Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 155: CALI YOST

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, a podcast where we discuss strategies, and advice for how to climb the S curve of learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, and today our guest is Cali Yost, an internationally recognized workplace strategist, futurist, speaker, and author. She is the founder and CEO of the Flex+Strategy Group, a company that helps leaders re-imagine how, when and where their people work today and tomorrow. Given that the coronavirus has completely disrupted how we work, there is a lot of re-imagining happening right now.

WHITNEY   Cali, welcome to the podcast.

CALI   Thank you, Whitney. It is a pleasure to be here today.

WHITNEY   You know, I like to ask this question at the very beginning of every episode, because I like to have our listeners have a sense of who they're listening to and be able to connect to you a little bit more, so could you tell us very briefly where you grew up and what you wanted to be when you grew up?

CALI   I grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which is in central Pennsylvania. It is most famously known as the home of the Amish, although, I am not Amish personally, and when I was growing up, I wanted to be a journalist, a writer, and I wanted to tell wonderful stories of other people, and went to college wanting to be that, and it was in the college that I actually took an economics class, and fell in love with business, so that is where my journey toward telling the stories of business began.

WHITNEY   Oh, interesting.

CALI   Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY   So, you took an economics class, were not planning on falling in love with business, but then it was love at first, I don't know, micro economics [crosstalk 00:02:04].

CALI   (laughs).

WHITNEY   Or something (laughs).

CALI   Exactly, exactly, first chart, first the Venn diagram.

WHITNEY   So what's interesting though is that that has, I mean, business has become your life's work, but it's a little bit more specific than that, so how, how did you get interested in the work that you do today?

CALI   Well, it always really has been about re-imagining how, when and where work is done to help businesses, and people achieve really the highest levels of performance, and wellbeing and it began back in the early 90's when I was a junior manager in training at a bank in New York City, and my area specialized in lending to closely held companies, and these are companies where they don't have audited financial statements, so you have to have a very strong relationship with the owner in order to lend money to that business, so the relationship between the banker, and the customer is very important.

                So, when I would lose a banker, my business would become very vulnerable, and at the time I was married, and I didn't have any children, but I just as an aside was becoming interested in this emerging field of work flexibility. It wasn't even a field, it was literally like this little innovation pocket that was happening in the world, in a couple of think tanks, so I was studying this on the side, on my own while I was in the process of potentially losing two really very valuable bankers, and one banker was a woman who had gotten remarried, and had a child with her second husband, and lived in the suburbs, and was not going to be able to make the commute every day, and the other one was a father, a young father who had had a child. There was no paternity leave, and so, he was sort of not showing up.

                And, I went to my management again, clueless young manager, and said, "Hey, why don't we give them some flexibility? Our customers don't care where they are. And I need them to stay with us so that I can maintain that relationship, and our business." And, needless to say, in the early nineties before there were laptops, or mobile phones, or anything, my management looked at me and said, "I'm not even actually sure what you're saying. And she just has to leave, I guess, and he just needs to go be put on review, and if he can't get it together, you're going to have to let him go." And it just didn't make any sense to me, so the, the crowning moment came where I went to the office of the CEO of another bank. We had his business to introduce myself, because this woman had left, and it was her client, and the CEO basically said that what had happened was a mistake, and what he does with his bankers is he gives them flexibility, and I actually couldn't believe that the senior leader of an organization was speaking about this, this topic that I had become so obsessed with on the side, and it was one of those moments where sort of the angels kind of sing, and time stops.

                And, I walked out of that meeting and I said, "I'm doing this. This is what I am doing." And I went to Columbia Business School in 1993, walked the halls of Columbia Business School saying I was going to be a work flexibility strategist, and everything's just sort of played out from there.

WHITNEY   Wow. Okay. So, you just, you, you have this experience, and you now had found your calling of what you were going to do.

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   All right, so that brings us, we're going to go straight to what's happening today. You've now been a work life strategist for 25 years.

CALI   Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY   Our world has completely been upended where remote work is now going to become the commonplace way of conducting business, and no one is quite sure what to do. We had been

moving in that direction, but this has completely accelerated it. Tell us what's happening, what you're seeing, and what do we need to know?

