

Alison (00:09):

TheoremOne is the leading innovation and engineering firm for the Fortune 1000. We design, build and deliver enterprise-scale technology solutions and are very excited to present the Breakthru podcast, an ongoing series where we interview technology leaders to share their experiences and perspectives on what's next in tech.

Alison (00:38):

Welcome to The Breakthrough. I'm Alison Dean, VP of operations at TheoremOne, and today we are talking with Wendy McEwan. Over the last 20 years, Wendy has worked as VP, COO, CMO in digital media technology and professional services including roles at ZDNet, CNET, CBS, Oracle, and Knight Frank. Wendy sent me this quote from Dr. Seuss, one of my favorites. "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own and you know what you know, and you are the one who'll decide where to go."

Alison (01:19):

Hi, Wendy.

Wendy McEwan (01:20):

Hi, Alison. Thank you for asking me to join this.

Alison (01:23):

Of course. So why does this quote resonate with you?

Wendy McEwan (01:27):

I just love how it encourages you to take control of your own destiny. It's something as women, we sometimes struggle with and we're in control of where we want to go and we often forget that. We think it's up to somebody else, but it's up to us.

Alison (01:41):

Yes. So TheoremOne, my company, has always been a remote-first company, and with the pandemic, many companies have shifted to the hybrid work structure. I'd love your perspective on how hybrid and remote work is viewed in Singapore and Asia in general.

Wendy McEwan (01:57):

There's such a roller coaster of an answer to that, because a year ago, Asia was totally leading the pandemic, or what the future of work might look like because most of the rhetoric was we were never returning to the office in the western world, and in Asia, everybody was already back in the office because the pandemic was under control. Then you had the Delta variant and this reemergence of COVID everywhere, and so hybrid has become much more pervasive as people go in and out of lockdown, in and out of lockdown. It's like whiplash, because in Asia, it's not necessarily normal to work from home, because people live in very small place, the commute times aren't quite the same in certain countries. Obviously other countries like India and the Philippines, it's a very different story. So different parts of the region has different approaches to it.

Wendy McEwan (02:47):

There is a cultural preference in some parts of the region to work from the office because of that home situation not quite being the same as it is in a western environment where you have much more space to complete, so the approach is very different. I think also what I worry about in Asia is the invisibility tax. You already have a challenge when you work in a global company with different parts of the business that don't necessarily use their voice, or you don't have equal usage of voices based on cultural background, language, and just confidence. And so I think this virtual environment has really had a potential to have a detrimental effect because when you look in Asia, you see even less people using their voice, because it's easy to have your video up, and you're not physically around to encourage a different kind of contribution from everybody in the conversation.

Alison (03:40):

Right. You were a GM at Ziff Davis APN which ended up being acquired by CNET, which ended up being acquired by CBS Corporation. So I want to know how did your experience during these two major milestones influence your focus on business transformation?

Wendy McEwan (03:59):

That's a very long story. It was really interesting. I joined the internet media industry in 1999, web 1.0 which definitely dates me, but it was an amazing time to be in a brand new industry and to be the disrupter, to really have that experience of going to market and trying to educate the market and make the market around the changes and opportunity in advertising, and then also the changes in technology, because we were a technology media company. Well, it was where was advertising going, but also where was technology going in this. Kind of the learning tracks. Becoming part of CNET or CNET Network as it was known then and this born in the valley, born in San Francisco early 1990s kind of company scrambling to try to become a billion-dollar company. When I reflect now on what it takes to become a unicorn versus what it took back then, particularly from media revenue, I remember we always talked about digital pennies and television dollars, and all these different things in advertising. It was very, very hard to do big deals in digital media way back then, and when you think about unicorns today, it's not based on advertising.

Wendy McEwan (05:10):

Also, it's based on SaaS revenue, or it's based on e-commerce and maybe a billion dollars is a bit easier to generate. So becoming part of CNET Networks was fairly fluid. I was so new into the business. What was fantastic was being part of a young company where we were all making it up as we went. I got a lot of opportunities at a very young age. I was promoted into general management before I turned 30, and I didn't have the experience to do the job, but the good thing was, nobody else did either. There wasn't a lot of people in the industry saying, "I can do that job better than her," because everyone was young. Everyone was making it up, because we were really leading some sort of revolution.

