

# Enduring Play\_ Season 2 Episode 6 Amy White

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Game development, scaling ideas, community support, company culture, proactive strategy, people partner, HR role, employee engagement, neurodiversity, AI impact, recruitment process, management training, core values, LGBTQIA advocacy, career development., Bullying awareness, harassment training, sexual harassment, whistleblowing, performance cycle, manager training, career framework, seniority levels, job architecture, interdisciplinary teams, game development, leadership roles, HR support, management tools, team growth.

## SPEAKERS

Cheryl Platz, Amy White, Enduring Play Computer

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- E** Enduring Play Computer 00:00  
Initializing enduring play podcast season two, engine decompressing, audio, synchronizing waveforms, reticulating splines, launching podcast lobby.
- C** Cheryl Platz 00:16  
Welcome back to Enduring Play, the podcast where we explore what it takes to create video games that don't just survive, but thrive. I'm your host, Cheryl Platz: video game designer, director and author of The Game Development Strategy Guide from Rosenfeld media. Enduring play season two is about scaling our game development ideas beyond the individual. A common thread through most of our conversations is the collective through communities of game developers, through game education, through games research, and through the events and systems that support the releases and people making our games. Few games are released in a vacuum, so how do we scale together?

C

**Cheryl Platz 00:54**

This week's guest Amy White is a pioneering director of people at Fusebox games in the UK, where she's helped this studio grow from 26 to 48 employees over the past three years, while collaboratively, equitably and clearly defining a company culture that helps them thrive and still have fun while making their games. Fusebox Games is a mobile game studio best known for interactive visual novels like Love Island, The Game. She was drawn to the video game industry after a career serving a variety of other industries due to her deep and lifelong passion for video gaming. Today's conversation debunks some of the mythology around human resources and people partner roles. Yes, they are there to protect the business, but if that's your whole people strategy, it's no wonder folks are frustrated. There is so much more to a thriving people strategy than reactive policy. Amy's insights help us understand how proactive cultural change, even for small, independent studios can create the clarity desperately needed in ambiguous, creative environments.

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**Enduring Play Computer 01:46**

Loading Episode preview

A

**Amy White 01:48**

in the almost three years that we've been here, we've had one voluntary leaver, and I'd like to believe that is because of the #NewFusebox and everything that we've implemented. And like someone said something to me the other day, which is really interesting. They said, "Do you think people - Oh, do you think people just don't leave because they're too afraid to try and get another job? You know, given the industry at the moment, but I genuinely don't think that's what it is. I actually think since this new fuse box kicked in, people do genuinely show up. People do genuinely love working here. And even when I'm chatting to spoke to spoke someone in dev the other day. They were just like, oh, you know, it's integrity, isn't it? And like with the collaboration, we still talk about the values now and again. I think it just drives home that real people focus of the business, and that's why people are attracted to Fusebox.

C

**Cheryl Platz 02:37**

Let's get into the game.

E

**Enduring Play Computer 02:39**

Player One. Cheryl Platz, pronouns, she, her. Player two. Amy White. pronouns, she, her podcast level start.

C

Cheryl Platz 02:50

Welcome back to enduring play the podcast, where we explore what it takes to make games that don't just survive but thrive. And I'm so excited to expand our understanding of what it truly takes to build thriving game studios this week, because I have today with us Amy White, Director of people for Fusebox Games. Thank you so much for being here today Amy.

A

Amy White 03:13

Thank you for inviting me.

C

Cheryl Platz 03:15

I usually start out by letting my guests describe their background in their own words, since they will do a much better job than I can of highlighting the important parts. Do you want to start out by giving our listeners a little brief tour of who you are and what's important to you?

A

Amy White 03:30

Yeah, of course. So yeah, as you said, my name is Amy. I work for Fusebox games. We are a smallish, UK based studio, and we actually are the creators of love Island, the game, and big brother, the game, and soon to be traitors, the game, which is really exciting. And I definitely can say that, because it's public knowledge so that's very exciting. So, yeah, no, my background is very varied. I've always had a passion for gaming, but I sort of started out in retail, moved into recruitment, then an agency, and then into talent acquisition for the sort of entertainment, casino gambling arena, working for one of the big companies: Entain. And then I've moved into more of a HR role, where I've accelerated at Fusebox. And yeah, I'm the sole person in HR - People partner. And yeah, I guess what's important to me is and what I really, really really get out of bed for is just continuing to create an amazing culture at Fusebox where people feel like me, which is, you know, as soon as I log on, I'm happy to be there. And that's, that's genuine, and it's the only time my entire career I've actually felt really content in a job. So yeah, that's, that's basically me.

C

Cheryl Platz 04:37

Thank you for that tour, and congratulations on the recent expansion to the titles in your lineup! Traitors, is going to be very, very exciting for folks.

E

### Enduring Play Computer 04:48

Podcast level paused. Begin host commentary

E

### Enduring Play Computer 04:52

As we get started, let's put some framing in place about fuse box games, the company where Amy works now, and the greater context of the market. Place. This isn't a sponsored podcast, but context helps us understand what we're discussing. Fusebox games develops interactive story driven games on mobile devices. These games rely on narrative design, like we talked about in season one, episode five. Fusebox games are typically based on popular television IP like love Island, big brother and the just announced Traitors. According to the official website, in 2023 they had a top 40 grossing game and hit 25 million lifetime installs. It should also be noted that the games from Fusebox are typically rated 16 plus for romantic or mature themes, which limits their audience to casual competitors that are rated for the whole family. So that download count doesn't always tell the whole story. In 2024 fuse box was acquired by Nasara. That acquisition reflects growing interest and investment in the casual gaming market. And why is casual gaming so big and growing? Part of it may be that the age range and preferences of gamers are changing. Remember that generational gaming conversation from episode two of this season? A Boston Consulting Group report from 2025 shows the baby boomers are continuing gaming into retirement. 35% of that generation surveyed reporting one to five hours of gaming a week, and 41% reporting more than five hours of gaming a week. This same report shows a stunning contrast in platform selection. While around 20 to 26% of recent generations prefer mobile gaming, 37% of Gen X and a whopping 55% of baby boomers report preferring mobile gaming. This is where many game devs I speak to trip up. They think that casual gaming and mobile gaming is over reported. It isn't. It's just happening in communities they don't speak with or see. But back to fusebox, the success of games like love Island remind us that the motivators of play, like comfort, immersion, fun and companionship, can be satisfied on the go just as well as they can on consoles.

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### Enduring Play Computer 06:48

Loading podcast level one: Growing up in gaming.

C

### Cheryl Platz 06:53

what do you love most about working in video gaming? If you look sort of walk through your LinkedIn profile, you've actually worked in a number of different contexts.

A

Amy White 07:03

Well, I mean, I think it's because I've always been a gamer. Since I was literally a child waking up on Christmas. I always remember it getting my first computer, which was a Commodore C 64 which I now currently have, because I actually collect retro gaming consoles as a hobby. And working in gaming always seemed like a bit of a pipe dream for me, because I always thought, Oh, this is something that I would like to do, but I don't think I can do, and I always thought you just needed a technical set of skills to become someone that works in gaming. But obviously, over the years, I realized that it's not just the development side that's super important. It's actually the supportive ration side, which is important. I don't believe you can develop a game without having the support in order to do so. And it's only my recent years that I really thought about how amazing would be to work in games. And if I just tell you a little bit of a background to that, actually, I was made redundant in my last talent acquisition role, which was a consultancy position. I saw the ad a few sorts games. I thought, You know what? Always wanted this to apply. Didn't expect an interview, got an interview, really didn't expect the job, and then I was just absolutely thrilled to to get the job, because I was finally working in an industry where I've just always been passionate about it. I see games as a massive escapism from real life, and it's something that, yeah, whenever it's not my comfort blanket. So to be able to exercise the skills I've picked up in HR in a comfort blanket, sort of, you know, environment is really special to me. And yeah, I'm absolutely loving it.