CALI   So, we have been moving very organically in that direction for the past two decades, and since I started doing this work as a work flexibility strategist, I have truly been privileged over those years to work with some of the most visionary leaders who, men and women, who truly understood that the traditional model of work was broken, and to prepare their businesses for success not only today, but in the future, flexibility in the way work is done had to be part of their operating DNA, part of their strategic decision making process, so what they did is they voluntarily threw themselves onto a new S curve of learning, okay? So, they threw themselves because they had to challenge their beliefs about work, and how, when and where it needed to be done. They put their people on the curve and they put their organizations on the curve for a variety of reasons, and I'm going to get to why this matters today.

They understood that they needed to build a culture of high performance flexibility intentionally and deliberately if they wanted to attract and retain the top talent across all generations, if they wanted to engage their workforce and maximize productivity, if they wanted to optimize resources like workspace, and technology, they wanted to encourage innovation, and they wanted to service their clients better and smarter the way clients wanted to be serviced.

And, of course, they wanted to be prepared to respond rapidly to any crisis so they could maintain their operations, and that could have been weather, the most of it is weather, cyber-attack, and now here we are with this unprecedented crisis of the coronavirus, and so those organizations, and I've been in touch with them, they've been able to almost flip a switch, and recalibrate how, when and where their people are doing their work.

On the other hand, you now have all of these organizations who did not do that work, and who did not take those intentional, deliberate steps to move their organizations, and themselves up that curve that now find themselves - literally overnight thrown on a new curve, and they're trying to now navigate up that, up the different levels in real time, and that can feel very overwhelming and chaotic. But the good news is, is that I've learned a lot over those 25 years, and there are some simple things that an organization can do in order to not necessarily move to full mastery in this moment, but at least be able to maintain their operation, and most importantly, learn a lot from this moment that they can then take once the crisis is passed to do that deliberate, thoughtful work, and really position their organization for success in a profoundly important way going forward.

So, that's what I'm optimistic about, I think ultimately we're going to come to the other side of this and organizations, they will be prepared to do that work, and it is very exciting, but we have to help them through this moment, and that's what I'm very committed to do.

So, now we have to just find a way to help organizations scale that much more broadly.

WHITNEY   Right, I know I was talking to an organization not too long ago, well, in the last week, and they were saying to me, you know, they're, they're working remotely, and they've got, they need people to be able to talk to each other, and they're all these different platforms. They've got Zoom, they've got Google Hangouts. I think they've got MeetMe, maybe MeetMe, maybe WebEx, like all these different platforms, and they're not sure how to manage that, so it, all these really sort of logistical things get very complicated very quickly.

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   So, Cali.

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   What are some tips for people who are struggling with this and they've been in an office and now all of a sudden it is remote. What are two, or three, or four things you would suggest that people do to be able to manage through this?

CALI   Well, if it's okay with you, I'm going to do five, because I think there are five key things.

WHITNEY   Oh, please (laughs).

CALI   In fact, I love the number five, so let's start with five.

So, okay. First step is, and I can't say this more emphatically, if you have no experience, or limited experience working flexibly, and or remotely, you really, really need to keep it simple. There is some fantastic advanced level remote workforce strategic advice going around right now, which is, it's awesome, but it's overwhelming. When you are first getting on this curve, the S curve of learning, really try to keep it very simple, and straightforward in the beginning. As you begin to move up the curve, and curve, and master things, by all means start to emulate, and be inspired by leaders who have led distributed workforces for the last 10 years. They have a lot to teach you, but in the meantime, let's just keep it simple, and let's just get started. I think that's important so people are not overwhelmed.

WHITNEY   Right.

CALI   And I'm going to reflect on the story that you just told to be an illustration of that. You know, our research, which we did two years ago, we surveyed a national probability sample of full-time U.S. workers. We asked them, "What technology do you use most frequently to keep in touch with your colleagues and your supervisors?" 14% said they use video conferencing and collaborative platforms, so that's 14% frequently. So that means, let's say that went up to maybe 25% over the last two years.

