

Hummingbird Humanity

an LGBTQ+ owned business

Hummingbird Hour

Building Cultures of Belonging

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00;00;00;11 - 00;00;30;27

Brian McComak

Happy Tuesday, everyone. Happy New Year, happy 2020 to happy. Hey, we're we're in another world of COVID with Omicron and I'm with all of you as we navigate this. Ongoing new chapter of COVID, sometimes, I'd say. What's the post-pandemic world going to look like, and I'm like, Oh, wait, we're still in the pandemic world, so I do

00;00;31;19 - 00;00;42;25

Brian McComak

know I try to find some levity in it. And but I also want to acknowledge that I know it's been painful for many of us, and I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy and well.

00;00;43;23 - 00;01;10;02

Brian McComak

So welcome to Hummingbird Hour, which is our conversation series where we amplify the voices of others and amplify the voices of the unheard to and share wonderful stories and bring conversations to all of you. And that will hopefully help us learn and grow and make the world a better place for everyone and particularly make workplaces better for

00;01;10;02 - 00;01;33;13

Brian McComak

everyone. So I am delighted to and to welcome Tanya Wilkins as our guest today. La and I met last year and had through a mutual friend. Actually, I think we may have met through Bernadette Smith, who was my last guest of Hummingbird Hour before the holiday season.

00;01;34;03 - 00;01;52;07

Brian McComak

So we'll come back to Bernadette here in a few minutes because I want to make sure I talk about Bernadette Spock as well for a minute. But Latanya has also written a book leading below the surface, so we're going to talk a bit about this book and how we can build the psychologically safe relationships with with people

00;01;52;07 - 00;02;08;28

Brian McComak

that are different than us. So I'm delighted that Latanya is here with us today, so I'm going to stop the sharing now and talk a little bit more about Latanya and the the then Bernadette. But Bethany, I want to give you a chance to say hello.

00;02;10;15 - 00;02;17;24

LaTonya Wilkins

Hi, it's great to see everyone and it's great to be here with you. I actually think we were introduced through Jennifer Brown.

00;02;18;14 - 00;02;19;07

Brian McComak

Oh, Jennifer.

00;02;19;09 - 00;02;41;13

LaTonya Wilkins

Bernadette came later. I think it was her because I remember having a phone call with her and 1:19 and then pretending to be me was 2019 or 2020. And then I think, Bernadette, I think we figured out that we both know Bernadette, who just wrote a book called Inclusive 360.

00;02;41;18 - 00;02;44;22

LaTonya Wilkins

And so, yeah, so she's also a local Chicagoan.

00;02;45;01 - 00;03;05;05

Brian McComak

So we're all that. We throw up the visuals here. So the 360 so proven solutions for an equitable organization. So if you're looking for some, some great reading, Inclusive City 360 is a great one, and I love that we're doing the the name dropping of Jennifer Brown, who introduced us.

00;03;05;05 - 00;03;30;02

Brian McComak

She's one of our celebrity DIY colleagues, and I know for me, Jennifer was such a big advocate for for me. As I made this step into the the world of DIY, she really was a mentor for me, her and her team at Jennifer Brown Consulting.

00;03;30;10 - 00;03;42;26

Brian McComak

They they did a lot to help me learn and grow and actually were one of my. They worked with me as a as a vendor partner when I was at Tapestry, which was my last in-house role in corporate life.

00;03;43;04 - 00;03;53;19

Brian McComak

So, so really a big fan and grateful for the work that Jennifer done and the time that Jennifer gave me and the work that the Jennifer Brown team does. And I know that's actually true for Jennifer and for a lot of people.

00;03;53;19 - 00;04;00;10

Brian McComak

So yes, she is a she is a celebrity name in some ways in the DIY space, but she does a lot to support others. How did you meet Jennifer?

00;04;01;25 - 00;04;34;00

LaTonya Wilkins

Oh, I got her through. I think the publisher so press and so I did a similar kind of interview like like video chat with her and Jen, and then me and Jennifer ended up having a chat after that and it was when I was sober was when I was starting.

00;04;34;00 - 00;04;48;15

LaTonya Wilkins

I think I'd been like, You're one or two in my business. And so we chatted. And yeah, it was. It was a nice chat. We didn't, really. It was kind of a personal chat. It was nice. Yeah. So I didn't really know much of her until we met.

00;04;48;15 - 00;04;55;09

LaTonya Wilkins

And so it was great to just hear about the business she built up and all of that as well.

00;04;56;05 - 00;05;20;29

Brian McComak

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And I cannot think of the name of that conversation. They invited me to join as well. So, yeah, oh, it's so for those of you who are listening or watching where we're talking about Jennifer Brown, who's D.I, diversity, equity and inclusion leader and thought leader and someone who is really has really made a difference

00;05;20;29 - 00;05;46;04

Brian McComak

in my career and someone we're watching you and I are both fortunate. Snow and Jenn T Grace, who is also a mutual friend of ours, who is the founder of Publish Your Publisher Purpose Press, which is a hybrid publishing business that focuses on similar to the commitment that we have at Hummingbird, of amplifying the voices of the

00;05;46;04 - 00;06;01;02

Brian McComak

unheard and bringing it to the bookshelves and to readers around the world. Stories that haven't been told yet and need to be told so. So I'm glad that you got to work with the publisher, your purpose team. I actually did their their workshop to learn about writing the book.

