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

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Jacob 00:51
Hello everyone hope you're having a wonderful day, wherever in the world you are welcome to another wonderful and fun episode of the future work. Today, my guest is Jeff Schwartz. He is the future of work leader at Deloitte. And he's also the author of a brand new book that I had the opportunity to read called Work Disrupted: Opportunity, Resilience and Growth in the Accelerated Future of Work. Jeff, thank you for joining me.

Jeff 01:16
I'm really delighted to be with you, Jacob.

Jacob 01:20
So before we start talking about the book and future of work stuff, you actually have a really cool background that I want to talk about for a few minutes, I read that you also used to be used to teach in Nepal, and it was in 1983, which is the year I was born. So let's go way back to your background, your story, and then how did you get to where you are today?

Jeff 01:42
So Well, again, Jacob, it's great. It's great to be with you. And as I've mentioned to you before, I'm a huge fan of, I'm going to call it your show and your podcast. And I think what you and and your guests have done over the last few years has been phenomenal. So thank you for that. It's just as somebody who is a future of work researcher and consultants and adventurer fellow adventure, it's been terrific.

Jeff 02:13
You know, it's interesting. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 80s. I was also the first associate one of the first associate directors of the US Peace Corps, when the Peace Corps operated for about five years in the Russian Federation between 1992 and 1998. So I've had a chance to be a pretty good adventurer. Somebody recently asked me in an interview, what is my superpower? And I think my superpower is curiosity and my sense of adventure. And my sense that there's a lot to learn in the world.

Jeff 02:51
So you know, I studied the most useful of things at university, I studied intellectual history and the history of ideas at Cornell. Then I worked for a small foundation to Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation, found my way into the Peace Corps in Nepal, everybody should spend two years living in a

village to understand what's happening in the world. And then did studied both business and public policy, got a couple of master's degrees. So at a really nice chance to sort of explore what was going on and then that moved into a career that has largely been in management consulting, which is a great career for those of us who have a short attention span. Who are looking to, to really study different problems and how they evolve and with the firm with first PwC Consulting and then Deloitte I've, I've lived in Africa, Russia, India, Brussels, Kenya, and a few places in the US. So it's been it's been an adventure.

Jacob 03:53
What was it like to live in a village in Nepal? Because I think you said there was no electricity, no running water. And you were there for a while. What was that? Like? What did that teach you?

Jeff 04:06
Well, it's interesting. What did I learn from the experience? Maybe another way of putting it? So I was there in 1981 to 1983. I know you said you were born in 1983. But even when you were born, was before the internet. So we were before the internet before cell phones. You know, I called my mom once from Katmandu. And you know, we had operators on the line and Katmandu and Delhi and London in New York, and then Long Island, where my mom was living. And so this was, you know, early, early days.

Jeff 04:37
It was phenomenal. You know, I think one of the, one of the important disciplines and the future of work that we're exploring, I certainly talked about it in my book is cultural anthropology. And the importance of social anthropology, which Gillian Tett Of course talks about quite a bit in her research and the chance to live in another part of the world, but really to live there and to work and to study and, you know, nobody spoke English in this village, I was the only Peace Corps volunteer in the village, I had to learn Nepali, which is how Nepalese is referred to in the local language. So, it was a very big experience in learning and listening and adapting, which was phenomenal, I would recommend it to anybody who's looking for a good experience, whether they're in their 20s 30s 40s 50s or 60s.

Jacob 05:37
They teach you a little bit also to slow down because you didn't I mean, you weren't always connected, right? You didn't have email, smartphone, Whatsapp. And now in today's world, everyone's like binging and buzzing and beeping and trying to get in touch with you every five seconds. You don't have to worry about any of that stuff in a village in Nepal.

Jeff 05:54
You didn't, you know it's interesting that you say that right. This is we didn't have obviously email, we didn't have phones. We sent letters via air grams, which were these very light envelopes, where you could send them an airmail message that would move pretty quickly. And it took months to get a response from sending a note from a village in Nepal that had to get to Katmandu that had to make its way to New York to get to your friends, wherever they were.

Jeff 06:22
So it did give you a chance to slow down and gave you a chance to reflect. And it's interesting, Jacob, because one of the things that we're hearing, my guess is your hearing, and as well for many of your guests, and the people you talk with, is what people want is more time to reflect. They want time to think they want time to actually organize their, their thoughts and to read. And I had a lot of that time. But I also learned, which I think we're all learning now as you have to make that time in order to do it, it was a little bit easier in Nepal, because there were a few interruptions. But I learned something about deep reading. And, and the importance of, of reflection. And how valuable that time can be.

Jacob 07:05
Yeah, for sure. And also curious, do you speak Russian?

Jeff 07:10
says Russian word

Jacob 07:13
My parents grew up in the Republic of Georgia, I speak Russian fluently.

Jeff 07:18
I speak a little bit of Russian, I used to joke that, you know, if I had had a little bit of vodka, I could speak Russian very, very well. So I was pretty good at it when I lived in Moscow. But it's been buried, but I like the fact that I can read Cyrillic. So that's, that's sort of cool. So all of us could read Cyrillic know that what we thought said CCCP actually is SSSR in the Cyrillic alphabet. So a little bit I know a little bit of Russian.