WHITNEY   Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CALI   You got a heavy percentage of the workforce not familiar with those technologies right now going into this crisis, so I would say again, that's great. They're there, but you want to keep it simple. So, where do you begin? So, this is my second tip. You have to sit down, and this is not hard. You have to sit down, and you have to put the jobs that your people do into some broad categories, so for example, jobs that can be done either partially, or fully remotely. Jobs that can only be done on site, and then, you want to begin to break it down by essential and non-essential people who can, who have to be on site to do their work and there's a reason for this.

Once you have those jobs categorized, it makes it easier for you to determine who is going to be able to work partially, or completely in a remote capacity, because not everybody can do this, and I, I think this is very important. It throws leaders off when they have a component of their workforce that is not able to work remotely, because they get caught in the, "It's not fair, I can't be consistent, what do I do with these people over here who aren't able to do that?" Just start with the people who can go remote, and get them set up and get them started, then what you do for the people who are not able to do their full job remotely, or only can do part of their job remotely, that's when you're going to move to being creative with time and space, okay?

So, think about remote as being place, right? You are leveraging where they're working. Now you're going to move over to, to think about how you can be creative with when they are working, and actually the space within which they're working with each other.

And, the way you can do that is you can form A and B teams, okay? So, split those people who have to be on site partially or fully, and are essential to the business into A and B teams, so you're splitting them in half, and then, you can split them, and when they come into the workplace, the workspace. So, team A works Monday, Wednesday, Friday, the first week, team B works Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, because some organizations to keep some productivity that would be lost by doing this they've added Saturday onto the work week, and then, you switch it up the next week. Everybody switches, and the days in between you are cleaning at the end of that day, and the purpose of this is you want to limit the exposure of everybody to the virus.

Now, what other organizations are doing is they're also being creative with time, so instead of having an eight hour day, they're extending to a 10 hour day, so that 30 hours a week of work gets done in those three days, or they're switching hours so that people can come in earlier in some of the, the busier time commuting, or leave a little bit later. Also, that's happening, and is helpful for parents.

So, if you have parents who are on your A and B teams, and now have kids at home that can help them coordinate care, so again, just sort of think about the jobs, and then, assign the different types of flexibility that you can to those jobs, so that's my second tip.

WHITNEY   So, you're seeing companies do that, you're seeing companies do that?

CALI   Yes. Well, you know, I, here's what I'm seeing - honestly, I'm seeing a lot of panicking. I'm seeing a lot of-

WHITNEY   (laughs)

CALI   Panicking, okay. Like, what? Okay, so I'm trying very, again, to keep it simple. Just break it down, okay? And, these are some of the solutions that you can begin to employ, and experiment with because this is an experiment, because you know, Whitney, and when you're on that S curve of learning, it's super awkward in the beginning. Like, you're not going to have-

WHITNEY   That's true.

CALI   Nailed it right away, but it can make it easier if you have some structure within which you're trying to do it, correct? That'll-

WHITNEY   Yeah, yeah.

WHITNEY   Can I just pause for two seconds and to-

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Tell you how happy I am that you are completely fluent in the S curve of learning framework. That makes my little heart sing (laughs).

CALI   Okay. Well, you know, I'm a major fan. We've been friends for a very long time, and I told you-

WHITNEY   (laughs),

CALI   When I go into companies and I start a change process, I usually throw the curve up at the beginning and say, I'm just going to put a little context around what we're getting to do, ready to do here, okay? We're going on a curve, and it's going to be a little awkward, and the good news is,

remember the, the leaders I work with are like, we're going on the curve, man. Let's do it. Let's get-

WHITNEY   Let's do it.

CALI   You know, so there's a voluntary, let's jump on it, okay? Which really is what you need to be successful. What these leaders are experiencing now is they're on it, and-

WHITNEY   Right.

CALI   I think with a little bit of structure, it's not going to be as overwhelming as it seems right now, and I really, really do believe it's going to lead us to an even better place for their organizations as they, as they go through this. So, again-

WHITNEY   Absolutely.

