Jacob:** Interesting.

**0:21:19 Barri:** What do you mean? And they said, "Well it really needs to stand for parental leave and we have a lot of people that are LGBT-and pride and people that are adapting and doing different things. So, we renamed it, we now call it a family bonding policy. They said to me we had an offer to pay for a lactation consultant and they said, "Well that's not really inclusive, not everyone wants to breastfeed. So we now have multiple options. You can do sleep, everybody needs right sleep training for their baby, lactation. So what we're trying to do, and I think words matter how you position words matter...

**0:21:56 Jacob:** Yeah for sure.

[overlapping conversation]

**0:21:56 Barri:** Business but also how things are truly inclusive, so I think those things are important. And the other thing I would say is we have a lot of millennials right we have tons of...

**0:22:09 Jacob:** What percentage would you say of your workforce is millennial?

**0:22:12 Barri:** Our average age of our core is probably between 27 and 32 so it's...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:22:17 Jacob:** Wow.

**0:22:20 Barri:** So when you look at that, we do a lot around being what we call a force for good. And being a force for good is our own Ketchum giving back in work that we do, whether it's volunteering in our communities or pro bono, but also really pulling that through on being a force for good, for how you inspire and support your colleagues and clients, and the type of work we do for clients. So this past year, we've won a lot of awards and done great work for tons of clients. Like for Mastercard we did... I don't know if you saw the street sign "acceptance matters" we had a street sign in New York with all the different terms for gay that became during Pride Month and then stayed on in New York, because it became such an icon and true name cards. We did a lot of work for the National Safety Council, that won awards around the opioid crisis. So we're not only trying

to volunteer but trying to really put our creatives to work to help our clients do good as well.

**0:23:18 Jacob:** I love that, and I actually wanna talk a little bit more about the do good stuff, but before you can get into that, I'm still interested in the blind process, that you have for people who apply. So you don't even look at schools, because I know for a lot of companies out there, you gotta come from a Harvard or Stanford you gotta come from a UC. You have to come from a certain tier school. Why... Did you guys use to do that and you got rid of it?

**0:23:48 Barri:** We did, so at the entry level and particularly for our summer interns and we get thousands of applications every year, and what we were finding is it our own... We struggle as an industry, I'll be honest, in getting a diverse enough workforce. And so...

**0:24:03 Jacob:** Everybody industry struggles hard.

**0:24:06 Barri:** We did a lot of training on unconscious bias but it wasn't enough. So this allows us... And literally, I remember the highest score the first time... My husband is, and I have love summer camp and my husband's a summer camp director, so this... It was near and dear to my heart is the person that scored the highest, his summer jobs had been all at summer camp. He would have probably never gotten an interview and yet his creativity and stuff right, was off the chart. So what we're trying to do is eliminate those things and let it be based particularly at the younger levels at your ideas, how you engage, how you communicate through the gamification, how much you play and how involved you are.

**0:24:48 Barri:** There's a lot of things that we can see through that. And then we do go through an interview process from that. So in a sense, it's right, it's just an ability to then be a real screening tool. But what we find is exactly that we don't have everyone from the same top communication schools, and we've even hired some people that haven't even gone to college, which is great that we might have that... That have run their own blogs, or podcasts, or created followings as influencers. And the other thing today is, we're looking for much more diverse talent, so we have people that just do influencer marketing, we have people that are in change management and doing a lot of design and infographics, and visuals and visual storytellers and things like that. So the backgrounds we need also are very different.

**0:25:37 Jacob:** I completely can relate to that. I mean, I have a obviously much smaller team than you. I have a team of 10 people that I work with, and for me, when I was looking to bring these 10 people on, I didn't look at their schools, I just looked at can you do this kind of work? If you're creating an image, are you a great designer? If you're helping with writing, are you a good writer? And for me all the other stuff didn't even become a factor at all, and I'm glad to see that that's something that you guys are doing and thinking about too.

**0:26:08 Jacob:** You mentioned something... Actually there were two things that you mentioned earlier which I thought were interesting. One was you said, "It's better to be trusted than it is to be liked", so I wanted to unpack that a little bit because I feel like in a lot of businesses, even as leaders or as individual contributors, we try very, very hard to be liked. Why do you think that that's not as important as being trusted?

