

Work Shift – Episode 4 – Claudette McGowan

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CHILD 1: When I grow up I want to be a stunt double.

CHILD 2: I want to be a YouTuber.

CHILD 3: A creature adventurer and a teacher.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Ray, how do you handle change? Do you embrace it or do you avoid at all costs?

RAY HARRIPAUL: I used to avoid it at all costs but as I got older and the situations changed and your life perspective changes, it depends on the situation.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: M'hmm. Agreed. The thought of change makes you-- brings up feelings of, I don't know, skepticism or reluctance and then other times I really look forward to it. So I totally agree. It depends on the situation.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Yeah. I think if, like if we're talking work, if there's a sense of transparency and I know we're going through this pivot and what the outcome or objective? Awesome.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: M'hmm.

RAY HARRIPAUL: But if it's sort of happening and I have no control? That scares me. The anxiety, everything else-- those feelings that are associated with it. So I totally agree with you. It is dependent on the situation.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah. And the control factor is a big one too.

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's a perfect segue into what we're talking about today which is change management and what tech executive Claudette McGowan has to say will be very interesting for those looking to break into the work force. Both employees and employers alike, sit back, relax. It's a great episode. Amazing person, Claudette. She's got multiple things on the go. Game changer for sure.

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RAY HARRIPAUL: Welcome to Work Shift.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Love learning and create something and if you keep learning how to create, you'll be fine. As opposed to, you know, I was a Cobalt programmer once upon a time, right? Yeah. So that was programming from way back when and it's not really serving me well

today, so it's, it's-- but I'm still employed, right? Because you have to love learning or really respect learning and have an ongoing kind of continuous improvement approach to what I think is your personal growth. And so you'll always have opportunity if you're, you know, investing in yourself.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: If you hear the term 'continuous learning' and think of a million other things you have to do in my life, I think the way Claudette framed it helps put in perspective. Consider it an investment in yourself.

RAY HARRIPAUL: And on top of that, learning new things has never been easier. Your employer might offer cool PD opportunities, there are tons of online courses and flexible learning options or hey, ask a kid in your life for some help.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yes, yes. I've done this for Snapchat and Fortnite. I'd highly recommend that.

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RAY HARRIPAUL: Digital disruption.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: The gig economy.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Artificial intelligence.

(synthesized voice) Robots.

RAY HARRIPAUL: There's a lot of talk about these things in the media and online but what do they mean for you?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: I'm Shawne McKeown.

RAY HARRIPAUL: And I'm Ray Harripaul.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: We are exploring the future of work and changes you can expect to see at your job.

RAY HARRIPAUL: We'll tell you how this massive digital shift could change your career and what you can do to adapt, evolve and thrive.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Today, we're talking to Claudette McGowan, Chief Information Officer for Enterprise Technology, Employee Experience at BMO. Claudette holds a Bachelor of Arts from Lakehead University, an MBA from Athabasca University and holds certificates in artificial intelligence, information technology and project management. She's also the technical leader for BMO's Urban Campus and leads the bank's Women in Technology program. She founded

the Black Arts in Innovation Expo and on top of all that, she's authored a number of children's books.

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SHAWNE McKEOWN: We're gonna kick off. You've had a really interesting career and almost two decades here at BMO. So can you tell us about what you do here and give us kind of an overview of your career path and how you got where you are today?

CLAUDETTE McGOWAN: Sure. I'm happy to do that. So I am the Chief Information Officer for Enterprise Technology, Employee Experience. So ultimately there's about 45,000 full-time people who work at BMO and my goal is to make sure that all the technology, regardless of what domain it is actually lights up for them; it enables them, it empowers them and what keeps me up at night is the radical enablement of those employees. And because what they do is so critical, delivering for 12 million customers, we have to get it right. I'm specifically looking at the work space; the physical, the digital and also just the human element of things. So how do you engage the hearts and minds of all those employees to make a difference and to connect to those customers? As far as my career trajectory, I started off in technology, so no surprise. Twenty years later, I'm still in technology but in different domains. So more frontline support; helping people out, you know, at the side of the desk, you know, fixing things that are not working. All that good stuff. And then to more strategic roles in management and leadership; setting the strategy on again, how do you take manual systems and really make them digital systems? How do you automate? How do you modernize? And so we're taking a look at that across the entire portfolio. So what started off as bringing things in like mobility and tablets and smartphones to the bank has now transformed into how do you again marry this with the space? How do you make this bank, this organization a recruiting magnet so that when people have the option to decide where they want to go, there's really only one choice?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What kind of major digital shifts have you seen in your career here? And how has that changed the work environment and the people who work here?