CALI   Just, categorize your job, and leverage the different types of flexibility. Are we ready for-

WHITNEY   All right.

CALI   Point three?

WHITNEY   I am-

CALI   My tip three?

WHITNEY   I am ready for tip number three, bring it on.

CALI   All right, Whitney. Tip number three is we have to relax.

WHITNEY   Oh, I'm glad you just said that.

CALI   Okay, well we do have to. We just have to relax. We have to relax with specifically, not only do we have to relax and, and just support each other, but we need to relax the work from home best practices that are valid, and very relevant in normal times.

              These are not normal times, so we need to relax some of those best practices, which again are being presented very broadly, and they are not wrong. You really should try to have a separate space with a door, and walls. You really should try to minimize distractions, but with what's going on right now where people are finding themselves overnight having to work remotely, that's unrealistic, and what you want to do is you want people to feel they can be accessible and responsive to you without worrying that their workspace has to be completely perfect as they are hearing all remote workspaces need to be.

              We need to be a little more forgiving of a child in room. We need to be more forgiving of a dog barking. We need to be more forgiving of a roommate who is also trying to remote work right next to you while you're on a conference call. We need to be more forgiving if I am working at my dining room table, or the only place I can work is in my bedroom, because that's the only door. Is that optimal? No, and once this is over, it is important to go back and say, okay, let's regroup, and let's try to establish, and get back to some of these best practices, but we're, right now what really

matters is people feel that they can respond, and be accessible, and not worry about the workspace being absolutely correct before they're able to do that.

WHITNEY   It's so funny, it's so funny that you say that, so this morning I was doing a LinkedIn live, and so, I'm in, and I was working in s- one of the people said in the comments like what's behind the shutter? So, I've got this like shutter right behind me is kind of space-

CALI   I know, I watched you this morning. I love your LinkedIn Live.

WHITNEY   (laughs)

CALI   I love your LinkedIn live, what is behind this shutter?

WHITNEY   (laughs) My bed, my bed.

CALI   (laughs).

WHITNEY   My bed is behind the shutter, because I don't have-

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   An office yet. I, I need to, I need a desk for my office, and so, I am working in my bedroom, and I was just like laughing so hard, so hey everybody, poster girl for remote work-

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   That is not ideal, and I, I do love that. I was just doing a Zoom call with someone, one of my coaching clients this morning, and his cute little daughter walks in, she's probably like-

CALI   Oh.

WHITNEY   Five or six, and she has on a Hulk costume, and she's like waving it. You know what I love about this is, you're right, it will go back to normal, but we will also in the process normalize the work life fit that you've been advocating for the last 25 years.

CALI   Oh, yes.

WHITNEY   That it's okay, that, um-

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   You know, a child walks in the room, there... nothing wrong with that.

CALI   Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that, and I, as I was saying earlier today, we are watching the real time destruction of the artificial boundary between work and life. Like, we're now, it's now gone. Like, we now know there's really no boundary between the two, and again-

WHITNEY   And, this is-

CALI   When we're done with this, and the other side we'll, we'll figure out what that looks like now, but yeah, we have to really be forgiving.

WHITNEY   Right, but I, I think this is one of those upshots though. I mean, this is like-

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   When you go on massive disruption, there are all sorts of things that will not work, and will end, but I think this is one of those positive things that is going to happen, and I-

CALI   I agree with you.

WHITNEY   I think it's lovely. Okay, what's your next?

CALI   I agree with you. All right, we're on to number four, and this goes back to the story you told at the beginning, okay. I really feel strongly about this. You need to stick with the technology that you, that everybody already knows.

WHITNEY   Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CALI   And, start there, okay? So, if you normally communicate mostly with email, text, mobile, mobile phone calls with conference calls, stick with that upfront.

WHITNEY   Hmm.

CALI   And, just get settled using that, and if you have video conferencing capability, and most people have some comfort with that, I would start using that as well, but don't worry if you're not facilitating a video conference call to the most masterful level that you can do. There are a lot of best practices around that, but it's enough right now to get everybody on the VPN.

