



Unboxing Future of Work feat. Kieran Gilmurray

Episode 4: Unboxing Learning & Digital Skills

[Audio Transcript]

Vijay 0:33

Hey Kieran, great to have you in Unboxing Future of Work this week. To my audience, many of you would already know Kieran, what we are looking for Kieran today is to have an engaging conversation about digital transformation and future of work, which Kieran is very passionate about. So, without further ado let's get started. Welcome, Kieran.

Kieran 0:53

Thank you, sir. I'm delighted to be here. Looking forward to our conversation today.

Vijay 0:58

Absolutely. So, Kieran, we'll just start off with a little bit about yourself. That will really help the audience know your background., what you love. And I already heard you're passionate about behavioural psychology. Give us a couple of personal bites.

Kieran 1:16

Oh, wow. So, I'm passionate about all the things I do if that makes sense, Vijay. So, I started just from work perspective, as a business technologist for years. And I've absolutely loved automation and data analytics and social media and sitting between the business teams trying to help them evolve and transform. And I'm passionate about that. So, I sort of it's a hobby, and it's a job.

Kieran 1:40

But some of the stuff you might not know about me is that I'm actually a certified Executive Coach. And I am an Executive Director as well. So, I work with Tom Allen's AI Journal, if you've come across that.. Yeah, a LinkedIn live host so you, you will have seen me on T3, as you named it with Ema Rolloff every Thursday. And then outside of work, as you say, it's behavioural psychology. I'm fascinated with people and mindset and how people behave and work and operate.

Kieran 2:12

And then when I'm not doing that, it's normally time with my two dogs, Holly and Badger, one brown and white Collie, and one black and white Collie or I don't have a lot of time left in a day, because I'm awake at half five, and I'm in bed by about 11 or 12. But I pack in as much as I can of all of the things that I absolutely love and I'm passionate about. Days fly by and I never notice what I'm doing because I'm having fun doing.

Vijay 2:39

Amazing. Kieran do you have 24 hours a day, or you get to have 36 hours a day?

Kieran 2:46

I will take 48 please. I do this every...I do this seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Vijay 2:53

This is crazy the stuff that you do and I don't know how you're finding time. You should definitely have more than 24 hours it looks like.

Kieran 3:03

You know something Vijay see when you love what you do, you just have piles of energy. You don't know don't know how's the days passing. And therefore, I've looked around me and you know, interesting things around me and interesting people and interesting hobbies and interesting conversations. It just gives you a buzz and an energy that you don't get when you're doing something that you dislike. So, the more I do of it, maybe the more hours will appear in the day, or at least I hope, but I would love another six or seven.

Vijay 3:37

Thank you very much. Let me take you a little deeper into the topic of the day, right? I know you've been a champion of technology, digital transformation, Intelligent Automation, and analytics. When it comes to future of work, we believe all these technologies are going to be playing significant role of their own. Especially Intelligent Automation, right, and the kind of value that it's delivering to customers and the kind of growth that customers are, adopting. So, what exactly do you think is limiting the scale of intelligent automation, digital transformation and enterprise? What do you think is stopping people to adopt these technologies and start and scale their journeys?

Kieran 4:20

Yeah, well, I look at this Vijay from three perspectives. I look at it as this skill set question. A couple of years ago, skill set was the gap in the market. Individuals were paper qualified or they weren't qualified or very little skill or experience of Intelligent Automation. And they made lots of mistakes a bit like the, the automation winter as described, or the downward shape of a Gartner hype curve. But that's disappeared. Now the skills are in the market, the experience is there, the lessons are there. So, then you move on to the product and the tool set. A numbers of years ago, the tools were RPA based that was it, that's all you got out of the box. You didn't get anything like, you know, process mining. You'd certainly didn't get much in the OCR AI space, or any of the other hyper automation tools that you might care to see on the market. But the product set and the tool sets, whatever you want to call them, they're there now at the moment. So, the one thing that I come back to is not skill set, it's not product set or toolset, it's down to mindset. And mindset is down to people's desire or willingness or attitude to actually want to change. And for me that is the limiting factor. It's not so much legacy processes. They exist as legacy minds.