CLAUDETTE McGOWAN: Yeah, I think ultimately, it's about speed. So if you're on the front lines or you're in one of those roles across the bank, it's how fast we're able to deliver, how we're able to get the data to use you can make the right decision at the right time. And sometimes when you have a lot of data it's actually more complex and you really have to distill it, comprehend it, turn that into wisdom. And so what I believe is things like artificial intelligence again, taking a massive amount of data and now getting that to be meaningful, actionable. That's how the employees in the front lines can really get the benefit of it. That's how the customers get the benefit of it. We know more about you. We're able to deliver things that we think are appropriate for where you are, who you are, where you're located and again it's really about customizing and personalizing solutions.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Talking about change management. How do you get people to shift quickly and be cool with that shift and get them excited about it?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Yeah, I think that's the big piece of it is getting them excited. And change is hard and so we are building what we call a tech fluency program to help people go from you know, not so comfortable to comfortable; comfortable to good; good to great; great to, you know, outstanding. And it's-- everyone is starting at a different point and so we're making sure that we develop a program that is mindful of the different starting points. It's interesting as you speak about people coming from the outside in because especially straight out of school, there's a level of digital literacy that is higher, I would say, than 10, 15, 20 years ago. So it's almost that we have to make sure that we have the right onboarding ramp for people who are used to using things like MacBooks and then you have traditional companies that use PCs. So making sure that we have a channel where we have choice and options for people as they join the bank. So it's not a one size fits all approach but what I can say around bringing people in and having them feel comfortable, it's socializing, you know, where we are 'cause that's part of your decision criteria when you join a company. And I always say as much as BMO hired me, I hired BMO. And it has to be the right decision for me.

RAY HARRIPAUL: You mentioned speed, digital literacy sort of being at an all-time high with the new wave of students that we're seeing and obviously you have first-hand experience with that. How can we then prepare? Like, what things can we start implementing?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Yeah, I think of the way you deliver learning is very key. And so I did my MBA at Athabasca which was completely digital platform. And so you have to look and check and challenge how are you educating students? What are the mediums and the mechanisms that you're using? My son goes to a school-- he's 15 years old. It's a laptop-based school so he doesn't come home with a paper for me to sign. He is connected through OneNote. So if he does something on OneNote, there's no saving because the saving is automatically. He doesn't lose his homework; the dog can't chew away at the homework. So all those traditional ways of working, I think you just have to challenge them and say, "Are we preparing this next generation for the future work force or for the work force of yesterday?" And I think it's how we do the learning so through digital mechanisms, through social mechanisms, giving real time feedback. So what I loved about Athabasca when I went there was that I'd do an exam and I'd get the results right away. I didn't wait two or three weeks. And I went to, you know, different universities in the past and high school and you would have to wait till the marking was done. So when I talk about speed in banking and speed in the workplace, we also have to think about speed in education.

SHAWNE MCKEOWN: What are some of the exciting-- most exciting new technologies you've seen in the last handful of years that you're really excited to implement and that have really kind of turned things on their head? And it could be from any part of the bank.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Yeah, absolutely. So things like mixed reality are really powerful. We're doing some work right now with the Microsoft HoloLens in that, you know, physically you look at a space and say, "Hey, I could probably fit four computers in this room." And you couldn't do anything beyond that. And with the Microsoft HoloLens, you're able to, you know, just flick

your wrist and create a screen you know in the air. And you can do that 20 times, 30 times. There's really-- not to my knowledge, no significant limit and so all of a sudden now your space, you're not just using the desktop or the table top, you're using the air; you're using the ceiling' you're using the walls. We're experimenting with this for our onboarding system. So you're coming to this new company, how are you learning about the company? You know, the video-- okay, and by the way, if you're going to work in a branch, here's what the branch looks like. Here's what the day in the life of a branch employee looks like. So we're really experimenting with it right now but I think it has many applications for learning, for growth, for training, for onboarding. I've seen examples of where they send a technician out and the technician has the HoloLens on or any kind of VR technology and they're getting right in front of them the instructions on what to do. So now everything is not, you know, in memory which-- you'd love to remember everything but sometimes that's not possible. Especially when you're working with different systems, touching different technologies, different pieces of hardware. So it's a great application on for even field technicians in any field.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: So for someone who's not familiar with this at all, this would just kind of like a VR headset?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: It would look like a VR headset. So if you've seen HTC or the PS4-- we have everything in my house. Oculus Rift. If you've seen any of those things where they are used for traditional gaming, it is basically instead of you being in that virtual gaming world, you're now in this environment where you can be, you know, at the panel-- the networking panel for us or you can be on the trade floor or you could be in the branch or with a customer. So if I wanted to teach you how to have a great interaction with a wealth management customer, then maybe we would do this in a virtual space; we can get the real time feedback; we can get the coaching and now you're ready because you've been through this. So I think we all know that experiential learning is very powerful and so that's kind of what I love about what you guys do at George Brown and then also, you know, what we're trying to do here when we talk to employees and how we can move them forward.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: With automation efforts here, if it's not jobs not being removed, is there-- have you seen a shift in how jobs will be carried out in the future when parts of positions become more automated?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Yeah. I would say again, being from technology, we're talking about things like DevOps so how do you automate, you know, the testing, the QA, all those wonderful things that you have to do to bring code to life so it turns out to be something that adds value for humans? We find people are shifting from doing this in a manual way to learning how to do the automated stuff. So becoming the developers and the programmers and the people who do the configuration, I think there's a lot of opportunity there. But you also see people going into a completely different domains. So I've seen recently as we're working on our Urban Campus and, you know, putting up what we're hoping to be is a digital kind of building, that is a smart building, it's an intelligent building, we can have systems that converge. We're finding people from the business side of the bank saying, "That's really interesting. I'd like to be a part of that."