Wendy McEwan (05:49):

Particularly in Australia where the incumbents were the print media and we all know the story of that. The little digital disrupter against the big print and television and media conglomerates. So that was super interesting. I think being with the San Francisco based innovative company, getting to go to San Francisco a lot from Sydney, and being that 1.0 bubble was fantastic. And then when CBS bought us in 2008, it was like the grown-ups came to town. We really had to step up, and we used a lot more compliant operating models. We went from being I think around 1,000 people in a \$600 million business to being at 25,000 strong organization doing billions in revenue mostly from North America.

Wendy McEwan (06:31):

So by then, I think on my way to be head of Asia Pacific, there was this real continuing challenge to educate the Americans about what was happening in the rest of the world and to move forward with that kind of grown-up operating model that CBS really brought to what we had been doing as this legacy digitally native company. So trying to understand how to operate within that legacy operating model when we were so used to being agile and constantly pivoting and having the freedom and flexibility to just products up on the fly.

Wendy McEwan (07:04):

It was such a magical time really when you reflect on it now. But also great learning about what it takes to run a business and what it takes to operate within a much bigger legacy corporate infrastructure. To your point around influencing business transformation, not only were we acquired by a number of companies, we also had a change in competitive landscape. So in 2008, we were bought by CBS, but then also you had the iPhone and the App store, which globalized everything. You had Facebook and Google becoming stronger and stronger and becoming much more like media companies. Google did the Panda update, which remains burned in my brain and nobody would understand what that is anymore, but it was the big update to how they indexed content as part of a search engine, which had a major impact on the way that we operated.

Wendy McEwan (07:51):

So constantly pivoting against the competition to adapt to what our customers were asking for in terms of how they bought media in 2000, 2001 versus 2008 versus 2012, it kept changing because then there was also programmatic media came in, so... the core of business transformation is really how do you continue to adapt and how it's possible to make revenue, and then the cost base that goes with that. And that's something that I think in media, we learned really early, that how we made money yesterday may not be the same way that we make money tomorrow. And I think because we had a digitally native business, it was very easy to tweak that, whereas when you have a lot of legacy tech and physical product infrastructure, it's probably not as easy to convert it... I've subsequently seen in other industries.

Alison (08:40):

That's interesting. Okay, I want to talk about this move that you did from Australia to Singapore. What was the decision process like for you related to country relocation? You're the first person that I actually am asking this question to, just because I find it super interesting.

Wendy McEwan (08:56):

I had been at CNET Networks, CBS Interactive by the time I moved for nearly 10 years. So it was 2010, and I'd joined in 1999. And I was starting to question going through all of that in one company... Most people in the digital industry jumped by the bit. It was very unusual to stay in one company for so long, and that was like 100 years in internet years, those 10 years. I had my first child in 2007, I was thinking about having a second one, and I was also thinking about is it time for me to take some time out. After my first child, I had eight weeks off, and so I was like, I'll have another baby, I'll take six months maternity leave, what was the norm for mothers mostly, and then I will assess what's happening in the market and determine my next steps.

Wendy McEwan (09:44):

And I think I'd started floating that to my boss maybe, I'm not sure. And anyway, he said, "Why don't you move to Asia and run APAC." So I went from taking six months off and having my second child to moving countries, having my second child, and doubling the size of my job all at the same time, which is actually the best thing I could've done. I'm not sure I realized what a big commitment that was to move while pregnant to another country and double the size of my job.

Wendy McEwan (10:11):

I had been to Singapore many times. I've been working for this company for 10 years already. I came here probably three or four times a year. I knew the team here really well, and I thought that meant that it would be a fairly seamless transition. When you move cities, you think you know that city, but there are communities and there are layers to those communities and there are different ways of doing things and where you go and how you get things done. It takes a while to get into the groove. There's certain complexity here. It's lots of different cultures, a real melting pot. There are four different official languages here, and so there's a lot of complexity to living here, and it's a perfect bridge between east and west, but there were a lot of things I didn't realize. You don't know what you don't know.

Wendy McEwan (10:51):

So it was an amazing opportunity that bridged to the east and bridged to the west that Singapore really is. It's such a great place to be. I know for the past 10 years that I've lived here for 11 years, this kind of accelerating digitization of the Asia region, especially in emerging Asia and the opportunity to see that transformation at the macro-economic level while also helping companies at a corporate level, has been fascinating to be a part of.

Alison (11:22):

I can only imagine. When I think of Singapore, I think of a country rooted in technological advancement at every turn. Is there an unspoken pressure to perform, transform, be transformational because of where you live?