**0:26:34 Barri:** I think that... And look, we're all in these moments where it's... Whether it's your leadership team, the people you're managing, you're gonna make decisions, and people might not like that decision in the moment, they might not like the way you're conducting something, or if



you're doing layoffs, people aren't gonna be happy with you. If they understand what you're doing and it's for the best of the business and what that means, then they're gonna trust you and follow you in the future. If it's all about liked and you're so worried about everyone being nice and being liked, a lot of times we make decisions and we do things not for the good of the whole but for the good of individuals, and then it becomes a popularity contest, and I believe often you end up not being as popular as you think.

**0:27:20 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:27:21 Barri:** So I think that in order to be a true leader, you have to earn that trust every day, and some days it's gonna be harder for everyone to like you, but overall, it's gonna be better for business if they trust where you're coming from and understand the mechanics and how you think. And people will say to me, even sometimes after we've made some tough decisions, that, "I know you care about people, I know you care about those things," 'cause they see the consistent behavior, right, year-round too, it's not... And I'm not one way in the New York office and another way in the Mumbai office and another way in London. I'm consistent when I travel with how I interact and what I say and what I do, and that's really important for people.

**0:28:06 Jacob:** Is there a story or an example from your life or career that you can think of that sort of illustrates this idea of being trusted versus liked? 'Cause it sounds like this is something you had to learn through experience. So how did you come to that realization? Did something happen?

**0:28:21 Barri:** So I think, as I said, I grew up in the South and there was a lot of things where I was always trying to be accepted and liked. And what I started to realize sometimes is I was carrying a lot of angst and guilt and emotion over things and keeping it inside, and sometimes you'd let someone go and you wouldn't tell anyone why 'cause you'd 100% wanna protect them, and then people wouldn't really understand the behaviors that you expected. We still struggle with that sometimes at Ketchum now, I'll be honest, because we care so much about our people, we wanna protect their reputation, and so how do you go really say, "These are the behaviors we expect people to do in these roles"?

**0:29:05 Barri:** And when people don't do them, you have to be honest and give that feedback. So I think part of it is about fast feedback. No one should ever be surprised at an annual review. To me, it should be that you're giving them that feedback all the time. And truthfully, no one should be surprised when people are let go for behaviors that aren't right for the organization if you're consistent about what you expect, right? But that's not being nice to everyone, that's holding people accountable. And by holding people accountable to certain standards, I think it's one of the ways you really build trust.

**0:29:37 Jacob:** Makes sense, and I think a lot of people can relate to that. The other thing that I think you mentioned which was interesting, you said you had to reinvent yourself several times during your career. And I think now with this rapid pace of change that we're all a part of, we're all gonna have to reinvent ourselves many times during our career. So can you talk about some of those reinventions that you did? And is there a process for reinvention, or how do you go about doing that?

**0:30:04 Barri:** Well, we talk a lot about, in our culture, about being an ongoing learner, and curiosity, right? And I think you hire people for curiosity, people that are always looking to what's new, to try to re-skill at times. When I got into this business, it was all about writing. I'll never

forget it, at Burson-Marsteller, Jonah Tobias was like former New York Times editor, and you could not get a press release out the door until he approved it. And he took that red pen and you'd be like, "Oh my God." I was afraid of his office, right? And today, we hardly put out a press release. You do for financials and things like that, but so much more of it is visual storytelling.

**0:30:48 Barri:** And I remember at a point when we... I'd taken on digital, and I insisted at one point that if you were writing the video script or writing the shot list and you were a client director, that it probably wasn't good enough. And people looked at me and said, "But we've always done. We became writers, then we started writing the video scripts." I said, "No, you're not that person any more. We we have a million producers and things." But that adoption curve of getting people to make those shifts is really not always easy. And I think some people adopted technology really quickly, some people didn't. I remember at one point, I actually really am a big believer in reverse mentors, and I had some of our best young digital people mentoring me, and at the time it was when everyone wanted a blog, and I said, "Okay." We all started personal blogs and tried to keep it going and all of that, and worked at it. And then when I launched my LinkedIn or Twitter, I had people working with me that were helping me in those areas, 'cause it's not so intuitive or easy for people of our generation compared to my kids who are in their 20s who kind of grew up with that in their hand. And I can now type with my thumbs faster than most. I can race pretty much anyone.

