

## Cris Beswick

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:00:00] The edison365 podcast explores the best practices and deep insights of modern day Edison's people who innovate 365 days of the year. This podcast is brought to you by Edison three 65 the company that enables idea management from idea to business impact.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:00:21] In today's episode, we will talk about bridging traditional leadership with actionable innovation. Learn about what we call the innovation theater and dive into how your business can sustain relevancy towards your customers and the extraordinary people you want to employ in the future.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:00:36] Hello everyone, and welcome to the edison365 podcast. My name is Stewart Noyce and I'm joined by my partner Dennis Hoel.

Our guest today is Cris Beswick, author of the award winning book, building a culture of innovation who as a consultant helps his clients shape the future. All right. Cris, thank you very much for taking this interview with us today. Why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself and then we'll go through some profile questions.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:01:00] Cool. Okay. Well, first of all, thanks for, thanks for having me guys. Um, yeah, as everyone's just heard, my name is Cris Beswick. Um, I based out of London and, um, although work globally with. Um, lots of really cool, interesting, but challenging, um, corporate clients, um, predominantly around innovation, strategy, leadership, and culture.

Hence the latest book, building a culture of innovation. Excellent.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:01:29] Thank you, Cris. Um, what is the unmet need that you address, uh, with the culture of innovation?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:01:34] uh, what would that specific book? Um, I, th the main thing for me, the main reason for the book was my, uh, my publisher said, you know, Cole Cole does in quite a few years ago now, and said, look, you know, we've done some research, we've done some questions, um, been asking CEOs questions around what kind of books they want, and the overriding answer that they got backwards.

We need, still need to understand innovation, but don't give us another innovation book that reinforces why we need to innovate and why we have to become innovative. You know, a CEO as a senior leaders would get that. What we're struggling with is how do we actually do it? So the need for the about the book was to be less theoretical and less, you know, complicated than many of the books on innovation out there.

Uh, um, to, to write something that was really pragmatic, really simply less theory, um, uh, more reality and practical steps for helping leaders understand how to start to build innovation capability and culture.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:02:45] That's beautiful. Um, what special skills and experience do you bring to your work.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:02:50] That's a great question.

Um, I suppose if I, if you look at the re the world that we now operate in around innovation, we, um, the world requires, and CEOs and organizations require, um, creativity. They require entrepreneurship or even intreprenurship inside the organization. And all of that needs a different kind of leadership. Um, and the bedrock to all of the things that organizations are doing ground innovation is, is, uh, things like empathy and jobs to be done and design thinking predominantly.

And my special skill, I suppose is, um, I spent 15 years in the design industry as a product and industrial designer. Um, and. Through that 15 years, I was an entrepreneur. I started my own design consultancy in the early two thousands, then became a CEO. Um, and finally, really fortunately, um, had a full exit, um, just before Lehman brothers crashed.

So all of those things, um, which were part of the first part of my career, all of those ingredients, I bring all of those into the corporate setting now. And it just, I've been really fortunate that all of those ingredients are exactly the things. The senior leaders and CEOs and organizations are trained to understand.

So, um, that's, uh, that's what I hopefully bring, uh, uh, as part of the work that I do.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:04:22] Okay. What is the solution then that you're bringing to the unmet need? So given your skills and experience, what, how have you packaged this into a solution?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:04:31] Um, the main thing for me is. Bridging the gap between traditional leadership.

I, you know, not to, not to take anything away from. Um, all the programs and all the business schools and all the development work that many of the senior leaders or CEOs that I work with have already done. Um, but it's bridging the gap between that real great base foundation of good leadership. And then the, the, the bridging the gap between what it then actually takes to lead for innovation and the gap that I feel or the gap that I help bridge.

The unmet need is most of my clients, big corporate organizations globally, the senior leaders and CEOs are very good leaders, but they still haven't been taught properly how to lead for innovation. Um, that's the main gap, the main unmet need that most of the work I do, um, meets.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:05:35] Okay. So with the solutions that you have, I'm assuming these are, you have clients and you're offering services, do you have any products, maybe take us through how you get paid for the time that you offer?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:05:47] Um, yeah, so, you know, traditionally, I suppose the, the, the word or the phrase is consultancy. Um, most of my work is sort of, is more advisory than consultancy. So, you know, I do, I do. Get my hands dirty from time to time, but the majority of it is, is advising, working with senior leaders and senior teams, helping them understand

how they need to solve problems and how they need to do it, as opposed to the traditional consultancy approach, which is going in and solving things for people.

