A Better Place of Business

Episode 3: Transcript

Why collaboration is a team sport

[00:00:00] **Linda Mzimane:** A new era of collaboration has emerged – we're less confined to physical spaces with the rise in remote work and we're a lot more reliant on technology to bridge those gaps. But we still need to collaborate to get the job done – the key to success lies in the art of effective teamwork. What does it take to create teams that can navigate uncertainty, embrace new technology, and deliver exceptional results?

[00:00:27] **Linda Mzimane:** In this episode, we're diving deep into strategies, techniques and insights from industry leaders who have mastered the art of team building in the modern era. (Spoiler alert: it's got nothing to do with pizza parties.) Training Industry is a resource hub for upskilling professionals. On the topic of the brain science behind creating high-functioning teams, they say:

[00:00:52] **Linda Mzimane:** "High-performing teams don't appear overnight. They develop when conditions are right, with the combined actions of senior leaders, team leaders and team members. While [humans are] biologically wired to connect with others, we must meet critical conditions to drive peak team performance." The Springboks brought this energy to life in the 2019 Rugby World Cup Final against England.

[00:01:14] **Linda Mzimane:** Cheslin Kolbé sealed the victory in the 74th minute, getting the ball on the right wing and manoeuvering around several defenders. Handre Pollard's conversion produced the final 32-12 score.

[00:01:28] **Linda Mzimane:** Absolutely electrifying. Let's move from the rugby field through to the virtual graduation address that Brene Brown shared with the University of Austin's Class of 2020. It's titled, Don't Be Afraid to Fall, and contains some pearls that we can all benefit from, whether we find ourselves in a boardroom, a field, or anywhere else in between.

[00:01:48] **Brene Brown:** Your ability to live a life that's full of love and meaning, to make the world a braver and kinder place, to disrupt and reshape the future [00:02:00] has very little to do with the greatness of your plan. It depends completely on your ability to get back up and begin again when your plan fails. What starts here changes the world if you're committed to getting back up and beginning again, the exact same number of times that you fall, trip, and get pushed down.

[00:02:26] **Linda Mzimane:** Welcome to this episode of A Better Place Of Business, brought to you by Life Health Solutions. I'm your host, Linda Mzamane. Our guests today are Kate Woods, Senior brand director at Adidas South Africa, Caroline Brewin, Executive and confidence coach and Marita Williams, Manager of organisational resilience and coaching at Life Health Solutions.

[00:02:47] **Linda Mzimane:** They all have created careers that showcase the value of collaboration and years of experience in building – and being a part of – high-functioning teams. Welcome, Kate, Caroline, and Marita. And thank you for joining us today. [00:03:00]

[00:03:00] **Kate Woods:** Thank you, Linda. Hello.

[00:03:02] **Caroline Brewin:** Nice to be here.

[00:03:03] **Marita Williams:** Good morning, Linda.

[00:03:04] **Linda Mzimane:** Awesome. I'd like to kick our chat off today by talking about the definition of a well-functioning team. How would you describe a well-functioning team? We'll start with you, Kate.

[00:03:16] **Kate Woods:** Yes. Over the years through sport and work, um, I've developed a little bit of a toolbox in terms of how we can function as a high-performing team. I think it all starts with, um, the team having a shared purpose.

[00:03:30] **Kate Woods:** I think it's important to understand why we exist, what we want to do together and the legacy we want to leave behind and sort of define that shared purpose as well as graft a shared vision and ambition. The next thing that's really important is for each of our team members to establish a clear responsibility.

[00:03:47] **Kate Woods:** What is your responsibility in the team and are you delivering towards it? So really understanding how the team can best utilise the strengths that sit within it. I think the next thing also is, is sort of the relationships [00:04:00] amongst team members and the behaviours that are acceptable and maybe not acceptable.

[00:04:04] **Kate Woods:** And actually defining those, what are productive behaviours, what are unproductive behaviours and how are we going to operate as a team? And the next critical thing for me is, is really, um, showing genuine care for one another. Um, I love Simon Sinek and he talks about, um, an experience where I think it was in the Navy.

