

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.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

Jacob Morgan 00:01

Hello, everyone, welcome to another episode of The Future of Work with Jacob Morgan. My guest today is Julie Zhuo. She's the author of the bestselling book, The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone Looks to You, Julie, thank you for joining me.

Julie 00:15

Hi, Jacob. Thanks for having me.

Jacob Morgan 00:17

Before we get into your book, and all the wonderful things that you talked about in there, why don't we start with a little bit of background information about you because you have a pretty interesting as a career you were the former VP of product design at Facebook. But even before that, how did you get into this whole space?

Julie 00:37

Absolutely. So I joined Facebook, when it was about 100 people. I was Facebook's very first intern. I started as an engineering intern who discovered what design was basically on her first day in the job and then promptly switched over to becoming a product designer. This was at the time 2008, no 2006 and Facebook was a college site. So it was, you know, very, very popular on college campuses. I had just graduated from college, all of my friends and I were using it. So we knew the product very, very intimately. And I believe it had just open to high schoolers at the time. So that was the summer that I joined. I sensibly started to just work for a couple of months and go back to school, but then decided I liked it so much that I continued, and I went from becoming an engineer to doing more front end development to doing design to eventually managing about half or more of the design team.

Jacob Morgan 01:38

It's crazy that you were employee number 100 at Facebook, I didn't know you were there so early on in the process, because now how many thousands of employees do they have?

Julie 01:47

It's got to be 30,000-40,000 now,

Jacob Morgan 01:49

geez, that is crazy. So as you saw the company grow, I'm assuming the importance of leadership of management became dramatically important and When it started off, I'm guessing the management and leadership has changed since 100 people to 30 to 40,000, right?

Julie 02:08

Oh, yes. I like to tell people, you know, it seems like it's a completely different company and a different job basically every 18 months.

Jacob Morgan 02:16

It's insane. Yeah, I mean, and nowadays, everybody talks about Facebook and how great you guys are doing or how great you were doing when you were there. As far as leadership training, management, training, diversity and inclusion, like Facebook has gotten a lot of recognition and awards for their approach to leadership over the years.

Julie 02:34

Yeah, that's, uh, you know, it didn't start out that way. Of course, when I started with about 100 people, you know, most of the folks who were working there with me, we were all recent college grads. I mean, it makes sense, right? Mark started the product when he was in college. Then he dropped out. A lot of his friends came with him. And you know, it was a product for college students. So we were the audience that knew it best. And so the first you know, dozen or so a couple hundred employees We're really similar in that profile, we had a lot of passion, a lot of enthusiasm. We loved the product, we knew our audience intimately. But we didn't really have a lot of experience working at companies nor really running them. And so a lot of what we did over the years was really learn and kind of trial by fire, you know, actually doing a lot of things, realizing it doesn't work. Over the years, as the company became more successful, we had the great privilege of being able to hire in wonderful seasoned executives and leaders, you know, when Sheryl Sandberg came, she made a huge impact just because, you know, she had so much knowledge about what it was to run a company in a really responsible and rigid manner. And, and all of us really benefited from her expertise in management and and, you know, we we ended up hiring many more really, really amazing leaders that I've been able to learn from and, you know, that's how we developed our management, philosophy and ethos.

Jacob Morgan 03:58

So when you first started off in a leadership capacity. Did you just kind of have to figure everything out on your own? Or were you getting training when you were early on in Facebook?

Julie 04:07

Yeah, I wrote about this in my book. And so I was about 25 years old. When one day my manager pulled me aside. And, you know, I joined the product design team, as I mentioned earlier on, and when I joined, it was about maybe six or so people. And this was about two or three years later, and it had more than doubled. It was maybe 12 or 13 people. And we had one manager, and we all she didn't really I don't know, she really wanted to be the manager. But we all pointed to her and said, You're the one who's the most senior and experienced among us. So you should be the manager. And at this point, we were starting to hire a little bit more. We were growing the team. And so she took me aside one day and she goes, Well, Julie, you really get along with everyone on the team. So so we have a

couple new designers starting in the next couple of weeks. And I have too many reports. And I think that you should go and manage them. And she goes, how about it? Will, you do it? And so, you know, imagine me and I'm 25 years old, I really don't know that much about management. But I had been working at this crazy startup for the last couple of years. And you know, we were very used to at that point, just doing all sorts of things, you know, that we weren't that we'd never done before, right, in order to kind of keep the company going. And you know, some days I'd be called on to do marketing copy, and other days, I would design an icon and other days I would code and so when she asked me to just start managing some people, and I did what I always did, which was to say, okay, sure, of course, like, I'll do it, we need it. Like I gotcha. And it was not until, I think a couple of days later, which had made the announcement and suddenly, you know, she moved a couple of people who were previously reporting to her to report to me, and I'm having a one on one with one of them. And I'm looking at him and he's like, he's a much better designer than I was at the time. You know, he's he's much more senior. He had more experience. And suddenly, I'm his manager. And I realized I have no idea what I'm supposed to say, or really how I'm supposed to help this person who, frankly, he wasn't that much older than me. But I had looked up to him as someone that I learned a lot about just, you know, the discipline of design. And and, and so that was how I got thrown into it.

Jacob Morgan 06:21

It's funny, because when I was doing research, for my book that came out earlier this year, I was looking at, at what age do most people get into leadership development or training programs. And as you pointed out for your own career, a lot of people actually become a leader in some capacity in their mid or late 20s, whether you're just leading one person or small team, but most people don't actually go through any formal leadership training until they are in their mid late 30s, early 40s. So there's a period of like 15-20 years where most people get put into leadership positions, and they have no formal training for it, which is totally nuts. So when you were first thrust into this position of, of being a leader, what did you do? I mean, did you? Did you have somebody that you can turn to? Did you read books? How did you figure out how to do one on ones or motivate or engage people?