So it's much more advisory based. Um, I do do a huge amount of speaking sort of globally. Um, a good proportion of my, um. Uh, my income, if you like, in other questions about how I get paid for my time. Good proportion of that is, is derived from keynote speaking. Um, but then also, um, many of your viewers probably know, um, my partner, my business partner, Dan, Tomer, and Dan, and I have, um, something called a, which is the assessment for innovation maturity.

So, um, it's an enterprise wide innovation maturity tool that helps us. Um, assess the maturity levels of big corporate clients. Um, and we, we run that maturity assessment with clients all over the world before we actually start and engagement. Um, but that, that forms quite a significant part of our, uh, of our proposition.

Okay.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:07:16] Excellent. Um, what kind of upcoming initiatives are you particularly excited about this year?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:07:22] Um, well, um, the 20, 20, there are some really exciting things. Um, how do I describe them without disclosing things I'm not allowed to disclose, um, as difficult one. Right.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:07:37] Well, just tell them, here's, here's another way of thinking about it.

Just tell me what your objective is for the year

**Cris Beswick:** [00:07:42] so I can disclose if you think so. We have a really, really exciting piece of work. Um, with ING, um, one of the big global banks, um, I won't go into what that work is, but as a client, they are super switched on around innovation. They're passionate about innovation, a core part of, of how they do things today and, uh, and a core part of how they're going to shape the future.

Um, and the work, um, Dan and I are going to be doing with them throughout next year is really exciting. Um, and then I have. Um, on the horizon throughout 2020. Um, something I'm really passionate about, which is using all of the things that we've talked about so far and all of the things we're probably going to talk about in terms of my skill set and the things I do and using them to do really important piece of work with, um, with part of the government here in the UK.

Um, to try and really shape how some of our essential services are delivered across, um, across the UK. So, um, that's a really exciting piece of work that's on my agenda for 2020.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:08:53] Excellent. Well, uh, thank you very much for going through those questions with me, Cris. Um, I'm going to turn the mic over to Dennis Hoel.

And he's going to ask you a few very specific questions and I'll, I'll follow up later with my own, um, particularly after listening to, uh, to what you guys have to say.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:09:09] Cool. Sounds

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:09:09] good. Thank you very much, Stewart. Um, so Cris, this March, I, uh, graduated from a Holt international business school with a degree in disruptive innovation that means that I have all of these tools like design thinking and business model canvas and jobs to be done. Like you mentioned earlier. But can you give us more details about your journey from being a designer to who you are today? You mentioned something about the lane, but the layman brothers.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:09:36] Yeah.

So layman brothers was, um, I mean, it's just, you know, I look back and think, you know, what, what an incredibly lucky few days. So, and the context of Lehmann brothers is, um, I, I built a design, a group of design companies in the early two thousands. Um, and wanted to go and do something else. Around 2007, um, towards the end of 2007 and started an exit just to sell basically my, um, my shares in the business.

Um, the deal took, um, uh, about seven, eight, nearly nine months to complete. Um, and purely by chance, I signed. Um, with the lawyers on September the ninth, 2008. So that was my exit official on September the ninth and Lehmann brothers crashed on September the 15th. So five, six days later, um, you know, I'm fairly confident that deal wouldn't have gone through.

Um, because you know, the world collapsed. Um, as, as we all know, as part of lemon, but it's going down. So, um, I think, you know, the, the proverb around, you know, cats have nine lives. I think I used the whole nine of my note. Um, uh, in September, 2008.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:10:54] And, um, since then, uh, you, you mentioned earlier, uh, referring to the, um, the quick note about the book that you wrote.

You said that business leaders understand that there's a need to innovate. Um, but why would you say that organizational culture is, is such an important facet of, of that innovation?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:11:12] Yeah, so the book came about in around 2000. Um. 15 2014, 2015. Um, um, as I said, my publisher, you know, they, they, one of the biggest global and business book publishers in the world, and they annually do a lot of surveys and reach out to all of that, the corporate world to say, look, you know, what things are you struggling with at the moment?

What do you need more thought leadership on? And. How to drive innovation and build innovation. Culture was one of the themes from their research. So I think the, the tone from the business community at that time was, you know, we know we need to innovate. We get, you know, the whole language around, you know, disrupt or die and all, all of the things that, um, were part of common vernacular around innovation.

They got all that. They just didn't have enough information on how to actually do it. So, um, you know, my work really has always been built on the principle of, of the things you've just mentioned. Design thinking, outcome driven, innovation, empathy, you know, really understanding people. And when you come from a creative background and a design background, the way that you collaborate and work together as teams, you.

Um, when you're a CEO, when you lead an organization lap, you, you fundamentally understand how important collaboration teams, groups of people are, and ultimately culture. Um, and that's why we focus the book purely on, um, on culture. And if you, you know, even even at the time, a lot of the research we did was starting to show the organizations.