[laughter]

**0:32:05 Barri:** But those are all even... You think about that. Basic skills. Every time you get a new device, you gotta dive in.

**0:32:12 Jacob:** Yeah, and I'm even thinking of in my career just the things that I had to learn. When I went off my own 15 years ago, Social media wasn't even really a thing. Just even how you build a brand, how you do all these things has transformed rapidly. So how do you... Do you have a process that you use to learn new things? Is it like an upskilling and training program that you guys offer? Do people just speak up inside of Ketchum and say, "I wanna learn this, " Or what's that process like?

**0:32:47 Barri:** So I think it's a combination, I think what we're trying to do is we provide a lot of training. Influencer marketing took off, we created something called Influcan which was our influencer training, we trained about 200 people in a year and really have brought them along and some of them were people that just opted in and some of them were people we hired. Similar we do a lot of web and we've worked with a company called Nomadic. So there's a lot of training, you can do on your own, as we've been involving analytics and AI, and what that means.

**0:33:19 Barri:** And then in addition to Ketchum University and the courses they offer, we have LinkedIn learning, so a lot of times our people wanna do that. I just recently met with our L&D team, and two of the top courses people were using on Linked-In learning were around, one was around stress management, and one was around time management. And so those are things people might not wanna opt in to in their day-to-day but they can do that on their own. And we have people doing photography and other things too, so there's a little bit of that. We also have a tuition reimbursement program.

**0:33:55 Barri:** And then Omnicom for our leaders has a great leadership program where they build custom Harvard business study, case studies on leading agencies and they have cases from all different agencies around the network. And then I also think though, and I'm sure you do too, a lot

of it is reading, understanding things. And I remember when I was starting to look at blockchain and AI, and what that meant and what was that gonna mean for our business. And if you asked me three or four years ago, as I was educating myself on it, I wasn't sure. And now our influencer marketing databases are all AI enabled. They're using artificial intelligence to identify people like you that might have a certain reach, a certain following, a certain influence in an industry or specialty, and then we're vetting them for our clients based on tone, and other things after that, but the short list that we create is all done through AI today.

**0:34:52 Jacob:** Very cool. I wanna ask you a little follow up to that, but first, somebody live was asking, "Are you the same leader for your kids as you are for your employees?"

**0:35:02 Barri:** Oh, that's a great question.

**0:35:04 Jacob:** That's what I said to him too.

[chuckle]

**0:35:07 Barri:** I try to be a great coach for them. I have a son and daughter, my son is a systems engineer in the aerospace and space innovation industry. One of the things that he'll tell you is how he got his job at North of Grumman now, but when he was getting his first internship he'll say, "My mom packaged me." And I literally taught him how to do a whole virtual online LinkedIn in 360 and personal branding and all of that, and engineers never do that stuff. So, he totally stood out and created video and other things. I work with my daughter a lot. I think girls do grow up having a little bit tougher confidence and things like that. One of the things, when I... She went to college I gave her confidence cards that are photos and sayings, a lot of them with her in 'em, and I actually keep a whole set on my desk...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:36:01 Jacob:** That's super cool.

[chuckle]

**0:36:04 Barri:** So I try to instill a lot of the things I impart as leaders on my kids as well. But I often do think sometimes raising a lot of young people in the office is a little bit like parenting. There's a lot of similarities no doubt it. Sometimes my CFO and I joke that we need consistent parenting, mom and dad have to be aligned.

**0:36:28 Jacob:** I couldn't agree more. I think that makes a lot of people, especially in leadership management roles can probably relate to that, especially if you're running a company that you said the average age was like between 25 to 32.

**0:36:40 Barri:** Yeah. We're catching up with that.

**0:36:43 Jacob:** Yeah, yeah. You mentioned earlier that you're staying on top of things like AI and blockchain and all these different technologies that are out there. One of the things that I found, at least from interviewing a lot of the CEOs for my upcoming book is that a lot of people have a very hard time keeping up with the pace of change and just adapting this stuff that's happening. What do you do to stay current? Are you just always reading the news? How do you keep a pulse on how the

world and your business is changing?