00;06;02;01 - 00;06;17;15

Brian McComak

And as the tiny nose I am and some of you may have heard, I wrote a book too, and gentle grace and publisher purpose press play that played a role in in my journey in writing that book. And I learned a lot from Jennifer Jen.

00;06;18;20 - 00;06;32;29

Brian McComak

Whippy. And from Jennifer Brown, of course, as well. So I'm grateful to Ted that their role that we both had a chance to cross paths and that we got introduced through Jennifer Brown. And we find, of course, this world and we have lots of friends in common.

00;06;32;29 - 00;06;46;11

Brian McComak

So. So I have to know why. Well, actually, before we dove into about the book, you know, I skipped the Bryan Reading the bio portion of this. So Lehtonen, do you want to share a little bit about who you are?

00;06;46;14 - 00;06;47;15

Brian McComak

Yeah, absolutely.

00;06;48;06 - 00;07;06;19

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah, I won't bore you with a long introduction, so I'm going to tell you, I ran a company called Change Coaches, and we work with organizations to create a culture of belonging through coaching and workshops and also customized it customize what we call culture academy.

00;07;06;20 - 00;07;25;11

LaTonya Wilkins

So that's like the corporate side of business. And then I also run a speaking business as well. Under the Letendre will get stuff coming out. Also run some. I also do one on one coaching, do that tangible stuff, company executive coaching, credential executive coaching under that as well.

00;07;25;21 - 00;07;48;04

LaTonya Wilkins

And that I am an author of a book on the surface at both real and psychologically safe relationships with people who are different from you. Thank you, Brian. I have all these these tabs here because this is actually the final proof of my book that I had gotten in the mail before I actually opened the book up

00;07;48;04 - 00;08;11;22

LaTonya Wilkins

live for book sales. So these are like my my final changes, and some of these changes probably were a little bit obsessive, but that's the that's the story behind this book. So right now, I would say I'm spending most of my time on being an author, promoting my book, doing a lot of keynotes with companies for larger

00;08;11;22 - 00;08;34;07

LaTonya Wilkins

companies, smaller companies and also coaching a lot of companies I'm really excited about. 22, I think a lot of organizations are ready to take a deep look at their cultures, and that's what we hope people do. There's been a lot of surface things that have happened over the last year or so, and we're here to help companies

00;08;34;07 - 00;08;36;03

LaTonya Wilkins

get deeper. So that's a little bit about me.

00;08;37;10 - 00;08;54;18

Brian McComak

I love that. I love that, thank you for sharing and, you know, I love that. And what I. There's so many things I love and I, as you know, I love the message in the book, but I want to just acknowledge the this gig economy that we have all live in now where we're like, OK, so here's

00;08;54;18 - 00;09;08;28

Brian McComak

my speaker hat, OK, and I'm going, have my coach hat, I'm going to have my consultant that we all put on lots of different, different hats. And you know, I know I find it rewarding because it gives me a chance to to do a variety of things that I'm passionate and excited about while trying to make a

00;09;08;28 - 00;09;28;16

Brian McComak

difference. I know that before we became we, we went live. You and I were talking about the reality of the world that we're all faced with today and navigating this this pandemic and COVID and the Omicron resurgence of the virus, which is impacting so many people.

00;09;28;26 - 00;09;32;27

Brian McComak

How have you just navigated the last two years as a human?

00;09;36;05 - 00;09;51;02

LaTonya Wilkins

So that's a really interesting question, I mean, it started I say that in 2020, the early 2020, I still had a full time job. Although I was doing a lot of speaking, I was doing a lot of coaching.

00;09;51;02 - 00;10;10;09

LaTonya Wilkins

I was writing the book. I started kind of writing it mentally in my head, but I had nothing on paper. March of 2020, I did two keynotes and then those were the last keynotes I did in person until December of 2021.

00;10;10;13 - 00;10;28;24

LaTonya Wilkins

I think I like I said, I think I had a few and last month. And so how have I been navigating this? Well? My life has changed a lot with this pandemic and like, like others, I also had a great realization and do that great realization.

00;10;29;21 - 00;10;51;03

LaTonya Wilkins

I ended up going part time with my job and then that ended up completely on my own. Writing a book I ended up I had already been accustomed to doing things from home, and then I have a really strong instructional design and leadership development background.

00;10;51;03 - 00;11;07;27

LaTonya Wilkins

So I had to facilitate my for many years now. So it wasn't like a huge change for me. But now I will say that I'm excited to get back on the road. I think with when you are a keynote speaker.

00;11;08;22 - 00;11;24;19

LaTonya Wilkins

Like for me, I get my energy from my audience, and so I'm really excited to get back out there. But the last thing I'll leave this with is that I have all the shots. I think I'm getting my last shot, my booster on Thursday.