We're focusing on culture there. We're focusing on the front end of trying to innovate and trying to create new products because they were reacting to the recession we were in. They were reacting to what happened in 2008 with Lehman brothers. But as we've seen over the years, uh, of the past few years, most of those organizations have realized that their investment innovation hasn't paid off.

So, you know, despite accelerators and labs and teams, and. You know, huge amounts of split money being spent teaching people about lean or you know, how to be intrepeneurs. All of that hasn't paid off. Um, and we, we now know that, um. Organizations where it hasn't paid off, it's because they haven't changed what happens on a day to day basis, right?

If you look at the latest McKinsey survey, it shows something like, don't quote me on the number a few days ago since I read it, but it shows something like 90 something percent of senior execs say they're still not satisfied with how their organizations are innovating or, or their innovation performance, and.

What we, the reason for that is that it's this focus on all the other things, apart from the fabric of the organization. So they haven't changed culture, they haven't changed behaviors and routines and what happens on the, on a day to day basis. Um, that really is why culture is so important.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:14:28] Is that, um, do you find that most.

Low performing management teams or organizations do a lot of changes that are visible and maybe not that many changes that are invisible. Am I understanding you correct there? Um,

**Cris Beswick:** [00:14:43] so what I mean by that is, let me probably put it in a, in a, in a way that's more easily understood. There's been a huge amount, we all know that's been a huge amount of innovation theater.

So, um, you know, lots of, um. Well from innovation work that's very visible to people. Um, that looks as though the organization is very mature in terms of its approach to innovation. But actually there's been very, very little impact from all that. What we're now seeing is those organizations realizing that.

Um, you know, spinning up innovation labs and accelerators and hubs and all of that kind of activity looks great when you're looking in at those organizations, but hasn't really changed the way the organization operates, the way it looks for problems, the way it tackles problems. And the way it solves those and build solutions, I.

E. the way ultimately innovate. Um, so there's been a lot of noise and work and theater around innovation, but very few companies can tangibly say that their investment in innovation has paid off. Um, what we're now seeing is that those organizations have got everything in place apart from the culture and the leadership component, which is predominantly what, um, what we work on with them on.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:16:00] That's a beautiful, uh, clarification there. And, um. something that I find great about, uh, you know, this conversation and this interview is, um, that both you and steward, you're both experienced in the, in a, in, uh, in the innovation space, uh, while I was a recent graduate, um, obviously newer. Um, and, and innovation can be hard.

It can be frustrating. So what are some actionable steps or advice that you would give to people who are one. Just starting their innovation journey and to, to those who have been in the innovation space for a while and feel like they might have exhausted their innovation potential by now.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:16:41] Hmm. Well, I think the first off, let me answer the second bit first because.

You know, that fatigue that you mentioned, you know, you know, I've been in my organization several years, I've been trying to champion and drive innovation, but it doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Um, and I am now, you know, am I exhausted in terms of the amount of effort that I'm putting in? You know, if, if, as a leader, we start to hear that we've got to be incredibly worried because those people that, um.

That put that amount of effort into trying to shape the future of an organization that are incredibly rare. And you know, if people like that start to feel exhausted, then organizations all over the world should, should be really, really scared because. Um, you know, we can all employ people to do jobs and perform roles and comply with the, um, you know, with their employment contracts and their specific obligations around their role and et cetera, et cetera.

But innovation takes more than that, right? It takes, um, what I call the willing contribution. You know, you can't contractually force people to be passionate and creative and want to challenge the organization and want to do more. Um, so for leaders out there that are aware of people like that, no. My advice is get a grip on that situation really quickly because those are the people that are going to help push the organization forward.

For people out there listening that are thinking that, you know, those things, you know, they've been doing this for awhile and you know, the organization isn't really passionate about it. You know, there, there's two things. Find an organization. The Israeli passionate about it and demonstrate to the organization that you are passionate about innovation and want to solve things, wants to challenge the organization.

Because the way that, if you think about the way that we're shifting now in terms of the skills and the contribution that organizations need from people, we're going to need those passionate entrepreneurs more than ever. Um, so, and then to answer your first question, for people that are starting now in this space that are passionate about innovation, I think the best thing to do is understand the innovation isn't a thing that you do.

Um, and it's not a thing that you are, or a thing that you have as an organization, but innovation is an outcome. You know, innovation is the end result of. Lots and lots of hard work, lots of skills, frameworks, methodologies, approaches, behavior, all of those things, and the end result of all of that work, you know, really understanding customers, identifying a genuine, deep systemic need or an opportunity and taking that all the way through to its hopefully successful conclusion at that point.