Julie 07:16

I did go to the bookstore, and I read a bunch of books about management. So

Jacob Morgan 07:23

I love it. So you literally went to a bookstore to figure out like, how you're going to lead people?

Julie 07:27

Yes, yes. And you know, the the story later is why I ended up writing my book is because I have this, this very strong memory of being there and going through all these books, and then realizing that all the people who had written them were, you know, really experienced CEOs like these are the people who've been running companies for, you know, decades. And then they're writing about management. So you read them and they're, you know, they're talking about like, org structure and like, should you go horizontal or vertical and I'm like, I'm just trying to figure out how to have like a one on one with my report next week. So it was it was it So I think a lot of what I saw in the market was, again, really great, lots of love lots of great stuff for management for but usually assumed a certain proficiency, like you were an executive, and you were trying to figure out how to make your team, you know, of dozens or

hundreds of people even more effective. And there really wasn't that much that was really targeted for me where I think, you know, in retrospect, I don't think I even had a very good definition of what management was, or really what the job was, you know, because I think I went into it. And I think many of us do, because we grow up and we take on jobs, sometimes or summer jobs, sometimes, you know, we have internship or we go and work at a place for a couple years. So we have a lot of models of how bosses are supposed to be, again based on our own experiences. And so we you know, we think that's what it means to be a manager, right? So I had had bosses in the past and my bosses would, you know, have one on ones with me, and they would give me feedback and they would tell me if I was gonna get a promotion or if there was something I needed to do better. And so that was the mental model that I had for the job of a manager. And it really wasn't until I want to say, like, seven or 10 years later that I really went back in, you know, and tried to, I think fully internalized like what it was to, to lead because it's not just a series of actions, it's actually about getting results from a group of people. And I don't think that's how I thought about it when I was first starting.

Jacob Morgan 09:29

Do you remember any? I'm trying to figure out how to phrase this delicately, not like embarrassing moments, but any big mistakes that you made as a first time leader? like did you bomb your first one on one? Did you have a lot of like, really weird and awkward experiences as you were just transitioning into this role?

Julie 09:49

Oh, my gosh, so many, so many, I think everything that I learned was, frankly, from probably making a horrible mistake here and there. I remember tons and tons of them. I definitely remember the awkwardness of, you know, even having those very first one on ones with people who were now reported to me, but again, who I thought were better designers than me. And I think I had this misconception for a very long time that there was not anything that I could really offer them because they were more skilled in the discipline that I was. And so I felt this sense of imposter syndrome, you know, a lot of anxiety about, oh my gosh, how am I going to help this person? I can't really give them advice on design, I can't really tell them, you know, what they should do if they're stuck, because, you know, I like they're much better than me. And so that was, I think, one big barrier that got in the way and, and a lot of my earlier months, I made a bunch of mistakes as well, when it came to trying to solve conflicts and tensions between team members. I too frequently felt like my role was to be the middleman and I would you know, go and talk to this person. Because this person was having a problem with, you know, this other person and that I could go talk to the person and I would try and broker a peace treaty. And, you know, over time, I realized that was just horribly inefficient. And really, they just needed to get into a room together. And maybe I could help facilitate, but like, it doesn't help to play middleman. I made a bunch of mistakes as well, when, you know, I had people who were very promising on my team, you know, who were really thriving other people look to them as leaders, and I pushed them into management and Okay, we were always growing and we always were, or were, you know, needing people to become managers. And it turned out it was not at all what they wanted to do, or were well suited for, and they burned out and they were deeply unhappy. So those are a lot of those mistakes that I made, that I learned through the process of basically doing and, and trial by error.

Jacob Morgan 11:53

Any particular stories come to mind because I know people who listen to the podcast, they love stories, especially if they are embarrassing and awkward leadership stories, so do one or two specific instances come to mind for you.

Julie 12:10

Yeah, well, I, the biggest mistakes I think I make are whenever I feel like I am being helpful for a person because I feel like there's a maybe a particular path. And I remember very distinctly, you know, this one report of mine who I felt like could have my job, right, I was sort of I felt that I was, you know, maybe helping to guide this person to become a great leader to become a great manager. I think I saw a lot of myself in this person, and I felt that, you know, their career could, you know, like, I could be that person who was mentoring them towards his career. And eventually, yeah, they took on a management role and they had a wide scope of responsibility. And, you know, they were very well respected and people were excited to see that person in the role. But then they totally crashed and burned. And that, you know, I still wake up lots of days and kind of, you know, think about that. Because I realized that so much of the management is not about what you know, I think people should do or what I think that they're talented in and you know, could use those skills to great effect. It's also about trying to really understand people and meet them where they're at, and taking the time to listen to their goals, and to their aspirations. And then working through figuring out how they can do that thing best in a way that of course, helps the team but that starts with, you know, where they want to go.

Jacob Morgan 13:35

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Now, I noticed the title of your book, you use the word manager and not the making of a leader. And I know there's a lot of debate between this concept of is it a manager or is it a leader? Do we need one do we need the other? Do people ever asked you about this the difference between manager versus leader and what's your take on that?