[00:04:22] **Kate Woods:** And he says, they don't talk about coworkers and colleagues and teammates. It's more about brothers and sisters. And I think it's okay to not love each other like a brother or sister, but we need to behave and show genuine care and positive intent towards one another. And the minute we start to do that, when we come together as a team.

[00:04:40] **Kate Woods:** Um, I think you can be unstoppable, you know, great teams really play with freedom and confidence and the key is to play your role within the overall system because this is what's going to yield collective performance. Um, so yeah, a little bit of shared ambition, purpose, the structure, behaviours and relationships, I think all play such a critical [00:05:00] role.

[00:05:00] **Linda Mzimane:** Marita, what's your take on a well-functioning team?

[00:05:03] **Marita Williams:** I really do resonate with what Kate is saying about purpose. Uh, that was first on my list that a team needs to understand what are they here to do and why is that important. You have company strategies and visions and missions, but you have these different pockets of teams that operate within.

[00:05:26] **Marita Williams:** That collective strategy or vision and mission and the purpose of each team differs. The purpose of a leadership team differs from the purpose of a sales team. And once a team understands that they can create a psychological contract when it comes to how do we bring our purpose into practice?

[00:05:54] **Marita Williams:** What are the behaviours that we, uh, we condone and which ones don't we [00:06:00] condone and how do we create that psychological contract? So, uh, for me, the essence is purpose and having a psychological contract with one another.

[00:06:10] **Linda Mzimane:** Absolutely. And I suppose. It's also the role of a leader then in that team to kind of set that tone, I suppose?

[00:06:15] **Marita Williams:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And I think later on, maybe the discussion will go to the role of the leader within a highly functioning team.

[00:06:24] **Linda Mzimane:** Yes. Definitely. We'll look into that as well. Caroline, what do you think are the key principles or strategies that you believe are crucial for building a high-performing team in 2023 and beyond?

[00:06:37] **Caroline Brewin:** Yeah, I mean, um, it's really interesting because I think if there's something which is, is consistent at the moment and as we look into the future, it's 'change'. And you know, the acceleration of change that we're seeing. So in that change, we've got to have really strong leadership. And both, you know, Marita and Kate were talking about that purpose and that sense of purpose and that comes from the [00:07:00] top.

[00:07:01] **Caroline Brewin:** And that leadership looks like integrity and vulnerability and a level of decisiveness and what I felt a lot of, um, um, we were talking about before was it's about trust. It sits in this, um, it all funnels into trust. Do we have a trusting relationship that we're working in? Those leaders need to create psychological safety, which, you know, may be something that comes up quite a lot today.

[00:07:21] **Caroline Brewin:** And that is by their actions and their behaviours as well, so not just the words, they need, people need to see leaders doing what they say they will, otherwise it undermines those messages. So we need to feel safe to ask in this change, because you know what, there's going to be all sorts of things, it's accelerating so rapidly that people just don't understand.

[00:07:43] **Caroline Brewin:** And so we need to create an environment where people say, I don't know what's happening, I don't understand and it's kind of this meshing of the old and the new, you know, what are the lessons that we've learned in the past and how can we dovetail those into things which are, you know, the future and, um, in a way that actually accelerates [00:08:00] organisations while still looking after the people as well.

[00:08:05] **Linda Mzimane:** Absolutely. And you're right about change being the only constant oftentimes. Kate, do you have anything to add there on these principles or strategies? Is it a leadership-only responsibility where, you know, it comes to building these high-performing teams or what else do you see as a key strategy for building high-performing teams?

[00:08:23] **Kate Woods:** I think it certainly should start with the leadership to set the tone and start to sort of build that culture but absolutely every team member has a role to play in a high-performing team. I would just add to the safe environment that's coming through very strongly from my team right now. With so much uncertainty going on in our world is just having that safe environment to have conversations that need to be had, to call out things that are not sitting comfy with each other.