Jacob 07:46
Very cool. Yeah, I mean, my family's from Russia. So I always, I don't think I've had many guests on the show who speak or understand Russian in any way, shape, or form. So you might be one of the first with a bit of ground. Let's shift gears a little bit, I want to talk about your book, some of the research that you've been doing. Why don't we start with just very, very big, really big picture? What has been the impact of COVID on the future of work? And then Are there other big trends that you're paying attention to that are shaping the future of work?

Jeff 08:19
That's all you got for me Jacob, just talk about like COVID trends and what's gonna happen in the next 10 years? Um, great question. So there's a few things about COVID that I think that we're we're all reflecting on and thinking about now. One of the best commentators on this in 2020 is Anne Marie Slaughter who is the president of New America, the foundation and think tank in Washington and Emery said in literally the third week in March, which is pretty amazing, that the Coronavirus and its social and economic impacts are a time machine to the future. And things that we thought would take five years took five weeks now Anne Marie said that in March.

Jeff 09:13
I was joking with somebody recently, Jacob, that they referred to me as a futurist. And I joked and I said, if you live through 2020, you're a futurist now. Right. And obviously what I mean by that is, we saw elements of the future in 2020, things that we knew what the underlying trends were. But the forced experiments of 2020 helped us see things much more clearly than we saw before. We saw the level of adaptability. We saw the criticality of integrating technology and people on what we call super teams working together in highly, highly collaborative ways. We saw that disruption.

Jeff 10:01
One of the one of my favorite quotes, which did not make it into the book is a quote from Albert Einstein who said that you can't use an old map to explore a new world. And I think that's part of what we learned in 2020. Which is that what we thought was the future of work actually is happening.

Jeff 10:23
And I had a very interesting discussion, literally this morning with a global thought leader, it was fascinating. And we I think we agree that we were talking about where are we in the evolution of the future of work really interested in your perspective on this? And I said, I think we're at the end of the beginning. And we're beginning the next chapter, which is really the chapter of implementation and scaling, and where we're going to see the impact of all these technologies and new ways of working, whether it's people in technology, or the different employment models that are really proliferating, or certainly what we've seen around workplace, how these are going to become in new combinations, new fusions, the normal way that we work. And I think that really tees up, you know, what's going to be hopefully a very interesting set of opportunities. That's why I call the book opportunity resilience and, and growth.

Jacob 11:31
Yeah, it's interesting. When I think of the future of work, I the analogy, I guess a couple analogies pop into mind. One is sort of like a, a jazz improvisation or any kind of musical improvisation where you know, you get a you get people together, you're playing an instrument, and then it's time for somebody to like, go off and do their own. And so for me, work is very much like, okay, everybody's playing their tune, like we know what's happening. And then every now and then, this improvisation gets thrown in the mix. And you're like, Whoa, Where'd that come from? Like, that's, you know, like, everybody else now needs to adapt to that improvised solo that the guitar player or the piano player put together.

Jacob 12:10
So there's usually like this steady, you know, the steady be the steady kind of flow, you're playing the notes that everybody knows, and then you get these solos that kind of break off.

Jacob 12:20
And the other analogy I think of is oftentimes chess. So I play a lot of there's like a chess board behind me, which you can see, like, I take lessons with a chess grandmaster, I'm pretty like nutty about it. And with chess, you know, during the first few moves of a game, it's, it's called the opening, and there's really four top grandmasters they play something known as theory, meaning like, a lot of computers and engines have been used, where they can figure out, you know, what are the first best moves that you

should be making for the first 10-15 moves of any game. And so it's very, it's very structured. So when you see grandmasters playing a game of chess, the first 10-15 moves, they play almost instantly. And then they get to a point on the board, when they're out of theories, so to speak, they're out of the book. And they have to think for themselves.

Jacob 13:07
And every now and then, you know, somebody makes a novelty, like they make a move on the board where, you know, takes you out of theory, you know, it's totally something new. And that's another analogy, I think of when we think of the future of work. Like we're very used to this consistent, okay, yeah, we know, like, we get it, you know, performance reviews, like we get it. And then we get to a certain point where it's like, we're out of theory, now, you know, like pandemic happens, a recession happens, some kind of crisis. And it's like, you're out of theory, now, you can't, there's no guide for what you should be doing. And you're kind of thinking on your own.

Jacob 13:41
And I feel like that's very much where we are now, we're at a point where the world has played this novelty move on us. And we've used to, like, you know, we used to know the moves for a long time. And now we're in a position on the board where it's kind of like, we got to think for ourselves. Now there's no blueprint, there is no guide. There's nothing that's telling us what we should be doing. So there's a kind of like the things that I that popped into my, my weird brain when I think of the future of work.

Jeff 14:11
Well, I think, I love that and I love these ideas, and building on the last piece. I think this really touches on what I've tried to explore in work disrupted, which is, you know, I mentioned this Einstein quote, which is if the world changes, you need a new map. But a lot of people are using old maps for new problems. And this is a big shift we're going through now. Right?

Jeff 14:36
We spent years I would argue 120 years, sort of working on an on a notion of scientific management. We're still trying to escape Frederick Taylor in some ways and the mechanization of work and the idea that, you know, we can optimize work and workflow and process and what we've seen as you've pointed out, is that it's a version of the William Gibson quote that the future of work is the future is here. It's just unevenly distributed, nothing new about that.