Or “I’d like to do that career pivot.” So sometimes we think about jobs-- of going away but I go back to, you know, the day where you had somebody in the elevator handling pushing the floor and the switchboard person and-- there's going to always be an evolution of jobs. But jobs are created and I think about even coders today where everyone was like, “Hey, you know, you gotta learn how to code.” And the other day I built a website with an AI in three minutes with no coding required. And so, I for my children, I say, “I want you guys to learn how to create I don't really want you to fall into one this particular domain. Love learning and create something. And if you keep learning how to create then you'll be fine.” As opposed to, you know I was a Cobalt programmer once upon a time and it's not really serving me well today so it's-- but I'm still employed, right? Because you have to love learning or really respect learning and have an ongoing kind of continuous improvement approach to what I think is your personal growth. And so you'll always have opportunity if you're, you know, investing in yourself

RAY HARRIPAUL: Sort of keeping an open mind to things. 'Cause there's been a lot of talk about certain jobs becoming redundant and so forth and obviously being part of change management, how do you approach those barriers or those road blocks if you will in changing and flipping the way you look at--

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Yeah, I--

RAY HARRIPAUL: 'Cause it is perspective like you said.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: I think it's all about being transparent. And so if you're in an area where you know that jobs may not be there, then you have to be transparent about that and say well, what are the alternatives? If jobs are going away; if in any company, I think it's very important to be transparent because you're part of a team. And so when you have really good news, you share it. And when you have news that's difficult, you should share it as well. And I think, you know, they talk about this whole sandwich approach of, you know, say something bad and something good and then something bad and I read this weekend about the velvet hammer which is really around-- we have this challenge and what should we do about this? And here's the things that we think might work and what are your thoughts? And so it's more of a collaboration and then it's not like you're waiting for the shoe to drop. You kind of know what's going on and I can tell you every time I've spoken to colleagues, they're saying that works a heck of a lot better when you just tell me what's going on. And then I'll make a decision for myself or tell me what options there are. And I think it's-- for me personally, I like to find options because when you have great people you wanna keep great people.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: And I love that, you know, we're talking about a tech and-- but a number of times in the time we've been speaking here, you've mentioned winning the hearts and minds, having great people. It seems like you're still very focused on people.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: And sometimes people-- it's interesting, sometimes people want to make a change too. And so you'd be surprised how many times you say, “Hey, listen. These are the options, right? Here's what's going on.” And someone says-- and they do the thing that you

probably didn't expect them to do or you think you're gonna have a difficult conversation and it's a great conversation 'cause that's why you have to speak to one another. 'Cause I can't make decisions for you if we've never had a conversation about what makes you happy; what's the next three to five years of your life look like? And so everything to me like, don't be mistaken. The bank is not buildings. The bank is people. It's the people who work here. It's the customers we serve. And so we can never ever like, not put that at the centre of everything that we do.

RAY HARRIPAUL: So I guess in addition to the technical education that students can bring, there's the intangibles; the ability to speak and connect. We need to focus on those as well too, right? 'Cause that goes a long way, I guess.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: And resilience. I think resilience is a big thing because the one thing-- I think honestly is through-- there's a muscle and I think it's through experience but also giving people the opportunity to fail and letting them do things that are very different and maybe out of their comfort zone. I remember being asked to do something at this bank that was completely out of my comfort zone and I went to the meeting like, trying to figure out how am I gonna say 'no' but not really hurt anyone's feelings but I'm gonna say no 'cause I don't wanna do this. And then I spoke to the leader and they told me about the opportunity and then they told me why they wanted me. And then after I found myself saying, "Sure. Yeah. I'm looking forward to it." That's not what I was planning to say. But it's because stepping out of your comfort zone and doing something different, it is a challenge and you have to push people to kind of push through those challenging moments when it's so easy to go left but going right might have all kinds of opportunity. And so I really encourage people just to-- when it feels like it's gonna be hard and tough, go for it. Because it's gonna be hard and tough, right? 'Cause after, my gosh does it feel great.