00;11;24;19 - 00;11;40;26

LaTonya Wilkins

And then you just got to live with this. Brian, you said something earlier about post-pandemic world. I don't know if that exists. I think that this is going to be this is going to be the future and I am a climatologist, I should say self proclaimed.

00;11;40;26 - 00;11;42;16

LaTonya Wilkins

I mean, I don't have the degrees to match.

00;11;42;16 - 00;11;43;22

Brian McComak

We'll have an Easter vacation.

00;11;43;29 - 00;11;54;04

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah, but global warming is coming and our world is going to change and this is what it's going to look like. There's going to be things that happen that you're going to say, Well, we don't have to do this like five years ago.

00;11;54;05 - 00;12;08;21

LaTonya Wilkins

Well, I'm telling you the world's going to continue to change and the pandemic is part of that. And I think it's just the beginning of what we're going to see in the future where our lives are going to be different and that's not going to be determined by us.

00;12;08;21 - 00;12;10;01

LaTonya Wilkins

It's going to be determined by the planet.

00;12;10;19 - 00;12;30;11

Brian McComak

Yeah, yeah. I couldn't agree more. And I saw it actually. I saw one of the headlines that crossed my my, you know, my news out this morning was, I'm going to get I'm going to mention two numbers because I don't remember which one it was, but it was something it was either ten or 20 that in the

00;12;30;11 - 00;12;36;10

Brian McComak

last year the United States had, it was either ten or 21 billion dollar climate disasters in the last year.

00;12;36;12 - 00;12;40;00

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah, yeah. Just pick it up. This is our world.

00;12;40;12 - 00;12;54;17

Brian McComak

This is this is what we all live with. Yeah, and well, the you know, again, as I said earlier for just during my opening comments, I keep wanting to believe that there's going to be a post-pandemic world, but I fully agree with what you've just shared.

00;12;54;24 - 00;13;10;16

Brian McComak

But it is. It is not. There's the post isn't a reality. It is part of just who we are and how we live today. And you know, one thing I loved and again, for those of you who are with us, I certainly hope that you are safe and well and that your loved ones are safe and well

00;13;10;23 - 00;13;20;26

Brian McComak

. And if you're able to, I highly encourage you to get vaccinated. I too have all three shots, and it certainly has given me a lot of peace of mind to know that I have the shots and my mom and dad have their shots.

00;13;20;26 - 00;13;44;23

Brian McComak

My sister has their shots, so I encourage you to get vaccinated. You know, one thing that you started with, though, was it's it's interesting. I remember absolutely the last thing I did in person before the pandemic, I was in El Paso, Texas, working with the the queer community in El Paso and and facilitating the conversation with community

00;13;44;23 - 00;14;00;09

Brian McComak

members about how can we create safe spaces? And I was actually with the Jennifer Brown consulting team. So I still remember that so vividly, and I have built an affinity with that group of humans that I got to meet because we that was the last thing that many of us did together.

00;14;00;18 - 00;14;18;03

Brian McComak

And I've done one live event since then, which was this past November in Anaheim, and it was such a joy to be in-person again. So I hope that we can all be together again in person, you know, something that we're we're talking about right now, though, Latanya, we're, you know, reminds me of one of the core messages

00;14;18;03 - 00;14;33;27

Brian McComak

of your book. Here we were. You know, again, there's something as we were talking about earlier, is this this reality that workplaces don't invite real conversation? Like, I think some of this conversation would not have happened in workplaces two years ago.

00;14;33;27 - 00;14;43;26

Brian McComak

We'd be like, No, we got. We have some Excel spreadsheets to try to solve in some PowerPoint presentations to do, and we have some decisions to make and we need we got to make sure that we're hitting the bottom line.

00;14;43;26 - 00;14;59;23

Brian McComak

And the reality is humans are really impacted by what's happening in the world around us. And we've been talking about the pandemic. But there are so many aspects of who we are as humans that that we we can't put those things in the drawer when we walk into the office.

00;14;59;23 - 00;15;22;20

Brian McComak

Or, you know, as I mentioned, the analogy that I share a lot with when I'm delivering, you know, speeches or keynotes or training even training sessions is, you know, I remember 20 years ago when I, you know, 20 plus years ago when I walked into my first corporate job, nobody told me, Hey, take that coat off, which

00;15;22;20 - 00;15;36;01

Brian McComak

is which is represents your emotions and hang it up. But I knew I was supposed to hang up my emotions. And I knew I was supposed to put on the blue suits and the red tie and the white button down shirt and just go and be that robot human that fits the box.

00;15;36;10 - 00;15;46;07

Brian McComak

But that isn't that doesn't work for real people. So tell me like I know you well, let you sort of dove into this, but I know that that's that's a core part of what you talk about in your book.

00;15;47;15 - 00;16;07;21

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah, it's so interesting that you brought that up. So, you know, it's funny. I was in a conversation with someone yesterday, and this is someone that I've coached in the past and this is I got is he's like a high potential person in this large corporation and he's doing really well.