[00:08:49] **Kate Woods:** You know, that, that safety and that safe environment is absolutely critical in order for each team member to perform to their highest ability.

[00:08:58] **Linda Mzimane:** Yes, yes, Marita, you want to add something?

[00:09:00] **Marita Williams:** And if I may contribute to that, yes, the psychologically safe space is so incredibly important but it's also for team members to really start understanding one another on a deeper level and how to leverage off the strengths.

[00:09:15] **Marita Williams:** We have so many generations coming together in teams and we bring different experiences and we bring different levels of maturity. We bring different lenses into this team environment and I think for us to truly understand where our team members are coming from and leveraging of that experience that they bring, that lens that they bring, that they look at the world from a different perspective than we do.

[00:09:45] **Marita Williams:** And then also challenging assumptions that we make within the team context, having that space, that safe space where we can challenge assumptions in a positive way and having those type of [00:10:00] conversations around the assumptions that we make.

[00:10:02] **Linda Mzimane:** And to that point, what do you think, Marita, are the key differences between building a team and training a team? Is there a difference between team building and team training?

[00:10:11] **Marita Williams:** Oh, I can spend the entire day talking about that topic for sure. So there are two types of team building. In the traditional sense, we had very focused events where we built team spirit and we identified a lack or a, or something that the team was struggling with, and we would focus on that element and we would go out and we would hype up the energy and we would challenge one another.

[00:10:39] **Marita Williams:** Either in a physical context, um, or in a mental context, and we had these events, the team building has shifted so much, um, over the last few years and especially when COVID hit, we were faced with a completely different context and we can't be physically together so [00:11:00] how do we build teams? How do we bring in that motivation and challenging component?

[00:11:06] **Marita Williams:** So there's a shift now towards more team coaching than really team building activities. So it is about, uh, journeying with a team, challenging a team on different levels, having different types of conversations and creating that space where teams can have conversations and feeding back to them, being their thinking partner, their accountability partner in a team context and building the team through walking a journey with the team.

[00:11:42] **Marita Williams:** Now, team training focuses on your skill sets. It focuses on how to have effective communication and develop skills. Team training is there to identify what is lacking in the team and really upskill us to address those types of elements. [00:12:00] But team building is there to really hold the space for one another in a different context and then transferring what we've learned, our learnings from that and building sustainability.

[00:12:14] **Marita Williams:** When we go back into the work environment, so whether it is holding the space for one another in a high energy activity environment, holding the space for one another in deep, immersive work, where we start understanding what motivates us, what drives us, what are our values. And creating activities and tasks to really not only have boardroom conversations about what are our values, not just head conversations, but head, heart, and gut conversations about what is important in the team and that is the difference between team building and team training.

[00:12:55] **Linda Mzimane:** Do you have a similar outlook there, Caroline, in terms of coaching and what those [00:13:00] distinctions are between building and training teams?

[00:13:03] **Caroline Brewin:** Uh, I think it's, it's very interesting because, in an ideal world, one would have an organisation which is built on coaching.

[00:13:08] **Caroline Brewin:** And I think some of the forward-thinking organisations now that exist are building teams who are, um, have coaching capabilities. And yes, I think that is quite an anomaly, sadly at the moment, maybe I think people are starting to realise the power of it. I think there's something in between, which is, um, you know, team building is about creating.

[00:13:30] **Caroline Brewin:** There's a piece about constructing something together. The teaching piece, I completely agree, it's that kind of skill-based. But when creating something together, can really, that's when you start to build those kinds of, um, those bonds between each other and so that may be just something simple. You don't have to go away, you know, for a weekend away or, you know, some, um, you know, team building activity.

[00:13:53] **Caroline Brewin:** Team-building activities can come from having a joined-up challenge. You know, from having something which [00:14:00] is a project that you work together on. And so through that, having that collective goal, you build the bonds between teams.

[00:14:07] **Linda Mzimane:** That makes sense. That makes sense. You know, building through creating and having that shared experience makes complete sense.