A

Amy White 08:23

I love that you bring up the comfort blanket metaphor. Because one of the motivators of play I talk about in the first chapter of my book is comfort. It's hard to define what comfort is, because it's very subjective, but you know it when you see it. And I love that gaming to you is that comfort blanket.

E

Enduring Play Computer 08:39

Narrative cutscene, the Commodore 64

C

Cheryl Platz 08:43

The Commodore 64 is dear to my heart too. An eight bit home computer launched in 1982 it was sold for between 250 and \$595 making it a huge success in the marketplace. The C 64 walked so the iMac could run. It was a computer and a keyboard with an embedded cartridge slot and an optional floppy drive. Few people realize how influential the C 64 was on my generation. I had Fisher Price game cartridges for the C 64 and floppy disk games like some ducks that taught me how to do math. I had an entire Muppets themed peripheral device, and most importantly, the C 64 came with a basic programming manual. So I, like many of my generation, taught myself to program at the tender age of four. It makes total sense to me that Amy would have a Commodore 64 in her collection, as it is one of the most impactful, thriving pcs of all time, and it directly launched countless careers like my own. What should you take away from a couple of elder geeks waxing poetic about a PC from the 80s? Well, it's pretty remarkable that an entire generation of game devs self taught themselves basic on the C 64 you might almost say that was UGC before user generated content was cool. In fact, the signs have always been there that young gamers were ready to exceed our expectations for ingenuity and dedication when given the right tools and a passion project. Don't underestimate the next generation. In any generation.

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Enduring Play Computer 10:00

Loading podcast level two. Bringing your authentic self to work

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Cheryl Platz 10:04

For those who are listening, you can't necessarily see this, but there is a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles arcade cabinet in the background of the video right now, which is very legit arcade cabinet right there. It's a very awesome visual addition to the conversation right now. Is that your favorite game?

A

Amy White 10:21

Yeah, yeah. And actually, right behind me, I've got a massive collection of ninja turtle figures, all from the 80s. So yeah, turtles is one of my favorite games, as well as Sonic. I've actually got two dogs called Sonic. I've got a dog called Sonic. Hopefully my partner will let me have Sonic eventually, but I've got knuckles and tails. Yeah, so, but yeah, the machine I actually play sometimes, you know, like, if I've had a rough meeting, or, you know, I'm just feeling like I just need a break, and I just switch over, have a game and come back. So, yeah, absolutely love it.

C

**Cheryl Platz 10:54**

I love everything about that. Well, thank you. I love giving people that context, especially because, as you mentioned, let's be honest about it, right? Sometimes there's stereotypes about non technical roles, especially in tech. Feels like gaming. I think it's important for us to acknowledge that, like, it's amazing that you are a gamer, you are just as passionate about this as everybody else who's working on the games. And I, as someone in gaming. I'm so grateful for everyone who is passionate about the fields and working with us, right? And it's takes everybody I've worked with people who are not passionate about games and are also great at their jobs in games. But I think it's important to dispel the stereotype, if you're not in a tech part of gaming, you're probably not a gamer. You are a gamer.

A

**Amy White 11:41**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And this is another reason why I have the machine in the background. Because when I get on like, calls, you know, interviews, if I'm interviewing for fuse box or just different sort of calls, or external calls with people, it's always a talking point. She's like, Oh, so you must be a gamer. But isn't it interesting how they say, Oh, you must be a gamer. Like, it's a shock, and it's quite interesting. And that's what sparked me, I think, to kind of really try to, you know, I really want people to understand that that gaming is okay, no matter what gender on, no matter what age you are. Because, you know, I've even had it like, Oh, you're director of people, you know, and you're in your 40s, you probably don't game. You don't have time to game. And it's like, actually, I need to game. I need to go to get through the day sometimes. So, yeah, it's just interesting how you always get that response. Oh, so you're a gamer. This sounds surprised. You're a gamer. You don't look like a gamer. It's really, you know, still having those sorts of questions, which is, which is bizarre, really,

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**Enduring Play Computer 12:36**

loading podcast level three, comfort and the motivators of play.

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Cheryl Platz 12:41

We will get into the people partner stuff in just a second. But I think this is really interesting conversation, because the needing to get through the day right? When I was doing the research for my book, *The Game Development Strategy Guide*, talking about the motivators of play, it helped me get a language for the needing. Because the motivators of play like comfort and meditation, it helped me understand why I was pursuing, even as someone who loves immersion based games, like, you know, a good *Fallout 4* or something, why I would sometimes go, like, "I just need a match game right now," because I needed to shut my brain down because I'd had a really stressful day, and I needed that not to be the last thing that I brought to bed with me, right? But like, understanding that there were different motivators of play that I was bringing to the table at all times, and like you said, like these are director level Roles are intense. If gaming resonates for you, it's a great way to self regulate.

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Amy White 13:29

Yeah, although I wouldn't recommend really playing *Resident Evil 9* after having a bad day, because I think it makes my day worse. I switched that off. I went to *Fortnite* instead,

C

Cheryl Platz 13:43

that speaks to why comfort in gaming and why companionship in gaming and self expression in gaming. I think one of the many reasons those are rising in self reported importance right now partially because things are a little intense, right? So the immersion in *Resident Evil* may be a little bit less amazing than it was 10 years ago. For the universal there are always going to be people who like that. But is it like everybody wants to do it? No, some people are going to need something else, because the world is really intense, and maybe that will change. That's the other thing about motivations of play, the collective humanity can change. Gaming is fascinating.

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Enduring Play Computer 14:19

Loading podcast level four, the people partner skill tree.

C

Cheryl Platz 14:25

Let's talk about the people partner stuff. So as a people partner, I think the work that you do is probably not well understood by many listeners. So let's start with, how would you describe your work to me if I was a new hire coming into your organization.

A

Amy White 14:41

And that's a really good question, because it's when I'm doing screening calls, if we're recruiting, I always introduce myself as, yeah, I'm the director of people. What does that? What do you do? Or even people partner, oh yeah, what's that? And then I'm like, I work in HR. Oh yeah, you work in HR. And I think this again. And. Don't want to sort of go down too much hole here. But I think you know, the term HR has been used for so many years, and it's actually brought a very negative stereotype with it over the years, and it still does. So whenever, you know, we say, oh, there's a HR person in the studio, it's kind of it just sounds a little bit alien to people. But when I really describe what a people partner does it is exactly what it is in the name, it's like, I partner with specific people, if not everybody in the business, to basically build departmental culture plus overall culture within the business. And obviously, we were speaking earlier about culture. Culture can be seen as a negative thing or a positive thing, but I think most of the time we kind of see it as, you know, the one of the kind of key things that people look for when they are looking for a role or wanting to join a company. And my role is basically to not only attract people to the company, but to make sure we keep them without affecting the business. So it's twofold, you know, I'm there for the people of fusebox. I'm also there for the business of fusebox, and it can be quite challenging trying to get that balance right, because you might want to do something that the good of the people, but it's not going to benefit the business. And without the business, we're not going to have the people. So I'm basically the bridge, I guess, between the business and the people side. And I think again, like, you know, I have had conversations with my CEO, Terry and other studio heads in that, oh, we've never thought about getting a people partner. We don't need one. We can, we can outsource the HR function, and that's fine. You can absolutely do that for the kind of bare minimum, you know, processing policies and recruiting, you know, drawing up contracts. But what it doesn't have is that kind of people insight, the people strategy, motivating people again, offering things. We have flexible working with unlimited holiday, which is quite unheard of, and it's kind of just ensuring that everybody's happy. But we're also, you know, working ethically, we're working safely, and we're working basically to business standards. I also do a lot of management training as well. I'm very passionate about that, so I want to make sure that you know our people managers are managing people in the right way. So, yeah, I do that kind of training once every three months. Did one recently. So I do a bit of everything, really. I guess it's not really a traditional role. It's kind of, we've we've built on it over time. Yeah, I actually think that every studio should have a people, people, partner,

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Enduring Play Computer 17:26

loading podcast level five proactivity is your people strategy.