Kieran 5:34

And people, if they want digital evolution or digital transformation, I make a distinction between the two, the evolution is gradual, and you know where you're going, and you will get there. Transformation is all or nothing big bet stuff. I'm a bit of a fan of knowing where you're going and evolving to get there. But to get there, you need people who are willing and want to change. You certainly don't reach the point where you have to change i.e., a knee jerk reaction. You're standing at the edge of a cliff and you have to transform as an organization. Organization should have change and technology is the thing that's largely changing organizations. They should have change built into their DNA. Their people should want change to happen. They should be encouraging change, bringing forward ideas, transforming how they work - either employees experience work on a daily basis, how customers experience the firm, through automation and digital tooling. But the mindset or the willingness to change appears for me to be the limiting factor.

Kieran 6:34

People prefer consistency. They prefer habit, they prefer not to change. Now, some of that has dined individuals themselves in the way they operate. There's a great book called Who Moved My Cheese which talked about three types of people. Those who will change will run with anything. Those who won't change, no matter what, and those in the middle who will watch. We need more of the first. We need the people who understand that change is inevitable. That we're in a period of digital Darwinism driven by technology. And if they don't change, then the organization won't be about. And, therefore, what is it that they need to do to give themselves the skills and the desire and the will to want to change an organization and the way they work.

Kieran 7:10

Now, I'm not just putting this down to people inside of the firms themselves as totally responsible for a firm because an executive team has to paint a bright and shiny picture. HR team needs to make sure that they're not getting the skills that people need today only today. They need to prepare it for this years ago. They need to have got those digital skills and hire the people that they don't have, remember the new digital DNA that they need. But HR executive teams, employees within the

business all need to want to change and drive this change to make sure that automation works. That's the one thing I'm seeing limited. People sometimes and quite often don't want to change. They're used to doing things the way they've always done them and they're quite comfortable doing them. And the only time they choose to change is when they have to. But in the digital age, that's too late.

Vijay 7:58

And I love that. And I love digital Darwinism. I just heard it for the first time. I think that's... that's really true. And talking about mindset. Today, I was coincidentally talking to a CIO and CFO. We were presenting something on how we can help them. Then the CFO said, "Hey, I'm a manufacturing company. And, I can implement the best of the tools in the market. But how do you change my people's attitude towards automation. They're comfortable talking to people, they don't want to talk to anything apart from people. That's how my manufacturing industry is. What are you guys doing about it? And that came out because I was talking about mindset. I was talking about the culture, not just the technology. And, he said that you guys are the first, one talking about this. Because everybody came, showed their technology.. But who is talking about the people here, and what kind of culture we are in. And how is this going to fit in? So, mindset is, I think, is the biggest opportunity or challenge I see in adopting automation and scaling in that organization.

Kieran 8:57

100%. There's the old phrase Vijay, it says culture eats strategy. And I think that's really, really true. And as I said, I don't put it just down to people themselves. Because the press has been full of some horrible stories that automation will lead to job losses and all sorts of dreadful things. It's not been the case you've seen every industrial revolution that's actually happened. So, I do put it down to the leaders of those firms to say, "Well, look, what is the bright and shiny picture you're painting to want people to go on the journey? How are you going to convince them to get there?" You know, very often people don't know where they're going. They don't know what's happening. They maybe don't see the end game. They don't understand their part in this end game. They maybe don't have the skills to bring the organization there yet very often organizations look at their own people that haven't trained them, qualified them, brought them up to date, explain the picture, and then wonder why they're being resistant or perceived as resistance, and not getting on message. But, if the message isn't clear in the first place, and you don't know where you're going, it's very difficult to get on board. So, I think it's down to every person in the firm to change their mindset way of working and move after this shiny object that's going to keep moving. Because change is going to be inevitable in this age. So, I think everybody's a part to play. But, I wonder what I would have said to the CFO. I would have said, "Well, what are you doing to improve that picture?"