[00:14:14] **Linda Mzimane:** For someone like you, Kate, you obviously have a lot of experience building teams from the ground up. And what are the kind of challenges that you found in your experience and how did you work to overcome them?

[00:14:24] **Kate Woods:** So I travelled abroad for a few years, and I think my biggest challenge as a leader was stepping into new territories.

[00:14:32] **Kate Woods:** I actually moved to Dubai for a couple of years and then to Europe. I was based in Germany, and my team in Germany were absolutely multicultural, from very

different backgrounds, different languages, you know, different cultures and we had to come together and establish, you know, our own team culture and start to live that.

[00:14:51] **Kate Woods:** And while it was a challenge, it was also the biggest reward because the diversity within our team was our strength. And it was just about [00:15:00] realigning and, and really being curious about one another and understanding one another on a deeper level like you've mentioned earlier, Marita. It was once we had a sort of established that, that personal bond, then we could make sure that we were all going after the same goal.

[00:15:14] **Kate Woods:** My team were based in different countries around Europe, and each of them had their own set of KPIs and it was, you know, also managing a bit of push-pull what my objective was for our team versus what maybe their country objectives were. And the minute there were sort of KPIs pulling in different directions that caused a little bit of friction and tension.

[00:15:33] **Kate Woods:** And so that the challenge was to make sure we were all going after the same goal and that we weren't having competing distractions or goals that were pulling us away. I think also on a local level here, back in South Africa, we've gone through many restructures. And that is also a hard challenge, I think, that faces a team because the immediate reaction is what does this mean for me personally?

[00:15:55] **Kate Woods:** How's it going to affect me? And, again, we sort of default to not thinking of the [00:16:00] collective and thinking about for me, what's, what's the impact on me. And so again, through any restructuring that we've gone through, it was always really, really important to align why this is happening. What's important for the business, what's important for the team and then your role within it.

[00:16:16] **Kate Woods:** Yeah, I think those are the few that, that come to mind now is, just, again, I go back to my point that the collective performance is what's going to yield the most amazing results. So how we can always put each other first and not ourselves first and play our role in the system? I think, uh, this is, this is the lesson that's learned constantly throughout any challenge that I've, that I've been, been in is, is really how can we rise above the self and look at the team performance?

[00:16:44] **Linda Mzimane:** Absolutely. And I think also the challenges in looking for the universal truths. As you say, you've worked in different teams in different countries, but there are also things that. Sort of unite us and help build us as teams universally that can be applied I'm sure as well. In a world where we [00:17:00] have, you know, remote work distributed teams, everyone is working everywhere and that's kind of become the norm now.

[00:17:06] **Linda Mzimane:** Um, what are some of the effective ways that we can foster collaboration and communication and a sense of unity among team members even though we're all working scattered around the country or around the globe in some cases, what's your take on that, Caroline?

[00:17:20] **Caroline Brewin:** Um, yeah, well, I think similar to, I think, from some of Kate's experiences, I think I managed a group which was across 13 different locations in Asia and so very different cultures.

[00:17:32] **Caroline Brewin:** But what we did was have a collective challenge and we talked about the purpose. But what I saw really worked very well was where they were able to come together and what we did was get different groups working with each other, you know, China with Malaysia and Singapore with Australia. And, um, actually looking for those opportunities to have those group projects and presentations or analysis.

[00:17:54] **Caroline Brewin:** The other thing which I think is really important is consistency in messaging. [00:18:00] We need to be really clear, right from the top all the way through, around what are we saying, what is important, what is our purpose, and then obviously there's an interpretation of that for people through the different teams that they're in.

[00:18:12] **Caroline Brewin:** And then there's an identity piece as well. Um, who are we? What is our vision? What are our goals? And taking time to include people in creating that makes such a massive difference. It's a bit more work, you know, upfront but when you take people on the journey as a leader and say, let's talk about this together.

[00:18:33] **Caroline Brewin:** What are our biggest pain points? What are our biggest focus areas? You know, where do you want to go? If you can steer that and come up with that journey together, you will be rocket-fueled as a team.