00;16;07;21 - 00;16;28;15

LaTonya Wilkins

He's got his first global assignment. And in my book, I talk about he's just read my book, and in my book I talk about below the surface leaders. I talk about different levels of leadership. I talk about. I talk about surface leaders, which are kind of what you're talking about, Brian, which I don't share anything.

00;16;28;22 - 00;16;45;01

LaTonya Wilkins

Don't bring any conversations to work. You know, we are going to be stuck in the dominant leadership standards right of let's muscle up. Let's be meritocratic all those types of things. Then we have transitional leaders are kind of in the middle and then we have below the surface leaders.

00;16;45;01 - 00;16;58;21

LaTonya Wilkins

And that's when I talk about a lot in the book and these are leaders. I talk about the problems, real leadership, relatable, equitable, aware while talking about empathetic leadership and empathetic listening to be able to connect with people.

00;16;58;21 - 00;17;12;09

LaTonya Wilkins

And then I talk about psychological safety and how do we get deeper and psychological safety and actually build that up. This person had read the book, and he said, Hey, is the goal for everyone to be below the surface?

00;17;12;09 - 00;17;23;17

LaTonya Wilkins

We're like, Are you saying that I have to be a bit of a sentence there? And as a coach, I do that question that kind of. What kind of a leader do you want to be or what kind of leader do you think you need to be?

00;17;23;28 - 00;17;41;01

LaTonya Wilkins

And he said to me, and this shows us how trapped we are in this dominant leadership standard. I talk about my book. He said, Well, you know, sometimes you're going to be surfaced because sometimes you talk how it is, and sometimes people don't don't want to get squishy and sometimes.

00;17;41;02 - 00;17;50;21

LaTonya Wilkins

And I said, OK. So it was like, I want to be transitional. You know what I said to him? I said, OK, I want you to read the rest of the book, and I want to see if you change your mind.

00;17;51;04 - 00;18;16;05

LaTonya Wilkins

Because what I'm hearing is that when you're reading about below the surface leadership, you're thinking it's mission. You're thinking it's it's overcompensating, but you want to know what those people wanted. This didn't get below the surface. If those people that did want to stay at that level, if you did have those people on my team, you wouldn't

00;18;16;05 - 00;18;34;06

LaTonya Wilkins

even do it. You wouldn't know how to create psychologically safe relationships with them. You would know how to work with them if you didn't become a below the surface leader. And so I yeah, I think you're exactly right, and I think we are so caught in that way of thinking that we sort of defend our way back

00;18;34;06 - 00;18;45;29

LaTonya Wilkins

into it like, let's hold you. And there's no way like, how are we all going to be below the surface? Then it's just going to be a workplace full of emotions and people are going to be uncomfortable. But that's not what this is with.

00;18;45;29 - 00;19;04;11

LaTonya Wilkins

This is this you're able to connect enough so you can create that environment for everyone, especially for people who are different from you. So yes, I agree, and I think that this is going to be something that is we're going to be working on for years to change.

00;19;04;11 - 00;19;27;06

LaTonya Wilkins

I'm seeing a lot of it, especially with remote work clients, and it's like we're supposed to be talking about creating cultures of belonging, but we get stuck when there's these these conflicts around, well, people need to come to the office or they need to stay over again, like getting below the surface, like getting below the surface and

00;19;27;06 - 00;19;40;01

LaTonya Wilkins

understanding how people want to work. That doesn't mean that you have to accommodate it. But getting below the surface with them first and then being. Able to understand that and work with them, but you can't do that unless you get below the surface, right?

00;19;40;03 - 00;19;42;08

LaTonya Wilkins

So yes, I do agree with that.

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Brian McComak

Yeah. You know. Well, thank you for sharing the the story about about your the coaching client and also just the example of this, this fear, because because we have we use a similar philosophy at Hummingbird and Witches and we do this exercise that that using the human iceberg and it's called Who am I?

00;20;06;02 - 00;20;23;09

Brian McComak

And we ask people to we we share the iceberg of invisible, invisible, visible and invisible identities. We asked the participants to write down those identities and to think about how their identities shape, how they see the world or how they show up every day.

00;20;23;16 - 00;20;40;14

Brian McComak

And then we just ask people to share stories about how their identities shape their perspective and whatever they're comfortable with. We don't make people share things they're not ready to share. And it's all in the spirit of what you're talking about is let's do each other as humans first, before we do the work that we do that

00;20;40;14 - 00;20;52;05

Brian McComak

we need to do together. And if we understand each other as humans, we can see each other as humans. The work can actually be better and more, and you can do more together. And and so that's where we where we start.

00;20;52;23 - 00;21;06;00

Brian McComak

What I had a couple of cover stations that I can think about right now with CEOs who are like all the people are going to do is they're going to talk about how they feel about things. And I'm like, that's that's actually not going to hurt.

00;21;07;14 - 00;21;11;09

LaTonya Wilkins

We don't jump from here to here. I usually jump from here.