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Cheryl Platz 17:35

Thank you so much for walking me through that, and it's a really great segue into one of the other questions I had for you, which is, because you talked about your bio mentioned strategy, and I think that's another term that's very vague for folks, but I think you know, as directors, as senior leaders, what you just discussed is a really great example of strategic leadership, right? Like you were talking about things that your people, you hired, didn't necessarily know they needed, but you're bringing to the table like, "Hey, I'm going to do this training", or "I'm going to do this gonna do this program", or I'm gonna like, this, "here's this unheard of program", and that's - but all that other leader needed to do is, like, have the humility to say, like, Hey, I maybe need somebody with the skill set I don't have to help me get to another place. Can we double click a little bit on that? Like, how do you approach what it means to have a strategic mindset as a people partner, like, how do you find your opportunities?

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Amy White 18:26

That's a really good question, because I think that's the real difference between and I might get people disagree when I say this, but I think there's the difference between HR and a people partner. In my experience is that HR can be a very reactive role. You're dealing with the problems as of when they arise. You know, you have someone that's consistently going off sick, or someone that's not performing, you know, that's, that's an issue that you're sort of waiting for. And I think when I first joined fusebox, it was very much like that. I mean, I had to go through a pretty tough performance review with someone like the day two I joined, but it was reactive, you know. Then it like, you get your quiet days, and then you think, okay, just sort of waiting. And then it kind of dawned on me that that we don't want to be waiting for things to happen. We just don't, we don't want them to happen. So that's when the mind shift, you know, it kind of switches to sorry. The mind shifts to, well, more you know, you're kind of being more proactive in preventing these things, and that's where the strategy comes from. So if you're thinking about, Okay, what's sort of one of the key people strategy requirements of this year, it's to ensure that all the managers are, you know, trained up on the new employment law changes that are happening this year. So why is that? Well, ultimately, it will prevent, you know, tribunal cases. It will prevent people leaving or, you know, trying to, sort of, or like, our managers are discriminating without realize they're doing it. And it's kind of like you kind of always having to catastrophize the worst case scenarios in order to prevent them. And I think, you know, obviously I don't like the term catastrophizing, because that. That's part of what anxiety is. But actually, if you kind of think of it, you think about the worst case scenario, and then you build back from that to prevent it from happening, and that's what the strategy is. And with a people strategy, it's not a case of, you can kind of have KPIs or targets. It's like, this is what you know we want, or whatnot, you know what we don't want, but this is how we're going to get there. So it's always building back from the worst case scenario, and I'm always looking for the next thing, even. So, like, as we're sort of growing as a business, you know, we're currently looking at IT solutions, because at the moment, it's kind of taking too much time. And, like, what if someone laptop, you know, someone's laptop, dies? We don't have, like, a really good turnaround time and getting new laptops out. That's not even happening right now, but if it does happen, that could affect Santo and again, not really part of my role. But we don't actually have an IT department at the moment, so I sort of take on that remit. But yeah, it's an interesting one, because it's done by sort of those predictive milestones, as opposed to KPI and output, if that makes sense,

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**Cheryl Platz 21:00**

it does, and it's really resonating with me and for context for listeners, you and I contrast some of my my guests, we don't have a deep background together. We met on LinkedIn recently, and but you describing how you do strategic problem solving hits me right in the heart, because, like in my first book, I talked about Opti-pessimism, which is basically designed for the best case of Build for the worst, right? Like this sometimes call it catastrophic imagination, because it's that thing. It's, what are the worst consequences of our success? We get a whole bunch of people in here, but they start making bad decisions. And what does that do? So that felt very resonant to me, because whether you call it a name, or whether you just do it allowing yourself to think about those situations and then trying to stop them being bold enough to think like, what if that never happens? What if I like, stop that before it happens. You can create these thriving environments, which is, is why we're on this podcast. Is what like we want video game studios to survive. We want like, we want people to be happy in their working environment,

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**Enduring Play Computer 22:00**

loading, tutorial level, opti-pessimism.

E

**Enduring Play Computer 22:03**

Opti-pessimism is a design framework. I introduced my first book, design beyond devices, to explain the way I process the unknown, and it's the kind of thinking you see from a lot of folks in senior leadership. I just introduced it as something you can apply in your own work. Opti-pessimism is glass half full and glass half empty. It's imagining the worst consequences of your own success. Because what's worse than being your own worst enemy when you launch and you succeed and you didn't design for your own success? So the four principles of Opti-pessimism are: consider the human context, design for the best case, plan for the worst case, and be ready to adapt in the moment. And there are lots of challenge questions available in design beyond devices. If this kind of strategic thinking is something you want to get deeper into, if catastrophic imagination is not something that comes naturally to you, you can't learn it.

E

**Enduring Play Computer 22:56**

Loading podcast level six, better outcomes through inclusion.

C

**Cheryl Platz 23:01**

So I love everything you're talking about, the proactive training. And if you just wait until things are broken, it's not just that one incident, right? If you wait till things get to a breaking point, the whole culture has changed around it. Yeah, yeah.

A

Amy White 23:16

And that again, that that's a really, a really good point. Because, you know, I think a lot of studios and even companies in general, will just wait for that breaking point and then it's like, oh, okay, well, we'll fix it now. And it's like, you're just putting sort of a plaster over it and then hoping it doesn't happen again. But again, like, I always think of like a scenario, if you have someone come and join and, you know, a big thing, I don't want to go off on a tangent at the moment, big thing in the gaming industry at the moment of industry at the moment is obviously neurodiversity awareness and how, actually, neurodiversity is superpowered within the gaming industry. And, you know, historically, people wouldn't apply because, you know, they were, they were scared about how they were going to be judged. And, you know, studios couldn't offer reasonable adjustments. We are now in a day and age where we can offer those reasonable adjustments to ensure that neurodiverse employees, you know, are looked after. They can do their best work. Because, you know, some of the neurodiverse people I've worked with, you know, demonstrate amazing work. And I think that, again, this is, this is a scenario of where it's not just about, oh, if we don't offer reasonable adjustments, you know, and then we have to let someone go, they can come back and say, Well, you didn't, you didn't, you know, look after me as a business. You know, that kind of thing, which it can happen again if the right things aren't in place, I'm not having the right conversations. But it's actually living and breathing. You know what we're saying in terms of our culture, like, we really do support this, you know, we really welcome people in that might not have, you know, applied before. And I think that's when it becomes again, like strategic, because you're trying to think about not only preventing catastrophic things from happening, but also like encouraging the good side of things as well. Off the back of that that I'm very passionate about that as well. I work within dei myself. We've got a DI committee within fuse box that I run. It was like three people. Now it's 14. I do a lot of that. While I've done that a lot. Last few years as well, but yeah, I obviously don't.