Jeff 15:07
What's new about it, I think in 2020, and 2021, is that the future comes at us in accelerated bursts. That's my corollary to Gibson's idea, which to me is very related to what you're saying about the improvisation comes in. And I think what we're seeing in 2021, is that it's the improvisation that really is driving the change. Right? This is, it seems to lead said when he wrote about Black Swans, which is the Black Swan events that actually, are the events that change history forever. I'll be presumptuous, I think COVID may be an event that changes work forever. And that, you know, one of the things we learned or are challenged with is, is 2021 about a return to something? Or is it an on ramp to something new? And you don't have to guess my view is it's an on ramp to something new.

Jacob 16:08

So for people who are watching or listening, who are thinking, Okay, you know, what's the big deal? Why is COVID such a big deal? Why is it changing or altering work so much? How come after the vaccine gets distributed? You know, by this time next year, or by the end of this year? Why won't things just go back to normal the way they always used to be? So what is it that you think is going to be so transformative?

Jeff 16:33

Well, I think, what is the most transformative thing about the transition, we talk about in Deloitte, we talked about the transition from survive to thrive, the went through a response, a recovery. Now, we might describe it as an extended recovery. And then we have a post COVID period is that we discovered a whole set of choices in COVID. And in 2021, that we we actually in a way didn't have before. Right?

Jeff 17:09

We discovered that a lot of people can work remotely, a lot of the time and be productive. We have to now decide how much of that do we want? That's the choice. But the question isn't whether we go back to the office or whether we stay at home. The question is, what combination of them we will adopt as individuals and companies and communities in order to make it work this this is a choice. We saw the way one of the ways I think it's interesting to look at it, we saw a lot of what I call 10 X in 2020. We we often talk about exponential change and Moore's law that I'm sure that's very familiar to many of the people that have been listening to you and reading your work for for many years. But we all saw 10 X in 2020.

Jeff 17:58

I'll just give a couple of really quick examples. We saw 5% of the workforce go from working remotely to 50% of the workforce working remotely. We saw the the average number of telemedicine visits go up tenfold, we saw systems that had four or 500, telemedicine visits in a major city go up to 5000 telemedicine visits in a city 10 x. And the most obvious one, which I had to be reminded of was used to take 10 years to develop a vaccine. Look it up How long does it take to develop a vaccine? Look at the vaccines over the last 100 years. By the way, they don't go back much more than 100 years. Although there's some earlier efforts in it. We develop vaccines, four or five of them in 300 330 360 days. Right, that's 10 x.

Jeff 18:49

So the one of the questions in front of us now is what's the version of 10 X that we are going to choose? How do we live and learn and lead? Those will be the three things that we're talking about a lot in our work in a 10 x world? That's a choice, right? How do I use the ability to work with machines, the different employment models, the different workplace options, to do things differently and to get different results, which we can obviously go into if you want.

Jacob 19:18

So do you think these things are permanent changes? For example, like you said, we went from working remotely 5% to 50%? Is it going to go back to 5%? At the end of the year after we get vaccines? Or is this like a permanent change? Is there a permanent change to workspace design? Is there a permanent change to I don't know leading virtual teams? Or are these just temporary things that are gonna you know, go back to the way they always used to be, so to speak?

Jeff 19:48

Um, my perspective is, I'm not sure I would say they're permanent or not, but they are real shifts. And, you know, we were at 5% We're probably still in many parts of the world and 50%. I don't think we're going back to 5%. Right now, we're gonna go back somewhere between five and 50. So pick a number, I'll pick 25%, right? Would one out of four workers? Or would the average worker spend a quarter of their time working in a hybrid flexible way? Probably not a bad, a bad way to think about it. Right?

Jeff 20:25

Will we be using more robots and robotic Process Automation? And AI in our work? Look, we're all going to be working next to it with smart machines. Right? There's no question about that. Right? One of my favorite. One of my one of the big opportunities we have when we look at, not where we're going back to, but where we're going to is how people are working with technology. And one of the ideas that I look at in work disrupted is I try to take on the question is the future about the robot apocalypse or humanity unleashed? Really good discussion. I'm sure it's something you've talked with many guests about and experts about over the last few years. I also think that's a choice. We have to choose.

Jeff 21:15

And if I think about people like Dr. Eric Topol, who wrote deep medicine, and he talks about what's going to happen in radiology, you know, he described the future of Radiology as Renaissance radiologists. What does it mean when the radiologist who's reading the scans when she or he is not crushed by the technology, but stands on the shoulders of technology, and using what he calls the gift of time to, to do deep care to do the things that that humans can uniquely do? So? I don't think it's about going back. But I do think we have a choice as to how we're going to push forward in these different areas.

Jacob 21:56

Yeah, and you're right. That's one of the big, big topics of conversation, I always like to ask people, are you on the side of the Apocalypse, or on the side of opportunity? From the hundreds, my book alone, I interviewed 140 CEOs, I asked all of them the same question. Very few, if any, were on the side of negativity, Apocalypse, worried about some sort of mass hysteria, pretty much everybody I interviewed was on the side of optimism and opportunity, which to me, I find very interesting, because it oftentimes goes contrary to the reports that you read, you see studies and reports that say 40% of the workforce is going to be automated, you know, billions of people out of work. But when you talk to the people who are running these companies, and they say, No, we don't see that. So there's this very big gap between like the surveys, and what the executives are saying, and you talk to a lot of business leaders, what are you hearing?