00;21;12;21 - 00;21;26;15

Brian McComak

Yes, I'm like, OK, well, I appreciate the fear. If you just trust to take the leap, you're going to find that it's not a big jump. You're going to like, maybe go down a ledge and you're going to you're going to you're going to like, Oh, hey, this is going to feel and it's actually going

00;21;26;15 - 00;21;43;23

Brian McComak

to feel better once you do it. But it's gonna feel unfamiliar, unfamiliar. It's going to feel uncomfortable. It's going to feel different. And I actually one of my favorite moments a couple of months ago was a leader and I were prepping for a session that I was facilitating.

00;21;44;04 - 00;21;53;20

Brian McComak

And he said, I want to do this. I want to explain what happened and I want to like, I want to like, rewrite like or go back and sort of revisit like the steps of what happened or what didn't happen.

00;21;54;02 - 00;22;06;09

Brian McComak

I said, we're going to do none of that, actually. And he's like, what? And I said, We're not going to do that. We're just going to we're going to go have a conversation with humans about how they felt about what about leaving that room?

00;22;06;09 - 00;22;17;08

Brian McComak

And we're not going to try to agree what did or didn't happen in that space. And he said that feels so uncomfortable. And my response was good. That means we're doing we're doing something that is moving in the right direction.

00;22;18;07 - 00;22;32;09

Brian McComak

And the session that that we then became afterwards, like we came out of it, it was so powerful. And he was grateful that he stepped into that discomfort. But it's hard. Do you find I'm guessing you find that a lot with the people you work with it just stepping into the discomfort.

00;22;32;09 - 00;22;35;29

Brian McComak

Is it because it's unfamiliar? This is not how we were taught to show up at work together.

00;22;37;19 - 00;22;51;01

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah. Yeah, it is. It's it's hard. And so when I in my book, I talk about fallbacks and I talk about a bare minimum of not being empathy, like I have a chapter called Living on the Edge with empathy.

00;22;51;01 - 00;23;05;25

LaTonya Wilkins

And I think if you could just do one thing and just do empathy, just try empathy just and wherever, whatever they have the best person to person, you can do person to person listening. You can validate people. You could play things back.

00;23;06;02 - 00;23;21;20

LaTonya Wilkins

So people that you're listening or a person of longing, listening, looking around, taking a step back, saying, Well, someone participates in the environment, how they participate in someone dominating it's I'm not taking a step back, so you can actually acknowledge what's going on.

00;23;21;29 - 00;23;37;16

LaTonya Wilkins

But everybody, yeah, we need a fallback. And I think again, empathy is accessible if you try to do list and if you commit to empathy on a smaller scale, that's that's where you start, right? Just find a place to start.

00;23;37;26 - 00;23;50;24

LaTonya Wilkins

And if you stop there, find your leadership will probably be even 20 times better, right? Just from starting and stopping there and mastering that. But everything that we're talking about today, you don't have to do it tomorrow, right?

00;23;51;13 - 00;23;55;06

LaTonya Wilkins

Just take took one call back and to see if that can get you on track.

00;23;56;15 - 00;24;07;03

Brian McComak

I love that. Well, I want to. I want to go back to that, that what is the title of the chapter, as you said, living on the edge with empathy, right? I think I marked this earlier. Is that right?

00;24;07;10 - 00;24;08;02

LaTonya Wilkins

Yes. Yeah.

00;24;09;04 - 00;24;20;17

Brian McComak

What is living on the edge with? Say I say more about that. I'm I'm hearing Bon Jovi in my head as that said, a Bon Jovi song Living on the Edge.

00;24;21;02 - 00;24;42;27

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah, yeah, that's funny. Yeah, the reason why I talk about it has living on the edge is exactly what the conversation we're talking about is that empathy has not been a very socially. Acceptable behavior at work. It definitely is not even entirely socially acceptable at home.

00;24;43;04 - 00;25;03;02

LaTonya Wilkins

Like you hear a lot of marriages and other intimate relationships breaking down because of the lack of empathy, the lack of acknowledgment. Right. And so when you're living on the edge, you're you're you're accepting that this might be a behavior that is not going to be accepted.

00;25;03;02 - 00;25;18;04

LaTonya Wilkins

And so you are on the edge. You're having edgy thinking because other people and the org are going to they might label you as being too soft or they might label you as not being a real leader. And so that's why I call it that.

00;25;18;04 - 00;25;32;25

LaTonya Wilkins

I acknowledge exactly where we are today. I know me and you talk about this. I know think tanks talk about it. But Brian, when I'm with Michael, I will tell you most organizations are not talking about this, especially in the trenches.

00;25;33;02 - 00;25;35;02

LaTonya Wilkins

And so that's why it's on the edge.

00;25;36;28 - 00;25;52;24

Brian McComak

Yeah, it is, it is really it's different than just what the how we defined our workplaces and, you know, I think that it's, you know, it's something that we are at Hummingbird where we're practicing, how do we do that?

00;25;52;25 - 00;26;02;24

Brian McComak

Like, what does it look like for us and what are the things that work and what don't what don't work, what doesn't work so we can share that with our clients. And so I know that, you know that that's important as well.

00;26;03;08 - 00;26;13;01

Brian McComak

We got to try new things and sometimes we're going to try and something that's going to fit and sometimes we're going to try and something and say, No, that doesn't fit. We got to try something different. But that exploration is so important.