Julie 13:55

They do, they do and you know, sometimes people use them interchangeably. As you say, but to me, they're quite different. To me, leadership is a quality or a trait. And I think all of us are, you know, can be leaders in certain contexts or can exhibit leadership traits. Being a leader just means that you know, you are somebody that other people will listen to, and will follow. And you have that ability to influence and help organize a group of people towards doing something together. I think of a manager as a specific role, like it's a specific job function with a set of responsibilities and the major responsibility of a manager is you are trying to get a group of people to work together and to achieve some certain outcome, right? There's a reason why, you know, teams are formed. There's a reason why companies are formed, they're trying to, you know, aspire to hit their mission or they're trying to hit a business goal or they're trying to do this and that and your job as a manager is to help this group of people hit that goal and to do it either higher quality or more efficiently or for lower money, then then you know what the expectation is

Jacob Morgan 15:06

And would you because some people and I've talked to a couple of organizations like this, where they say, like, Oh, we don't even want to use the word manager anymore because nobody wants to be

managed, and nobody even wants to be a manager. But it sounds like you think we need we need both right? I mean, we need managers. We shouldn't be getting rid of them.

Julie 15:26

Yes, I think a manager is a specific job with a specific set of responsibilities that you can hold someone accountable for, right? It's like being a any job where it's like being a, like a soccer coach or being a physician, you know, one, one job, you're trying to help a group of people win games and the other you're trying to help save lives. And you know, you can judge somebody who's a good soccer coach or a good physician based on how well they do it. You know, how many lives were saved, or how many games were won. And I think that's similar for a manager. You know, you have a group of people Trying to achieve an outcome? How well did you achieve that outcome? You know, how consistently Can you do it again, at high quality for low cost at high speed. And and so, like any job, you know, people should hold a manager accountable. Now, I do think that managers can't be successful if they aren't regarded as leaders, and if they don't have leadership traits, because if they're the kind of manager who has that job, but nobody wants to listen to them, nobody wants to follow them, there's not respect there, then it's going to be really difficult for them to achieve that outcome from that group of people. Right. So So I think the reason why they can get interchanged is because good managers definitely need to be good leaders, and to exhibit those leadership traits. But on the flip side, I also think that lots of people can be leaders. They can be trusted, you know, again, in certain context, or maybe even all the time, and they don't have to necessarily have the job of manager and I see many, many examples of people you know, who are individual contributors, and yet go on to lead great initiatives, you know, you might be the person who spots an opportunity, you know, something is wrong, you see an opportunity, a customer is not happy, you investigate, you rally a group of people towards solving the problem there, you've just done you've just led you become a leader in that workplace. And so I think we should be trying to foster leadership qualities across as many people as we can in the workplace. But I also think that there is a special job and role which is that of manager, which companies also need.

Jacob Morgan 17:36

Okay, so just to make sure I understand it. So manager is more of the role and leadership is more of the quality. So manager is something that you get promoted to but leadership is something that you can earn. But you're saying that managers have to have those leadership traits and qualities. And basically, if you don't have those leadership traits and qualities, then you shouldn't be promoted to the position of manager.

Julie 17:59

Right. That's absolutely right, or I think you will do the job, but maybe not do very well.

Jacob Morgan 18:04

Okay. Okay, got it. That makes sense. So when you were doing research for this book, I know a lot of people listening to this are probably either getting ready to become managers, or maybe they just started in in this position. What are some of the big mistakes, the common pitfalls that you see new managers making?

Julie 18:28

The first one I would think is that managers, you as a new manager, you have this feeling that somehow you need to have all the answers, and that if you feel unsure about something, that somehow it's a signal that you're not cut out for the job, that maybe you're not doing the job very well or that you don't have what it takes. And I see new managers, you know, kind of feeling this like all over the place, right. And, and I always want to go and say, you know, it's really common and it doesn't mean that you're not cut out for it. I think that the job of being a manager oftentimes will feel that way, it'll feel uncomfortable. It'll feel like you're unprepared for it. And that's because, you know, you're dealing with a group of people, people are very, very complex. But oftentimes, you're also doing things for the very first time, especially as a new manager. And oftentimes, it's very difficult to actually get practice on their skills until you become a manager. As an example, a lots of new managers I know are get very nervous sometimes when you know that they they have an underperforming employee, and they have to have performance conversations, and sometimes they have to go and, and let that employee go. And oftentimes, you know, people will say, Oh my gosh, like, I must be a bad manager or you know, because I don't feel like I'm comfortable. I don't know what to do. You know, I feel I feel really anxious. And this is completely normal, because there's really no other way to practice firing an employee and really going through that, you know, that that difficult emotional experience of doing so. Unless you suddenly are in the job, and you're kind of faced with it for real. And so I think it's very, very common for people to again, go through these experiences, they're new, they're challenging, they're difficult, you feel unprepared. And that's okay. I think every manager goes through that. And and even as you become more and more experienced, you know, it doesn't mean that those feelings go away. It just means that you might be better equipped to deal with them, you know. So whenever you do find yourself in a situation you can, you've never seen it before. It's new, it's hard. Perhaps it may not draw you quite as much because you've developed tools for dealing with uncertainty. But uncertainty is always going to be there as a part of being a manager. I think there's always going to be there and any role that deals so much with humans and dealing deeply with, you know, how people work together and the relationships and emotions that they have.

Julie 20:53

I think a second mistake that managers make is that they believe they need to know it all somehow or that They believe that they need to be the best at whatever role they're managing. And this is the mistake that I made, I looked at the fact that I was managing now a report who was more skilled at design than I was. And I felt that that I had nothing to contribute. And that's also incorrect because your job as a manager is not to be the best at doing that job. Because if you were, then maybe you should go back and actually do that, you know, be an individual contributor, your job is to make sure that a group of people who do that can operate at their best. And so it actually behooves you to have people who are much more talented than you are at any specific skill on the team, and to help elevate those talents so that they could benefit everyone on the team.

Jacob Morgan 21:44

I love that. I think that makes a lot of sense. And you were talking I was also thinking um, have you seen ever this kind of like when somebody gets promoted to become a manager, all of a sudden, they become maybe a little bit arrogant, a little bit full of themselves a little bit I'm better than you? Is that ever a typical mistake or pitfall that you see? Or does that not really happen?