That's when you've innovated. That's when you've done something that's innovative. That outcome is only really when we should be labeling things innovative or saying that we are, we've done something inverted. An understanding that approach and understanding all of the things that innovation requires, um, I think is still quite a rare commodity in the corporate world.

There are people that understand bits of that process. Um, but if you can demonstrate as an employee, you know, um, that you understand exactly what it takes to do innovative things, that's an incredibly valuable person to an organization. So if you are starting out in this space, just, you know, soak up every bit of insight around what it takes to go from.

How you find problems and how you understand what customers need right through to being able to measure the impact of the solution. And if you can understand everything through that process, that's an incredibly valuable person to any organization on the planet.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:20:54] Man. I am, I'm feeling, I'm feeling so inspired.

Just listening to that. Um, cause I'm, I, I remember back to, um, back to school, um, where people were saying that I'm not innovative. And, uh, what's you're saying here is really. You know, soak up, um, talk witness, soak up information, talk with people, and uh, and kind of learn your path and bring your special sauce into the blend of ideas and conversations.

And eventually, um, if you're passionate about. Building something extraordinary with other people, you will find that, that you definitely are in evidence.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:21:29] Yeah. Yeah. What you just said that is really interesting, right? Um, the, the, the, the w the word you used was if you're passionate about, you know, doing things and solving problems with other people, right?

That, that one phrase is really important. Um, we don't live in a world now where there are lone innovators. Right where there are Mavericks who, you know, crazy inventors that just go off and do things in isolation. The world of work is about creative collaboration. And if, if you can be, and if you are passionate about working with or helping others solve problems, then that's a fantastic mindset to have.

Um, and, and if you can just work on that bet that creative collaboration makes you, you know. Think about how many people are gonna want you on your team, on a team or an innovation program. Um, if you can bring that kind of perspective and that passion and those kinds of skills.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:22:30] Exactly. And, uh, one, you know, one side of, you know, me searching for jobs or I have a job now, but for other young innovators that are, um, actively searching for, um, for a place to work, they are more and more.

Trying to see or determine whether or not an organization has the appropriate culture for them. Um, so that they can feel like, Oh, here I can grow here. I can be challenged every day and in a positive way, et cetera. And the other side of that coin is the employer. They need to create this organizational culture that attracts these kinds of people, these extraordinary, uh, human beings.

What are. The greatest challenges for the employer in developing the appropriate organizational culture. Um, and what can they do to overcome those challenges?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:23:22] Hmm, that's a great question. And your, you know, the, the, the way you introduce that question is really important. Um, you know, you asked earlier about your, why is culture so important and what you've just said there highlights one of the reasons why, you know, it's super important now more than ever.

Um. Take, take this as an example. So this is something that I, I, um, I share with, with senior leaders and boards, if, you know, if we get onto the conversation about this, imagine a world where you no longer interview. The young people that are joining your organization. You know, traditionally we as senior managers and leaders, you know, we have the power to grant a young person a job, you know, or not just a young person, anyone, right?

But if we're talking about new talent, we traditionally have had the power to grant that young person a job to grant them the start on the ladder, you know, to kick off their career. Um, and typically we do it from that perspective. I have a job. You as a candidate, you need to prove to me that you are better than all the other people that I'm going to interview.

And if you do a good enough job of that, I'm going to give you the job. The challenge is now what I say to every senior leadership team I work with is the tables have now turned. Most culprits are. You know, not necessarily losing the war on talent, but they're definitely not winning the war on talent and the reality of the world that we're in and rapidly moving even deeper into as those talented young people who understand the world so much better than we do.

Um, we have to know. Take on board that they are interviewing goes, those young people will choose whether they want to come and work for us. It's not the other way round anymore. And that means the job of leaders, um, and the culture that they build and the culture that is able to be communicated internally, but more so externally that says, we're so progressive.

We know we are going to shape the future. We're purpose-driven and look how amazing all our people say it is to work here. We're solving really systemic, important problems. You know, every day in this organization and on an annual basis, here are some of the things that we've done to make the world a better place.

And if you can work for us, you have the opportunity to do that, right? There aren't many companies in the world that can communicate. Externally, as I've just sort of, you know, communicated. But that's the challenge that organizations who are wanting to drive innovation and build a culture of innovation, that's what it helps them, um, do it helps them attract really amazing, talented young people.

Um, and the ones that do that better than everyone else will be the ones that out in a vape. Everyone else. Um, the challenge is to, once you're the main bit of your question is. That's a huge turnaround for many big corporates that are still in existence in the world today, and because of their size and the inertia that that being established for decades or even hundreds of years has.