Vijay 10:10

Exactly. Most of the companies I've spoke to, they don't have a process, they don't have an approach towards, you know, this part of the story. They have a SDLC lifecycle to do software development, and there is an approach, there's a process, there's a QA, but there seems to be a great gap in terms of how do we do something mindset as a process? And how do you change mindset as a process. There should be something that should be coming in the market.

Kieran 10:37

Oh 100%, design thinking will certainly help because we get into the mind of the people. But there's a phrase I use repeatedly Vijay, and I'm sure people are bored hearing it, but I keep repeating until people listen, it's that people transform organizations, not technology. Therefore, if you don't have the hearts and minds of the people, it doesn't matter what technology you've got, it just isn't going to work. And, therefore, you're absolutely right, we need to do something as an industry to sell automation a lot better. And the way to do that is what I would describe as most people look at things, and this is meant as a compliment, not as anything else is what's in it for me, you know, how's it going to impact me. People demand initial psychological safety, which is they want to come to work knowing they've got a job, they know that the boss is supportive, they know they're going to get trained and learned, they know they're gonna get paid at the end of the month. So, when that psychological safety has been damaged by the press, we keep telling them that they're going to lose their jobs. When that psychologically, that psychological safety is damaged, when your boss tells you, you're not scaled to do the work that you're meant to do when they've not told you what it looks like or giving you the training to get there. Or when you don't understand where you're going. All of that is harmed. Therefore, to go back to what we're saying, if we talked as excitedly as we did about our people, as we do technology. If we invested in our people, as much as in terms of cash and time, as we do technology itself, can you imagine how the world might look and how differently and better it might look? If we focused on our people as much as we do our tech.

Vijay 12:09

Absolutely, and the future of work would be much more amazing if you help people driving it than just tech driving it. So, that brings us to a very important, and my favorite topic of asking you, how do you measure this? It's just not about automation I'm talking about. I definitely want to hear about metrics that people, companies and business should track to start and scale their automation journey. what are top of the mind metrics that you think people should start tracking?

Kieran 12:37

Yeah, it's a fantastic question Vijay because the old phrase that what you measure, you manage is so true. Doesn't matter where you are, what it is. If you focus on it, you will normally get what you want.

Kieran 12:49

And as mentioned, for a number of years, folks have concentrated on finance metrics, you know, what's the FT that we're going to remove from the organization, and limited extent they use automation for income generation. Ever understand why organizations don't do that, because automation is definitely there. Why keep talking about cost savings? Why not talk about income growth. So again, even existing metrics haven't been discussed in the most helpful way. But you should be looking at and this is for me, you know, cultural and transformational and digital talent metrics. So, at the moment, I have a series in LinkedIn that's combining all these different types of metrics together as the 50 metrics of automation world. And it's a fascinating series with about 26

different experts, and I'm working with Shail, who you will know from the world of automation to put this series together for the first time.

Kieran 13:38

Now, it really does depend on what the organization wants. Because every organization is different. Every business outcome, every business strategy and goal tends to be different. But if we're moving in a digital age, then I really would like to see productivity metrics, cultural transformation metrics. Even something as simple as how many staff have you got certified and did and how many staff have we got certified as digital this or digital that? How many digital talent roles have we created, you know, all those types of metrics come true. Now, if you're looking for a very balanced scorecard and metrics, and that's the one thing that automation allows. It's not just one thing. So, if you improve a process, you can definitely save time, increase capacity, reduce cost or increase benefit, you know, definitely create that new capacity process that excess number of transactions.

Kieran 14:24

But we should also be looking at EX and CX. Technology that's not enjoyed is injured. And, therefore, whatever we're doing whatever our goal is, we need to make sure we create the Intelligent Automation tooling that our customers and our staff want. We need to make sure that we have the right number of people in the organization to deliver this tooling as well.