[00:18:45] **Linda Mzimane:** And I think consistency, as you said, is a very valid and important part of that equation.

[00:18:50] **Linda Mzimane:** Marita, do you have any examples or tips that you can share about that unity that we can create for teams, especially teams that are distributed? What sort of tips or tangible [00:19:00] advice could you share there?

[00:19:00] **Marita Williams:** From a really practical perspective and back-to-basics perspective, teams need to connect with one another on different levels, not only around mandate, purpose, and goals.

[00:19:16] **Marita Williams:** But to start connecting and really creating spaces where they can have conversations that get them to know one another.

[00:19:26] **Linda Mzimane:** I suppose, because that after-work beer thing at five o'clock is, it doesn't really exist when you're all distributed. It doesn't exist. What is the, is there a virtual equivalent of that or how, what can people do?

[00:19:37] **Marita Williams:** Yes. What we've been experimenting with, with one of our clients have been micro-breaks. They have created, where they have a half-hour meeting scheduled, and the meeting only lasts 25 minutes. Where there's an hour meeting scheduled, the hour meeting only lasts 50 minutes. And they use the 10 minutes and the five minutes [00:20:00] as micro-breaks.

[00:20:01] **Marita Williams:** Now this can be on an individual basis, but as well as for the team to connect and check in either at the beginning of the meeting or at the end of the meeting. Really checking in on how everybody's feeling today. What experiences did they have, and how did this contribute to them being creative this week? So conversations on a completely different level where it's a connection, a connection with the other within that unit

and being extremely deliberate about these conversations and steering them away from the business of the day.

[00:20:41] **Linda Mzimane:** I like the idea of that, taking that just that five or 10 minutes before or after a meeting to really kind of, you know, share with one another and my favourite is kind of learning about what people do outside of work.

[00:20:52] **Linda Mzimane:** Like what are your talents outside? You'll be amazed at the things that people do outside of their jobs. Now, Kate, I [00:21:00] understand you are a three-time Olympic hockey player. I mean.

[00:21:05] **Kate Woods:** A very long time ago.

[00:21:07] **Linda Mzimane:** Is it? But three, that's amazing. That's amazing. Okay. So you obviously know very well on that field, the team dynamics. How do you liken those on-the-field team dynamics to the dynamics at work when it comes to teamwork on the field versus in the office?

[00:21:24] **Kate Woods:** Oh, it's, it's exactly the same. It's just a different playing arena. So for me, it has been absolutely wonderful to transfer everything I've learned in the sports field into the workplace.

[00:21:34] **Kate Woods:** Um, I feel like it's the best leadership course I could have ever gone on. I mean, I think honestly what you learn as the team and, particularly a national team, which is then, you know, um, high pressure, you learn how to handle that pressure. You learn how to handle, um, you know, a lot of distractions. Uh, you learn to focus on what's within your control.

[00:21:55] **Kate Woods:** You learn to focus on what is your game plan. What is your strategy? And then also what is [00:22:00] my role within the team? I go back to that always, because that's what I learned on the field. It's not about me dribbling through everyone and scoring the goal. My role was to tackle and to distribute and to set someone else up to score that goal.

[00:22:12] **Kate Woods:** There is no one player that is bigger than the team itself and I think that was such a great lesson to learn and transition into the workplace. I think also the other thing, um, is critical is, is the ability to win and lose together. So as mentioned, when you win, there's not one or two heroes. It's recognising every single role that every player has played and contributed to the successful results.

[00:22:37] **Kate Woods:** And at the same time losing, you know, it's a wonderful lesson to really feel the defeat, but then to rise again. Um, and to learn from it and to understand what went wrong and be able to correct, um, your performance or the team's performance. Um, I, I think, you know, setting goals, is really, really important.

[00:22:56] **Kate Woods:** We had a couple of hard lessons where we thought we'd go out and beat the Dutch and we [00:23:00] lost 7-0 and it hurt and it was because, you know, our, our goal in the beginning was, maybe not correct. They were one in the world, we were 12 in the world. And so there were, there are lots of lessons that are learned along the way.