SHAWNE MCKEOWN: And are there any instances that you can think of in your career here where a new technology or a new process has been implemented and you get a lot of like, "Ah, I don't know about that." And then you've-- how did you-- what was the technology if you can think of something and how did you win people over and get them to push out of their comfort zone and try something new?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: We had a transformation-- we have a transformation on the go and I think every company has a transformation on the go. And it was really about again modernizing systems, getting people to do things in very, very different ways and I was asked to run the change management for technology. And we went back to this ADKAR model. And this ADKAR basically 'A' is awareness. First of all, make sure everyone's aware of what the change is, right? So you'd say, "Hey, do you know about transformation?" "Not really." "Do you know about-- oh, it's this." And you'd ask somebody else and they'd have a different kind of, you know, point of view of what it was. So common language. Getting everybody to understand what was really going on and then having them repeat it back. Then the 'D' is desire. When it comes to change management, where do people stand? Do you really want it to succeed 'cause you see

opportunity for yourself? Or do you really want to fail because you think that, “Hey, this is going to eliminate my role.”? Like, understand where everybody was in the change curve. The ‘K’ is knowledge and that’s around training. Give them the knowledge to be successful. The ‘A’ is the ability. So now I’ve trained you, I’ve told you what we’re doing, I found out where your heart is. I’m giving you all the training. Do you have the ability? That ‘A’ is ability ‘cause at the end of the day, we’re running a business. And you want to make sure that people have the ability to do the job. And the last piece is the ‘R’ for reinforcing and making sure that you didn’t do it and it’s a flash in the pan, it’s a one hit wonder. Can you do this Monday and the next Monday and next month and the next year? How do you make sure the change is sustainable? So reinforcing is so important.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: M’hmm. (laughing) That makes perfect sense.

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Just ADKAR it. That’s what we say. We’re just gonna ADKAR it.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: ADKAR. Yeah.

[music]

SHAWNE McKEOWN: It’s time to take a look at the future want ads.

RAY HARRIPAUL: In this segment of the show we ask our guests to give us an outline of a job that doesn’t exist. According to the Institute of the Future, a non-profit think tank based in Palo Alto, California, 85 percent of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven’t been invented yet.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Okay. Claudette McGowan, what have you got for us?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: Chief Generation Officer.

RAY HARRIPAUL: That’s interesting. What will a Chief Generation Officer do?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: So imagine like, financial literacy. This thing that people struggle with even in your schools, other-- you know, adults are like, “No one taught me, you know, the value of a dollar. No one told me about a loan” Or “I heard about a credit card when I was in the mall.” Like, so getting in as early as possible to make sure that, you know, we’re creating generations who really understand, you know, why having certain things are important and how they can use that as a tool. So this is not about material things but this is about perhaps what you can do with community, what you can do for your personal life, what you can do for your family. That’s really critical to me. But even when the generation-- I wanna make sure that we’re clear, I want them to include the young generation but I don’t want to not remember all the other generations either. Yeah. So I was giving an example but what I hear frequently is there’s so much focus on Millennials and other folks are like, “Hey, what about us?” People want to work as long as they want to work. So we shouldn’t, you know, not focus on any one

segment and put too much, you know, focus on a particular segment. I think there's a lot of people contributing across the generations.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What skills would you need for this job?

CLAUDETTE MCGOWAN: First of all, they'd have to be a stellar individual. You know, high character, all that good stuff and really care about people. They would have to be very-- I guess creative and understand the creative process and how to help others learn. So I do see an educator but a creative educator. I'm sure that exists. That can really help to tap into, you know, the magic of all these different generations and make sure that their voices are being heard and they can contribute to society.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: That's a wrap on this episode of Work Shift. What did you think?

RAY HARRIPAUL: Want to share your thoughts on the future work and adapting to new technologies on the job?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Email us at workshift@georgebrown.ca

RAY HARRIPAUL: And be sure to tune in to Episode 5. We're gonna chat with economist, author and social theorist, Mr. Jeremy Rifkin.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: This podcast is brought to you by the fine folks at George Brown College. We want to thank Claudette McGowan for sharing her thoughts with us today.

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's the end of your work shift. See you later.

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