**0:37:14 Barri:** Yeah, it's interesting today 'cause I would say one of the things I kind of miss sometimes is reading a newspaper cover to cover, 'cause I often say, you'd read the Arts section, and get things and others and now we opt in to so many things. So I try to follow a lot of different types of people in different industries. And whether that's on some of the key channels. I'm on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, all of those, but I also pick people every day that I trust to curate information too. So when I... Alan Murray for Fortune does like a CEO morning newsletter, and I get a lot of the business news from that and then I can deep, go down into deeper stories. But there's the saying, you have different people you follow for tech and different people you follow for cultural trends and it's harder and harder to keep up. I will say that. I find the pace of change is really quick.

**0:38:11 Barri:** So sometimes what I'll do is start the year in January, I have the luxury of many times going to Davos, or other big economic meetings in the beginning of the year. And I'll try to focus on a few things a year things I think that are emerging. So I followed blockchain for a year until I felt like I could understand it. I followed AI and I still do, 'cause I think there's a lot of ramifications to what that's doing for the business. But sometimes too I'll follow some of the top creatives like [0:38:40] \_\_\_\_ I find is a really interesting company that's innovating products, to look at what they're innovating and things that they're looking at. And we've done a lot of work in the 50 plus category and they're doing a lot of universal designs. So how do those things link up? And to try to make the connections... For people and for a lot of trends too, right? We're seeing like a lot of employees get more engaged in issues and employee activism. So when you start to see that, then you start to follow and say, "Okay, how can we as a communications agency and internal get engaged and help our clients with employee activism," so connecting a lot of those dots as well.

**0:39:20 Jacob:** So, one follow-up question from earlier, that same person said, "Is there anything that you do at home for your kids that you would apply at work?"

**0:39:28 Barri:** You know, I think that for... Whether it's kids or people at work, I really try to encourage to get the best out of them and not to impart the way I manage or the way I would do something. My kids are both very different in terms of how they approach things and one's much more left-brain, one's much more right brain, so how you get to the end process and what that end process looks like is gonna be different. And I think I've learned at work, particularly my work style, I skip steps, and a lot of people can't do that.

**0:40:10 Barri:** So if I have to write a speech, I will on the train, while I'm walking, create something in my head, and when I go to paper, I can sometimes just write something and people want the outline step and they want me to look at the outline and make sure I agree with the outline, right? And, so it used to make me crazy and now I'm like, "Okay that's their process and way to get through that and this is my process," and I've had to learn to do that with my kids and with people at work is accept that different outcomes are different. And different processes are different.

**0:40:44 Jacob:** I like that. What does a typical day look like for you? Maybe you can walk us through from when you wake up in the morning to when you're done, what's your day like?

**0:40:53 Barri:** Yeah, I mean, the thing I love about this industry is the days are very different, but I would say there's certain things, I mean I'm either commuting on the train or I'm on a plane or something, so I usually... My early morning time is usually something commuting where I have time to read, answer emails from the night before, do a little bit of thinking or editing if I need to. I

do a lot of client meetings and new business pitches, and things like that, so every week, I'm usually... Happen to be a quick study on what I'm going into or the industry or where we are with a client.

**0:41:28 Barri:** I spend a lot of time with our leaders around the world, so trying to listen and coach and one of the things I find that I can do a lot because I travel and hear so much of our working clients is, be the connector and bring ideas together and thoughts together, and help people say, "Have you thought about this," or, "In this industry, they're doing this or that". So being a connector. I go out a lot, I'm very social, both with my friends and with business. I try to make time for my friends and family every week. It's really important to me, so my assistant knows if I'm out certain nights of the week, I wanna be home here or do this. And you know, last week was crazy 'cause we had a lot of business things. And then Friday night, I had 22 people at my house, till one in the morning so that we could all catch up and make sure that that part of my life, it's important to me. I always feel like I don't... If I'm gonna work this hard, I want that... I'm leaving tomorrow on vacation for my mom's 80th birthday this weekend.