Wendy McEwan (11:38):

I think the short answer is no. I don't feel pressure to perform or transform, but I think I am very lucky to be in this community. I think back to your point around moving countries, by the very nature of the fact, there are a lot of senior, very smart people living here that have moved here from all over the world. So you automatically get to be part of a community that have innovators in their field. And the Singapore government also really invests in innovation, either home growing innovation or attracting big companies from around the world to be headquartered here in Singapore for their Asia-specific operations.

Wendy McEwan (12:16):

So you very naturally get to interact with and network with a very interesting group of people. I guess it's sort of like a mini Silicon Valley in that way. And I think at the macro level, the government really invests in the transformation of the country, because it's a sort of democracy. They have a very long infrastructure plan that they can actually execute against. So their ambition around being a green economy and a more sustainable place to live in terms of the experimentation they do with buildings, in electronics cars and electronic vehicles and data and how they actually look at the country in terms of data. They make a lot of things publicly available for people to take advantage of, so there's innovation all around you and perhaps you forget. It just becomes so normal until you go somewhere else.

Wendy McEwan (13:07):

Even through COVID. Touch-less entry into buildings, QR codes, check-ins, temperature taking... It's just everywhere here and has been for like a year or more. I've heard from people who go elsewhere who've

been lucky enough to travel, it's a completely different world out there. So I think we forget because we're just submerged in it

Alison (13:28):

Okay. So in 2016, you became a CX of marketing strategy director at Oracle. I want to know what the transition was like moving from management to an individual contributor role and the second part of that question is in that role, what business transformation projects did you impact?

Wendy McEwan (13:45):

Again, lots of answers to this question. Transitioning from management to an individual contributor was really, really liberating and frustrating in equal measure. It was amazing to let go of that responsibility. I think I managed 200-odd people. I worked with CBS for like 14 years, and then I did a few projects, and then I was a COO for a time, about 200 people there as well.

Wendy McEwan (14:13):

And then I was just me. I was a... IC5, I think it's called Oracle, and nobody reported to me. I didn't have to do all the management training. I didn't have to interview people constantly, because the problem is when you're a manager, half the time you're trying to hire because of attrition or because of growth and so you're constantly interviewing, which is super interesting and actually you learn so much by interviewing so, eventually I did miss that. And when I got to do it again, I realized how much I missed by taking a break from that.

Wendy McEwan (14:43):

So it was super liberating in that sense, but it was also really frustrating. What I realized a couple of times since then, it's not so much about being a manager, it's about being the manager, and being able to really control the destiny of where the business is going and how the business is going to get there. And for most companies, people are anywhere from 60 to 80% of the cost base. So how you get the mix of people and build an opportunity for your people to flourish and be empowered and to execute against your vision is really core to how you drive business success. And when you're an individual contributor or even a sub-manager in a much bigger organization, it's much harder to be able to be that kind of orchestrator of the people and really investing in potential.

Wendy McEwan (15:36):

Potential is such a challenging thing, and we both know Joanna, and she talks about potential a lot. It's not so much about hiring for skill and experience. It's about hiring for what you see someone can become if you give them the right leadership and guidance, they can get there. But when you're not in control, then you're not the boss. You can't necessarily do that, and that can be incredibly frustrating.

Wendy McEwan (15:59):

So to me, that was liberating and yet frustrating. Especially once I got to know the business. I jumped into lots of different industries. My first year or so was always about understanding the industry and the business model and what was happening here. How did it make money? Who was the customer, and then where does it need to go next? To your point around the transformation way, what does this business need to be tomorrow, or in 10 years, and how does technology and talent fuse to enable that to happen? And when I got to that point, that's when it was like, okay, this is what we need to do. And if the business doesn't want to keep up with you on that, that's when the

frustration sets in.

Wendy McEwan (16:38):

In terms of the projects I impacted and what I got to do at Oracle, again, it was an amazing time as I said before, in terms of where the economies that I was working with were. So in Asia, in 2015, India was still I think 50 to 75% penetrated by feature phones. I think at the time, there were 200 million people on the internet in India out of one point something billion. Many people still didn't have access to the internet. Many people were still on feature phones, and many people still couldn't afford data. In a lot of the countries I worked with, data was 10 to 15% of a person's income. So mobile phones were used as dumb devices first to watch entertainment content. They weren't necessarily used either even when they could afford smartphones and we had that kind of influx of some \$100 Android phones. People still couldn't afford the data to go with them, so they were mostly just screens to watch television, et cetera.