C

Cheryl Platz 25:04

I'm openly disabled, so I'm appreciative of that kind of work, and I think it is. I'm not going to call out any specific studios or companies, but like most of North American people, management is reactive when it comes to accommodations, or is very interactive process, which is a euphemism for, there's lots of barriers to get to simple things. So I love what you are discussing, because in the end, it's like the classic curb cuts example, that where making accommodations for people who might need them helps everyone. And it's it's funny, because I think it's common knowledge, but it's not. When I bring that example up to people who are outside of design are like, Oh, design, they're like, Oh, yeah. I'm like, do you like not tripping over curbs? Yes, those are there for people with wheelchairs, but it helps all of us, right? Like on sidewalks, those things where it goes down on the that was for people with wheelchairs, but I assume you like not not having, like, twisted ankles too. Yeah. Helping people who have disabilities often helps everyone, and that applies to neurodivergence, and it helps, it applies to physical disabilities. And so I'm grateful for that work that you're doing, especially because the climate has sort of changed recently. So I don't consider it a tangent. I consider it very relevant to the work of keep the people partner, and relevant to thriving studios. I don't, I don't have any data to back it up, but it's certainly I just came from GDC last week. GDC last week, and it certainly feels like the game development community that's a very relevant consideration.

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### Enduring Play Computer 26:33

Loading narrative cutscene: Curb cuts as a disability accommodation.

C

### Cheryl Platz 26:35

Curb cuts are something you probably take for granted now. They're those ramps in the corners of sidewalks that you use if you have a stroller or a rollable suitcase or a wheelchair, but they weren't around always, and it took advocacy from disabled people to get curb cuts in the United States, there's an article from the Stanford Social Innovation Review that talks about the history of Curb cuts. The first curb cut showed up in 1945 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, but it was a homegrown curb cut from Michael pechovis and a few friends in Berkeley, California, that changed the world. The advocacy from these wheelchair users fighting for what they needed eventually set off a domino effect that led to the Americans with Disabilities Act going into law in 1990 which mandated changes, including curb cuts. And what's interesting is later on, as curb cuts became standard, there were studies that found that nine out of 10 unencumbered pedestrians go out of their way to use a curb cut. So think about that. Even people who don't need the curb cut go to use it because it's safer. We're less likely to trip to twist our ankles. The thing that the disabled advocates pushed for is something that's helping us invisibly all the time, and that's true about so many accessibility accommodations. So why do we make it so hard for accommodations to become standard. When they become standard, there's usually tons of folks in the world who benefit. Many of them just don't feel comfortable speaking up about the fact that they need the accommodation in the first place.

E

### Enduring Play Computer 28:13

Loading podcast level seven, modern people policies.

C

### Cheryl Platz 28:18

Many of our listeners are on a journey. They've been laid off or they're in an indie studio, or they or they just maybe, maybe they're in leadership, and they don't necessarily know what kinds of questions they would need to bring to a people partner. And so I wonder if you might be able to walk us through some of the significant changes you've seen. Especially because you're based in the UK, so we can get this global perspective what significant changes you've seen in the last few years that have challenged you in your work.

A

Amy White 28:44

Of course, there's been a lot. I mean, you know, in terms of UK specific, there's, there's a lot of the Employment Rights Acts has actually changed quite significantly in terms of, you know, unfair dismissal, which would mean that if anybody is let go after a two year period in the company, they are protected and can actually, if they wanted to take a business support for unfair dismissal. And the reason why that would happen is if someone felt like they had essentially been dismissed unfairly, which is why it's incredibly important that it's something that I always drive home at fuse box, that we are, you know, making sure that we are having those one to ones of people, we're documenting one to ones. We're in the reasonable adjustments like I sort of mentioned, because I've seen that, you know, got the Disability Awareness act and everything that kind of comes under that as well, the Equality Act, and it's incredibly important. And there's been various other changes that kind of has affected the overall hiring process as well. So things like probationary periods changing, and that has had quite a profound effect on our managers, and even, like mostly our new managers that have been new to management, because at few spots, we like to encourage people to progress, and historically, that would have been a people manager route, but now we're actually creating different routes. Because being a manager is not just about you know, ensuring that someone does their job, the day job. It is ensuring that, actually, you know, they are learning about the law, employment law, equality acts, all these sorts of things. That's been the major challenge, I think. And it's been not only that, but getting the managers to actually understand the why. It's very, you know, it's very easy for me to say, right, "you have to take this training, you have to implement this bit of legislation, you have to do your one to ones", but why? You know, and then kind of like shifting their mindset from being a tick box exercise, "Oh, I better do my one to ones" to "Actually These are very valuable, and they will sort of protect you as a manager, the employee and the business." And that's been a real shift from when I joined fusebox, and I think again, like smaller companies or companies that don't have that HR people, partner influence, could potentially be in trouble because they're not aware of the ramifications that might happen should these things not be placed in terms of process,

E

Enduring Play Computer 30:53

Loading, podcast level eight: AI in the workplace.

A

**Amy White 30:58**

So that's been a real challenge. I would say the other one, that's a recent challenge, and I was actually having this conversation, having this conversation the other day with someone at work, is AI. Because as much as I know this is like, been seen as a bit of a taboo subject, especially across the gaming industry at the moment, but I do think it's one that does need to be spoken about, and it's interesting from a people perspective. Because, you know, I think AI is a tool. It can enhance people's work. It can be very time efficient, and it can really, you know, I'm not afraid to say that sometimes I'll, you know, I'll write an email, and sometimes I'll scan it through into like, I'll, you know, check it, or whatever. That's something I didn't do before. And I think that can be a really good tool. But equally, I think, you know, one of the challenges, especially in recruitment, we've had to change the way we do specific development tasks, writing tasks, because people can use AI, and it's really hard to kind of spot the difference sometimes. And that means that we've had to kind of weigh heavily more on the people side than actually the kind of do this test and then get it back to us. But then it's interesting, because it comes full circle again, because we're relying more on the on the people. You know, are you? Are you a good fit? How do you fit with the team? You know, what's your motivation? You know, all these, these kind of things. So it's been an interesting shift. I was worried at one point, you know, will AI take over HR, but I don't think it ever will, because you still need that people influence. You still need the empathy, and AI does not have empathy, and that's one of the most important things that a people, partner or managers have to have.

C

**Cheryl Platz 31:44**

It's a really important piece of insight about the effect of AI on the industry that I don't think people are tracking is the impact on the inbound, on the interviewees, on the design tests,

E

**Enduring Play Computer 32:37**

podcast level nine: rising against the machines with behavioral interviews.

C

**Cheryl Platz 32:40**

It feels like there needs to be this shift to focus on the process and the why if we are doing skills tests - we can't focus on the deliverable. Because, to your point, AI is really good at deliverables, but what AI is not good at is observability, telling us how it got to that. And so asking a candidate to tell us how they got to an answer. Could help us explain, help us tease some of that stuff out. Have you seen any other examples of adaptation to get to that sort of mindset, or that process to differentiate person from machine?