00;26;13;23 - 00;26;14;11

LaTonya Wilkins

Absolutely.

00;26;15;05 - 00;26;29;07

Brian McComak

So we've talked a little bit. So you've mentioned your the the real acronym. So that's relatable, equitable, aware and loyal. Yes. If we if it's just a little bit more about those four words.

00;26;30;03 - 00;26;50;28

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah. So the reason why I dedicated a chapter to real leadership and it's the chapter is called Becoming Up Below the surface leader and I take you through each of those qualities is because I spent a lot of time teaching leadership classes.

00;26;50;28 - 00;27;06;27

LaTonya Wilkins

And whenever I went into the libraries to get my books, I tell, I tell the story a lot. There's all the authors of these leadership books were white, white men. And when you look at the top selling leadership books of all time, they're all white guys.

00;27;06;27 - 00;27;28;12

LaTonya Wilkins

And I'm not saying Franklin Covey hasn't helped us in some way, but that's pretty much all you see. And that's that's the dominant piece of what you see there. So I was fascinated. I still am fascinated with leadership archetypes and how leadership archetypes always focused on what we were as a leader, like what we focused on, but

00;27;28;12 - 00;27;47;17

LaTonya Wilkins

not how we let. So, for example, you know, I've worked for a lot of different larger corporations, went through some corporate leadership programs, always had a leadership archetype assessment, and it's usually it was like, Oh, you're strategic or you're innovative or, you know, you are whatever, like those types of things, creative.

00;27;47;17 - 00;28;01;00

LaTonya Wilkins

You're all these types of leaders. But never have I really had a lot of archetypes or seen any archetypes that focus on how we lead. And that's like some people were like, well, inclusive leadership. But that's not an archetype, right?

00;28;01;01 - 00;28;18;22

LaTonya Wilkins

That's something that we talk about as a descriptor, right? And so I did a lot of research and as I was doing this research and I looked at what makes leaders successful and what makes leaders empower their teams in a more inclusive way.

00;28;19;01 - 00;28;36;02

LaTonya Wilkins

And this is what I came up with. It was the real acronym, and these are the things that a lot of leaders are striving to do, but they're doing it off the side of their plate. So, for example, being relatable, that means that you are relating to your staff in a way that works for them.

00;28;36;14 - 00;28;52;22

LaTonya Wilkins

So you're coming down to the lower level, you're speaking their language, you you're being more relatable in that fashion. For example, if one of your staff members, for example, has children and you don't, you're being relatable to them, like around their children and vice versa.

00;28;52;22 - 00;29;06;00

LaTonya Wilkins

Right? Like, maybe you are accommodating them in some ways, right? You're being relatable to them in that way. Equitable equity. We talk about equity a lot and it drives me nuts because when leaders talk about equity, they talk about it as a separate thing.

00;29;06;13 - 00;29;22;09

LaTonya Wilkins

All the DIY teams are going to do this thing for us. No, you need equity is a part of leadership. And so again, that's that's what equity is. It's like creating equitable team structures and systems are where it is that you are always aware of how you are as a leader.

00;29;22;09 - 00;29;38;25

LaTonya Wilkins

You're aware of what you're good at, what you're not so good at and loyal is one of my favorite parts of this. As you know, psychological safety is a big part of my book, Amy Edmondson wrote. My board and loyal is it kind of goes hand in hand with psychological safety.

00;29;39;05 - 00;29;59;06

LaTonya Wilkins

And what that means is that as leaders, we don't give up on our people too soon, right? We are loyal to the process. We are loyal to them. You know, when when someone new comes in and I know a lot of you are hiring new people, especially in interest of diversifying your team, an interest of keeping up

00;29;59;06 - 00;30;12;22

LaTonya Wilkins

with the future of work that we're living in right now. And so you're going to hire people who are different from you and you have to be loyal to them so they can ramp up and be able to to succeed in your organization.

00;30;13;00 - 00;30;26;17

LaTonya Wilkins

And this is a huge issue. There's so many works that I work with a lot of tech companies especially, and they have this prototypical way you're supposed to think or how fast you're supposed to succeed or all these things.

00;30;26;29 - 00;30;36;26

LaTonya Wilkins

And they're so quick to give up, but you have to give people time. And that's what that's what I mean by loyal, loyal to people and also loyal to process. Of change.

00;30;39;18 - 00;30;52;08

Brian McComak

Yeah. You know, on that last note, and I wish I could, I could offer thoughts on, oh, you know, all four of those those words and the descriptions, but on that loyal piece of the puzzle, I think something that.

00;30;53;25 - 00;31;16;24

Brian McComak

I worry about these today is because our world and our workplaces, our immediate gratification driven, we want to be agile, we want to adjust quickly. There's an I think there's an expectation for people to perform and deliver faster and faster and faster than ever before.

00;31;17;04 - 00;31;35;03

Brian McComak

And. That doesn't work for every human. It's just not realistic, and, you know, I think about actually the the momentum. And I, you know, I'm far from alone in telling the story of the moments I learned the most when the moments where I got something wrong, I messed up.