And it means that very, it takes a long time to change the fabric of those organizations to be able to create a place where you can articulate it in the way that I did a few minutes ago. And. And predominantly, I think that's a leadership issue. I think it's about senior teams needing to understand better how to lead for innovation, um, and the culture that that requires.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:27:07] This is some awesome food for thought. A lot of great advice. And, um, the, you know, this is an incredibly interesting topic that I think that we could have another interview later on about. Um, Cris, thank you so much for answering those questions. Um, I think a stewardess says, sitting with a few more questions for you, so I'm just going to hand the Mike back over to him.

Go ahead, Stewart.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:27:33] Thank you very much, Dennis. And it is a, it is in fact, true. I have some, so many questions now. I mean, I'm really excited, uh, Cris by this conversation and, uh, and not the least of my excitement comes from the fact that I think you are a great blessing to those who are true innovators.

Um, you are speaking a language that, um, those people who, who regularly challenged the status quo, who regularly look for. A new ways to add value and, and challenge the organization to deliver them. That's actually not something that, um, is necessarily, uh. I would say rewarded in some of these large corporates.

And in fact, uh, innovation culture is always seemed to me to be a lip service, uh, in many of these companies, however they, those, but as you said, if they're, if they actually are just making it an innovation theater, if they are just giving it lip service, they're probably going to file, fall behind. Um, those companies that are more innovative.

So Leah, let's, so let's look at this in, in, in practice right. When do you have one of the, you know, you go in, you, you're advising a company, maybe you're providing consulting services

to them, you know, what do you face with them? Um, how do you get them to get over the fact that, well, maybe we just want to make this look good, but, uh, you say, no, you need to, it needs to be more than just something that looks pretty, it needs to be something that delivers an outcome.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:29:06] Um, so the first thing is, um. You know, just, just as it happens, the, the, the, the, um, the advisory firm that Dan and I run, we specifically, um, renamed it outcome. Um, so alcohol narrative is around driving those outcomes. Um, and we've, we've been, we've actually been quite specific and not, um. Yeah. Not having the innovation, even in the name, uh, of the, you know, we didn't want to be, have our consultancy, you know, XYZ innovation or something like that.

You know, we, we wanted to move away from, from using the word. And part of the reason for that is to try and, um, show senior leaders and get them to understand that innovation is an outcome and not a thing. So that's the, all the, all the theater. Um, and you know, the labs and things like that, you know, all of the things that have soaked up millions and millions of dollars for many corporates around the world, you know, demonstrably, you know, and this is in a, in a boardroom, in, in a kickoff meeting.

Give me a list of outcomes. Like, tell me, you know, if, if you're doing okay, right? One, you know, why are we sat here? Why have you called us? Because. You know, you must want us, you know, you've asked us to come and talk to you for a reason, right? So now we're here. Don't tell us that everything's okay. Right?

And you don't need to change. So there's a demonstrable reason that you've, you've asked us to come and talk to you. Um, and my expectation is that that reason is because the outcomes that the organization and those senior teams. Um, really, one haven't materialized. So when you have, um, a very Frank and firm conversation with senior teams, in my experience, it's not that difficult to get them to understand that.

Um, yes, actually I get the point about relevance and we already know that we are less relevant than we were a few years ago. And yes, I get the point about. Yeah. You've put us on the spot and you've asked for demonstrable outcomes. Well, actually, we can't really point to any. Um, so it's just about challenging those senior teams who in many cases, very, very rarely get challenged, um, on questions like that.

Mmm.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:31:26] Yeah. So let's, let's look at that a little bit more in depth there. So what I took away from your answer. Is that it? It might not be dramatic enough. A problem that, yeah, we're not innovating, but we're not really in trouble here. Right. And so there's no real reason to just jump up and down and try to break everything in your culture so that you can become more open to things that are new.

Yeah. And that's really all this is. It's just being open to. To changes and to, you know, to adjust them being willing to, to make some, some bets every now and then. Uh, so, but it can be too late. So what, is there a way to, to explain to them, you know, maybe show them examples that say, you know, here's a company that.

That was doing just fine, but then it didn't make the next move and their competitor did, and then they were out.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:32:20] Yeah. I mean, you know, look at the, the, the world over. We've seen, you know, dozens and dozens in, in, uh, specifically in the last sort of seven, eight, nine years, dozens of organizations who've fallen by the wayside.

You know, global brands who were. You know, one time, you know, King of the Hill, you know, look at the Nokias of the world. For example. You know, they were almost the Apple of the, of, of their day, you know, you know, late nineties, early two thousands they, you know, they were one of the best brands in the world.