            You get them on the VPN, just get them logged on, get everybody settled with an initial meeting or two. Then you can talk about maybe adding something else in, but I'm getting a little nervous that I'm hearing people all of a sudden logging on to, you know messaging platforms, and it's, that's adding a level of complexity right now that isn't necessary, so just start with the technology that you have that you know your system can support, and that's when you want to start to establish a communication protocol using that technology. So, what I mean by that is, you're going to establish, you're going to prioritize, like that group was struggling with that you were talking to which ones are we prioritizing? How are we going to be talking to each other? What do we use first? Put that in some kind of a priority order, and then, what you want to do is start using it.

            So, if you're not used to having a regular check in with your people every day, you might want to start with saying, "Hey, we're going to have an all hands check in at the beginning of the day for 15 minutes to just check in on priorities. I'm going to get some updates on where you are, and then let's check in with each other throughout the day this way." And, start with that, and then, check in at the end of the week, and say, "How'd that go? Like what should we be doing? Could, could we be doing something differently? What would be more helpful?" And you're, that's when you're going to start to think, to really be specific about what are our priorities? What are we trying to do? And, what this is going to feel like initially is micromanaging.

WHITNEY   Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CALI   Because in most organizations where there is no flexibility, this is not really happening, and I know this for the following reason. When I go into a workplace, this is literally the con- this is the question I get from almost every manager, "How do I know people are working if I can't see them?"

WHITNEY   Hmm.

CALI   My answer is always the same, so that's easy actually, "How do you know they're working now? It should be no different." And, I get a blank stare nine times out of 10.

             We are not doing a very good job in most workplaces today, being clear about productivity, what, what do we, what do we value? What matters? What's important? And, that's one of the great magic of deliberately implementing flexibility in your culture is all of a sudden you start answering that question.

WHITNEY   Interesting.

CALI   And, productivity measures become clear. It's true. It's really, it is fascinating, so-

WHITNEY   So, what you're saying-

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Can I, can I just clarify? So, what you're saying-

CALI   Totally.

WHITNEY   Is that when you are driven to do remote work, that, that paradigm of I see someone at their computer, therefore, they're working, you can't, you can't use that as a measure-

CALI   You can't.

WHITNEY   Or, a metric anymore, and so, now you're like, well, now I've got to measure it, and so, people-

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Start to look at actual productivity measures-

CALI   Yeah, yes.

WHITNEY   Of what was their output?

CALI   Yes.

WHITNEY   What did they get done?

CALI   Yup.

WHITNEY   Um, I- I'm thinking yeah, that's so interesting, huh?

CALI   Mm-hmm (affirmative) and-

WHITNEY   I have another question for you-

CALI   Yeah.

WHITNEY   So you talked about like how are they communicating? So, if you've got a company that historically is focused on text, and email, would you do the check in via text and email, or are there platforms that you're recommending that people use, whether it's Google Hangouts, or Zoom, or what are you seeing for a company that maybe hasn't had to use video conferencing, sort of more of a startup type of company? Anything that you're recommending?

CALI   Well, I think that could be a phone call, could be a conference call, you know, just-

WHITNEY   Okay.

CALI   Logging into a conference number-

WHITNEY   Just start.

CALI   And, and just, yeah, just start but I do think, you know, this is why I sort of say with, with some guarded, um, enthusiasm, if you can dive into a video conferencing situation, try that. A couple of things that come up, one, people's cameras on their computers are wonky, okay, so, that could be like a whole three hour thing, just getting everybody's-

WHITNEY   Okay.

CALI   Video camera going. Um, and that's fine. Um, the other thing is you may have some people who are super-duper uncomfortable showing their house, like where they live, and what-

WHITNEY   Ah.

CALI   Their background looks like.

WHITNEY   Yeah.

CALI   And, so this is something that we really are not, we haven't thought about, right? When you-

WHITNEY   That's interesting.

CALI   When you video, when you video conference in somebody into your house, you are letting them into your life in a way that they are not normally let into, and some people can be very hesitant about that.

WHITNEY   Right.