Wendy McEwan (17:38):

So this transition that happened between 2015 to kind of 2017, 2018 where a lot of the unicorns and the VCs and the big companies like Google and Facebook really invested in the next billion. They all had next billion teams and everyone was racing to be the unicorns and the super apps of this part of the world.

There was this real acceleration to digital across a lot of these economies, and in India in 2016, you had demonetization, which really accelerated digital payments, and then you had the launch of Reliant Studio, which Mr. Ambani, I think he's the richest person in India, thanks to his children who were getting educated in the US and were frustrated with the internet connectivity in India, he launched a mobile phone business, giving out free data for six months. Data was free. It was three months at first, then there were six months.

Wendy McEwan (18:33):

So India kind of went from two or 300 million people connected to five or 600 million connected in a very short space of time. Why that mattered to me was I was spending a lot of time in India with the team trying to sell marketers marketing tech, and organization CRM and customer service technology as part of the CX suite, and as your customer becomes more digital, those tools become more relevant. And so you're in a country where most people are still doing print and television as a core part of their marketing budgets. Most people are still selling over the phone and face to face. Most people are still delivering customer service through VPOs or call centers or just plain old-fashioned answering the phone. And then all of a sudden, their customer goes from doing everything traditionally to being much more digital and so they start buying Google and Facebook ads, but there's so much more they can do and should do in terms of connecting those customer touchpoints and delivering a better customer experience.

Wendy McEwan (19:35):

Similar transitions were happening in the Philippines and Indonesia, in Sri Lanka. I even got to Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. They continue now obviously with COVID, they've been accelerated again. But this kind of conversation with traditional business, whether its retail, banking, telecommunications, whatever it might be, talking about the way that interacted with their customer in a traditional environment versus how they transitioned from this legacy operating environment to a digital-first customer, and what that meant for their business was fascinating to be a part of that education and that experience at that time.

Alison (20:16):

Yeah. That was a lot to unpack there, Wendy. Yes.

Alison (20:18):

What are the most important learnings that you can share related to walking in the shoes of the customer and how do those learnings impact you today?

Wendy McEwan (20:27):

For me, after I spent all that time in those programs talking to those customers about how they could transition from this legacy operating model to think more about how they took advantage of technology and talent in a digital world, I decided that maybe it would be fun to actually try doing it in a company myself. And so I think that I've learned so much over the last couple of years doing exactly that, nearly. Instead of trying to coach other people through it, I thought I would try and experience it for myself and become part of a company that had a legacy technology infrastructure, had not yet been disrupted. If there's no compelling event to change, if there's no external disruption to how you actually make revenue, you don't necessarily need to operate at pace to adopt new ways of doing business because the business you're doing is still very healthy.

Wendy McEwan (21:20):

one learning was the pace in terms of understanding where the business opportunities are and what's happening with the business, and that it may not need to change overnight. The other learning was changing your language, and a lot of people talk about this, like you need to understand your customer, but you also need to understand your stakeholders and more importantly have them understand you and so I learned a lot about a lot of different types of customers. I often say when I went into the real estate industry, I didn't realize that so many analog people still existed, which isn't meant to be insulting. It was a revelation to me because I have lived in this silo. Often when you work in the tech industry, for example, everybody's worked in the tech industry for years. There's this merry-go-round where people go from Oracle to SAP, to IBM, and then back again. There's this merry-go-round so everyone does business exactly the same way, and a lot of the technology that those businesses sell to business is built like they sell.

Wendy McEwan (22:25):

So when you think of that MQL to SQL handover and all the technology, there's 8,000 hard tech tools and 2,000 cell tech tools that help with that kind of marketing to sales handoff and that building customer experiences. Not all companies have an MQL to SQL operating model. Technology is built to suit what makes sense to the technology industry, but lots of other industries don't operate that way. When you unpack that with systems integrators and consultants who help you implement and operate technology similarly, they often come from the technology industry so you really do need to find the industry expert for

your field. You can really make sense of what's going to work for your business, not what they're used to actually operating from.

Alison (23:12):

Okay. So most recently you were at Knight Frank, and you spearheaded marketing and digital there. Were there any transformations on the list in the first year, or was it all pushed out?