Julie 22:07

It does happen as well, because I think sometimes, you know, we can see management or being promoted to manager, you know, actually at Facebook, we often didn't use the word promotion, we use the word transition, to recognize that management was a kind of on a parallel path that, you know, you could grow in, you know, if you're an engineer, you can actually just become a better and better engineer and grow your career that way until you're not you're architecting and working on the most complex problems, or you could decide to go into management and we didn't want to somehow, you know, place management as, as being a better job or being kind of, you know, more prestigious than then, you know, going the path of the individual contributor. So, so I like the word transition versus promotion, which kind of implies that it's just better to be a manager. I think that the fact is that sometimes you know, when in common culture, right, you kind of see the idea of being the boss or being the manager as like, as kind of being, you know, like, you're the person in charge, it's really prestigious and, and so in some ways it can maybe make it feel like it's like a judgment is being placed upon you that you, you know, are have a certain set of skills, or you're you reach that level. And so, you know, I think it could definitely feel good to have that recognition. And then, you know, again, makes you feel like you maybe know all the answers or should know all the answers, but I've tend to find that, that the best managers are the ones who are extremely humble and self reflecting and who actually acknowledged that, for the most part, you know, the stronger your team is, and the better that you have people in your team who are much better at certain key skills than you are, then the better your team is going to perform as a whole.

Jacob Morgan 23:51

I have kind of a weird question for you in it. So why become a manager? Because I know and I've heard stories of some people who've actually turned down management positions, and it's obviously not for everybody. So just because the opportunity is there doesn't mean you should go after it. But why? Why do you think at least from your experience at Facebook, why did people want to become managers? What was in it for them? Besides obviously more money in perks?

Julie 24:20

The first thing I would say is that oftentimes the kinds of people who really thrive as managers and who really enjoy it are the people who get a lot of satisfaction out of helping other people achieve their aspirations or helping a group of people solve a particular problem. So oftentimes, the litmus test that I asked, you know, if someone says, Hey, Julie, what do you think? Should I be a manager? The question I always ask them is, do you get more satisfaction out of having a problem be solved? And yet you know, you don't play any particular role in that problem. You're just trying to figure out how to help how to get people to get to work together to get that problem to be solved? Or do you get more satisfaction out of playing a particular part in solving that problem, you know, in that part could be I love engineering or I love you know, actually talking to clients or I love just sitting down, you know, in front of a computer and designing something or or writing I love, you know, this the act of actually composing sentences and paragraphs, right? If there's any one craft, or any one thing that you truly love doing, and that you can be better and better at, again, assuming that there is a lot of ability for you to continue to grow in that and then you know, and do harder and harder things that gets you promoted, then the question really becomes, is that what you love to do? Or do you actually love just to solve a problem

and you play whatever role you need to in order to get that problem solved? Because that's basically what a manager does, right? A manager is you're trying to get help a group of people solve a particular problem. You don't have to be the person who goes in and does all the stuff, but you kind of have to do what needs to get done. Right? If you have somebody three people on your team, and they're excellent at, let's say, you know, engineering, but they're really not that great at sales, and you're the CEO. And even if you like engineering, guess what you should really be doing sales, because that's what your company needs in order to grow and thrive and so no one else is going to do it, it's got to fall on you. Ultimately, to me, that's what it means to be a manager because you care more about the outcome than you care about playing any specific role and getting to that outcome.

Jacob Morgan 26:34

So it's okay to say no, to a management position, like, you know, like if, and again, I know several friends who've been in this position where they've been offered management positions. And for one reason or another, they didn't feel like it was worth it. Because as you know, when you get promoted to become a manager, you get a lot more responsibility. There's a lot more that goes on your shoulders. Sometimes people turn these things down because they're happy being individual contributors. But then sometimes they get a little bit of, you know, should I have turned that down? Should I have said no to that? In your experience? Is it okay for people to turn these positions down if they get presented? Or should you always take them?

Julie 27:16

It's absolutely okay. I think if you don't know, and you're not sure and you think that there's potentially you know, you might enjoy it because maybe you love mentoring people, but you're worried about you know, whether or not you could do it, then I think you should go for it. Right. Because, you know, in that role, you know, you're definitely intrigued by aspects of the role and maybe your your, you know, the hesitation comes more from whether or not you think you're ready, and I think those cases like Yeah, go for it and you're by actually doing the job, you'll know you'll have a better sense of whether or not it's the kind of thing that you love to do. But I also know lots of people get, the reason why they may be not interested is because they loved doing a particular thing. They love playing a particular role too much they love the the craft that they're doing. And, and managing is going to sort of take them out of doing that and have the end of doing much more. That is, you know, many more meetings many more talking with other people, many more sort of organizing and, and process management and all of that. And for some people, that's just not fun. That's not what, what's exciting for them. And if you're that kind of person, and you know that about yourself, it's absolutely okay to say, you know what, this isn't the right career path for me.

Jacob Morgan 28:34

Good. I like that you give permission because I know sometimes people feel like they have to take these positions, because, you know, for their career, but like you said, it's okay to say no. But I also like that you said in a situation where you're not sure you should go for it if you're not sure because clearly, there's something there that's drawing you to it, but don't kind of sell yourself short. So unless you're a definite No, if you're a maybe or a yes go for it

Julie 29:01

And ask yourself as well, are you the kind of person that gets energy from seeing a group of people work together? Because there is also a fact of management, which is a lot of times you're dealing with people, right? You're having meetings with people, you're, you know, working on this person and helping them achieve their career goals, you're planning and creating a process around, you know, making sure that these people know what they're doing. So it's obviously a very, very people centric role. And it can definitely be harder for people who are, you know, real introverts, or who find it extremely taxing to have to have a lot of meetings or to deal with people all day long. That said, I know many wonderful managers, many CEOs who are introverts who are that, you know, still derive a lot of satisfaction and joy from that job and wouldn't want to be doing anything else. But that's because back to that question that I asked you, would you do you get more satisfaction out of seeing a group of people reach a particular outcome than playing any role. And for that the answer is still yes.