A

Amy White 33:14

Yeah, I suppose in the interview process because, and that's exactly how you can kind of end up filtering that out, because even by taking away like a task, you know, if you're on an interview, and we've got specific competency based interviews, so one of the things that's really important to me as an ex recruiter within talent acquisition is, you know, we actually have competency based questions, and we split them into our core values. And our values are collaboration, integrity and innovation. And we have the same set of questions for each person, you know, maintaining a fair recruitment process. And so as you're kind of like reading off the question, you can almost see, you know, someone reading, and then it's, they'll say something back, give an answer, which, again, feels, I suppose, again, you know, it could be, it could be people dependent, but, you know, doing this job as long as I have, I've got a good sense of when someone's being authentic. But then, even if you don't know, it's the way they say, the credit the answer, and then exactly what you said, "Oh, could you just tell me a little bit more about how you got to that? Or what was your mind, you know, your mindset when thinking about that answer?" or something along what you just said. And that's when you'll know, because, like you said, you said, you can't, kind of go back on what AI said. It doesn't understand the thought process, and then you can quite quickly see and look, at the end of the day. I'm not saying that - you know, we would automatically reject that person. I think AI is becoming incredibly easy for people to do things of I don't necessarily think it's, it's the right way to enhance your career, but, yeah, I think again, you know, you go, you can go down this in many different routes, because if it's someone that's lacking confidence, but actually is really good at their job, but it's just comes down to the interview, it would reject someone because of that, or actually, you know, they could come in and do a smashing job as a developer. It's really hard. So I think AI, it does help. I think it's taken me a long time to get my head around that. But equally, I guess I'm old school, and even this podcast, I didn't really do too much preparation, because I want it to come from the heart. So, you know, I'm being authentic, even if I've like, you know, stumbled on my words or, you know, not said things in the right way of articulate it is all coming from the heart so that, yeah, that's just my take on it.

C

Cheryl Platz 35:25

No. I mean, that resonates with me. And this is not to judge anyone who needs to, like, prep things. But I recently gave a talk and I was like, someone was like, where's your speaker notes? I'm like, I don't do that because I would be too much in the words

E

Enduring Play Computer 35:37

loading podcast level 10, defining your culture through values and competencies.

C

Cheryl Platz 35:43

You mentioned a concept which I am familiar with, but I think some indies might not be or may not know how to navigate because you mentioned competencies. Competencies are - I've run into them at multiple corporations, right? It's like the things we believe are important for employees in a specific role or at a specific company to have. But what's interesting is technically, there could be infinite competencies, and somehow most companies get from the infinite list to list of specific competencies that are necessary for an individual in a role. And so maybe we could give people a little insight into how you would recommend they navigate that, because that concrete list of what competencies you do look for in a specific interview could help with that? Is it bad that somebody is using AI in this moment? Because if the competency isn't, you know, crafting the thing cool, if it's strategic thinking, maybe using the AI is fine, but then you kind of need to know what your goals for recruitment are. Can you talk a little bit about how somebody might go about working with a people partner or something to define those competencies for their business?

A

Amy White 36:45

Absolutely and actually, just as you were saying that, it just dawned on me that using AI could be seen as innovation and obviously being one of our core values. And actually you are using something to innovate, I guess, you know. So, yeah, I mean, you know, as I said, the three core values, collaboration, integrity and innovation, I actually helped develop. We didn't have core values as a business when I joined. And the way - the way I did this was it was pretty simple. I got on a call with everybody in the business in groups, and I just started asking questions about what was important to them. And this was a mixture. And this was a mixture of people that have been in the company for four or five years, and some people have just joined different seniority levels. And we did a few workshops, it was just like, Oh, so you know what's important, what challenges you? What would you like to see different and all in talking about the game, about what people like from a personal perspective. And through a series of workshops, we actually came up with these three areas where actually we feel that every single person demonstrates these areas at fuse box currently, and we want that to actually be the future fuse box. We actually had an hashtag called #newfusebox, because that was after we put the core values in, and ever since we put those in. So that would have been another start. Yeah, almost three years ago, we do everything around them. So we do the management training, we do the interviews, we do our performance reviews, we do our one to ones, so when we're actually assessing people with the competency. So it's department dependent, obviously, because if you having someone that's coming in as a writer or someone that's coming in as a dev will ask these specific technical questions, but we will always make sure they fall into one of those three categories. So like, innovation could be, like, you know, "when have you created an idea that ensure that you hit, you know, deadlines on time", for instance, or I'm just throwing that out there, so that would fall under innovation or collaboration, you know, it could be, "can you tell me a time where you've worked together as part of a team to ensure a deadline have been met, or a bit of project work went out on time?" Integrity, you know, we're talking about respect. We're talking about transparency. "Could you tell me a time when you've had to deliver bad news? How did you take it? Or how did you give or receive feedback?" You know, feedback is really important in our company. I think it's important in in general, but I think specifically, when you're making games and you're working in the remote environment and there's cross collaboration throughout different teams, feedback is really important, and that's one of the things fuse box has still one of the biggest learning curves, I think, for the managers, in giving not just challenging feedback, but also positive feedback as well. Sorry, I felt like I went up on the tangent again, but I think again, that I'm really passionate about that. I think when you're developing those competencies, you really need to try and think not only about what skill set people have is how they can demonstrate that in your company core values. And if you don't have company core values, I would really suggest putting them together, because it will be the backbone of your business

E

Enduring Play Computer 39:41

podcast, level 11, stability through shared vision.

C

Cheryl Platz 39:46

What I loved about your answer was it was passionate. It was also very specific. And you got around to like, what made it good for gaming, which was going to be a follow up question of mine, if it felt generic, was like, "Why do you think this is important for games?" But you started to talk about that cross disciplinary thing and a very specific way that this helped around the feedback part and everything. So I think that was a really good tour of how what seems corporate, right? I get it sometimes people like, "oh no" - but corporate values give people a shared language and understanding for their social contract, for how they show up. And I love your #newfusebox moment you talked to everyone, and you got them bought in on what it meant to be at work every day, and it lit this thriving fire at the office, and people knew how to show up with each other. That's - That's magic.

A

Amy White 40:35

yeah, and again, like, you know, the almost three years that we've been here, we've had one voluntary believer, and I'd like to believe that is because of, you know, the #newfusebox, and everything that we've implemented. And like someone said something to me the other day, which is really interesting. "Oh, do you think people just don't leave because they're too afraid to try and get another job, you know, given the industry at the moment?" But I genuinely don't think that's what it is. You know, I actually think since this #newfusebox kicked in, people do genuinely show up. People do genuinely love working here. And, you know, even when I'm chatting to - I spoke to someone in dev the other day, they were just like, oh, "you know, it's integrity, isn't it?" And like, we were like "oh, collaboration!" We still talk about the values now and again. I think it just drives home that real people focus of the business, and that's why people are attracted to Fusebox, because it's not just a gaming studio, it's one that's actually run by people, and passionate people. And yeah, I again, I'm probably showing it, but like, I just love talking about this kind of stuff, because I've been at the core of it. And as I keep saying, if you don't have a people partner, then then, yeah, go get one.

C

Cheryl Platz 41:46

And I think, you know... and how many employees are at Fusebox?

A

Amy White 41:50

Yeah. So when I started, there was only 26 and now we are 48 but we are recruiting now. We're projected to be 60 by the end of this year. And my boss has, yeah, very optimistic goals, which I think are going to happen of becoming an 100 people led studio by the end of next year, which is really exciting. And again, it's kind of then you you face a new challenge. It's like, how do we maintain the new fuse box and take it through to that next stage where we're not becoming a corporate business, and we don't want to be, but we have to adopt values in order to survive. And that's where the next challenge, I think, will be.

C

**Cheryl Platz 42:24**

You gave your future selves a gift by having that clarity of culture. When you're no longer able to be in the room as you scale, when you're no longer... having that #newfusebox culture to pass on to the managers who will be the ones passing it on to the next people gives you a better chance of thriving. And I think, to the people who are like, "Oh, well, the low attrition is just because of the industry." No, what I can say that firsthand, like, attrition is still happening in the industry. What will happen if you have bad culture is your high performers will leave because they are attracted by other companies, and you're left with everything else. So, and it's not to say that they're like, there is always natural attrition, right? People have people have family issues, they want to move whatever. But like, what you're talking about is that that low attrition feels, feels magical.