Wendy McEwan (23:23):

Well, there was a load of transformations on my list, but what it turned out was, again, that learning about pace and the requirements of the business. They weren't necessarily as urgent to the business as they felt to me. So for me, my focus in the first year was building the foundation and I think this is really something important for people in marketing, and I think in selling, is that understanding who your client is and who you already know in that client base. And I know that sounds kind of a bit daft to say, but it's amazing how many people go straight into, "We need to buy ads on Facebook," or, "We need to do these campaigns on LinkedIn," or, "We need to buy outdoor advertising." They just stick to what they know rather than really unpacking who we're trying to reach, what's their journey, and what's the best way to reach them.

Wendy McEwan (24:14):

So really that journey mapping and that kind of real invested time with the sellers around what are we selling, who are we selling it to, why are they buying in, what's the value they get from our services and our products, and backing that into a kind of strategy to help facilitate that and scale that.

Wendy McEwan (24:34):

I'm not sure that work happens enough. It's kind of ironic when you have conversations with sellers and they don't necessarily know the answers, particularly when you think about selling a product versus selling value, and that value realization land, and I feel like we've been talking about value selling for a very long time, but it's still quite important, and maybe in North America it's different, but definitely, in Asia, there's still a lot of coaching and education we need to do of the market around what is the opportunity for the customer in taking advantage of these products or these services as opposed to what are we trying to sell, what are we trying to sell? Read this white paper, download this report. Actions that get you somewhere, but not the ultimate what's the end goal and then backing into it from there.

Wendy McEwan (25:21):

In seller-driven organizations, like real estate and technology, you really need to build your brand to your people, because it's your people who bring your brand to life as the customer. So really investing in building the brand of the individual brokers through LinkedIn, through leadership, through PR—and helping them build a point of view and a voice connected to value, as opposed to product. That was a really interesting transformation to be apart of and to drive and to lead.

Alison (25:55):

So cool. Can you tell us, and you mentioned this on one of the earlier calls that you and I had, but you mentioned SWIMMA to me. Maybe you can talk a little bit about what it is and why an organization like this is so vital to Singapore.

Wendy McEwan (26:10):

An organization is probably a gross underestimation of what it actually is, but SWIMMA is myself explored. So Singapore Women in Media Marketing and Advertising was formed in 2013, inspired by another community that I was part of, I was the only female, and I was like, I know so many amazing women out there. Why don't we get together? And so I started to arrange dinners every two months with a group of women to learn about a topic that I thought we'd all be interested in. And so I would QA the venue, the topic, and the attendees and really started to build this piece of their learning community.

Wendy McEwan (26:48):

At the time, I was still in media and I really wanted to get to the marketer because, in media you also have the agencies and whatnot in between. And so I really wanted to hear more from the people who were responsible for the budget and then also really wanted to connect with people like me because at the time, I was the MD and the VP of the region and I had no peers in my company at my level in the market. So I used to come to San Francisco and see my counterpart from Europe and counterparts from North America and we'd drink a lot of wine because it was the only time we really got to have an outlet of peers at our same level, and I was like, "It must be lots of women like me here at Singapore at the same peer level who have the similar challenges."

Wendy McEwan (27:29):

So that was kind of the inspiration in the beginning way back in 2013. And then there's also, I'm very curious, and having worked in media and technology for so long, I was very used to being at the leading edge, so when Snapchat launched, it was like, "What is this Snapchat and why does it matter and should we be spending money on it? Should marketers be buying ads on it? What does it mean for advertising?" So I had a session on Snapchat. Had a session on Blockchain. Had a session on whatever it is that's happening in the market that I think if we were to do one tomorrow, we would probably do it on NFTs or the metaverse.

Wendy McEwan (28:05):

And it's slowed down a lot over the past 18 months because of COVID. It's hard to get together physically and we're all a bit exhausted from Zoom, but for me, it's really, again going back to Joana, your invention guides, and your outlet to connect with peers and to be in a safe space to learn and to be curious and where you can ask questions that no one's going to say, "That was a stupid question," or, "Why are you asking in that context?" And also I think it helped build confidence that everyone's trying to figure stuff out. You get that imposter syndrome and you get that kind of crisis confidence and the more that you can interact with other people across verticals or in roles like you that are not necessarily in your company, the more that you can appreciate that we're all trying to figure this stuff out and that gives you internal confidence in your day to day. So it's been fantastic from that perspective.