Jeff 23:00

Well, it's a really interesting question. So I think it's interesting to to reflect on what our business leaders saying, what a public policy leader saying, What are workers saying, of course, that's impossible to say what workers are saying, and what are we saying and thinking about in in communities? You know, one of the more interesting pieces of research that we've seen over the last couple of years was by Joe Fuller, and the team at Harvard Business School, who looked at the adaptability of the workforce. And said, one of the things I think we all saw, I certainly saw in the COVID period, which is how the closer you get to the worker and the family, whatever your family structure is, the more adaptable we were. Right? The more senior you are actually, in a way, the less adaptable you are, which is one way of looking at it.

Jeff 23:48

But you know, you know, as an individual, you know, with your partner, with your family, with your dog with your, with your whomever your people are, we really had to adapt, right, how we're working, how we're living. Our learning if we were students, and most workers and this is what Fuller's research points out, that workers are pretty optimistic about adaptability, but what they want real opportunity and real support, to exercise the opportunities that they know that they need to take advantage of, right.

Jeff 24:23

And workers know that we all know that technology, whether it's robotics or AI, is going to change our jobs. Right? There's no confusion about that. What we're looking for is help in the transition so that we can find the next career the next opportunity because our careers are, you know, as Lynda Gratton says they're, you know, in 100 year life, you're going to work for 50 or 60 years you're going to spend three or four years in a job you're going to have the half life of a skill is five years or less. You need we need support to be at adaptable in the way that we're expecting to be adaptable. And I think the challenge is that our institutions may not be as adaptable as we are.

Jacob 25:12

Yeah, and I think we, the general assumption, I think, for some of these reports sometimes is that you can't, it's hard to like take into consideration how adaptable humans really are. I think a lot of the studies and reports sometimes assume that humans are very, are static, and it's like, you know, we forget that we're gonna learn new things, we're gonna take advantage of opportunities that, you know, we're gonna watch YouTube videos, we're going to take classes on Coursera, we're going to participate in training, like, we're not just going to sit while the world is changing, and stare at the wall. And sometimes it feels like when you see some of these scary reports out there, that their assumption is that humans are going to do nothing, and they're just going to watch.

Jacob 25:56

And I think throughout history, we've seen that that's never the case. You know, when humans are put into a tough situation, even like we see what this pandemic, we're very good at rallying, we're very good and moving quickly, we're very good at adapting to change, we're good at coming up with creative problems and solutions. And that is a very hard thing to, I think show in a research report or a study like, How good are humans at adapting? How quickly can we evolve and change? And I don't know, I'm betting on the humans, I think we're pretty good.

Jeff 26:29

Well, we're exactly there with you. And I say we I mean, the work that I've been doing and the work we've been doing at Deloitte. In our human capital trends research, we just put out our 11th report in December of 2020, looking at human capital trends in 2021. And and we really have two major perspectives that come out there. One is this is one of the most interesting data survey questions I've seen in years, Jacob, we asked business leaders, very senior business leaders across 99 countries. How did you think about work transformation before COVID? And what are you thinking about work transformation after COVID? This is a survey we ran last September and October. So we were seven, eight months into the COVID period.

Jeff 27:15

And that won't give you all the data, we can share it on your website, if that makes sense. But 29% of the executives said before COVID, their focus was on what we defined as the reimagination of work, really redefining work new combinations of people and technology to do new things. That number went, the post COVID number was 61%. So six out of 10 executives saying you know, we really think we need to reimagine and re architect work in the next chapter. And the theme of our report really was and this is what we've been exploring together is, how do we do this reimagination and redesign in a way that really puts humans at the center of the discussion, which is what many of us have been talking about? Well, not humans at the center by putting technology at the back. But looking at how technology and people work together, versus how people work for technology, which I think is one of the fears out there.

Jeff 28:12

So this whole question of what does Human Centered Design mean for the future of work? We think is really going to accelerate in the next couple of years. We have a lot of reimagination to do. And that's really what came out of that survey results.

Jacob 28:27

Yeah. So you mentioned the human capital trends report that came out 30 days or so ago, I won't go through all the trends, but what were maybe the some of the top trends that you guys identified for 2021.

Jeff 28:42

So in the 2020 2021 report, we were really looking at how earlier trends are playing out in 2021. So the top trends were well being and the integration of wellbeing into work, well being not as a set of side benefits that are offered to employees and workers. But how do we literally integrate well being and work in a much more deliberate way?

Jeff 29:11

One of the trends was about super teams, which I briefly mentioned already, how do we integrate, how do we put AI and robots on the team? Right, not pull work out so that technology can do the work? But you know, the example I mentioned a minute ago about the Renaissance radiologists, how do we put

people and machines on the team so that we get new results and people can do more human work, deep care, deep teaching, deep design, etc.