CALI   So, this is a very chaotic time, right? People are overwhelmed already. People are feeling very insecure, and so, you, you know, you want to, just to kind of gauge that, and the other part is people don't know what to wear.

WHITNEY	Right.
CALI	What do I wear? How do I dress?
WHITNEY	(laughs).
CALI	Like, okay, you know what? Don't... like, these are the things you have to clarify upfront, which is, do not worry about distractions, do not worry about what you're wearing, do not worry about the background. It's all fine. It's just important that you're part of this conversation, and that we're trying this together. Okay, this is a great story. Bob Sutton, you know, @work_matters? Bob Sutton?
WHITNEY	Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative).
CALI	Okay, so he put out on Twitter, he's a Stanford professor, and he put up on Twitter that the other day he facilitated a video classroom with his students, and mo-
WHITNEY	Mm-hmm (affirmative).
CALI	And, many of them were in bed. Okay-
WHITNEY	(laughs).
CALI	Like they were in bed, and they thought it was great (laughs). So-
WHITNEY	(laughs).
CALI	You know, hey, that's the next generation that's coming into the workplace right now. Having all gone to school virtually they're going to be in bed, so this is really probably a near term problem that we have, people being afraid to show their, their life, but yeah, so, that's what I would say. Start with just the conference call if people are just uncomfortable because you just want to be communicating at this point.
WHITNEY	Interesting. Tha-
CALI	That's what I would say.
WHITNEY	Considerations I would never have considered. Okay, number five.
CALI	You know right?
WHITNEY	Number five.
CALI	Okay, number five is, and this is a final one, but I'm going to end with one caveat that goes back to the S curve of learning, but number five before I do that is then you want to just be really, very rigorous about what you're prioritizing. So, pick one or two priorities that are really, really important right now. You cannot do all of your pre-coronavirus crisis priorities. You want to really hone in on the ones that matter. So, maybe it is, we have really got to be connected to our customers, and see what they need, and make sure they know we are here, and we are communicating with them. How do we do that?

We really need to make sure that we are keeping ourselves financially afloat. So how do we do that? Like, just make those things, those priorities up front, and keep checking in with them, and you're always going to be reprioritizing as you go along week after week. With that, you want to optimize the white space. Okay, this is so, so important.

WHITNEY   Hmm.

CALI   Okay, so imagine you have had to cancel, or reschedule, you know, half of what you had coming up for the next four weeks. That leaves a lot of white space, right? On everybody's calendars. Fill it with all those back burner projects that never ever get done, right? Like update all those manuals that never get updated. Start the newsletter you keep meaning to start, do research on potential customers, or a new product brainstorming, like all of the things that just don't get done while you are in the thick of the day to day of work. Really think about how to fill that time so that again, when this crisis is over, and we are on the other side of it, you have all this good stuff that you've done that now even sets you up for more success.

WHITNEY   Hmm.

CALI   So, that's my tip number five.

And then, I'm going to wrap it all up by saying, Whitney, you were thrown on this S curve of learning involuntarily, and overnight, and it is overwhelming, but if you follow these basic steps, you can begin to climb up the curve, and week after week you can maybe do a little bit more, but each, each week you need to be checking in, and you need to be learning in real time what people are experiencing, and, and take that data, keep that data, so when you are done, and you have, we are moved through this, and you have some brain space, and some bandwidth to reflect, you are going to use that information, that data, and that experience to then go on the new curve, which is the deliberate, intentional re-imagining of the way how, when and where work is going to be done going forward, based upon what you have learned, and in this crisis period.

And, you will ultimately set your organization up for success in the future. For all of those reasons I shared with you that the, the leaders I have worked with over the years what they knew, and it has all played out. Okay, so guess at the end of the pilot period of our change process to the way we do change is, we come in, we train, and then we, we facilitate a six week all skate pilot period with this new way of working. We do a pre and a post. At the end, inevitably, we... well, we ask how did this pilot affect productivity? What we want to see is nothing bad happened, because that's always the big fear, and-

WHITNEY   (laughs)

CALI   And, inevitably, nobody says anything bad happened, but you had a very sizable percentage of supervisors, and employees saying in six weeks productivity went up. Why is that? Why, why? Because there's an element of intentionality and engagement that was not there before.