Jacob Morgan 30:06

You mentioned earlier imposter syndrome, which I also hear quite a lot in the leadership in the management space. Do you have any tips or suggestions on how to overcome impostor syndrome is something that you personally experienced while you were a Facebook?

Julie 30:22

I experienced it. Yes. Very, very easily.

Jacob Morgan 30:25

So what can you share a story about how you experienced it? And maybe what you did?

Julie 30:32

Yes, there was, I have this story of interviewing somebody for the very first time, you know, when we were growing our team, and, you know, I was I just become a manager. So now it was responsible for making decisions about who was going to get hired and who was going to get an offer. And so I'm sitting there in the interview, and I'm super nervous because I've never interviewed anyone before and the whole time I'm just thinking to myself that I don't want this person is an idiot because it's the first instinct of an idiot, that they're going to think badly of our company, and they're never going to want to join, and it'll be all at fault. And it's so funny because like, most of the time, of course, you know, if you go, you're actually an interviewer and you go into an interview, you think of your interviewer as the person with all the power, right? Because they're the ones who get to make decision on whether or not you're your hired. So it was it was funny in retrospect, that I was much more nervous, I think probably the name of the candidate about what the candidate would think of me. And I think that's an example of imposter syndrome, which I felt really acutely in my first many years of management because I was constantly presented with situations and scenarios and making decisions and again, not having the experience or the training to do so I constantly felt I was out of my element.

Julie 31:49

A few things did help me over the years with imposter syndrome. I think the first one is just recognizing that that you know, there are people I should ask for help, and that it's okay to feel like you're in over your head and that you need help. Because if you're the kind of person who recognizes, oh, wow, like, maybe I don't know this, but I want to do my best and I make some mistakes. And, by the way, let me

go and reach out to as many people as they can, so that I can learn from their expertise so that they can give me advice. That's absolutely the fastest way to learn. So the more that I started to actually admit that, you know, I wasn't ready for this or that I was nervous, the more help I got, and people from all over, you know, people who are really experienced, you know, they just, they would jump into the battery. Or they would say, oh, let me let me walk you through my framework. Or they would say, Hey, here's a way that you should look at this problem, or here's how I go about it. And that was extremely bad for me because I couldn't take that knowledge of through learning and I could use that to kind of accelerate our growth.

Julie 33:00

But Furthermore, what was also super valuable about talking to people and actually admitting, Hey, guys, I really don't know if I could do this right, I'm nervous. I'm scared. I heard so many stories about how this is totally normal. And that, you know, it didn't mean that I was actually an idiot. It just meant that I was like anybody else. And so to hear stories and to hear an affirmation, that sometimes when you feel nervous, or when you don't think you know what to do, that it's okay, and that people still believe in you, and that they believe you will figure it out. And that, you know, they were in the same situation as you, you know, seven years ago, all that was extremely helpful for me to hear that I wasn't alone. And the thing that I've learned that it's so valuable about imposter syndrome is when you can admit it, then hear that everybody actually suffers from it from imposter syndrome. And so, it's so normal and I think it should be something that we don't hold on to because we're ashamed or embarrassed. It's something that we can admit and through that gain the help the resources and the support that you need to be able to, to go out and, you know, and face these doubts with greater confidence?

Jacob Morgan 34:09

Well, I think the recent number I heard was that 70% of adults will experience imposter syndrome at some point during their lives. So it's, it's actually a very, very common thing. And I love that you were able to go and ask for help. Did you find that over time imposter syndrome totally goes away, or you just kind of manage it and occasionally creeps back in and you just have these kind of tools to cope with it and deal with it.

Julie 34:34

It still creeps back in but then I can actually take a step back and say, You know what, your feelings again, and that's okay, because it's new, or it's, you know, this is a crazy situation. And by the way, let's go back to, you know, the tool toolbox that I've created, right, the toolbox meaning go out and talk to some people go out and, you know, tell yourself that you've been through this before, and it's gonna be okay. You know, go out and, you know, do the kinds of activities that gives me energy that helps me, you know, reduce my anxiety and stress, maybe it's go out for a run, maybe it's go and you know, see some friends. But I definitely have a lot more confidence that whatever situation I encounter, again, even if it's something new and crazy and different, that I much better prepared to kind of face that head off.

Jacob Morgan 35:24

What do you think, is the biggest difference between an average manager versus a great manager?

Julie 35:34

I think that a great manager is somebody who gets great outcomes for their team. And the difference between a great manager and average manager is you look at the outcomes, right? So we're looking at, for example, let's say the head of a hospital. A great manager is someone whose hospital has just much better outcomes for its patients. Fewer people are dying, many more people are healthy. And, and they can operate, you know, and save more lives with the budget that they have versus an average manager. So it's hard to just judge based on, you know, the like quality or any particular thing that the manager does, I think the way you judge is going to be based on outcomes.