**0:42:30 Jacob:** Nice.

**0:42:32 Barri:** I never leave a vacation day on the table, I can promise you that.

**0:42:36 Jacob:** So you take advantage of your vacation days?

**0:42:40 Barri:** Every one. When I actually became CEO two years ago, I was becoming CEO in January, I found out two months before, and I had a bucket list vacation set, it was kind of when my kids, before my daughter was going to college and my son was graduating to go to... On a safari. And my first day of being a CEO I was abroad, on vacation. Everyone wanted me to do this, you know, day in the life and blah, blah, blah, and I literally wrote a letter to our entire workforce telling them not to leave a vacation day on the table, and that I never would and I can't wait to be back next week, but I'm with my family and that's what's important to start the year, and that sets a tone right?

**0:43:21 Jacob:** Oh, for sure. I mean, I think a lot of what you're saying... You know, it's one thing to send an email to everybody about that, but if you yourself aren't practicing it as a leader, then you can say whatever you want, I don't think people will take it seriously. If you say you believe in workplace flexibility and all that sort of stuff, yet you're in the office constantly, and take your vacation days but you never take them, be a leader and a coach, but you never coach anybody, then I think the other stuff is just gonna be words. So I love that you are literally leading by example and people can see that physically and everything, so it's wonderful.

**0:44:00 Barri:** People with that email were so funny 'cause they would all write me back, you know, "This is the most amazing email, but I guess you're not gonna answer it because you're on vacation."

[laughter]

**0:44:09 Jacob:** Right, exactly, exactly. One of the things that you mentioned when we first started talking is personal branding, and this is something, that at least for me, I have had to do very well over 15 years because when you work for yourself, you have to build a personal brand, otherwise nobody's gonna know who you are.

**0:44:27 Barri:** Yeah.

**0:44:28 Jacob:** Do you think that full-time employees or people who work for an organization, do they need a personal brand, too, and if so, why?

**0:44:36 Barri:** I think everyone needs a personal brand, because your brand is... Even if it's an internal brand, your brand as a leader, what you stand for, and what you're passionate about. People wanna work for people that are passionate, that have interest, that have dimension. For me, I've been lucky 'cause I've been able to blend those. I talk a lot about my striving to focus on women's equity and women in leadership and some of that came because at one of my early trips to the World Economic Forum, where I actually thought in our industry we were in pretty good shape and we actually weren't and I had a young daughter at the time and I realized that I was one of 16% women at this conference and I looked around and it was the first time I was ever in a minority and I thought, "Oh my gosh, now as a leader I'm in the minority. What am I gonna do about that?"

**0:45:24 Barri:** So I've done a lot of work in that area. I just was on the chair, the board of Step Up, helping young high school girls reach their full potential. And so I can do what I am at work and what I am in my personal life, I blend it together in a lot of ways, and I feel lucky for that. And we've kind of talked about it as my minor. But I think that when people know what you stand for, even if it's totally different, you could be a poet in your spare time, and a business person, people want to see that authentic you, and they wanna understand what you're all about, and they wanna work for people that I think have more dimension and a brand and stand for things.

**0:46:05 Jacob:** There are two phrases that I've heard different executives mention. I've heard some people say "bring your whole self to work", and I've heard what other people say, "bring your best self to work". And I'm kind of...

**0:46:19 Barri:** And they're not always one and the same right?

**0:46:21 Jacob:** Yeah, but where would you stand on it, because bring your best self, to me when I hear that, it sort of implies like, bring your work ethic, don't bring your problems, just bring kind of like what you're good at and what your strengths are. Whereas bring your whole self to me, implies you can bring everything with you. And if you have challenges and problems and your strengths, you can just be your complete self at work. Where would you stand on that, whole self or best self?

**0:46:51 Barri:** I'm a whole self gal. I have to say. I think, look, we all go through a lot. I remember, unfortunately, my father passed away, and he was sick with cancer for seven months. And my sisters and I, one of us went every Friday, home. And during that time, there's a lot going on and I think you are... Was I there with my best self every day? No. But if I was authentic, and people knew that, people can support and help you through those moments. And I think that is real, so I hope most days, I have my best self here, and I'm all in and I work hard.