WHITNEY   Right.

CALI   And, that is, that is nothing but good-

WHITNEY   Oh.

CALI   And again, you are prepared then for the next time this happens, then you're able to flip the switch, and remain operational, and keep the operating continuity together, and not have to find

WHITNEY   So Cali, where can people find you? And, we're going to include in this show notes, but is there a, is there an article, like if people want to learn more about this, where can they find you?

CALI   So, our site is flexstrategygroup.com. I am very active on Twitter, and on LinkedIn, and in fact, what I did just today is I went through my last three articles where I wrote out step by step from planning to implementation, and now also, what parents can do, and leaders can do to partner with parents to take care of the 32 million children that are now in people's homes while they work. I took all the steps that I put in those three articles, and I broke them out, and I put each one 15 steps, one after the other on Twitter, and 15 steps one after the other on LinkedIn. So, you literally can just scroll through my Twitter feed @caliyost, and you could go to my LinkedIn page, just scroll through my page, and you will see each one of those 15 steps. You could just follow them one, one, one, one, one and hopefully it will help you get started, and not be so overwhelmed.

WHITNEY   Fantastic, and then, if you can send us those articles, we'll include them in the show notes as well-

CALI   Oh great.

WHITNEY   So you can either go to Twitter @caliyost, or her LinkedIn, and look at them, or you can come to the show notes, and, um, see the articles all in one place.

CALI   Oh, and, my newsletter, and my newsletter.

WHITNEY   Oh.

CALI   You can sign up for my newsletter, because we send, we're sending out even more newsletters now, just released like t- like topical real time information-

WHITNEY   Okay.

CALI   And, advice, um. for people, so you can sign up for that at my, um, at my site as well.

WHITNEY   Perfect. Okay, so we'll include that in the show notes as well.

CALI   Okay.

WHITNEY   So, any final thoughts for us as we wrap up?

CALI   This is a really scary time. It is overwhelming, and nobody would want this. Nobody would wish for this to be the reason that your organization is stepping back, and having to reimagine the way your people work, but I know, I know this for a fact that if you can all, we can all just pull together, and be patient, and be willing to try, and experiment in real time you will come out of this on the other side, smarter, and even more prepared for success going forward. So again, I look forward to partnering with everybody in that process, because I do believe it's, it's going to happen.

WHITNEY   Cali Yost, thank you for being with us and this very timely conversation, and thank you for helping us re-imagine work in a really positive way.

CALI   Oh, it's my pleasure, Whitney, and it's just a joy to be on your show with you. I'm a fan.

WHITNEY   Oh, right back you. Thanks again Cali.

Our free will pushes against constraints. We think they are a check on our freedom, but we often do our most creative thinking within the bounds of constraints. Here in the United States, I'm seeing posts online sharing how businesses are pivoting, how they are changing their hours so the elderly can come in first to grocery stores, and taping lines on the floor to keep checkers and shoppers safely distanced from one another and a whole host of creative solutions to this situation we find ourselves in around the world.

When things feel out of control, sometimes all we can do lean into those constraints. To take one simple step at a time. When it comes to figuring out how to help our work force move to remote work, I loved Cali's approach - yes, it would have been better to think of this earlier, and yes, there are ideal things to do when it comes to working at home, but the most important thing you can do right now as a leader is start with what you have, where you are, with what you know and build on that. Figure out who can work remotely, and get them set up so they can get started. If people need to be in a specific physical location to work, be creative about how and when that happens. Use the tools you have to deliberately build patterns of success and then build on that. Then, when we are able to again work in the same physical location, we will be able to analyze what worked, keep what did, and discard what didn't.

For more information on how to work through working remotely with your team, be sure to follow Cali online, and we've linked to some of her articles in the show notes - visit whitneyjohnson.com/podcast, and you'll find her episode. And for daily conversations around disruption and how to manage during this time, I'm on LinkedIn Live every day at 9:00 am Eastern, and I'd love to see you there.

Thank you again to Cali Yost for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Melissa Rutty, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.