Julie 36:15

That said, when you look at Okay, so how does a manager get outcomes, it really comes down to three things. One is how does this person you know, sort of deal with people, right? So people is one major lever, probably the most important lever that a manager has people being what kind of talent do you have? How do you nurture that talent? How do you make sure that people are able to play to their strengths? How do you make sure that the right people are on the right problems. The second thing that a manager has lever on is process and the this is dictating the norms, and the way that people work together in the context of the team. And finally, the third lever that a manager has is purpose because you Even if you have really great talent, and they know how to work with each other, if you aren't super, super clear about, you know, what are we trying to get towards, you know, what does success look like for our group? What should we aspire towards? Then people might be working at crossroads, right? Because it's super fuzzy, you know, what they're all supposed to try and achieve together. So those are the three levers of a manager. And if you look at, you know, all manners of successful managers in the world, some of them are stronger at one dimension than another but, but usually they're figuring out you know, how to use some combination of people process and purpose to be able to achieve those great outcomes.

Jacob Morgan 37:39

Much of what we've talked about has been for, you know, maybe new managers who are just kind of getting their footing. But there's also something to be said about the managers who've been around for a while who are having to change or adapt because a lot of what they've learned is maybe outdated you know, the the the whole management space has changed quite In a bit over the past few decades, so for managers there who've maybe been in their careers for 20 years, maybe even 30 years, I'm assuming, would the steps be much different for them as far as becoming better or becoming a great manager? Are they kind of following the same footsteps, like, you know, just reinventing themselves?

Julie 38:23

I think the principles are, are going to be pretty much the same, right? You're going to still be focused on people, you're going to be focused on process, you're going to be focused on purpose. You're going to use these ingredients and these levers to try and get to great outcomes for your team. I think that managers at any level, but especially, you know, managers who have been doing the job for a long time, I think what really important quality is what you mentioned, you know, reinvention, it's the ability to, to look back and reflect and to constantly be learning and adapting. And that's because you know, in today's world jobs, don't state of saying, right, the industry does stay the same, the landscape of the

state of safe the tools and the processes, none of that stays the same. And so, you know, in order for a company or a team to thrive and, or even to survive, you know, we all need to constantly be adapting to change. And that means we need to be recognizing when you know, some purpose or a process or even a way of doing things or even sometimes a narrative, right, something, you know, an important value, we need to recognize when sometimes you know, it no longer is applicable, or it's doing us more harm than good. And so that requires a very reflective approach.

Julie 39:38

And so one of the most important, I think practices that a manager can have is is that what is of reflection, and, you know, reflecting on a weekly basis, but also on a monthly or yearly basis. And you know, taking stock of taking many steps back and say is my team where I want it to be you know, our Goals pretty clear for what it means to be successful over the next, you know, one, three or five years are the way that we're doing things still efficient? Or is there a better way for us to go about solving this problem? and having that regular time, you know, throughout the hustle and bustle of the day where you could really sit back, and you can reflect, and you can, ideally, also engage the entire team and that reflection, you know, not just the manager goes off in a forest, it does it. I think that that practice of being reflecting just means that we're going to have, you know, higher performing teams, because they're going to be much more adaptable, and they're going to be able to change that they're going to be able to evolve towards wherever the future might lead.

Jacob Morgan 40:46

One of the most common questions that I get, especially for people who listen to this podcast is they say, you know what, I work for a manager who refuses to change, they're still stuck in their old way. ways of doing things. I try to talk to them, they still believe in command and control. They don't believe in any of this kind of new stuff that's out there. Do you have any advice or suggestions? I mean, have you seen this it Facebook? Is it possible to change these types of managers? Or is this a lost cause?

Julie 41:18

I don't think I have a, I've been very lucky in my career. You know, I was at Facebook, we were a startup that kind of grew up in matured, but Facebook's not that big of a company. It's only been around for less than two decades. And I think Facebook as well as prided itself on being able to move quickly and rapidly adapt because that's how I became the company that it is. So I've been very lucky to have managers who were always very willing to change. And I think that that is a lot of how I develop those values as well as well. And you know, because we see how important it is and how much we gain from being able to be adaptable to what works.

Julie 41:55

But the advice that you give for people when they feel like they're struggling Sometimes with their manager, you know, they struggle to give feedback or they struggle to, you know, feel like they're heard when they have a great idea is to try and tie it back to, again, what does the manager or what does the team as a whole care about, right? Because sometimes we present ideas as like my idea versus your idea that, you know, there's a little bit of that personal element. And of course, we like to all think that our ideas are great. But if we can go back and actually ask ourselves, what's the purpose of what we're trying to do? Again, there is an app, right, your manager is there, because there's an alpha, like, if you

guys are a sales team, your outcome is that you're trying to make a lot of sales and you're trying to drive up those revenue figures like that. That is the thing that your manager and everyone on the team ought to care about. And so if you had an idea, that is a better way to do things that See if you can tie that to why is that better for the outcome? If we did XYZ, I expect that it should, you know, increase our revenues by 5%. That's good. Get everyone's attention, that's gonna get your manager's attention. And then you can go and explain why do you think that? Why do you believe this is going to be good for outcome? And so we can try to take the personal aspect of it that way, you know, is it your ideas, idea who is better and go back to which idea is more effective for helping our group achieve its outcomes? I find that it's just a much better way often to to kind of get on the same page about about the why.

Jacob Morgan 43:24

Yeah, no, I like that. So one of the things of course, I have to ask you out is COVID and managing during times of COVID? Have you seen some of the principles that you talked about in your book, change or more for this kind of a virtual setting? You know, people obviously are trying to engage and motivate and inspire their teams, but they can't actually be in the same room with them. So any suggestions or advice for doing some of the things that you talked about but doing it virtually

Julie 43:55

things that I think are really important to focus on The first is around people, you know a lot of people are struggling with, with where things are right now maybe they have a family member that's ill or they know somebody who's ill or maybe they're just a parent and their kids are at home and you know, they have to both be homeschooling as well as still trying to keep up with the job or you know, other people who are finding their work heavily impacted due to it and all that is real. So I think that across the board, you know, many people might be struggling and if you're, you know, somebody who's managing workplace, it's really important to be conscientious of that. And what I recommend you do is find a time to be able to check in with people at a personal level, you know, way back and just say you know, how are you doing? Like how how's everything going on and and this is a time when you know, you might get yesterday were you here was really hard or you know x y is going through a situation this is the time to find rally. Other people for whom, you know, may have additional capacity or ability to do more to kind of help out it and load balancing Yes, other people who, who aren't able to acknowledging that responsibility of, you know, taking care of people first and foremost, because when people aren't in a good spot, and they don't feel kind of safe or healthy or whatnot, then the, you know, of course, the team, right. So we always have to go back and make sure that we're taking care of people and understanding where they are first and foremost, and I recommend every manager, find a way to check in with people on a one on one level and then figure out how to adapt to what they need.