Jeff 29:38
The next was the whole question of, we call the trend beyond re skilling and going beyond re skilling and looking at developing, enduring human capabilities, giving workers the capability so that they can shift and work up to their potential. And to me, I don't think we've covered this Jacob, one of the fascinating things about what we all saw in 2020, was, it didn't matter what you were hired to do. It didn't matter what your job description was, what mattered was what you could do. What mattered was what you wanted to do. And you know, we had automotive companies making ventilators. And we had pharmaceutical companies putting together super teams to create new vaccines, a lot of people were doing things different than they were hired. And what really became important was that potential.

Jeff 30:30
And the other two trends, just to round them out is the real challenges around governance and workforce governance. We found in 2020, we just did not have the data and the information we needed. And then the role of HR, as we think dramatically been elevated, HR, in many ways, delivered amazingly, in the first few months of the pandemic. And so the opportunity is how does HR lead into this reimagination and re architecture of work era. So those are in a little bit of rapid fire fashion, some of the trends that we saw play out in the 2021 report.

Jacob 31:08
So somebody watching live actually just asked, Do you think that we implemented technology to fast in 2020? Are there any dangers? Did we miss out on any opportunities to do it properly, since we just kind of you know, scrambled so quickly?

Jeff 31:26
So there's well, even in the question, the way it's been presented to you the way you presented it to me. technology comes at us in a very fast and furious way. I think that's part of the question. I think that we know that the challenge. I think my perspective, as I shouldn't say, we know my perspective is that the challenge with technology is how we develop and integrate the management practices, the culture and the organizational practices to really take advantage of that. And in the same trends report, I mentioned that reimagination data, we asked the 3600 senior executives, what are the most important things you need to focus on in this uncertain turbulent world coming up, and we get them a whole bunch of choices, including invest in more technology, more capital, etc.

Jeff 32:18
The top two were getting their workforce to be more adaptable, and build the skills of the future, and being able to make rapid decisions in a decentralized organization. So what's interesting is that the constraints aren't the technology, the constraints, in many ways are the management and organizational practices. But the good news is, that's what we get to do that we we create the managerial and organizational practices, the technology and the machines don't do that. That's the work that we really need to pick up in 2021 and 2022, is, how do we pick up that technological change? And make it work for us? Do we need nine different versions of of instant meeting technologies? I love

them all. But you know, I don't know what your day is like, and your listeners days like but going from one platform to another platform to another platform takes a lot of time. And it's not the most human and efficient way of doing it.

Jacob 33:19
Yeah, So you got a couple more comments come in one question, one a comment. So I'll read you the comment. Perhaps in 2021, more people will agree that Einstein was right about whole brain thinking being normal and a choice. And Tom asks, How do you see the role of representative business organizations evolving over the coming years? How do they stay relevant in terms of the services they provide to businesses, and a collective voices they present to policymakers? That's a very complicated question.

Jeff 33:48
So I'm not sure. I'm not sure I understand the thrust of that second question, Jacob.

Jacob 33:54
Yeah, I think so. Tom, maybe you can clarify in the chat what you mean when you say representative organizations, and then put that in there? And then I will ask, Jeff, what you mean by that. So while Tom clarifies on that I can jump to the next question for you. And that was really about what are your fears? So when you see all the changes that we're seeing in the world of work, what concerns you freaks you out, keeps you up at night, if anything?

Jeff 34:21
Well, um, you know, we've already talked about the fact that I've lived in Nepal and I've lived in a village in Nepal and Katmandu. And I've lived in towns and cities in Moscow, and I lived in India for five years, so I don't have a lot of fears. But I do have a concern or a worry. And some of it has to do with not work not just where I have in my life, but I have two daughters. My daughters are 26 and 29. They are in the...

Jacob 34:53
I have a four year old

Jeff 34:54
You what, oh you have a four year old,

Jacob 34:56
I have a four year old daughter and an eight month old son

Jeff 34:59
All right. All right. Well, I joke my daughters don't like when I say this, but I'll say it anyway, I joke that I think of myself as having an eight year old and a four year old, the eight year old is 29. And finished her MBA and the four year old is actually waiting to go back to the Peace Corps. She was in the Peace Corps Madagascar, when they pulled all the Peace Corps volunteers out last March. But what my concern is that is that we aren't taking advantage of the opportunities that we have in front of us, as

both businesses and as communities in society, right, we're at a very interesting point, where we have the opportunity to do some pretty amazing things in terms of the way we live, our lives, our lives, we organize our work, the way we organize education, the way we organize our businesses.

Jeff 35:46
And I worry that we're not really as focused on the opportunity as we can. And, you know, as we were discussing earlier, this is not the predictable part of life. This is the unpredictable part of life. This is what John Seely Brown would call the whitewater part of life versus the still water part of life. And I'm my concern is that we're not some of us aren't as ready for the whitewater as we need to be. I'd be interested with the clarification on the question is, but one of the things that we talked about in the book, the last three chapters of the book basically asked the question, so of all these things are happening with people and machines and employment models and workplaces and careers are being reinvented and organizations are becoming networks of teams and teams of teams and managers are moving from being supervisors to coaches and behavioral economists and designers.