[00:23:11] **Kate Woods:** I think also handling setbacks, um, you know, in sport, it comes in the form of injury or selection, um, in work, it comes in different forms, but it's still the same lesson that needs to be learned. Um, and that's, that's really important.

[00:23:26] **Linda Mzimane:** I love the point you make about, um, you know, not always or understanding your role and it's not, it's not that you are the goal scorer.

[00:23:34] **Linda Mzimane:** I think a lot of us in the work environment want to be this goal scorer. You want to be the, you know, the person that lands the account or whatever the case may be, but your job may just be to set it up and then the next person takes it forward. I think that's a really nice analogy to make.

[00:23:49] **Kate Woods:** Which is just as important.

[00:23:50] **Linda Mzimane:** Absolutely. And that's the, I think that's what people need to keep in mind is that every function, every cog in that wheel and every, um, they're all just as important as that [00:24:00] person that is the, the closer or the finisher, as it were. I think, you know when it comes to organisations and uncertainty and rapid change that can take place.

[00:24:09] **Linda Mzimane:** Being adaptable and resilient in the face of all of that is obviously really, really important. And I think I'd like to hear a bit from you here, Marita, about what organisations can do to ensure that teams remain adaptable and resilient in the face of, you know, constant change or uncertainty.

[00:24:27] **Marita Williams:** Resilience is such an incredibly important, uh, skill set within an organisation and for individuals to be resilient and build resilience, builds a resilient organisation.

[00:24:41] **Marita Williams:** So it really all starts with individual resilience and again, going back to purpose. When an individual understands what their purpose is, uh, what, what are they here to do and why is it important? The whole foundation of resilience [00:25:00] is built on that understanding of what is my purpose? And, uh, because that drives our values, that drives how we show up.

[00:25:09] **Marita Williams:** It, um, it gives us the tenacity to hang in there when things are tough and when organisations start paying attention to their individuals, their workers, their, uh, young leaders, their top leaders in their organization, and really pay attention to how do they create an environment where they can develop resilience.

[00:25:32] **Marita Williams:** They will feed off the benefits of that because these individuals build resilient organisations. And it is really about assessing what the environment is demanding and adapting into that demand from the environment and choosing how do we respond to the challenges in the environment [00:26:00] and being, um, being selective in terms of what demands from our environment are the priority demands and not responding to every single change and demand from the environment.

[00:26:16] **Linda Mzimane:** And I think a key factor in all of these things is, or the importance of this aspect is, is diversity. I want to sort of touch on that quickly where the role of diversity

in these high-performance teams, and I think Caroline, I'd love to hear from you here in terms of what you think, we touched on a bit earlier, but when it specifically comes to building these high-performance teams, what role can diversity play?

[00:26:41] **Linda Mzimane:** And is it something that we should really lean into to kind of make sure that we have some level of success?

[00:26:47] **Caroline Brewin:** Yeah, so I think that diversity is everything. Um, you know, it comes in lots of different forms. I think traditionally we would talk about whether it's cultural diversity or gender diversity. Um, but there's also diversity [00:27:00] of thought and, um, all of us have different experiences and backgrounds and values and beliefs.

[00:27:06] **Caroline Brewin:** And, um, we bring those to the table. That is such a power that an organisation can have. There's some really interesting research that the University of Pennsylvania did looking at the difference between male and female brains if we just zoom into that briefly. And what they found, actually, was that the neural connections, um, when they compared around a thousand images of male and female brains, that actually the neural circuitry, on average, women's brains were highly connected between the left and right hemispheres.

[00:27:37] **Caroline Brewin:** Whereas the male, um, neural circuitry was much more front to back, so, um, between the front and back regions of the brain. And what the researchers said about this, they said, this is so interesting because what it actually did was give some science and background to what some of those kind of stereotypes that we have.