A

**Amy White 43:09**

And like, again, we talk about transferable skills. There's nothing stopping people from taking what they've learned in fuse box and adopting that into different areas within the industry. Like, you know, we bought on someone as a story associate recently. She's been doing it for about just over a year, and she's shown a lot of interest in data. And, you know, we're going to give her the opportunity to work in data, and then she could, technically, you know, there wasn't a role at fuse box. She could technically take that and go on to somewhere else. And that's kind of, you know, we want attrition. I don't think a business can, you know, operate fully if we don't have, you know, healthy attrition? I think that's important, and people will leave fuse box, but that's okay, because if we've given them that platform, and if we've given them that learning to go on and do something, but, you know, more enrichment for their lives, then I think that's great, and I think that is what will happen. It's the same with me, right? I was, I didn't know about being a people partner. Now I applied, and then didn't realize I had all these transferable skills, skills. Now, look at me, and you know, I don't know what's what's next for me long term, but I definitely, you know, can see myself being a piece box for a long time.

E

**Enduring Play Computer 44:14**

Podcast level 12 hiring best practices.

C

Cheryl Platz 44:19

In your examples earlier, you were talking about, "tell me about a time you blank", "tell me about a time..." And I wanted to call attention to that form of behavioral interviewing. One, because it's something I've been trained on at multiple companies, and so wanted to just point people's attention to that if they've never heard it called out before. Two, because I think it's effective in general, because it's drawing attention to lived experience. It gets around bias in some ways. And three, because it seems like a really effective tool against AI, because AI has not lived those experiences, I wanted you to sort of check me on that. Am I interpreting your use of behavioral questioning in interviews correctly? And is that something you're intentionally doing in your process?

A

Amy White 45:00

Yeah, absolutely. And again, you know, it's about if we're looking back at our core values, especially, you know, the integrity side of things. When it comes to transparency, it's important to look at how people respond to questions as well. Like, if you're speaking to someone and they've, you know, on their CV or their bio, they're like, I'm passionate about this, I can do this. And then you're asking a question, but they're not delivering it in the way that's coming across on the CV. Then that scenario, and you think, okay, are they actually, you know, saying what, preaching what they're saying on their CV? And it's about challenging that behavior and really understanding how transparent people are as well. And I'm a big believer in pure honesty. And, like, I was always trained in my recruiter days to, like, reject CVs with you have lots of people that have jumped around, or, like, long, short stints and things like that. And I just think that's and even now, you know, I've had to work with some of my managers that they rejected a CV on that basis. And like, well, I'm going to still have that conversation. And as I've had that conversation, you know, it's like this person has been made redundant, or they, like we said earlier, they've had a family issue. Or do you know what, they've just what, they've just taken time out, you know, just taking time out to just go traveling, or just, you know, to, you know, preserve their mental health. And that's all okay. And I think it's just, you know, being able to have those open, honest conversations with people, and open up those conversations by saying, you know, "tell me a time, describe when you did this," and you're absolutely right, as much as I hate to say, it does kind of, you know, prevent the AI use, and you're getting the authenticity. And that's what we want. We want authentic people to come and work here. You know, I had an interview the other day with someone, and joined the interview, and I said, "Why do you want to work here?" "Oh because, you know, because it's six months contract." That that was it. And obviously the whys the whens - the Tell me, is your opportunity to really describe why you want to work somewhere and give a good overview of your background. And again, that authenticity, I think, is really important. So competency based questioning is really good, but behavioral question basis is good as well. It depends on how you use it, and it depends on how you score people as well, but as long as you're doing it the same for everybody, you can't be then accused of being biased or unfair. Because, I think again, what employers don't realize is you can be I don't really want to use the term suit. It sounds really heavy, but if you're not even running a fair recruitment process without actually having hired someone, you could still get yourself into trouble. You know, your name could your business name could still be put up as a negative, lots of negative reasons on, on the glass door, you know, reputational, oh, you know, I interviewed with x, and they didn't treat me fairly because of this reason. And you know, before you know it, these things, you know, the gaming industry is small. People talk so having the same sets of questions, do it on the competencies, yeah, and then that's the best process.

C

**Cheryl Platz 47:46**

Those are all really important call outs, and so I want to repeat them, because A, it's the right thing to do, and B, also it's the legal thing to do right to create a stronger hiring process. And also, we're not lawyers, so consult with your legal counsel. But some of the best practices I've seen are a one make sure that you're drawing from a set of shared questions that candidates all get, so you're not like, giving one candidate a really hard set and everybody else an easy set. B, one process I tried to use is like, if I see a candidate about to be disqualified in a conversation, I'm like, "so what I'm hearing is that x is a criteria for this role. Is that correct? And are we going to be applying that to all candidates from here on out in this conversation?" Because sometimes when that happens, there's like, this weird, like hidden, hidden requirement that wasn't in the job description, and like, calling that out to the group can head off bias, or call out that, like, oh, we had a really good set of candidates, and so we like, now we have to talk about, like, how we're going to differentiate against these really equally qualified candidates, and it's going to be x, But it's tough.

E

**Enduring Play Computer 48:56**

Loading podcast level 13, deconstructing employment referrals.

A

**Amy White 49:03**

Yeah, and I also think as well, it's really important to understand about how referrals work as well. It's something that I actually got rid of at fuse box. We had a referral scheme. Whoever sort of referred someone into business would get an lump sum of money once they pass their probation. Yes, it attracts people, but does it necessarily attract the right people. Because essentially, what you're doing is you're actually creating bias without even realizing it. You know, we're just going to sort of start to hire people we know, hire our friends. We know so and so worked at x company. We know they're good at that. So therefore, you know, you are creating a mass bias. And then, you know, I did get challenged on that, and so, rightly so. But since we've kind of removed that, we've got this fair process, you know, recruitment has been, been great. Yeah, I would really recommend, if anybody has got a and again, it differs, but a referral process, it can bring quite a lot of challenges.

C

Cheryl Platz 49:54

You know, I'm so glad you brought that up, because, you know, I talked to my teams about solving the right problems. And. And referral bonus programs have been around for a long time, and I feel like they were solving for a different problem when we didn't have AI search tools and the internet, and when it was harder to find candidates. And so the referral bonus was largely like, hey, go tap your network help recruiters. And now most job openings, at least for now in the industry, like, I see them pulled down after like, a day or two. Like, why are we paying - A, like, it's wild that we're, like, paying people to for people who are gonna apply anyway. But B, I've seen candidates not apply because they were so obsessed with finding a referral, because they think that's how the system works, that they wasted time not getting it into the system and the system closed. I've also been that person once or twice before I realized that was silly. That was silly and C to your point, it can create bias and have unintended consequences. I've turned people like people will come into my DMs really hot, like, "Hey, I applied for this job. I really want to talk to you." I'm like, do you understand that if we form a relationship now, I'm going to have to recuse myself from your interview process?

A

Amy White 50:59

Exactly.

C

Cheryl Platz 50:59

And no other candidate's going to have that problem. The referral process was built for strong ties, and going in at the last minute and building a casual tie is not gonna have you're still gonna have the effect you think it is. But like, check me on that, right? Because, like, that's been my perspective. But do you think I'm crazy?

E

Enduring Play Computer 51:18

Podcast level 14, the slippery slope of proactive job networking again.