**0:47:26 Barri:** But when you're whole self, you're a little more vulnerable. And I think leaders and people, when you're a little more vulnerable and help each other and support each other, that to me is one of the reasons I've stayed at Ketchum for so long. And I think a lot of our people stay, is it's a culture that accepts you on the good days, and the tough days, and often, you know, it has to lift you up and support you or surround you. And most days, yes, I wanna be my best self, but I'm not sure everyone can have their best self at work every day.

**0:47:55 Jacob:** Well, you also mention vulnerability, which I know is something a lot of leaders struggle with. How do you become vulnerable at work? Because a lot of companies, it's very much like... I gotta have the best ideas. Everybody needs to think that I know everything, I gotta be kind of like the perfect employee or the perfect leader. How can you start to become more vulnerable at work?

**0:48:23 Barri:** Well, I think vulnerability comes with confidence, ironically, because when you're a confident leader, it's okay to say, "I'm not good at everything." We've gone through a huge shift to a consultancy, and we changed our model from P&Ls by geography to industries and specialties. And when we started the process a year ago, one other thing... We stumbled some in the beginning a little bit, and what I said to the team is, "I underestimated some of the infrastructure changes and reporting and things behind what we were doing, that we needed to do to enable people to have the information." That took us a while to catch up.

**0:49:02 Barri:** And I could have pretended like nothing was wrong and, "Oh, what's your problem? You can't figure this out?" But instead, we talked a lot about... I said, "As a leader, this is something that I underestimated." We brought in an outside consultant, we got help, we fixed it, we got people involved in giving us feedback on it. And those things, I think when you do that, actually, A, people give you more time, they also rally and become more resilient and figure out how to do it with the information they have. So they were kind of all in to help, and helped push us through a time until we got things exactly right.

**0:49:37 Barri:** So to me, that capability and also to bring different thinkers and different people with different opinions around. So I think I talked earlier about debate. I think a lot of leaders that aren't vulnerable put certain people around them that aren't gonna challenge them, that aren't gonna make them think differently, that aren't gonna take the business in a different direction. And there's many times when other people's ideas are way better than mine, and so to be able to sit back and listen and learn, and acknowledge and embrace that, to me, is a much more fun way to lead.

**0:50:12 Jacob:** Do you offer vulnerability training? I know that sounds weird, but is there... And I love that you said vulnerability comes with confidence. How do you...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:50:22 Barri:** Maybe you have to come up with the course, I don't know. [chuckle]

**0:50:25 Jacob:** Yeah, 'cause I'm thinking... Do you have or have you had people for example at Ketchum or maybe even at a previous job where you say vulnerability is important, and they look at you and they're like, "What the hell are you talking about? There is no way I'm doing that."

**0:50:39 Barri:** We definitely coach certain executives I've worked with and some of our clients and things through. Because I think building followership takes vulnerability, it takes that bringing your whole self to work, and there's a lot of really great people I work with and they're so smart, but they're not so successful. And so often, and you can help coach them to bring that in, to listen more to others, to be a little bit more vulnerable. They realize that they're gonna get much more followership, and get a lot more done and get people working harder for them. I find sometimes, and we've all been there, when you're in a room with the smartest person in the room, everyone... People just sit back and they wait for the person to tell them what to do and they're not leaning forward and they're not all in 'cause they know that they're not so important as the person in the

room. And you see that in a lot of meetings, and you even see the body language sometimes when a boss walks in the room, and the team, there's been a robust discussion around the table and a senior person walks in, and the energy shifts. Big difference.

**0:51:44 Jacob:** Yeah, for sure.

**0:51:45 Barri:** One of the things, though, I will say that is coming to mind that I did learn early on that was, it's a little game you can play with yourself called Green Light, Yellow Light, Red Light.

**0:51:54 Jacob:** Oh, I think I know this one.

**0:51:55 Barri:** Yeah that, right? So you have a meeting in your office and you mark on your calendar after. Did the people leave more energized, they would get green light. Did they leave less, red light, or kind of neutral. And what the findings are, if you do it, is if you take their ideas and you change them and you don't support them and you don't brainstorm with them and they leave and the ideas are different, they usually leave less energized. If you coach them and give them feedback and they can evolve it themselves, then they're more energized, they own it. So there's a lot of techniques, so there... That is a little bit of that vulnerability training. Maybe not exactly, but the closest thing I can think of.

