**Episode 3: Navigating Change during a Pandemic**

Narrator: Welcome. You're listening to Prosper on Your Own Terms, a podcast with insights and information on how to successfully build your business on your values for your life. In today's timely episode, Lenora takes on the subject of managing change during the pandemic. She hosts the perfect guest, client Molly Angel, founder of Angel Change Management, a company offering expert project and change management consultation primarily for healthcare and tech businesses. Get ready to delve deep as Lenora and Molly examine the profound and unprecedented effects the pandemic has been having on virtually all businesses. From transparency and vulnerability to maintaining a strong network of colleagues, there's a lot to learn and, they say, a lot to be hopeful about. Now, here's your host, entrepreneurial consultant and business development expert, Lenora Edwards.

Lenora: Hello everyone. Welcome to the show. I'm so pleased to have Molly Angel with me. She's a change management consultant who specializes in the healthcare and tech industries. So, Molly, let's start with your background.

Molly: I like to describe myself as a recovering Lean engineer. I spent a lot of time getting certified in various project management methodologies, Lean Six Sigma, et cetera, and like all project managers, just delighted in the on time and on budget delivery of projects. And on paper, things would look great. Things were wonderful, but the people weren't happy, so that really got my attention. And I started looking into, well, how is it that one makes sure that everybody arrives at the same time, the technical, the business objectives and the people.

Lenora: What makes you so popular since you started your practice a couple of years ago?

Molly: I think that the reason that it's happened is that you really want to spend as much time as you need to with clients to not only help them with the current project that they've engaged you with, but really to establish change capacity or change competency for them. And that takes a little bit more time, a little bit more attention.

Lenora: I'm curious, is there an average percentage of people that are raring to go saying, "Let's do this," versus those who don't?

Molly: By that I mean who's really driving the change. It has to be the CEO.

Lenora: Does that person need to be in a position of authority? Do they need to have a certain title for everyone to acknowledge and accept their leadership as a sponsor of change?

Molly: Inevitably it's the size of the change that dictates how high up in the organization the sponsor really needs to reside.

Lenora: You've made a reference to AIM, so I take it that's an acronym. What does that stand for?

Molly: It stands for accelerating implementation methodology, and it is one of my two go-to methodologies that I use in change management. The other one being liberating structures.

Lenora: Are there aspects of personalities you see of sponsors that are particularly successful?

Molly: I would say the key word is vulnerability. The more transparent and vulnerable and approachable leaders are through circumstances such as we are experiencing. And generally the more people are willing to follow and to invest their own wellbeing and future and career and folks like that, it establishes a much better level of trust. For example, everyone's now having to try to learn how to work from home, who never has done that before. The fact that you may as a leader be experiencing some of those same circumstances really does help people understand and connect and learn how to develop the path forward together more than someone who comes across as very I'm in charge, I'm very masterful, we will get through this.

Lenora: You're letting me know what's going on with you, which makes you a real authentic person and a leader yourself.

Molly: The transparency, I think, is a big factor for all of us right now. Leaders and all of us alike, we have to be very genuine about our circumstances and what we're all trying to deal with. In some cases...

Lenora: I think you had a case where you noticed that suddenly, for instance, in healthcare where something that had been prepared for years, just giving the intro to that because I thought it was fascinating, was suddenly and quickly and almost effortlessly, at least to the audience, adopted. Tell me about that.

Molly: I think patients were very reluctant to leave their homes so they eagerly embraced telemedicine as an alternative. One story that I read was a surgical practice who once they were given the green light by their COVID-19 steering committee that assembled to make sure that care was being organized to minimize the exposure of patients and staff to COVID-19, they were given the green light and three days later they had their telemedicine options up and running. You have to imagine the behind the scenes. They had a lot of ancillary personnel, the front desk folks, the folks in IT, people supporting all of that. And ironically, when I'm working with healthcare clients right now, I hear the refrain pretty often, "Well, we were able to do this for COVID so we should be able to do it for everything else." In other words, people are now saying, "Okay, we now know what's possible." So there is a new energy around change and transformation in healthcare these days.

Lenora: That's excellent to hear. In the past, have you seen, observed any other change that was adopted as quickly as telemedicine, telehealth has been in the last couple of months?