Jeff 36:44
Okay, I got it. What does that mean for me as an individual? What does that mean for me as an organization or business leader, then what does that mean for us as citizens and societies and communities? And a big part of the discussion and maybe this is part of the question is that we have the opportunity or necessity to think about what this means for us what this means for organizations, but the public policy issues, whether they're education issues, regulatory issues, climate issues, all at once. So the comment about a whole new mind integrative thinking 100% there. The future belongs to integrative thinkers.

Jacob 37:25
And Tom actually clarified he meant by business organizations like trade associations, and the example he gave is the Confederation of British industry here in the UK, which is obviously where Tom is. So his question was about, I guess, trade organizations like that, and how they might evolve or stay relevant. And in terms of service, they provide the businesses and a collective voice, they present the policymakers. So very, very specific question for trade organizations. I'm not an expert in that area. So I know very little about that space. I don't know if you have any insight on it.

Jeff 37:59
So I am not an expert on it, either. But I would. I think it's a really interesting question from from this perspective. Many of the institution relationship we have whether it's businesses, associations, unions, the way that we structure the work inside of our companies, what the departments are. These are all categories, as Gillian Tett from the Financial Times who wrote this wonderful book, the silo effect reminds us, we make up all these categories, right. And some of these categories may make sense going forward. But I'll just go back to the old map, new world metaphor, right? As the world changes, as we need new maps and mental models and mindsets, some of the institutions we have, will be able to stretch and flex to be even more relevant.

Jeff 38:58
But hopefully, we'll see new combinations of business associations, community associations, workers associations coming up, that are in their, in their own form, new ways of actually tackling these problems, which are more integrated problems than we had before. So I think the amount of institutional reform, hopefully that will have will be pretty dynamic, if the path is different than the institutions may need to evolve as well.

Jacob 39:30
So one question I probably should have started with this question because it's kind of sets the stage, we hear the phrase the future of work a lot. What does it actually mean? What does it mean to you? Or how would you encourage people to think about it?

Jeff 39:49
Well, the future of work probably means many different things. That's part of its appeal. And that's part of its weakness. When I talk about the future of work, I'm talking about three things at the same time, which is how work is changing? How workforces are changing, and how workplaces are changing. And and largely how they're changing due to technological forces, and how they're changing as employment and workforce models change, by which I mean, you know, we're not predominantly working as full time employees or even part time employees of one organization, but we have a much more dynamic set of employment choices.

Jeff 40:45
And I think we spent, it's a big question, but I'll try to give a big answer. I think we spent the last 20 years setting the table for the future of work discussion. identifying what the work workforce workplace options are, what the implications are for communities regulation, education, 2020, was a bit of a fast forward button or a forced experiment button. And as I was mentioning earlier, you know, I think we are at the the end of the beginning of the future of work. And we are at the beginning of the next chapter, which is taking these changes to work workforces and workplaces, and just implementing them at scale. Not on the side, but in the in the heart of what we're doing.

Jacob 41:34
Got it. And I love that way to think about it very, very, very simple way to kind of wrap your mind around it. So I wanted to talk a little bit about where where the opportunity is in all of this. And maybe we can break up the opportunity into two groups. So the opportunity for individuals, and maybe the opportunity for leaders or organizations. So what what should leaders of organizations be doing or thinking about? Where are their opportunities? And also just for individuals, you know, all of us out there, where's the opportunity for us? And what should we be thinking about?

Jeff 42:10
Which do you want to start with? You want to start with individuals or business leaders, organization?

Jacob 42:14
Let's do business leaders first

Jeff 42:16

Okay. So this is an easy question, because, as I mentioned a moment ago, one of the chapters is literally like, okay, you're a business and organization leader, what do you need to do? There are a couple of things that you need to do. And this is sort of how we try to structure it. One is, you need to think about what are the new mindsets you need to be focusing on? And then what are the actions that come out of those mindsets? And I'll just name like the top three, right?

Jeff 42:46

One is to recognize that the role of business leaders is to deliver value, not just cost savings, and we talk about what the work is about that you're doing? Are you maximizing, sorry, I'm an economist, in part by trading, are you looking at this through a cost lens, a value lens, or a meeting an impact lens. So one of the things that leaders need to do is to look at what they're doing in the work, they're leading through a cost value and a meeting lens at the same time, right. And we know that great companies, and we know that the big changes in the economy comes not from cost savings and productivity amazingly, but it's from innovation and new value, and and creating new sources of meaning.

Jeff 43:37

The second is as a leader, really wrapping your mind around the idea that we're leading workforce ecosystems today, we are not leading individual employees. It's not about who you can attract, develop, retain, it was 30 years ago, really good. 20th century model, attract, develop, retain, we talked about I talked about in the book, in an ecosystem world, it's about access, curate and engage, right and accessing talent is very different than acquiring it and hiring it. Because you can access talent in the form of a human or in the form of a machine. You can access talent by finding talent within your organization by using talent marketplaces. Or you can go out and use ecosystem talent platforms to find the talents as well. So are you really looking at all of the ways that you can access or curate talent?

Jeff 44:33

And I think the the third and there's actually actually seven in the book that I talk about, but the third is that leaders really need to think of themselves as co creators. Right? We talk in the chapter I talk in a chapter about management about this shift from the supervisor mentality to the player coach mentality. And we're, you know, in a world that's changing as fast as we are a player coach who understand team dynamics, individual dynamics, and is bringing the team into every aspect of the way that we're managing. They're just doing better. And I know, I've seen that in the work that you've done as you spoke to CEOs, it's them directly, which is the more CO design you do, the more CO creation you do, the better. So those are probably the top three, from an organizational business leadership perspective.