So how does an organization like that fall? Um. You know so far and so fast, will it fall? It fell far and it fell fast because it didn't remain relevant and the world moved on. Now the challenge is none of us have got a crystal ball, but what we can do is change our approach to strategy. One of the issues with most culprits and most senior leadership teams is.

Because they don't understand how innovation works and all of the, the ecosystem that you tap into when you really try start to embed innovation and the frameworks and the approaches you, that approach teaches us to have a completely different view of strategy. The challenge with most senior teams is they're still looking strategically, too far out.

So by the time that that horizon, that timeframe emerges, um, and they're halfway through rolling out a program or a piece of change or a product, the world's moved on. All right. You know, we, we, we know all the data that we can gather and not necessarily meet we book. Um. Consultants is all over the world, constantly gather data on this.

You know, annual global innovations surveys from many of the big consultancies were consistently showing that the large culprits are still taking too long to get new products and services to market. You know, since some of that data suggests. Some of those, some products that big corporates are bringing to market have taken four to five years to bring to market.

Well, that was all right, 10 20 years ago. But it's not okay now. So, you know, it's easy to demonstrate the impact of not remaining relevant and not being able to operate at the, at the right pace. Um, and when you can demonstrate that senior teams, it does. . The penny drops with the majority of senior teams.

Okay,

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:34:49] great. So let's, let's go into one of these companies that, um, one or more of these companies that you've worked with or you've seen that weren't able to move. Fast enough, and you were advising them and saying, Hey, look, here are things you can do here. Steps you should take. And what was there? The ones that didn't work, the ones that really couldn't accept it, what was the ultimately the, the barrier for them?

What was holding them back and, and the challenges that were just too hard for them to overcome.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:35:20] Um, in every instance, in every single instance. Senior teams, leadership's ability to recognize that they need to change before starting to change the organization. But in almost every instance, the excuses, the organization is too hard to change.

Um, so the, the, you know, that's about, um, that's a lack of empathy. It's a lack of self awareness and it's a lack of. Enough emotional intelligence to understand that I, as an individual leader and us as a collective leadership team, we were the conductors of the orchestra. Um, and we, we need to get, you know, we need to get our stuff together first.

We need to. Understand how to lead for innovation, and we need to recognize that that is demonstrably different than generic good practice management and leadership, which is what we've been taught to do for the past 10 2030 years. We need to recognize that if we as a senior team don't make the shift, then the organization won't be able to shift either.

And in almost every instance it's been that leadership challenge. It's the barrier

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:36:42] that makes complete sense. If you flip that around and you say some of these were actually able to do it, is it just that they, that they were able to either change internally or did they maybe, were they already in a place where they were willing to change and now they just needed tools?

What do you think is a works on the other side?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:36:59] It's, it's willingness to change and recognize it. Most of the time when people like me get brought into an organization, it's because the senior team have said, we need to take action. We need to do something about the position we're in. And you know, to the point you made a while ago, we're actually okay at the moment, but we're clever enough to understand that that is a very fortunate position.

That gives us a period of grace that that the fact that we're all right at the minute, it gives us some air cover and it gives us some time to be able to prepare for what's gonna come next and what we need to do next. So they, they capitalize on the privilege position that they're in by not necessarily having a massive burning platform at that moment.

The switched on ones I've worked with. Capitalize on that and say, let's start to change because we know that some things come in, we know the world's changing and we know we need to remain relevant, so let's start working on it now because it's not two workshops and Cris doing a keynote and we're all finished.

It's months and months and months and months and months of work. Those are the ones that are successful, but that is a senior team that understands and is willing to put that worker.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:38:17] Yeah. Brilliant. Um, that makes complete sense as well, that, uh, you need to address this before it be before it's a crisis.

Okay. You want

**Cris Beswick:** [00:38:26] me to get started? You think how long it takes to build leadership capability in these areas to change mindset, to change behavior, to start to, you know, we designed some of the fabric of an organization culturally, right? It's months and months, if not years for many organizations. Um, when, when the problem arises and when it's on the horizon, the timeframe is then already too short to make the kind of, um, and you know, for, for an intervention that's, that, that, that really needs to happen.

The timeframe is already too short. The clock's already ticking. Um, so getting ahead of that is really important. And a lot of organizations are, you know, the S the sun setting. Right? And that's, that's still. Trying to, you know, that's still trying to do 200 mile an hour, you know, towards the horizon. Um, and for many of them it's, it's going to be too late.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:39:22] Okay. So are there specific companies out there, global brands that you think are doing well at this time in terms of either changing culture or having culture that is open to innovation? You know, these are companies we could, we could aspire to be, or we could admire or just at least learn, you know, something about.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:39:42] So I'll give you, you know, there's a few, uh, scope the companies that we're working with at the moment that. Uh, still on the journey, you know, and people mind listening to these names and go, well, actually I know them and I don't think they're massively innovative. Well, the point is, um, these companies are huge.