Julie 45:44

The second thing that I think is really, really important in the COVID situation is taking stock of all of the processes and figuring out you know, which processes don't make sense anymore now that you know we're in a maybe mostly remote or Well setting and which was we needed to create in order to continue to focus on making sure everyone knows what's going on and can be effective. So taking stock across, you know, as an example, I've had a lot of people tell me that, you know, a lot of what was great about being in offices, you know, you could see someone in the hallways, or you could see them for lunch. And there was a lot more camaraderie, right, just three or four times throughout the day when you felt

like you got to know people. And as a result, it was easier to work together because we had made that personal investment. And now that, you know, many people are online and maybe only meeting and seeing each other in the context of meetings, a lot of those opportunities are gone. And so, you know, it can feel like you're just sort of losing touch with someone if you're only ever seen that in the context of, you know, some sort of decision making meeting.

Julie 46:50

And so figuring out what are the processes, what are the things that we can do to continue to foster that camaraderie, and I post on Twitter, asking for examples that I got, you know, hundreds of really created examples I heard from teams who had who do who would do things like, you know, just play Pictionary at once a week, right? Where it's or they would have a meeting where the entire rule is you couldn't talk about work or talk about anything besides work, or, you know, there would be a, you know, even kind of like speed dating where you would get everyone on the team together and you would have kind of these like, five minute one on one conversations, and they're not about work. They're just like, you know, okay, getting to know how people are doing. Or people would go and introduce their pets or their kids or their their work rooms, you know, lots of different ways to still try and keep that connection and you know, as a company, or as a team, you know, go and figure out what is the what, what, which of these processes might work the best for you. But it starts by first taking stock of Okay, now that we're in a virtual studying what's harder than it used to be what's easier, and for all the things that harder, what are some additional ways to evolve our process so that we can start You know, continue to do our best work.

Jacob Morgan 48:03

I like the emphasis on putting people first you know, like, I always say when you start your calls with your your team don't start off by asking about sales figures and numbers, you start talking about people, are you safe? How are you doing? Is your family safe? Do you need anything? Can I help you before you jump into kind of the project or status updates? So I think that's that's wonderful advice. Before we wrap up, kind of a multi part question. And if let's say you just get promoted to a position of manager, what would you recommend that people do on day one, week one, month one, and year one, so maybe we could start with day one. Today's your first day new manager. Any tips on what you should do?

Julie 48:47

I would talk with your manager at and make sure you understand what does success look like for your role, and not just success in the long run, but actually lay that out, you know, So I'm just gonna be a manager. And so what what does success look like for me in my role in the first month? What does it look like for me in the first three months? How about in the first six months and the first year, and that's super helpful because it helps create that alignment between you and your manager, and it gets you guys on the right foot, you know, clear and you have the same idea as he or she does. About what, what what you're expected to do. So I always think that the first day's responsibility is make sure you understand what the expectations of the role are, make sure you understand what it means to do a great job versus a mediocre job versus a bad job.

Jacob Morgan 49:41

Okay, that's a great one. So first, is you kind of the benchmark What does success look like? day one? What about week one? So you have the whole week? What, what do you do for that whole week?

Julie 49:53

So the first week I would focus on listening and getting to developing trust relationships with the people on your team, the people that you're going to be working with most closely. And, you know, maybe maybe you actually do the people on your team, but but maybe not the context of you being their manager, or maybe you're just, you know, going into the team. And it's a brand new team, in which case, there's a lot more to kind of understand about each person. So I would, I would focus that first week, maybe even more than for maybe the first month on going and talking to every single person who now reports to you sitting them down, you know, asking, tell me about yourself. Tell me about your hopes and dreams. Tell me what you think you're good at. Tell me. You know how you got to be where you are. Tell me where you want your career to go in the next six months or a year. Tell me who on the team you get along with Who do you have friction with? Why? Tell me what you think about our team. You know, what do we what do you want to be known for? What do you think we do? Well, what do we think we do you do we do quarterly? What are your ideas for how we could do better as a team

Julie 51:00

Because those are the questions and if you could sit there and he asked, and he listened, that is how you get a get to know the other person, which is going to be super helpful down the road when you you know, you need to think about how to help that person, again, you know, do their best work, but also establishes, you know, you as being the kind of person that really wants to listen and is going to invest in to individuals, and help them be a part of helping make this team great. It's not going to be all on you to go and you know, make all the decisions and make the team succeed. It's to succeed because everyone on the team contributes and feels a bit of that ownership for the team. So by presenting a bunch of questions, and simply listening, and hearing what everyone has to say, I guarantee you'll get, you know, lots of great insights about each person which is going to make it easier for them for you to be their manager as well as lots of great ideas about how your team can come together and do great work.

Jacob Morgan 51:58

That's an awesome one. That's one of my favorite tips Get to know your people. It's something that's not super hard to do. But I think something that a lot of managers forget to do. Is is really just spending time getting to know those who you are working with. That's week one. What about month one?