**0:52:34 Jacob:** Got it. I know we only have a couple minutes left. One of the people watching live says they love that vulnerability comes with confidence, they love that quote. But her question was, if vulnerability comes from confidence, do you have any tips or suggestions on how to build confidence if you're a leader, or maybe if you're not a leader at all, how do you start?

**0:52:53 Barri:** Yeah, so I do, you know, and do you know if it's a male or a woman? 'Cause I think there's sometimes different...

**0:53:00 Jacob:** It's a female.

**0:53:00 Barri:** It's a female. So one of the things that I talk to a lot of women about is being able to speak up confidently and not apologize. A lot of us say, "I'm not sure this is a good idea but..." or, you know, women walk in a room and they apologize for being three minutes late, men walk in a room and they're seven minutes late, and say, "Oh the meeting can start now I'm here," right? So some of it is tone and attitude and getting more confident even in how you speak and present. So I often tell people to pick a buddy in your office and really help each other and make sure that the language and the way you're presenting things is confident because I think that's part of it, is feeling that confidence in how you talk and how you enter a room.

**0:53:45 Barri:** I also think that rehearsing sometimes and practicing can give you confidence, so... And it's not the idea of perfecting, because perfecting is different. So a lot of times, I talk about women will sit there and they'll edit the PowerPoint and make it better and the men are at the bar pre-selling their ideas, while the women are perfecting it, and it's true. So what I say is get it to where it's good enough and then practice your presentation and how you're gonna talk about it and how you're gonna bring it to life in a room and then go and pre-sell it so that you're more confident when you walk in the room because you know some of the people around the table are already proponents of what you're gonna present.

**0:54:30 Barri:** So, there's ways to build in that confidence. So over time, you don't always feel like



sometimes, you need to pre-sell 'cause it's a controversial idea, sometimes you get more confident and don't, because you know you can be persuasive in the room. And the last thing I would say is, there are persuasion techniques and debate techniques, right, and things that you can use that help you better prepare and present more confidently. So sometimes even... We do a lot of media training and presentation skills training, and a lot of it is video taping people and playing it back to them and looking at their body language, their words, how they're communicating, how they're leaning forward or leaning back.

**0:55:10 Barri:** The worst thing to do before you go into presentation or interview, is be like this on your phone.

[laughter]

**0:55:16 Barri:** There's tons of data, right? Because your body's down, your shoulder's are down, your body language versus being open and up so you're way better off stretching for three minutes, even if it's in the bathroom, and raising, you know, some of that power posing. So there's a lot of things that build confidence and a lot of techniques for you to try.

**0:55:35 Jacob:** I remember when I first started speaking, and just looking at some of my old speaking videos, there was a dramatic change and a big difference in sort of my posture and how I delivered things, and I even remember when I had Marshall... My dog is saying hi... I don't know if you can... Even when I had Marshall Goldsmith as a podcast guest a couple of years ago, and I was interviewing him, and he would call me out for certain words that I would use as fillers. I would say things like, "So," or "I think," or "Maybe," and he would say, "Jacob, you're doing it again. Stop saying that." And so he... He like called me out on the podcast of doing this, and ever since then, I've been very conscientious of just like words that I use, and I think those tips are fantastic and they're certainly applicable, I think, to men and to women as well.

**0:56:28 Barri:** Yeah, no doubt, and having a buddy to help you, right to call out those things that remind you is very helpful.

**0:56:35 Jacob:** I share a home office with my wife, so she's constantly calling me out on things and I call her out on things. So it works out very well.

**0:56:42 Barri:** I like it, and clearly your dog does too so...

**0:56:44 Jacob:** Yes, I don't know what's going on downstairs, I think there was a package delivered or something, so I apologize to everybody that got a little Yorky in your ear. We have just three minutes left. I was gonna ask you about diversity and inclusion. Maybe we can just talk about that for one minute before we wrap up. Can you share why diversity and inclusion is so important and what are you guys doing about it, if anything, at Ketchum?