Um, um, but what we're seeing from these particular clients, um, is they are putting everything in place and are getting things in place and are. Making the right preparation for changing the organization in pursuit of all this stuff. Um, one of them's ING, um, who I mentioned earlier. Um, another great organization to look at, um, in terms of how mature their approaches to innovation is.

Telefonica. Um,

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:40:33] okay, excellent. Uh, I've got, uh, I've got, uh, uh, kind of a follow on question, um, that. We hadn't talked about before, but I wanted to bring up now. And, and that is, um, when you look at a list of global brands that you know, that are the brands today, the top 100 brands today or something, and then you go back 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 a hundred years, you know, you don't really see many of the same brands.

But then when you do. When you do see a brand that's there today that was there a hundred years ago or 50 years ago, even. That's astonishing. Right? And then you want, it makes you want to look at that company and say, well, how did you manage to last this long? You did you just have such a great moat, or were you actually changing along the way?

Were you morphing so that you're, no, you're not the same company, right? It's not the same company that it was a hundred years ago. So in those cases, I'm assuming there's an innovation culture, or at least some ability to, to shift. Is there a way to. Test that. Is there a way to maybe look, you ha you said you had an, um, uh,

**Cris Beswick:** [00:41:44] innovation maturity and maturity assessment.

Yeah. Right. So, so the challenge with that is it, you know, we would have needed to have assessed them, you know, a decade ago or more to be able to then say, you know, what's shifted? What's changed? What's remained? You know, what have you got better at, you know, in what areas have you matured your books? Um, but that's how we assess organizations.

At the minute.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:42:07] Right? So if I, but if I'm saying here, I'm sitting here, let's just talk about our portfolio, right? We got our retirement portfolio.

If I'm putting money into a company that I expect to have to be there 10 1520 years, let's look at Dennis, right? And he's just getting started. He needs to start investing for his portfolio.

So he has a retirement portfolio waiting for him. When he's looking at these companies, he would be wise to invest in those that are going to be around. And not only just around, but thriving. Are there clues if we listen to, uh, you know, the, the quarterly report, uh, you know, and they are, the management comes on and gives a statement.

They answered some questions. Can we learn from that? Are we learning from keynotes? Are we learning from things that they're writing? What clues do we have?

**Cris Beswick:** [00:42:55] Yeah, I think, you know, if you, you know, if you look at that, that sort of stock to trading and allergy, you know, what the guys in that will do is that constantly seeking out information.

You know, they're looking at trends specifically. And if you, if you look at some of those big global brands, um. And then do you reverse engineer? Why are they still around today? You know, in, in, in the face of the, um, the, the fortune 500. You know, how many of, I don't know that the, the figures off the top of my head, but how few of the fortune 500 still exist today, you know, but the ones that, do, you know, why are the why of they, why are they still performing?

Well. W when you know full 175 of their peers have gone or whatever it is, and if you reverse engineer their, their lifespan, what have they done and how have they, you have to find out how have they stayed relevant so. If you look at every decade, like what new things did they, they bring out? What new products did they bring out in the, was there a change in CEO?

Was there a, did they adopt in, you know, in any, any decade? Did they adopt a completely new leadership style or cultural style of management style? You know, what were these guys doing? And you can map all that out. And if you look at someone like, um, do you know the brand? Um, I don't know how you pronounce it, but, um, or higher.

The,

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:44:23] okay. I'm not familiar with them, but

**Cris Beswick:** [00:44:26] I think that China, Chinese, um, uh, I read an article the other day, it's something, you know, if everyone Googles it, um, their CEO, um, has completely transformed the organization. Like. Don't quote me on the number, but like six, seven, eight maybe 10 times in his tenure, he's been the CEO for decades, but he is consistently and regularly, completely transformed the organization, culturally leadership style, everything.

And. You know, the best analogy is, look, look at how Madonna has reinvented herself every decade, or maybe even, maybe even twice a decade in, you know, in the, in the eighties and nineties and two thousands right? But she's done that and she's remained absolutely relevant. And she's made that, that, that transition and, and reinvented herself to stay absolutely relevant with where we are in the world with the type of music, with the way culture shifted with the way society has moved and the things that now doesn't value in the new things it does.

And she's been probably the most successful artist in the world at reinventing yourself and staying relevant. That's what we have to do as organizations. Because when the world shifts, when society shifts, when consumer habits and demands and requirements and needs shift, we have to do, as organizations shift at the same pace.