[00:27:55] **Caroline Brewin:** Um, which is that men's brains apparently are more wired for perception and [00:28:00] coordinated actions whereas women's brains are more about social skills and memory and that multitasking piece. So it's a fascinating study if you, if I recommend you, you look into it. Um, but so the collective group of brains in the room, they all bring different perspectives.

[00:28:18] **Caroline Brewin:** I, you know, I found this, I worked in a very male environment, investment banking for many years, often being the only woman in the room and, you know, they would all, all come to a very similar conclusion and I would come from a completely different point of view. And they would say, Oh my goodness, we haven't even thought of that.

[00:28:35] **Caroline Brewin:** You know, we all bring our own gifts and particularly when we're talking about some of those, maybe just gender differences as well.

[00:28:40] **Marita Williams:** Linda, if I may add very briefly, also diversity of motivation. It's a concept that we, uh, that we don't often pay attention to either in terms of, uh, in terms of diversity.

[00:28:55] **Marita Williams:** Because the core motivation of an individual, [00:29:00] all individuals are different. Although we show up similarly, we might have a very conscientious individual in our team. And obviously if there's a conscientious individual, tasks like meeting deadlines and paying attention to detail, detailed tasks would be given to this conscientious individual.

[00:29:22] **Marita Williams:** But the core motivation of this conscientious individual may be to serve, to help, to be of service. So that individual will, uh, will, uh, will perform up to a certain point, but it could ultimately result in a very quick burnout because the core motivation of the individual showing up as being conscientious is to support.

[00:29:44] **Marita Williams:** Other individuals will show up as conscientious because they want to achieve. Other individuals will show up as conscientious because they want to do the right thing and to become aware of these core motivations, what drives us to show up like we [00:30:00] do also gives us a very strong lever on how to leverage individuals within a team.

[00:30:08] **Linda Mzimane:** I think that part of that is the psychology of that as well. And we spoke a little bit about psychological safety earlier on. I just want to touch on that again, and maybe pose this question to you, Kate, as someone who has that. sportsmanship experience and understands also the psychological impact of whether it is adversity or setbacks and how that, that can, can play out in the workplace.

[00:30:30] **Linda Mzimane:** But how critical is psychological safety where members can feel safe enough to take risks and share ideas and learn from failures? And how can a leader really create that place of psychological safety? Like what tangibly or practically can someone in a leadership position do to really create a place of psychological safety for team members?

[00:30:52] **Kate Woods:** Yeah, I think this is really where the leader and leadership team play a critical role and it's really is up to, to them to set the [00:31:00] tone. Um, for us at Adidas, we have a wonderful award called the Courageous Failure Award. And every quarter, we are awarding someone who tried something courageous. It might not have paid off.

[00:31:11] **Kate Woods:** In fact, it doesn't pay off. It's, it's rewarding behaviour rather than the outcome. Um, and I think for me right now in the world we living in with so much uncertainty and turmoil, and you know, that we spoke of needing resilience earlier, for me, I want to be a courageous leader for my team. So I set the tone at the top in terms of being willing to try new things, being willing to.

[00:31:33] **Kate Woods:** To just take risks and going after something that we wholeheartedly believe in. And if I start to do it and my team sees me doing it, then hopefully they will also feel safe to go after it themselves as well. Um, I spoke earlier about high-performing teams are those that play with freedom and confidence.

[00:31:49] **Kate Woods:** And so it's my job as a leader to, to really give them that freedom, to empower them fully, um, to go after something. So I think there's probably a little bit of a balance in terms of, [00:32:00] you know, playing within, if you, if you think of a football pitch while the women's world cup is on right now, let's talk football. Within the football field.

[00:32:07] **Kate Woods:** You know, it doesn't matter where you are in the world. The field is the same, the shape of the field and the rules are the same, but how each team plays is up to them. And it's, it's really creating our own way of playing, um, and giving them, giving the team the freedom to play in our own style while sticking within the guardrails of the playing field.