Kieran 14:42

And therefore, if we don't have people trained, and digital roles are certified and qualified to deliver what we need, then we're gonna end up in trouble. So, when I look for a balanced scorecard of metrics, my personal one is definitely income because something has to pay for itself. And that can be you know, money taken out cost avoidance, or a one on one shape or another, or ideally, incomes, it definitely should be capacity created a number of transactions process, because automation allows you to deliver that deliver and process transactions at pace and at scale. It 100% should be about EX and CX - employee and customer experience. And on top of that, we should be judging ourselves in regard to how we're prepared now and for the future.

Kieran 15:20

So, it should definitely be along the lines of digital staff qualified or numbers of digital roles created, if we can do that, and maybe put some other metrics around organizational culture, and that you can measure in net promoter score. In other words, do I love working for this organization, because I feel invested and cared in, I'm doing something meaningful and purposeful. And I have the ability to speak up change things, make a difference. All those are metrics that should be combined together, the digital age demands, new metrics Vijay and if organizations aren't putting new metrics in place, then essentially, they're creating a large ship's anchor that's going to wedge them to the bottom of the seabed, and keep them stuck where they are, instead in moving into new blue ocean territory, where the world can be a better and nicer place to be.

Vijay 16:09

Exactly. And I really loved when you spoke about digital talent metrics, right? There is no structured way to do it today. And there is no thought process about it. And that is the only skill that you need today. And so, if you look at the world around us is becoming completely digital. And just from filing taxes to even booking an appointment of vaccine to processing invoices...invoices, kind of process and organization, everything is becoming digital. And it's important that all the people should be digitally literate and digitally savvy to start taking the technology as something that is right up their alley than thinking it is something they're not comfortable with.

Vijay 16:52

And I love the balanced scorecard approach as well and make sure that you start measuring culture, you start measuring the mindset, you start measuring the digital skills that you have in your organization, and then the technology and then the execution, and then the operational efficiencies and so forth. So that that's a great insight, Kieran!

Kieran 17:09

No... 100%. And again, we have to be careful as a society outside of organizations that we bring people with us. One of the things I didn't mention earlier on that I do outside of work is I'm a Board Member, a volunteer Board Member of Northern Ireland's largest social housing charity Radius Housing where we've a billion dollars' worth of assets. We are responsible and accountable for helping over 33,000 adults in Northern Ireland. And numbers of those adults, through no fault of their own or through unfortunate circumstance or just life as it happened, can't actually read or write never mind have the ability or the cash to pay for technology.

Kieran 17:45

So, whilst we are putting all of these skills in place and organizations and businesses, one thing we need to do, because Vijay you called it correctly everything is moving digital, is just make sure that we don't leave people behind. We should judge ourselves as a society as to how we treat our most vulnerable people, not our most well-off people.

Vijay 18:07

Exactly. And, and I think the new metrics that I always believe and when we started championing is about empathy, about autonomy. Autonomy in the sense that you know, everybody, irrespective of your identity or your abilities and if you're specially disabled, all the people should be able to have access to digital because it's almost becoming like having access to water and food now in the world that we are living, and if you leave them behind, it's going to impact the society and all of us. I mean nobody is safe until everybody is safe. That's the kind of world that we are getting into. And that's what we are very passionate about Kieran.

So let me take you to a quick rapid fire.

Vijay 18:46

Right, this is the fun stuff. So, Ema did well, and I'm sure you would do with flying colors.

Kieran 18:55

Let's see. Let's see who wins me or Ema.

Vijay 18:59

So first one, what is your favorite app?

Kieran 19:02

Oh my goodness, I'll have to check my phone. Do you know what I love and it's maybe not an app as such. I love LinkedIn. I'm addicted to it. So, if I'm allowed that one, I will take that every day, the amount of information and knowledge you can garner and the amount of quality content that happens is brilliant. And if you're not allowing me that I'll go with a podcast app, because I spent my time when I'm in the gym, out running, weight training and listening to social media marketing podcasts, behavioral psychology podcasts endlessly on loops.