00;31;35;03 - 00;31;55;01

Brian McComak

I, you know, I failed at something and I had a and. And so that's that you could just stop there. Or you could say, and the ones that allowed me to know that those experiences that allowed me to continue to try and to continue to to take risks and to try new things where when I have leaders

00;31;55;01 - 00;32;15;16

Brian McComak

or managers who said, OK, let's figure out what happened and where you went wrong and let's learn from it and let's pick ourselves up and move forward. And and that's that's inherent in that loyalty equation. And if that I think of that, we're missing that loyalty, then, you know, then I think we're focusing on the the right

00;32;15;18 - 00;32;30;25

Brian McComak

. I could I could sort of envision humans living with five letter frees all the time of like, Wait, I don't know if I can miss this cause. I'm starting to talk about psychological safety of like, I'm in an environment where I know that someone who is committed to me in my learning as an employee and they're going

00;32;30;25 - 00;32;33;27

Brian McComak

to create space for me to make mistakes and to grow.

00;32;34;20 - 00;32;49;02

LaTonya Wilkins

Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Right. And it's, you know, I love what you're saying about that. There's there's one person that told me as a leader what he does as an executive leader. He he tells his team that he expects mistakes.

00;32;49;03 - 00;33;04;10

LaTonya Wilkins

Right. And so I think if the more and more we can talk about that, like where it expect mistakes and that's how we learn and then and that's part of the messiness, it's not it's not the quickest solution, right?

00;33;05;05 - 00;33;10;18

LaTonya Wilkins

But, you know, accepting the journey instead of just the results of that journey?

00;33;11;08 - 00;33;24;20

Brian McComak

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Well, I want to make sure I just ask those those of you who are with us today. The if you have any questions, feel free to drop those in chat. We are we're not going to try to to go to the full hour.

00;33;24;29 - 00;33;37;08

Brian McComak

Well, Tony, you and I talked about this book just before the call and I said, You know what? We are all spending a lot of time on Zoom. So we want to give you back a few minutes of your day and we're going to wrap up a few minutes early, but certainly want to make sure that we

00;33;37;08 - 00;33;54;23

Brian McComak

have a chance to turn by any any questions about that. And if you may have to share with us today. And if you're if you are watching later and I hope you're getting something that's out of this at a later time, for those of you who are watching the replay, we certainly welcome.

00;33;54;23 - 00;34;14;14

Brian McComak

You can reach out to us via email and we'll come back to that of where to connect with LaTonya and be here in a few minutes. So we don't let's honey. I'm curious what is the as as people have picked up your book and and you know, and said, Hey, this is the part that resonated with me

00;34;14;14 - 00;34;31;25

Brian McComak

the most. Is there is there a piece of this puzzle that because I know that we're living in a time right now where and I say, I know, but I also hope that we're living in a time now where leaders and decision makers are paying attention to humanity in a way that they never have before a particular

00;34;31;25 - 00;34;38;14

Brian McComak

humanity in the workplace. And I'm curious if there's a if there's a part of the book that's really like, this is the part that's resonating the most.

00;34;39;18 - 00;34;43;22

LaTonya Wilkins

You mean with humanity in the workplace? Is that what you're saying or what?

00;34;43;24 - 00;34;53;26

Brian McComak

Because your book is very much about humanity in the workplace and a way to engage in that. So I'm curious if there's a part of that that's really connecting the most or resonant the most with people that are reading that.

00:34:55;19 - 00:34:58;29

LaTonya Wilkins

Sorry, can you repeat the question, I don't think I understand what you're asking.

00:34:59;00 - 00:35:00;07

Brian McComak

Sometimes I make, I make.

00:35:00;13 - 00:35:08;12

LaTonya Wilkins

Sorry, sorry. I was trying to wing it, but I don't want to give you. Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is something I've just got to ask.

00:35:08;19 - 00:35:13;16

Brian McComak

Yeah, no. What is what is the thing you're hearing? People react to the most. What? What are you hearing?

00:35:13;17 - 00:35:39;14

LaTonya Wilkins

Oh yeah. In the book. Yes. Yeah. So. I would say the stories I tell a lot of stories that honestly were difficult to repeat and relive over and over. And I think I remember writing like right after I wrote the book and released it.

00:35:39;29 - 00:35:55;13

LaTonya Wilkins

I remember meeting with one of my clients and it was an executive team and the CEO stayed behind and he wanted to give me some, some feedback on my book. And he said, You know, I really appreciate your stories.

00:35:55;13 - 00:36:13;03

LaTonya Wilkins

I know that was probably hard to share, but he's like, you know, no matter how many times people tell me what we need to do or they tell me that people don't belong. He's like, I actually felt like I was there with you when you were telling me those stories and when you were when you were telling

00:36;13;03 - 00:36;29;24

LaTonya Wilkins

me the stories of when you were rejected as a black woman, as a queer woman and all your identities. He's like, that was that really hit home for us? And that really hit home for me, and that helped me experience what people might go through.

00:36;29;24 - 00:36;44;09

LaTonya Wilkins

And so it helps me understand how to change. And so I think that's the biggest thing. As you as you know, with the book, Brian, there's a lot of there are a lot of research, but I paired that with personal experiences.