Molly: I'm thinking of an example where there was the knowledge that very easy to administer to test for newborns would provide a lot of information about a potentially very life altering and dangerous condition, and very quickly within health systems they established that test as the standard of care for newborns to avoid that situation.

Lenora: Well, that's exciting. And I am excited to hear that because many times we think, oh, it's going to take forever, a generation. It's very exciting to consider that there can be events or sponsorship, leadership that can influence how quickly people adopt change and an actual shift occurs. In particular, I think of the younger generations coming along, it'll be interesting to see how they are, of course, growing up in the corporate world the way I did. But my observation of Xers and millennials is that they don't really have preconceived notions of how things should be. And I'm interested to see, as they age, if that changes.

Molly: Obviously the expression you hear of frequently is the digital divide and folks who really don't have any experience of life without the internet. So there's just a very different experience when your world has been crafted in a way that you naturally form assumptions. One thing I'm very struck by is that there is a generation who came of age right around the time of the last recession, 2007 through 2009, who are now experiencing this worldwide pandemic. And I think that they are going to be a generation that has a very different experience of the world and a very different outlook than you and I will have had, Lenora, because they have had these two very fundamentally ground shifting events occur in their formative years, as it were. And I'm going to be interested to follow and see what this means in terms of their change capacity and their change competency. My suspicion is that it will make them very competent at change and very adaptable, but it will be interesting to see what that actually looks like.

Lenora: Well, you're touching on something that... Trust. Have you seen a major change initiative get accomplished without trust?

Molly: The only time that I think that actually happens is when there is some evidence or some social element of the change that's so compelling that it's almost like that expression you're out over your skis. You're just ahead of being able to build the kind of trust that you need. I think of things like what's happening right now with the Black Lives Matter efforts and initiatives, people are somewhat focusing on the protests and the writing, but actually underneath all of that is a fundamental ground shift in terms of how people are saying, "Yep. It's time to make this change."

Lenora: And it's fascinating to watch. It's hard right now to gauge how my abilities to participate at what level, because I haven't been tested in this way. And so I think all of us are in this wild learning curve while we get educated. It's very rare to find a perfect balance, but I've always enjoyed when you talk about how people saw that change in the culture, and you have a particular saying that I would love for you to say out loud for us now.

Molly: Sure. What I explain to folks is that it doesn't matter if you want to go by wagon train or rocket ship, I can help you with change. What's really important about that is that getting there together because of course this thing is to go fast, go alone, to go far, go together. It's really very true, regardless of whether you're a task or a relationship based organization.

Lenora: And we've certainly seen documentaries or heard stories about companies that make something happen quickly that unfortunately can unravel. And when people are going to invest in change management, and whether they hire you or they just invest the time and the resources, it almost takes a company offline while they institute a change.

Molly: The often quoted statistic is that 70% of projects fail because they don't fully realize the return on an investment and vision, and inevitably it's because people either passively or actively resist the change. And even if they didn't intentionally undermine your change, they just didn't have enough information to be successful in a new environment.

Lenora: Wow. So we've been talking about organizations, groups, teams, if you will, and I'm curious, as an individual what advice do you have for people in the audience for them to consider as an individual how they can adapt to change and make an improvement toward being open and adapting to change?

Molly: I think there's a couple of things that I've noticed that people who I consider very adept at change are doing. The first is creating very solid networks for themselves, either developing the kind of community that you can rely on to figure this out together is really important. And secondly, I think the fact we all have to just stay at arms length from some of the hysteria of the news, but keep very close to the elements of information that will truly move us forward, folks who I consider good role models for change are doing.

Lenora: Well, what I'm hearing in here is the element of choice, with being well informed and being supported by a network, a community that you create. And I really like to see people operating out of choice. I think they tend to relax and enjoy themselves. They proceed with confidence when they feel it's a choice rather than options being taken away from them or feeling backed in a corner. And as an entrepreneur, I'm excited by this. It's a fascinating time. I'm a pretty opinionated person. Everyone who works with me knows that. And there's the other way that I can balance that out, which is to say what is my experience. That includes my experience of listening to other people and understanding, oh, there's a reason why they think the way they do and the way they're going to move forward in a different way than I would. And by the way, not everyone is me. So that's okay too.