**0:57:09 Barri:** Yeah. So we are working hard at it, and I think particularly in a business like ours, where we're consulting clients on audience segmentation, on what kind of creative resonates, what are the right messages, right? And it is around... Diversity is around age. We need different age ranges in our organization. We need people... We do a lot of work in the food space, and we need people that are from farms and living not in the big cities, on the east and west coast, right? And in different countries. So what we try to really look at for diversity is all different types of diversity and different backgrounds and different socioeconomic backgrounds and different points of view

and if I'm in my DC office, or my London office, I need people on different political points of view, right? So I also think we have a pretty broad view of diversity.

**0:58:02 Barri:** We all need to work better at racial diversity in our business, and we try that. We're trying to do things where we're even starting now at the high school level getting more people to go into some of the fields that we're in. We work with a lot of different universities. I work closely here in New York with City College to make sure we're bringing different diverse students into our halls and through Step Up and others. And then creating things like unconscious bias training inclusion... Aw there he is.

**0:58:33 Jacob:** For people on the video, I know... If you're listening to our podcast you can't see this dog. For the people who are live on video, you can see that this is the one who's been making all the noise.

**0:58:41 Barri:** I will say, we've talked about workplace before and pets at Ketchum is one of our favorite most active groups. And so your picture would be posted right now from a client meeting and they would love it, or our live podcast, right? So there you go. But that is inclusive, right? I mean, it's making sure that people back to bringing your whole self, that people feel like they can. And if they can, you're gonna get better creative, better thinking for clients, better consulting. So we're all working at it. I don't think... I have some businesses within my own organization that I think do it even better than others, and some offices that do it better than others, so it's a work in progress.

**0:59:21 Jacob:** Yeah and diversity and inclusion are not the same thing. I think you touched on it, diversity is just about the mix of people and inclusion is about making them feel like they belong and can show up to work each day. So I'm glad to hear that you mentioned that. So before we wrap up, I know we just have 30 seconds. Maybe we can end on what is your best piece of advice for people who are watching, who want to become better leaders? Anything that they should do or focus on from your experience?

**0:59:52 Barri:** I would say build a style that's authentic to you, right? The style that's authentic to me... It's a great question, whoever asked about, "Are you the same as a parent, as a leader?" I think if you have to put on one persona at home, and one persona at work, it's hard to be an authentic leader. So if you can build it from your personality, some of us are introverts, some of us are more introverts some are more expressive, some are more amiable, right, you have to start with that foundation and then build around it the leadership skills, but if you can show up at work as a leader true to your core, I think you're gonna be a better leader, no matter what.

**1:00:32 Jacob:** So you can learn from others, but don't try to copy what other people do, you have to be yourself?

**1:00:37 Barri:** Yup. So take those skills that you wanna emulate and make 'em your own. Don't just say, "So he did it that way, so I'm gonna do that..." It's, "He did it that way, but for me that way might mean X."

**1:00:50 Jacob:** Got it. Okay. Perfect. Well, that was the very last question I had for you. Where can people go to learn more about you or Ketchum. You mentioned you're on LinkedIn, Instagram, all these different places, so anything you wanna mention please feel free to do so.

**1:01:03 Barri:** Yeah, the good news is Barri, B-A-R-R-I is not really spelled that way from anyone else. So if they call and say, Mr. Barri Rafferty, I say, "Oops! Sorry not here." So my LinkedIn, my Twitter, my Instagram, everything are under those names. So do follow me. I try to share a lot of leadership tips through our Ketchum channels. We have a Ketchum blog that also has a lot of this information. And we love to share it and feel free to ask more questions after through this or through my channels as well. We'll kinda co-combine and make sure we cross channels to help everyone. It's been really fun. And you were right, an hour did go pretty quick.

**1:01:40 Jacob:** I told you. I told you. Everybody always says, "Oh my goodness, it's 60 minutes, and it flies right by." Well, thank you very much for taking time out of your day. And thanks everyone for tuning in, everyone who is live and everyone who's watching or I should say listening to the podcast later. My guest, again, has been Barri Rafferty, she is the CEO at Ketchum, and I will see all of you next time.

**1:02:03 Barri:** Great. Thank you so much.