Jacob 45:26

Okay, and these are the places I think for a lot of leaders to start from, and then, yeah, let's go with the individuals.

Jeff 45:32

So the individuals, this is a tough one, because we're for people who look at the book, and I hope people will, will go through it, the title of the chapter on individuals is Carpe Diem, seize the day. Now, some people have said to me, Well, that that, you know, you're putting a lot of responsibility on

individuals. And I think that individuals have a lot of the responsibility now. And part of the reason is, and, you know, part of that's a good story, and part of it is that, you know, we've done research in our researches, Deloitte, we've looked at this for many years, about five or six years, you know, the most adaptable group in the economy, or individuals, as consumers, we're like, unbelievably adaptive, right?

Jeff 46:24
It's like I've had, you know, you know, 10 iPhones in 12 years, you know, and I've never get training on them training on an iPhone or an Android phone is asking the youngest person in your life to explain to you how it works. I mean, that, you know, and in business, when we say we're going to go from one release of software to another release, you know, it's like, you know, it's a it's a change project. It's a shift project, we have all sorts of resources. So I think the for the individual, it's, it's recognizing the change that's coming on, and we talk about three things.

Jeff 46:58
I'll summarize them this way. The first is, and I'm simply picking up great thinking from Carol Dweck is to look at this through a growth mindset and not a fixed mindset. And I don't know if you've ever had Carol on the show, maybe you have.

Jacob 47:12
No, but I've also referenced her in my books. I know her work.

Jeff 47:18
Yeah. So I think she'd be a great guest for people looking at the growth mindset. But number one is adopting the growth mindset. And recognizing that one of the keys to being successful is having that view.

Jeff 47:32
The second is the importance of being a team player. Now, I'm not arguing for collective action over individual action. I'm simply suggesting that most great things are done by people working in teams, right. And the better and more effective we are teaming, understanding the different roles of teams understanding what a high performing team is, understanding that you may play a different role on the different teams that you are part of in some you may be a participant in some you may be more of a facilitator, and some of you may be an expert. And in some you may be the leader, the team leader, but recognizing how to be a great Teamer, I think, is one.

Jeff 48:15
And the last one again, there's seven, but I'll go to the third is I talk about the individual has the opportunity to embrace the 100 year life and the 50-60 year career, not to endure it, right. It's not like oh, no, what do I do now? Which, of course, we're all asking every day as the world is changing, but rather, how do I prepare and think about my life, as 100 year life, God willing, or a 50-60 year career with, you know, 12 different chapters of reinvention in it. And I think the value here is in having a view of what the road ahead looks like.

Jeff 49:00

And that's why this whole map metaphor, I think, is so powerful, Jacob, which is if you think that your We started by talking about my time in Nepal, if you think that the journey is going over one mountain, and you find out that the journey is going over six mountains, it really helps to know that it's a six mountain journey versus a one mountain journey. Right? You're mentally prepared, you're physically prepared. And you know, we're telling people, it's a one mountain journey, you go to school, you pick a career, you go to work for somebody, maybe it's a two mountain journey, or maybe there's another mountain of you know, behind this one, but, but if we know that it is a portfolio of reinvention that the journey is, is much more varied than we thought. We think that will help us to be prepared. I know it's hopefully that's working for my 26 year old and 29 year old hopefully it'll work for the four year old and the eight month old so you got some time with the eight month old.

Jacob 49:57

You actually had a great quote in your book from Thomas Friedman, and I want to read this quote, because I think it parallels very well with what you're saying. And the quote you had is today's workers need to approach the workplace like someone who was training for the Olympics, but doesn't know what sport they're going to enter. And I love that quote, because it's one of those things of like, yeah, work really hard, keep learning new things. And it's like, well, what do I learn what, you know, what am I working hard at? It's like everything, you know, you can't pick. So it's definitely a different world, right? Because even when I was in college, it was very much, get good grades, get your degree, climb the corporate ladder, you're going to stay in this field. And I learned very early on in my career, that it's not, that's not quite how the world works.

Jeff 50:47

Well, I think I totally agree. That's not how the world works. I also one of the, I'll come back to Tom's quote in a second. But one of the one of the one of the pictures, one of the cartoons in the book, we had the great fortune of working with Tom Fishburne to do 25 original cartoons for the book. And one of them is a picture of a career as a jungle gym, which probably works well for the four year old now that I think about it. It's not a ladder, but it goes in all different directions at all different speeds. And actually, it's one of our clients. A couple years ago in the tech industry, when we asked, we were talking about career ladders, and they said, there's no ladders here this we think of it as a jungle gym, which I thought was a great image.

Jeff 51:27

What I love about what's great about Tom's quote is, is it's not that we don't know what to do. Right? What I like about the Olympic athlete portrayal is that if you don't know exactly what the sport is, there are capabilities that you need to develop as an athlete. Right. And so the idea that if you build strength, if you build flexibility, if you build hand eye coordination, which is probably not much if you build balance, not my big strength, but something that's important. If you build these core capabilities that are important for multiple sports, including sports that weren't invented, like snowboarding, or you know, which now is an Olympic sport, but it wasn't, whatever, dozen years ago. But we do know something about the capabilities that if we develop them, will help us to be athletes and perform in games that we don't know yet.