Julie 52:17

month one, I think it is an extension of, you know, the most important thing at the end of that month, is, how good are you I always ask my manager to start, have you invested in your relationships, you know, have you have you have you gone through and that with everyone and continue to ask questions, you know, also it's very helpful every time you talk to someone and say, That's super helpful, you know, do you think there's anyone else that I shouldn't eat that will help me do my job better, right, so off the top of the list of people to meet grows and grows, you know, the more that you have those initial conversations, and I find that for most managers, they're continuing to have conversations well into the first or second month, but at the end of that first month, again, assuming that you know, we've done a

great job on you Getting to establishing that great foundation of trust in our relationships, and that we've, you know, started to have a lot of ideas about, you know, what's working well with the team, what's not working well.

Julie 53:11

And the other big thing to sort of understand and it's like, kind of getting to a point where you have a good sense of how does the team operate? How does, you know? How does stuff get done? What quality level is stuff getting done, right? Because you need to, I think, before you go and actually change anything, you need to have a good objective understanding of where where a situation is today. And so that's usually my bias for the first month or the first two months. So once you get to know people get to know the How does work, get done. What's working about that? What is it?

Jacob Morgan 53:44

Okay, and the last one for this is the year. So any anything that is specific for the full year,

Julie 53:52

A year's time where you know, after the first, let's say, three months or so, I think I think for a minute or two Feel comfortably wrapped up, it's gonna take between three and six months, right? By comfortably wrapped up with anybody that is like you have a great sense of the people, you have a great sense of the business, you should be able to start making decisions now that that will impact people or the business. And so at the end of the first year, what I'm looking for is, have we set clear goals, right, but you know, that that were the goals that we set at the start, or, you know, maybe three or six months in? Are we now able to see some of the fruits of that, you know, so if you made a bunch of decisions regarding people regarding processes, and so forth, are we starting to see those decisions pay out in a good manner. And oftentimes, it's super important to be constantly asking for feedback.

Julie 54:44

And I say that to you know, every manager but the most important thing that you can do, to be a great manager is to have the discipline and the humility to constantly ask people for feedback. And that means asking your porters for feedback on what we can do. Do better as a manager. And that means asking your your peers and colleagues, it means asking your own manager for feedback about what's going well for you what's not. And you know, whether or not your manager believes that you're on track with the expectations that the two of you discussed together, you know, at the start of the period, so at the end of that year, it's a great time to go. And actually, you know, make sure we're asking for feedback to do some reflection on whether or not the outputs were similar to what was laid out with your manager before and if not to try and understand what what needs to be adjusted going forward so that we can we can do better.

Jacob Morgan 55:37

That's awesome breakdown. And I love that you mentioned humility, because asking for feedback is not always an easy thing, not just at work, but in our personal lives as well. I mean, feedbacks a tough thing to, to admit that you want to hear what somebody else has to say about you does require a bit of humility and emotional intelligence. So I'm glad that you brought that up. Maybe last question for you before we wrap up. And that is for, for existing managers out there, because I know there's a lot of

them who listen to this, this podcast any words of wisdom or advice for them as far as something that they could do and we won't go through like, day, one week, month, year, but any specific things, maybe two or three things that they can start doing now to become better managers adapting to how the world of work is changing any tips for them?

Julie 56:33

I think the biggest one for managers is to constantly take stock code your team, I find that investment in people is oftentimes what the old stuff greatest about you know, over time, right? If you, you know, invested in somebody who has a ton of potential and investing meaning you know, you spend time with them, you met with them, you give them you know, assignments that could stretch them and help them grow. Give them the feedback. Oftentimes, you know, a year, two years, three years down the line, they become a star performer. So for somebody who has, you know, a larger team and has been managing for a while, make sure that you have that list of people in your head, you know, who are the folks that are really high potential, that if you spend time with them, you know, if you spent an hour a week with them, or even two hours a week with them, and you really think about their their career development, that interviewer to they're going to be the ones to be able to handle your hardest problems. So investment in people, I think it's all going and it matters almost more and more the senior you are, that was my big learning.

Julie 57:38

As my team grew and grew, you know, it's soft, becoming as important what specific decisions I would make to, you know, the product that we're building or to sort of specific timeline, right, because those are big, you know, I can only make so many decisions in a day or a week. But if I made the most important decisions, which was Do I have the right people are the hardest problems and do those people have the skills and talents to be able to do it, then I'm multiplying my impact, right? Suddenly, you know, I could go from making maybe 10 great decisions a week. But if I've invested 10 great people that all of us could make 100 grand a week. So the investment people even though it's longer, even though if you did it today, you might not see, you know, a result by next next Tuesday. This is the thing that's going to keep on giving. And so constantly focusing on Okay, how's my team? Who are the star? People with the greatest potential? How can I help accelerate their career, their growth? Those are the question experienced managers.

Jacob Morgan 58:41

Perfect. Julie, where can people go to learn more about you or grab your book because I know you talk about all sorts of other things in there a lot of wonderful advice. So people who want to connect with you or grab your book, what's the best place to go do that?

Julie 58:57

My book is available. pretty much everywhere. Also on Amazon most independent booksellers I am available on twitter @joulee. I also write a lot I have a mailing list on a sub stack called The Year at the Looking Glass and a bunch of articles as well as the past on medium and in various other outlets. So writing is a lot of how I process the world and it brings me great joy. So definitely check it out if you're interested.

Jacob Morgan 59:30

Perfect. Well Julie, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me.

Julie 59:35

Thank you so much. This was an awesome conversation.

Jacob Morgan 59:37

Yeah, it was a lot of fun and thank you everyone for tuning in. Again. My guest has been Julie Zhuo. Make sure to check out her book the making of a manager what to do when everyone looks to you. I will see all of you next time.