Wendy McEwan (28:59):

And obviously having a network and having a reputation also gives you an outlet when you need it as well, which is incredibly valuable.

Alison (29:06):

Here, here. I want to know what digital transformation means to you.

Wendy McEwan (29:10):

I really don't like the term digital transformation. I'm a big believer in business transformation in a digital world. There are so many misinterpretations of what digital is and I think it's actually something I tried to define for a couple of years, and I still don't know that I could define for you what is digital, because people

often refer immediately to what is actually digital marketing, or digital media when they try to define digital. It's not enough to say it's social media, do you know what I mean? It's so much more to it.

Wendy McEwan (29:42):

So to me, it's really how you operate a business in a digital world as opposed to how you execute digital transformation. I think these days, if you have a head of digital transformation, it seems a little bit, like an oxymoron. Everyone in your business should be digitally capable, who are driving transformation projects in their function to enable the business to be more savvy.

Wendy McEwan (30:05):

So to me, digitization and digitalization help you deliver business transformation as opposed to digital transformation.

Alison (30:15):

Very eloquent. Is there a project that comes to mind that is most representative for you of business transformation leveraging digital tooling?

Wendy McEwan (30:25):

Well, I think the biggest one was definitely the re-platforming of our media business when I was back at CBS and this was kind of the foundation layer for everything I've done ever since, but we talked earlier about that globalization and changes to the environment that happened from 2008 and as a business, we had been operating in a very analog way. We had separate operating models in every country that were replications of the mothership. We couldn't be competitive in the environment that was growing around us, and so we needed to re-platform our business to be one database of content so everyone be on the same CMS, everyone be on the same ad tech. Everyone was developing centrally as opposed to developing in every single country because by then you had to not only have a website, you had to have mobile apps for Android and for iOS. You had to be building smart TV apps. You had to have different types of ways to package your advertising for marketers, which meant they only wanted to buy eyeballs from the country that you were operating to. You only want to market to the people in the country that you're trying to sell to them in? Who knew?

Wendy McEwan (31:34):

So packaging what you had to sell was changing so re-platforming the entire business and then, therefore, changing the cost base that went with that. I think we started the conversation about 2009, and I exited the business in 2014. As part of that transformation project, I made myself redundant. It was kind of a big project over a lot of years to reengineer everything from the tech that we operated on, the way that we operated, the business model that we operated, the commercials that went with that business model, the employee base that we did it with. Everything changed and became much leaner but much more focused and much more effective in both the product and the revenue.

Alison (32:19):

So it sounds like there was some transformation that occurred. I like it. Maria Cortazo, who's VP of solutions delivery at AAG, was recently on the podcast and she has this question for you. "What are the digital trends you're seeing in Asia Pacific that you feel will be game-changers globally?"

Wendy McEwan (32:37):

It feels a bit old to talk about, but I think it's still is a game changer beyond Asia, but the super app, and that kind of gateway to your customer that has been proliferating here. So it started with WeChat in China. You know Tencent WeChat, but has expanded to pretty much every Asian country has a version of a super app, at least one and sometimes even more than one. And they're usually born of one service, so in Southeast Asia, the most prolific example is Grab, which is our version of Uber, so Grab started as a transport network, and now I can pretty much do everything through Grab if I want to. I can order food, I can get them to go to the chemist for me. I can order a courier. I can get entertainment, I can get discounts on things so they have this whole range of services and WeChat's the most advanced, because it has its payments ecosystems. It's almost like another internet. It's the gateway to everything else, and everybody has to have a mini kind of story or operating model within that environment in order to reach that massive customer base.

Wendy McEwan (33:45):

That has huge ramifications when you think of the old conversation around walled gardens being the social media environment, like Facebook or whatever. Social commerce is one kind of discovery operating engine, but when you think of these super apps that are really in the palm of your hand, through COVID

now, we just don't really need to go anywhere to do anything. It's funny, when I think of that same-day delivery which was such a big thing, if it's not within half an hour delivery now, then I go to the shops and get it myself. That's a really weird change in behavior and perception. Now remember, I live in a tiny little country city, like 60 kilometers from one end to the other, so the logistics to do these kinds of things are much easier in this country than they are in say Indonesia.