00:36;45;10 - 00:37;08;05

LaTonya Wilkins

And so I think that I I thought the research was good because I curated it in a way. But what I'm finding is that it's the stories that are resonating and people see either seeing themselves in my shoes and seeing that happen and being able to empathize and feel with me or people that are opposite of me

00:37;08;28 - 00:37;17;21

LaTonya Wilkins

seeing those stories and saying, Wait, well, yeah, are we doing this? And if we are, we really have to understand this and connect to it.

00:37;19;20 - 00:37;40;14

Brian McComak

Juan, thank you for being vulnerable and sharing those stories. I can connect with and empathize with the vulnerability that comes with one sharing those stories. But then the other is because similarly, my book is going to share some of my personal stories and there's a bit of like, do I want this to be printed and published and

00:37;40;14 - 00:37;53;07

Brian McComak

it's going to be on shelves and I lose control of that story, and I do want to share those stories and services. I know it's true for you, but it's it's it's definitely vulnerable. So thank you for taking that step into that vulnerability.

00:37;54;03 - 00:38;09;10

Brian McComak

And I think that that is what I was when I was fumbling through, and I just wanted to say, I appreciate you being vulnerable to say, Hey, I'm not sure I know what you're asking Bryan. And for me to acknowledge, like, hey, that was confusing at how I was asking the question, like, those are just human real

00:38;09;10 - 00:38;22;17

Brian McComak

moments that, you know, I think I think you and I have spent a lot of time being OK with those moments. Like, I don't, you know, neither one of us were like, Hey, this, this feels super uncomfortable. Now this is just like, Hey, there two humans are trying to have a meaningful conversation, and sometimes we understand each

00:38;22;17 - 00:38;33;14

Brian McComak

other and sometimes we don't. So how do we create workplaces that allow that to happen? And I love stories like the ones that you wrote that you share in your book too to be part of how we know each other in the workplace.

00:38;34;01 - 00:38;44;04

Brian McComak

Mm hmm. Yeah. Well, in the spirit of that, we want to give people some time back. I want to just, you know, I'm going to I'm going to ask you to come back with any final words in a minute.

00:38;44;04 - 00:38;55;02

Brian McComak

But first, for those people who want to buy your book and want to connect with you, where, where? Where do they find the book? Where do we connect with you? What? What are the what are the links and things?

00:38;55;22 - 00:39;13;02

LaTonya Wilkins

Yeah. So you could go to leading below the surface dot com and then it's got you can access it on Amazon Bookshop, Barnes Noble's all those places. It's also if you're in Chicago, it's also it's in a few bookstores here and also nationally.

00:39;13;02 - 00:39;33;14

LaTonya Wilkins

So those are the places, the usual places to find the book. And if you'd like to connect, I'm also on LinkedIn. I talk about concepts from the book quite a bit. And then I'm also on Instagram. And then you can also, if you're interested and reading below the Surface Dot Com, you can join our mailing list and

00:39:33;14 - 00:39:38;04

LaTonya Wilkins

I also send out we send out tips on how to live and leave below the surface.

00:39:39;05 - 00:40:02;15

Brian McComak

Awesome, awesome. Thanks to Tanya and for me. For those of you who are looking to connect with me, one of the best way to connect with me is on LinkedIn and search for Brian McCormack, and I share a recurring series of posts on representation matters in different ways for us to to think about representation in our workplaces

00:40:02;28 - 00:40:21;18

Brian McComak

and, of course, hummingbird humanity. We have a weekly newsletter that comes out every other Wednesday where we focus on how do we how do we create human centered workplace cultures? So, Latanya, as we as we wrap up any final words you'd like to share with those that are with us or watching later?

00:40:23;07 - 00:40:37;27

LaTonya Wilkins

No, I mean, I think maybe 20, 20 May 2020 to a great year, and I think it's just, I guess don't be afraid to learn and adjust to what the future may bring. We don't know what tomorrow may bring.

00:40:37;27 - 00:40:52;07

LaTonya Wilkins

And so get your shots, as Brian said, and keep on moving and keep others safe where your mask. I got my career in 95 and just got to keep adjusting and creating the environment that we want to be in.

00:40:53;11 - 00:41:08;10

Brian McComak

Absolutely, absolutely. Well, Tanya, it's a pleasure to see you again. Thank you for saying yes to our 2022 kickoff session of Hummingbird Hour. I mean, I was going to say hummingbird humanity. That's the business hummingbird out or as the series the conversation series.

00:41:08;10 - 00:41:22;14

Brian McComak

So thank you for being with us today and for all of you with us watching what you now are watching later. Thank you for spending time and letting us be of service. I know that I speak for the time you and I both that we are committed to making the world better for everyone.

00;41;22;21 - 00;41;35;02

Brian McComak

And hopefully you take away some some tidbits or insights that are are helpful for you. As you go off. I go back into the workplace, into the world, into and work with other work and live with other humans.

00;41;35;03 - 00;41;41;15

Brian McComak

So thanks for being with us. Stay safe, be well and have a great 2022 by everyone.