Vijay 19:32

Gotcha. So, I would keep LinkedIn aside because I think it's everybody's favorite nowadays. So well, I'll take the podcast app. What is your favorite book?

Kieran 19:43

Oh! There's no such thing as a favorite book, I should warn you. As I mentioned earlier on we were talking my Amazon bill is obscene. And if you can see over my shoulder here, I've one bookshelf for books. And I have lots and lots and lots and lots of books. And I tend to give them all away because I love giving knowledge or the gift of knowledge away. My current favorite, I should warn you Vijay, I have seven beside my bed. I read two books at a time I speak, I can speed read, because I've practiced so hard. So, I'm in the middle of doing the executive coaching course. So, one is all my executive coaching books. And there's about six of those my exams and choose them to qualify. And then the rest is the one in front of me here is 'The Methods of Persuasion: How to Use Psychology To Influence Human Behavior' by Kolenda is book number six, or seven. And then beside me at the same time is '22 immutable laws of marketing'. And then behind me is 'Influencer Marketing' which is the one I'm going to afterwards. So, it's a mixture of

Vijay 20:48

Isn't it a kind of cocktail of books in your mind that when you're reading all of the books together and you don't remember which one that I read.

Kieran 20:55

I have this old habit Vijay, that I can probably tell you the page number of something if you called it out to me. I consume books and I love just... I'm addicted to learning. That's what I spend my time doing half six in the morning, I'm getting up having a coffee. And the first thing I will do is read for an hour and it sets me up for the day. And the last thing I do at night is read. And then sometimes in the middle of the day, it's the same thing.

Vijay 21:18

That's just my inspiring. And I it's really inspiring me to start doing it because I want to do that. But I don't take time to do that. So, it really inspiring me to now to act on it. Maybe I'll get you some part of the book every day.

Kieran 21:32

Well, I love it. I have to say I love it. And I do I read them just end to end. You know, when I look at the books around me, the individual Nick Kolenda who's done this, he studied at his research that he spent a decade or more learning all of these techniques. And for less than \$20 I've just saved myself 10 years of research and very expensive University fees to get the knowledge that he has distilled. That's just simply magnificent. I love it.

Vijay 22:02

It's amazing what we humans are and the kind of curiosity that we have on knowledge. And what books do for us right. It's just amazing.

Kieran 22:11

I love it. I love it. And there's something maybe I don't know whether Emma told you're not, but we're both qualified teachers who moved into automation.

Vijay 22:17

Oh, is it? I didn't know that.

Kieran 22:19

Yeah, I'm a certified English teacher.

Vijay 22:22

That's what connects the both of you?

Kieran 22:24

Yeah.

Vijay 22:25

Yeah, awesome. So actually, you answered my last one a little bit. So, normally I ask some silly curious questions like what do you do first thing in the morning? Because we're all digital now. The first thing I would do is find my phone somewhere wherever it is I left last night. So, it ends with the phone and it starts with the phone. What exactly you do first thing in the morning?

Kieran 22:46

It literally is, it's reading, a coffee, I put the two dogs out, Holly and Badger my brown and white and black and white collie and then I'm straight down with a book. And I don't touch my mobile phone. Believe it or not for the first hour and a half two hours because I get into terrible habit years ago of looking at my phone then I start replying to emails and I end up in random useless websites. And it didn't bring me any joy.

Kieran 23:11

And as I mentioned earlier on, I run toward the things that bring me joy. And I run away from the things that don't. Now I need my phone, and my iWatch and everything that I've got connected to the internet and beyond. But that first hour of the day is what I've described as my most precious, it sets me up and sets my mood up for the next 16-17 hours. And therefore, a coffee and a read of a book. And it's not necessarily reading the book. As such, it's the knowledge that I'm gleaning out of it. Just as the most amazing moment of my life. I am addicted to learning, and I make no bones about it. There isn't enough books in the world for me, and there isn't enough hours, no, in a working day, or week or month or a year, for me not to learn something new and precious.