Wendy McEwan (34:31):

So that's one thing. I think the other thing is obviously the gaming and the metaverse and that whole microtransaction economy. I think in terms of e-sports and as well as in multiplayer online games and how people are really building communities in the virtual environment, I think Tencent makes billions of dollars a quarter of these microtransactions in gaming. A friend of mine talked to me about gaming being the new social media, and that's where we think marketing dollars will move because it's such a captive and interesting environment. When you think about Discord and all the communities that go with gaming, I can definitely see that continuing to accelerate.

Alison (35:11):

Fascinating. How has your leadership style evolved through the years?

Wendy McEwan (35:16):

This is an interesting one. Because I was a leader so young, or boss maybe is a better way to put it, because often you can be a leader without necessarily being the boss and certainly that's what happened to me in my Benjamin Button starting as a boss and then becoming an employee. One thing I learned was as the boss, or as a leader, you develop this kind of lead-mentality, because it's not about you, you're only as successful as your team. And so you spend a lot of time really accelerating everybody else and really celebrating what's happening with the team around you.

Wendy McEwan (35:49):

So then when you go into being an individual contributor, you don't lose that memory muscle around being a leader and coaching and celebrating everybody else, but you're in an environment where you're meant to toot your own trumpet, which is really hard to do when you've spent more than 10 years helping everybody else be successful, because that's what helped you be successful. So I think over time, you kind of void that. I think when you've been responsible for so much through such a transitional period, but

that kind of confidence in that leadership even when you're not actually the boss is what I've really honed the last few years.

Wendy McEwan (36:25):

Use your voice. Don't be afraid to put it out there even when you're not necessarily in charge, because that's true leadership.

Alison (36:34):

What are the most important lessons that you've learned from your mentors?

Wendy McEwan (36:37):

Many, many things. But I think that confidence in the kind of sum of everything that you've done before, and that willingness to put it out there and to lead into your adventure guides and people that are out there to help you, I think that sponsorship versus mentors in that Joana's kind of label of adventure guide, which I loved it even more, foster them, cultivate them, be that for other people and people will always take care of you and the universe will take care of you as a result.

Alison (37:07):

That should be a bumper sticker. I want to know what projects are especially interesting to you as you continue on in your career.

Wendy McEwan (37:14):

Well, this whole business transformation and future of work mantra that's been emerging through COVID... I saw a report from IDC yesterday, and it was really that workforce, workspace, and work culture, and I think those three umbrellas are really interesting. We always talk about people processing technology, and for me having spent two years working in the real estate industry through COVID, I really understood the value of space, workspace, and what that brings to the table, So that connection between your people, the physical environment and how you enable the best experiences for your people and for your business to thrive and therefore deliver a great culture contributed through physical and digital environments. That

hybrid, digital business alongside physical business, I think that really fascinates me, connecting those forces together.

Alison (38:04):

I think you and I are the same in this way. I always punctuate with this question, Wendy. Can you speak about a breakthrough that you've had recently?

Wendy McEwan (38:13):

Yeah. I very recently changed jobs and one of the processes I went through in making that decision was... I think as women, we often tend to lean into feeling responsible for the people around us. Our employees, our bosses, the environment we're working in, and we really want to do what's good for the team and for the company. But recently I made the decision to do what's good for me, and decided to make a career change and move back to technology.

Wendy McEwan (38:41):

And that was a big thing to me. That felt kind of selfish, but it also felt really right that I should make that decision, what's best for me long term and what's best for my career development, but also for my own learning and my own opportunity to continue to lean into that future of work and that technology and people, employee experience that I'm really passionate about. Where is it all heading? And so taking that decision to really make the jump and do something that was going to be a really great opportunity for me even though I was leaving behind a lot of unfinished business, I think that was a real breakthrough for me.

Alison (39:21):

Is there anything else you want to leave us with?

Wendy McEwan (39:23):

It's such an interesting time in business right now, an interesting time in our personal and professional lives, and I think having opportunities to build networks and interactions with peers and even the way that

we were serendipitously brought together. Say yes, be all in, always be learning, and don't be afraid to put yourself out there. And I love that you gave me that opportunity to do exactly that. Thank you, Alison.

Alison (39:52):

Thank you more, Wendy. I appreciate you so much.

Alison (39:55):

All right. Well, on that note, thank you for tuning into the Breakthrough brought to you by TheoremOne. Make sure to hit that subscribe button and leave us a comment. You can find us wherever you listen to podcasts and for more great content, follow us on Twitter and Instagram at BreakthruPod. That's Break T-H-R-U P-O-D. I'm your host, Alison Dean. Until next week.