Molly: Having spent as many years in tech as I did, people were always making very macho style pronouncements about breaking things and I'm a disruptor and we're going to upend this industry or that industry. And to watch those folks navigate this circumstance where things truly have been disrupted and industries are just tumbling and falling and seeing how their message or their ability to navigate these rough waters has been very interesting to me because it's displaying the fact that for some folks it truly was a very heartfelt and at their DNA level welcoming or ability to appreciate, as you're saying, this disruption or this change. And for other folks, you can tell that the way they're reacting to this, it was very superficial.

Lenora: Yes. I've noticed that too. There's a current state and the desired state. So people I'm talking to all day are always doing that for someone else and I'm seeing them be pretty good about doing it for themselves.

Molly: Well, I wonder what it will look like as our health fears or our health concerns start to diminish. A little concerned because things seem to be opening just because we've got fatigue, we've got this sense that, oh, it's been long enough then we know that vaccines are quite a way away. So I don't know what all of that's going to look like, but I think that it's going to be incumbent on all of us, as I said before, to really be informed enough about what your current environment, what your community is like, your own health so that you can make good decisions about what you should do. So I think our reopening of the world is going to be pretty uneven and continue to provide us with plenty of challenges to develop our change capacity.

Lenora: Well, Molly, I'm experiencing a 50% one way, 50% the other, when I talk to my friends, as they begin to socialize in a way they consider safe, I tend to be on the more conservative side. And I'm learning about, oh, well, what is it that makes you feel like that's okay while I'm over here thinking that's not okay. So I'm comparing notes. Again, this is like a change management initiative situation here and the communication, I'm finding I have to form a positioning statement and I want to be transparent, I want to be really clear, I'm vulnerable. Okay, I'm looking at it this way and doing this and I'm making myself vulnerable by telling you how I don't want to make myself vulnerable physically yet. And it's being met with mixed reviews. It's not a matter of, oh, I don't miss my friends or my family. It's simply a matter of my personal safety. It's almost like my feelings about I always wear a seatbelt and I always lock the door behind me.

Molly: People have used the analogy of, well, we wear seat belts. I've done a fair bit of research and it really was not something that people adopted readily and said, "Oh my gosh, this makes total sense. Of course, we're going to put our seat belts on." It really took legislation for it to finally be adopted widely enough that we started to see the impact in the decrease in the death rate. And I think as people talk about whether or not they're willing to wear masks, a lot of what I've read about the adoption of seat belts really mirrors what people are saying about masks. That people felt seat belts should have been a personal choice, and whether or not you wanted to adopt them and use them should have been something that you should have been free to decide for yourself rather than be told by a nanny state that you must do this.

Molly: And so even though seat belts have been around since the late 50s, early 60s, as I recall, it wasn't until the 70s and there really started to be the campaigns like buckle up for safety and then finally the legislation that made the difference in terms of people using seat belts all the time. My own kids, they don't remember a time when everybody didn't just use seat belts. So it's a generational thing obviously, but I think that masks fall into that same category of don't tell us what to do.

Lenora: That's an excellent, excellent comparison. And you're right, when people feel like choices have been taken away and they don't agree with the why, basically, they will challenge it. I'm greatly appreciative of where we've taken this conversation today, and talking about change, talking about societal change, talking about changes that are good for us, or maybe not good for us or how they're perceived. Fasten your seatbelt because that became a thing in entertainment people would say, "Get ready. Fasten your seatbelt so you can take this wild ride on the rollercoaster." And that's what we're on right now. And Molly, it's such a pleasure to be on that rollercoaster with you. I'm so glad to know you. Now, when people want to connect with you, how will they find you?

Molly: One is to listen to my podcast, The Change Manifesto, and the other is to visit my website, angelchangemanagement.com, where I have lots of great free, downloadable information about change management.

Lenora: Excellent. You're very generous. Thank you.

Narrator: Thanks for listening. And remember, prosperity is more than just cash, it's about having choices suited to your values and your life. Lenora's focus is to empower you to prosper on your own terms. See how at lenoraedwards.com.

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