A

Amy White 51:25

If Terry's listening, he's probably not gonna appreciate me saying this. He's got another interesting spin on it, like not the referral So, but what you've just said as well resonated, because every time I put a roll up, can't stop it, people will reach out to the hiring managers. That's fine. You know, they think they're being proactive. That's okay, but that's exactly it, you know, I had this conversation, and again, with my boss about, oh, you know, I'm going to go and speak to this, this person, because they've reached out, and it shows proactivity. And I've had to say, well, then, you know, you can't be part of the process. You got to completely step back, or, you know, we're just going to have to change the process. I didn't quite understand why, and I was like, trying to explain, because then, you know, unknowingly, they've got an unfair advantage because they've literally just spoken to the CEO of the business, and then it's going to make it even harder when we have to potentially reject that person. And it's it just, it just doesn't, it doesn't feel good, you know, it's not a fair process. And so now what I do is, when people approach me about the role. You know, my inbox gets flooded as well. I just say, you know, thank you for your interest. Please apply during, you know, using this link, and it feels cold, and I'm very much about building relationships. You know, I've got a almost 13,000 people on my Sure, not as many as you Cheryl, but

C

Cheryl Platz 52:38

Actually more. You're doing great, you're more than me. But like this is great.

A

Amy White 52:43

You know, I love making, you know, those meaningful connections. But you know, and I'd love to chat to some people. I look at their profile, I'm like, God, they're great for the role, but I just can't, because it's not fair on the other people. It's the same as if they were applying for a role at the moment, we're at final stage interview. Someone in the business says, "Oh, I know someone that worked at x company. Can I consider them?" Well, no, because, you know, it's not fair on the other people that are already in the last stages of the recruitment process. And just because you worked with that person, we know you're going to put that person to final stage. We know you're probably going to offer them. So it's really interesting, because then again, it's like about stepping back, and yes, it's showing proactivity, showing keenness, but even LinkedIn, you know, it's got this AI feature now, which, when you've applied for a role, you can follow it up with a message. So actually, is it really coming from the heart? Is it proactive, or is it just sort of a button that you can click? Now, I don't know mate again, it's a hard one. That's a really interesting one, but it goes back to referrals and just having to just try and keep the process linear for the sake of quality personally.

C Cheryl Platz 53:52

Look, it's tough out there. I get the wanting to have the personal connection. And if there's anything people take away from this season of enduring play, please build your community before you need it, because that last minute connection, it's you're going to get these responses. Because if I respond to 10 people out of 1000 -- inadvertent bias like, I can't, I can't scale to that. You can't scale to that. If a company does still have a referral bonus program, it's going to work for strong ties. And so if it's really important to you to have the networking, build your network before you need

E Enduring Play Computer 54:23

loading podcast level 15 out in the gaming community.

C Cheryl Platz 54:27

And that may be a good segue into something I wanted to talk to you about, which was your community work. You're a member of the LGBTQIA community and a senior leader in gaming. And can you talk to me a little bit about how you navigate your work in the community, and balance that with your work and gaming.

A

Amy White 54:42

I think, you know, it is about that kind of and again, you know, I was having a chat with my boss yesterday about regulating yourself and, you know, sort of managing your day to day and what you're really passionate about. And I think the two for me marry up really well, because it's that feeling of. Not knowing where you belong, and I've had that before as a gay woman, as a gay woman that's worked in different businesses, mostly entertainment, gaming, gambling, tech. I think you know, the struggles that I have had have been quite profound to the point where I just want to be able to help people get through that. Is that about being a woman? Is it about being a gay woman? Is it about being a woman in leadership? It's probably about all of those things. And the stuff that I have done has been mostly about speaking about my personal experiences. I've done round tables, I've done presentations, stand ups, I've been invited to different conferences. I did a stint where I worked as a volunteer for London pride. I was actually the head of recruitment there, and I worked on the recruitment strategy, the DEI strategy. When I was working at entertain, I did a secondment to become a DEI advisor, and that was working across different cultures within a global reach. So what I've been doing is kind of taking that and just, I just, I like to say yes to everything, like, like this, you know, if I get invited to things, if I can bring something, then, then I'm there. I want to do a lot more. Obviously, it is, it is it can be time permitting. One thing I kind of want to do at the moment is really focus on doing more work with people that need their CVs. Looked at career conversations. I did a post. I think this is how me and you connected about the women in gaming, and it blew up. And I had this post from this particular girl who's quite early in her career, and she reached out and she said, you know, you're an inspiration for all sort of young female wanting to get into gaming. And I actually said, Look, how can I help? And you know, we got on a call when I went through her CV and her experience, and, you know, we did a mock interview together. And you know, I didn't, you know, necessarily gain anything from it, apart from the fact that I know I've helped her. And, you know, I said to her, if you if you get an interview, if you get a job, let me know. And I'm trying to think of ways I can, I can do more of this. I think, I think the career side is really important. People, young people getting into jobs, people that wouldn't necessarily think about getting into gaming and, yeah, like, even, like, the LGBTQ bits that I do, you know, I still, unfortunately, sometimes that, you know, I have sort of comments not, not at work, thankfully, you know, these books were very, very diverse, welcoming space, but I've had sort of comments walking down the street and things, you know, if I'm holding my partner's hand, and you know, I've done bit, I want to do more. I want to do more. I feel like I am starting to develop a platform where I can encourage people to speak up about their experiences. Because I think, you know, experiences spreads awareness, and spreading awareness can provide more, safer places for people.

E

Enduring Play Computer 57:41

Podcast level, paused, begin host commentary.

C

Cheryl Platz 57:46

It's a good problem to have when your advocacy organizations are so many that you have to distinguish between them and the organization that Amy's referring to is not the same one that we heard about in episode one of season two of this podcast, women in games is a UK based advocacy group for women in gaming that was originally founded as women in games jobs in 2009 which is not the same as women in games International, which was founded in 2005 by a group of women who were at the Game Developers Conference. If you want to hear more about that story, you can listen to women in games international CEO Joanie Kraut in episode one of season two of this podcast, women in games, the UK version that Amy references is most recently known for their 2026 manifesto, which is an updated version of an earlier document which focuses on five key areas, industry, education, policy, community and culture, and talks about different areas where imbalance continues to exist and how We can take action. Their major point is that while women make up nearly half of all players, they're still underrepresented in game development and games leadership, which is statistically true.

E

Enduring Play Computer 58:51

Podcast level 16 become your own representation.

C

Cheryl Platz 58:56

Thank you for all the work that you do for people who are hearing you talk and feel inspired to either support the causes that you support, or maybe want to get started sharing their story. How would you recommend they do so?

A

Amy White 59:09

And that's a good question. I guess for me, it's just, it's organic, and it's happened organically, just through making connections. And I think that's all it is. I think it genuinely is going back. You know, we live in a world now where there's so much technology. We're going to talk about AI again, but like and various other bits of technology, and you know, the, you know, you're on your phone and the social media, but it's, it's about building meaningful connections, you know, going to conferences, going to game jams, going to meet ups, going to whatever, and just speaking to people, sharing stories, if you're work, if you're in a company at the moment, and you're thinking you might be part of the LGBTQ network, or you might be part of something else, and you want to start something just, you know, do it. You don't need sign off. You know, for these sorts of things. A lot of the time, it just sometimes takes that one person to start a conversation, and then before you know it, yeah, but I. Do think LinkedIn is a very good tool. I've used LinkedIn for years. You still get people saying, oh, it's not social media, it's professional. I don't necessarily believe that, because I think that actually it's becoming a safer place for people to post things on it, and that's a good thing. And also, don't be afraid to, just like, pull things out if you see them, which I have done, you know, if I've seen someone speaking about, you know, like a woman gaming, I don't know if you were part of the whole thread when I posted that, there was someone that said something, and then, you know, it was just really nice to see all these, these people sort of speaking up and speaking out. Just don't be afraid to have a voice. But like, I think the most important thing is building those meaningful connections.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:00:39