Jeff 52:27

And that's why we and many others, as you've highlighted, talk about what I refer to as enduring human capabilities, not soft skills, but enduring human capabilities. problem solving. How do you frame a question? empathy, social intelligence, flexibility, how to lead and manage teams, again, we don't know what problem we're solving. But we do know that there's five or six core capabilities that will be helpful, regardless of what sport we end up competing in. Going forward.

Jacob 53:00

Yeah. Love it. Oh, maybe one question before we wrap up, cuz I want to touch on this because I think it's important. And that's the importance of the human connection aspect. You know, a lot of people are thinking, are we going to go back to the office? Do we need to see people in person? So let's just briefly touch on the importance of that, that human connection?

Jeff 53:21

Well, from one perspective, it's obvious. Humans are social beings. It's useful to say it out loud. You know, we live our lives, through relationships through social interaction, the institutions, which are relationships. So the social aspect of the way that we live our personal lives, the way we learn, the way we work is absolutely critical. And so I'll wrap up by saying two things, Jacob, and these are really, really important. And as the Economist magazine would say, these are crunchy questions. These are not simple questions.

Jeff 54:01

One is that we have the opportunity to explore how we can be social beings in virtual and physical and hybrid worlds. Because we can I mean, we're, I mean, I'm sitting in my living room in New York, I'm not sure where you are in the world, whether you're in

Jacob 54:22

Northern California, the Bay Area,

Jeff 54:24

Northern California, so it's probably a little warmer, where we just got a bunch of snow here in New York. And we're having a human moment. I mean, we're having a conversation, at least it feels like that to me. So I think part of it is exploring how to do the things that we want to do socially, in different media, in this case, the using some sort of a collaborative media technology to do it.

Jeff 54:51

The other is the really interesting question. As I said earlier, I think we got a lot of important choices ahead of us, which is What are the things that really are best done in a co located physical space? Right. In some sense, I think one of the things that I've observed in the last year is, there are probably some things that we did in our offices or on our campuses, even in our factories that we didn't need to do there. We probably didn't need to be there 40 hours a week, or 30 hours a week or 42 hours a week, right? So how do we give ourselves the flexibility to use the physical spaces we have, and it differs by what business you're in, what career you're in, what what type of work you're doing, so that the time that we're working in the CO physical space really makes sense to be in that space.

Jeff 55:43
And it's actually designed for that a cubicle farm is not designed for, for the brainstorming that people keep telling me that we're missing. So hopefully, we'll see some real innovation in terms of how much time we spend in the office and in the virtual hybrid world, and what the actual physical spaces look like.

Jacob 56:03
I love it. Well, Jeff, where can people go to learn more about you, your book, if they want to grab the report that you mentioned, anything that you want to throw out there for people to check out? Please feel free to do so?

Jeff 56:15
No, I appreciate that, Jacob. So there's probably the best place to go is to deloitte.com. And on deloitte.com, you can go to the human capital section, and you will see the human capital trends report. You can also go to deloitte.com and hit the slash I never remember whether it's backslash or forward slash so I'll let somebody tell me which one it is. But deloitte.com work disrupted. And you can see information on the book. And it's at all the online bookstores. So whichever one you like, you should be able to, to look it up. So both the report and interviews were

Jacob 56:51
I was trying to look it up while you were talking.

Jeff 56:58
So, but you'll see why as soon as you pop it into your browser, so it's all on deloitte.com. And, and we've got 11 years of the trends report from the first one we did in 2011. I think we've got we've got it in many, many different languages, all the data for people that like it's it's all most of its accessible on Tableau databases, you can go and look at it. And there's a bunch of resources on the book, including some of the cartoons and a brief video on the book. So hopefully, people will look that up. And I'd love to get people to comment on the book and write reviews so we can keep the buzz going.

Jacob 57:35
Yeah, and actually, Bev, just to wrap up. So Bev, one of the people who are watching right now said one of the most enjoyable and useful hours spent online this week. Thanks for the insights and comfortable conversation. So that's a high praise from somebody watching, Bev, thank you very much for the comment.

Jeff 57:53
That was a drop the mic moment, we should just drop the mic and the show.

Jacob 58:01
Well, Jeff, it was a lot of fun speaking with you, hopefully, when you're out in the Bay Area, or if I'm out in New York, it'd be great to say hi in person one of these days,

Jeff 58:11

I would love that the last place I was before the I stopped traveling, I was in March 3 I was in the Bay Area talking to a board of one of the companies we work with. And I flew back on March 3 or March 4, I guess. And I've been in Manhattan ever since. So looking forward to breaking out.

Jacob 58:31

I was in Spain in January. I think we're February. So Jeff, thank you so much for taking time out of your day. And thanks everyone for tuning in. Again. My guest has been Jeff Schwartz please check this book had the opportunity to read it. It's very, very timely, lots of great insights and it is called work disrupted. can find it wherever you can find and purchase a book and I will see you next time. Thanks for watching and listening