Vijay 23:56

When I'm listening to you, I feel like I'm watching a Hollywood movie, somebody is really giving an awesome dialogue to inspire you that and I get into that zone that tomorrow morning on I should start really reading, focus on my learning goals, just not doing what I have to do. So, it's really inspiring and I feel the passion that you had to carry about learning and books and knowledge. And rarely see people in doing that, you know, people are busy living life, people busy living, you know, just doing something, but not really having a, you know, caring about the learning. It's just not about, I would say having learning as a goal, but I think it's about having your mind active about

being curious, I think that's what separates us from everything else in the world. So that curious,, we keep lacking during, the kind of rut that we get to the work. And that's exactly what we want to change as well that we should have a life, we should have things that we wanted to do. And you know that all starts with having a better work life.

Kieran 24:54

Yep. Well, someone said to me, if you knew your life was going to end in a week's time, what would you do? And the short answer is you would do absolutely everything that you were passionate about, and love for those seven days. And then the next question becomes, well, why don't you start now, instead of waiting for that, for that day to happen. And that's one of my mantras, I'm gonna live my life now. And my term, so I'm going to do the things I'm passionate about, because you just don't know when you might not be able to.

Vijay 25:24

Yep. So, I close with the same question for all my guests. The world is changing so fast, and it's very connected to what we just mentioned. A lot of kids are coming into the work and from different fields of branches of studies, and getting into the future of work with a lot of aspirations So, what's the one message that you want to give to the kids who are entering into the world now? And what's that they should have what's something that they should focus on so that they can navigate this to first world?

Kieran 25:53

Yeah, I think it must be such a complex world that you're coming into with so much happening, so much technology, and so much change. And therefore, my advice is don't rush. You know, the kids are coming into the workforce these days. And I don't know whether this is great advice for them, Vijay will probably do the medical health, food health and whatever else, be the first workforce to work to 100. So, if they like don't like doing something, don't worry, you have another 60 years to work out what it is that excites you. And therefore...

Vijay 26:29

People keep coming and saying that I'm passionate about artificial intelligence from you know, that's actually the first month of his work. He just finished his college, and I don't think he has ever done anything serious programming. And he would come and say, I'm passionate about artificial intelligence. I won't really work for Techforce.ai. I said, I asked all the time, like what exactly, you're passionate about artificial intelligence, you know, because it's very hard to be passionate about something like hardware unless you're really seeing a bright career in that...

Kieran 26:59

He can talk to me; I have to say I'm passionate about the outcomes that can be delivered by artificial intelligence. And then the beautiful thing about artificial intelligence is once you think you know, so much, you suddenly realize you don't know half as much as you thought. So, you leave yourself the opportunity to learn a lifetime of skills and mathematical models and ways of working. I think AI is a bit like a puzzle. So, if you're into puzzles, and you're into investigating and delivering outcomes on the basis of wonderful mathematical formula and equations, then the world is your oyster. But I have to say, what, what kids are passionate about now and what I was passionate about 20 years ago. It varies and a difference and just because you do one thing and you're passionate about it today, doesn't mean you're stuck.

Vijay 27:44

Exactly. Yeah, life changes.

Kieran 27:46

Take your time and it seems you know, all your worries. are massive and they're not to be they're not...they're not to be dissuaded from there are your genuine worries. But life is long, you know, life is long, and life is short. So do the things that you love, run toward what brings you joy. Run away from what you dislike, have no regrets. You have more time than you think. And therefore, just enjoy what you've got. Don't rush, keep going, do something else. And try again and again and again and again and again. And have fun doing it. And spend time with the things, doing the things and with the people that really matter.

Vijay 28:23

Absolutely. So don't rush. Take your time, fellas. That's it from Kieran. And I can great to have you in the podcast today. And we'll be glad to share this message with our audience.

Kieran 28:36

Fantastic. Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. I wish everyone stays safe. And everyone enjoys what they do and has a very happy life.

Vijay 28: 45

Great. Thank you.