[00:32:31] **Kate Woods:** So, yeah, I think it's something that, has to be shaped and built by the leadership team, but then really lived by the team. Um, and I think it is needed right now. I think all of our teammates are screaming for psychological safety, a safe environment to not only feel valued and recognised, but also to be able to really deliver in their role by giving them the freedom to do so.

[00:32:52] **Linda Mzimane:** I love the idea of an award like a Courageous Failure, because as you say, it really just promotes the behaviour rather [00:33:00] than the outcome which I think is a great approach to work life and just also encouraging employees. I think that's awesome. Life Health Solutions offers 24-hour support for employees and their families.

[00:33:13] **Linda Mzimane:** This holistic service includes not only primary healthcare but also counselling, financial wellness, legal services and executive coaching. Kate, Caroline and Marita thank you so much for sharing your insights and experiences with us. It's been a valuable discussion. I think the points I'm going to be thinking about for a while are that team purpose and identity are important.

[00:33:35] **Linda Mzimane:** In fact, I think we could consider them to be the building blocks of a healthy team and work culture. So spending time developing this is in a business's interest. Secondly, in the world of online, remote, and distributed working, it's so important to find ways of building real connections between teams.

[00:33:52] **Linda Mzimane:** This may differ between organisations, but finding something that works well is worth the effort. Lastly, I think [00:34:00] it's important for organisations to be adaptable and flexible when it comes to the ever-evolving world of work. So if your company values need a refresh or you need to relook policies, then it's crucial to do so because the company's health relies on this.

[00:34:15] **Linda Mzimane:** Before we wrap up, who is your favourite sports team in the world? I think we'll start with the sporty lady. Kate, who's your favourite sports team in the world?

[00:34:25] **Kate Woods:** I'm going to use the opportunity to shine a light on two of our female national teams at the moment in action. We have Banyana Banyana. Um, they are our African champions and they are making us so proud and inspiring the next generation of young girls to show that actually having a career in football, um, you know, is a possibility.

[00:34:47] **Kate Woods:** We also have our South African netball team, uh, and then I'm definitely going to have to say the Springboks. Absolutely. So very passionately South African.

[00:34:56] **Linda Mzimane:** Caroline, do you have any favourite sports teams that you back?

[00:34:59] **Caroline Brewin:** I think [00:35:00] certainly the Lionesses have been a group, the women's English football team, have been just so inspiring for women and girls and I think really for everyone, certainly in the UK and broader than that, a real inspiration and trailblazers around what they do, how they've approached it and how they are inspiring young women through our country.

[00:35:24] **Linda Mzimane:** No, the women's teams are really doing the most right now and I'm here for it. Marita, do you follow sports teams?

[00:35:31] **Marita Williams:** Who's your favourite in the world? I don't. I don't follow. I love sports and, but I don't particularly link to any sports team, but my favourite team that has taught me the most valuable life lessons.

[00:35:49] **Marita Williams:** Was, uh, in 2005, our Springbok skydiving formation, skydiving, the female team, how they built this [00:36:00] foundation of mutual respect, mutual trust, um, how they communicated with one another, how they supported and, um, motivated and inspired one another just went beyond. So they were, they have always been and will forever be my favourite sports team.

[00:36:20] **Linda Mzimane:** With more than 30 years of experience, Life Health Solutions helps businesses make a meaningful, measurable difference by putting employees at the heart of what they do. Our services span primary healthcare, occupational health and safety, wellness and emergency medical services. For more information, visit lifehealthsolutions.org.

[00:36:40] **Linda Mzimane:** If you'd like to hear more insights like these from business and industry leaders, be sure to subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss out on our upcoming episodes. This podcast is produced by 2Stories for Life Health Solutions. Written by Hanlie van der Merwe and Celeste Jacobs, and produced by Carol Williams, with audio editing, engineering and sound design by Kozi Mzimela and Jordyn Toohey. Thanks to the Training Industry, World Rugby, The University of Austin Texas and Brené Brown for the article and audio clips used in this episode. For more information, please refer to the show notes.