You know, we have to take a leaf out of Madonna's book and we have to reinvent ourselves every time the world makes a change. Those organizations you mentioned have done that. In various ways and in their ways, um, to enable them to stay relevant. And, um, the, the, the, the CEO, Hey, Ohio, however you pronounce it, you know, the, the guys that like Harvard and all the top business experts in the world, you know, they weren't in, you know, most of their work and the things they write is based on how this guys transform the organization and why.

Why he's done it a certain time and what the catalysts were and how he did it. Um, so if the best business minds in the world and looking people like that, and to learn about why these, this guy's done it and how he's done it, and you know, we should be studying organizations like that as well.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:46:46] That's fair.

Uh, I'm going to assume also though, that it's going to be very difficult to get access to the information that is ultimately, um, at work.

They are the,

yeah, they're really the, the, the successes. So I've worked in some companies that were extremely innovative, large made changes, dramatic changes along the way that, um, were successful up to a point where they.

Apparently no longer were able to make those kinds of kinds of changes, but when I was there, very successful at just completely blowing everything up and starting over. And I would say that my experience with that, and I'm going to point to sun Microsystems in the early nineties. Yeah. And that that company was growing so fast at the time and was making some pretty dramatic changes while it was competing with Microsoft.

And those changes were actually quite successful, and it became a major brand up until the point where it really kind of lost its way. And I'm going to attribute some of that to the original leadership, but I would also argue that it's going to be very difficult for someone to go in and sort out exactly what happened.

You'd have to do a lot of interviews.

Some of the decisions and, and not just listen to one or two people, but really listen to a broad spectrum. I've also worked in some really large companies that just didn't seem to, uh, have the ability or willingness to make those kinds of changes. And they weren't always large than times. Hey, we're small.

And it really, I agree with you that it does come down to leadership. Yeah, I mean, do you have any, any, anyway, go ahead.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:48:27] I was just going to say, you know, as an example of some Microsystems, you know, and trying to compete against Microsoft, you know, look at what Sacha Dell has done at Microsoft over the past four or five years.

I mean, that is, you know, to take an organization like that, you know, that is a behind them off of an organization, right. You know, these are some of the biggest companies in the world, super complex, you know, look at all the different facets and components of organizations of that size. And yet. What he's done there.

Um, and the, and the, the success that he's had over the past four or five years. Um, and it's not, you know, if the story isn't all rosy, you know, and I know. People inside Microsoft. So you know, there's an inside track on some of these things. Um, which means this isn't all a bed of roses, but look at the things he's done around growth mindset, around shifting leadership capability around innovation, around reframing how senior people look at failure and risk.

Uh, you know, and we know from leadership teams that looking at failure and risk and getting things wrong, that impacting core business, all of those things are in many ways some of the biggest barriers to leaders. Understanding how to lead for innovation. And what Sachin Odell has done at Microsoft is not said we're going to build a culture of innovation, but he's built a culture of learning.

Through their focus on ground growth mindset. And the byproduct of that is leaders understanding more and being more comfortable with the behavior that leads to innovation without saying, we're going to teach you how to innovate per se. Um, I think it's, it's really, really clever. And so there are examples of, of brilliant pieces of work like that.

Um, you know, if, if you go out and look for them.

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:50:19] Well, excellent. Thank you very, very much, Cris, for everything you've been able to share with us and you've been willing to share with us today. Um, you are, like I said before, a blessing for true innovators out there and, uh, we should all be thankful that you sacrificed your nine lives.

Yes. So that you,

so you could be in position, uh, to, to be out there telling the story now, and I'm looking forward to, uh, to reading your book and, uh, and digging into culture. So, uh, Dennis, do we have anything else? Uh, are we, you're gonna wrap up

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:50:51] while I, I'm super happy. I have a lean back in my chair here and I've enjoyed the conversation very much.

Cris, like Stewart said, thank you so much. You're, you're a blessing to do the innovation space here.

**Cris Beswick:** [00:51:03] It's my pleasure. Thanks. Thanks to you and to edison365 for the inviting me on the, on the program. I've just been a

pleasure

**Stewart Noyce:** [00:51:13] Excellent. Thank you very much.

Thanks guys. Bye.

**Dennis Hoel:** [00:51:17] Thank you for joining us on today's episode of the edison365 podcast. We certainly enjoy the conversation and hope that you're left with a more knowledge of the innovation space. We have more exciting guests coming up, so make sure to like, subscribe and share this podcast with your network. Also, if there's anyone you'd like for us to interview next, make sure to leave that in a comment or send us an email to the email address in the description.

Thanks again to our guests and we're looking forward to seeing you in the next one.