You know, it's a recurring theme this the reputation LinkedIn has versus its potential. I think some people think LinkedIn is just, I go connect with person, and in some ways, I think people who are getting started with LinkedIn for the first time, it has the same challenge that raw Tiktok has, or raw raw X has, where you're like, oh, this feed is but it's algorithmic, so you have to sort of teach it what content to give you, unfortunately. But when you do, if you start putting some stuff out there, if you start interacting with posts, you get something that can actually be really thriving, can actually be really engaging you and I met because your post crossed my feed, and I was like, That is someone who sounds like, I should really speak with them. I'm really interested in their perspective. And I've gotten multiple jobs from recruiters finding my posts and sliding into my DMs in this in this economy, because that's, you know, the recruiters are out there looking for people with unique voices and looking for people doing that. Those weren't referrals, people going out and having their voice and being in the community, and you contributing the community, you sharing your story. You don't, you'll never know how many people you impacted. You just you know some people, but like, there's lots, lots more that see you and are like, I'm glad she's there,

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:01:50

loading final boss level, empowering your managers



Cheryl Platz 1:01:55

Because you mentioned, management training, and I wanted to talk about how we set managers up for success, especially in gaming, but in general, too, you know, it's a common problem in corporate environments where we take someone really skilled and then sort of plop them into management. And I've been in some situations where we had unofficial management apprenticeships and stuff like that. But I loved to hear how intentional you were about giving managers training. So I wonder what advice you might have for studios that don't necessarily have that intention about, like, what's important and how to get started in like, lifting managers up,

A

Amy White 1:02:29

Your management team will be the biggest backbone to your success, would be my first thing. And as we sort of spoke earlier about attrition, culture, engagement, attention, all those sorts of things that will come from the management team. Again, I think, you know, it's really difficult, like you've just said, taking someone that's been like a developer for like, 20, 30, years, and then making them into a people manager. We've actually done that with someone, if you're listening, you know, who I'm talking about. And it's been a journey, but it's been one which I've really, really enjoyed seeing. Because I think again, he was under the mindset of, you know, just ensuring the jobs are done. He was more of a sort of manager, as opposed to a leader. You know, there's obviously two very different things there, but because, you know, we've gone through the why, like I said earlier, he's now one of our best managers. I think it's really important that you set the expectations early, that it isn't just, you know the output. It's about ensuring that you know you are fostering a safe environment for your team. You are, you know, adhering to the company policies you partner with HR or the leadership of the people partner. You've got to be able to work together. You have to build the trust you may not necessarily agree with some of the things that HR put in, but at the end of the day, they're doing it to protect you. They're doing it to protect the business. I think that I could go down the whole route of training courses. It sounds generic, but it's really important, but it's important that you find one that's works. Obviously, if you're a remote based business, there are companies out there where you can do interactive training modules if you really need to kind of do you know specific training, like your GDPR and you know all those sorts of things. But if we're looking at it again from a UK perspective, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, awareness training and whistleblowing, these are three really big areas that not only managers have to understand is actually the whole business. Because again, these are things that have been really highlighted in the women rights act recently. And again, it's getting your managers to understand why, making sure that when you've got a manager, the manager's manager is also, you know, making sure that they're going through the performance cycle. They're having their one to ones. I myself, I suppose I've got a slight advantage, because I was a manager of any plus years myself. So, you know, when I was a younger manager, I thought, you know, the bee's knees. I thought, Yeah. And, you know, I look back now, it's horrendous. It's horrifying, actually, how bad of a manager I actually was. So I sort of, you know, have lived experience, which I think is important, and I can really empathize with the managers when they sort of say, Amy, I've got this problem. And how. Do I deal with it? Am I dealing with it right? And I can get on it from a human perspective, I think that's one thing I can really drive home as well. Tools, are there? AIs are there? But being a manager, you have to be able to have the human touch in order to be to do it, you have to want to do it as well. And also don't feel like you have to do it. Your manager, or someone in the business is sort of pushing you towards that side, because there's nowhere else to go in the company. You don't have to do it. Have a conversation. Work with the HR team, work with your leadership team. They can be other routes, which is why we've created two separate routes, because not everybody wants to be a people manager. Not everybody can do it. It's hard work. It is hard work. But, yeah, develop those training modules. Create the frameworks. If you haven't created a career framework within your business, do it. That is very important. A career framework and annual review processes will be your manager's best friend. You have to be able to give the managers the tools in order to do it. Obviously, if anybody's listening and they want they haven't had this set up, or they wouldn't know where to start, then I don't, you know, reach out. I'm happy to give some pointers, because it can be a minefield when you're just setting up the management training.

C

**Cheryl Platz 1:06:08**

That's very generous of you to offer. And that career framework thing, I want to drive that home, because, again, I think people write it off like, oh, I don't need that. Especially in games. You need it. Why? Interdisciplinary? It's so complicated, the whole cloud service plus movie equals hugely complex problem space. And as a leader of the teams that are doing the actual game development, I've seen it time and time and time again that like what I've truly been called in to do is help people understand their roles, help them shine light on Yes, this part is your job, and then the cross disciplinary part, having this framework that talks about seniority levels and what a senior does versus what a junior does, what a staff does. That part helps people understand who to talk to and how to talk to them, and helps managers know what level of complexity to throw to people. But if you don't have that, then everything's just inconsistent, and there's all this resentment, and people's careers can't grow. It's a it's too much for individual managers. And again, if you wait too long, then everybody has different expectations, and it is so much harder to pull it back, because people's careers have gone off the rails. Do it when it's easy and you just write it down, you're like, this seems obvious. Let's just all agree that this is true. This is senior, this is Junior. Everyone will know. Everything is happy, please. In a previous podcast, I was like, please don't hard code you strings, please. Once you get to the point where you start having more than like 10 employees, start thinking about documenting what seniority means that once you start getting lots of discipline, start thinking about what job architecture might look like, your future self will thank you, I promise you.

A

**Amy White 1:07:41**

And we talk about the catastrophizing worst case scenarios and working back, that's a really good example of just, yeah, get your career frameworks in early, and the rest will be okay.

C

**Cheryl Platz 1:07:53**

And there are so many people out in the industry who have walked this walk and can help you do it fast. You just have to know what questions to ask. And we're telling you, go ask these questions from someone who's done it before, and they will help you set up your studio so it will thrive and be happy and not blow up in your face when you're just at the point when you're trying to grow right? Because that's the problem. These problems hate you when you cannot afford them. You're like, oh my god, we're winning awards. We need to scale. We need to do the things. Why can't anyone work together anymore? Because we did not give them any clarity and we threw 100 more people at the problem. That's why,

A

**Amy White 1:08:25**

that's why, exactly that, exactly that

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:08:29

loading, final podcast level links and follow up.

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:08:33

Well, thank you so much for this chat. I am so energized by it. I'm so grateful that you shared your time with me today, and I think there's so many insights in this conversation I think are under served, under shared, and to the themes of this the general podcast right creating games and studios that thrive, the energy you bring to serving your teams is going to help so many other people. Thank you. You very generously offered that people could reach out. How might people continue to follow your work and or reach out to you if they want to continue after the podcast,

A

Amy White 1:09:06

LinkedIn, I think that's a good starting point. Yeah, just add me on LinkedIn. I am very responsive on that. And you know, if you send me a DM, I'll always reply. And I have various different LinkedIn groups set up as well. So if you're interested in any of them, I can invite you to them as well. But yeah, by all means, you can bring me an invite. That's no problem.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:09:25

Amy, it has been a delight. I can't wait to see how the Traitors game turns out and how Fusebox continues to thrive. It sounds like you've given them an excellent, thriving, shared understanding of what it takes to be a studio that survives. And I look forward to seeing your continued growth, and look forward to continuing to see you on LinkedIn. Thank you so much.

A

Amy White 1:09:45

Thank you so much. Cheryl.

- C** Cheryl Platz 1:09:48  
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