SUMMARY KEYWORDS

remote, people, employers, companies, employees, office, jobs, northern ireland, community, work, working, grow, pandemic, remotely, chapter, bit, meet, thinking, big, culture

SPEAKERS

Suzanne Murdock, Joanne Mangan

Suzanne Murdock 00:00

Hi. I'm Suzanne Murdock and Welcome to Series Three of Powering Productivity. Each episode, I explore the energy, that really genuine connections, expertise, and being in your best flexible working environment can bring to you, your business and your whole life. So let's get started.

Suzanne Murdock 00:25

Welcome. I'm your host Suzanne Murdock. And today I'm delighted to be joined by Joanne Mangan, who is the employers lead with Grow Remote, originally founded in 2018. The ethos of grow remote is really about enabling people to live and work wherever best suits them, and for communities across Ireland to become more sustainable and connected, both socially and economically. As employers lead you and engages with employers at every stage of their remote working journey. She manages the partnerships with Ireland's leading remote first organisations, and helps employers who wants to make that transition to remote or hybrid work. And she's a regular media contributor on this topic, and is passionate about the potential it can bring as a driver of equality, diversity and inclusion. Prior to joining the organisation, she worked for a number of multinational technology companies, managing distribution teams, and enabling channel partners to do are welcome, it's lovely to have you here. I have to say, I'm a huge supporter of the work you're doing with grow remotes. I'm a massive advocate of remote hyper work. And if you know, we're delighted to have you here today.

Joanne Mangan 01:30

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Thank you, Suzanne. Sorry, I'm very happy to be here.

Suzanne Murdock 01:33
Nope. Very welcome. Tell us a bit about your story to date, Joanne and how you came about working with remote.

Joanne Mangan 01:39
Okay, so I've been with Grow Remote... It's actually two years, almost to the day since I joined the team at Grow Remote, which has been just an amazing experience. Before I joined go remote, as he said in your intro, I was working in the tech, whereas in the private sector work for a couple of different software companies had my own experiences at the time of remote working, never very good. I was managing a team and they decided to roll out remote working, but it was only available to top performers. So only maybe three or four people on the team. And everybody else had to still go into work feeling very sorry for themselves a little bit annoyed. How come this was available to them? So I had to manage all of that. And then another time I was working remotely for another company. And I wasn't allowed to tell anyone I was working remotely. So for one day a week, I just wouldn't be in the office. And I wasn't able to tell anybody why. And I'd be dialling in from meetings during that thing of Hello, can you talk louder? Can you hear me? So I have had I've seen the other side of remote working. I came to a remote. I took a career change. I guess I left the software industry decided to check a year out and I did a master's on something completely unrelated, which was gender globalisation and Human Rights in New Agey, which was really amazing, transformative experience for me really opened my eyes to the changes that are needed in the world in general. And once I can match that I really didn't want to go back to the tech world. It's a great industry to work in. Don't get me wrong, I really enjoyed this. But I was looking for something that had a social impact. And I saw the role with grow remote. hadn't even thought about working remotely, even though this was the pandemic had already started at this stage. But I just really liked what they were doing. I really liked the mission, it just fit perfect with what I was looking for. And here I am two years later, still here.

Suzanne Murdock 03:23
What fantastic timing to make a change like that as well with with everything that's happened. And I guess it's not just remote working. It's grown at such a rapid pace, but the technology side of it as well. And you've got you've got both sides of that expertise. So fantastic move. Tell me you touched on the ethos of them grow remote, and we were talking about the word I can't pronounce it. Say the word for me!

Joanne Mangan 03:46
Meitheal, meitheal. It's an Irish word. So I excuse you for not being able to pronounce it. It's not easy to pronounce. But it's meitheal.

Suzanne Murdock 03:54
And it tells you about the ethos of grow remote. Just talk a little bit about that.

Joanne Mangan 03:58
Yeah, so meitheal is an old Irish word. And it means people in the community coming together. It originated from harvest time when people who had a harvest to work on wouldn't be able to manage the work on the roll. And so the community would get involved and they would have to bring in the harvest. And that's the idea behind grow remote. It's bringing people in the community together for a greater purpose. And that's behind everything that we do. So we are a community development organisation at heart. And that's what we were found it to be. And that's what we still are today. You know, we've grown a lot things have changed a lot since we shot it since we started before the pandemic, but we still keep true to that idea of community development. And for us remote work is the biggest driver or potential driver of community development that there is it's a seismic change. I cannot I don't have enough words to describe how transformational remote work could be for local communities. Because if you want to or if you can work from anywhere then you can live anywhere. And if you can live anywhere, and you can live in your local community, I live in Austin, right? Three years ago, I would not have been able to apply for many jobs that were advertised because they were Joplin. And I didn't want to live in Dublin. But now I can advertise, I can apply for jobs and still live in Atlanta, right? I can walk down, spend a little money locally, I can connect with people locally, I can take pride in local activities. And that's what we're trying to drive with remote work. remote work, gives people opportunities that didn't have before. And it allows them to live or participate locally.

Suzanne Murdock 05:32
So it's amazing what you're doing. And then you work with the employers side as well, helping them in terms of transit transition to hybrid working, and helping them with talent, talent, attraction and retention.

Joanne Mangan 05:44
Yeah, so that is, that is my role. Grow Remote, we have three areas that we work on. So we have our community, which is groups of chapters, we call them, these are groups of people all over Ireland, and actually, we're in 17 countries, including Ireland, but our biggest presence is in Ireland. And our chapters are all about that local activity, awareness of remote jobs, and bringing people together socially, then we have trainings, so we provide training for companies, for individuals who are looking for Remote Jobs and for employees who want to do really well remotely. And then we work with companies. So that's what I do. My my role like remote, is to engage with companies, different types. So companies who are already fully remote and have been fully remote for a long time, and who know how to do it really

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well. And have all the best practices to share companies like Shopify, HubSpot, eBay. These are well known remote companies, and they were doing it long before the pandemic. So we we partner with them, and we learn everything we can from them, and we share that as much as we can with others. And then we also work very closely with companies who were on the transition to remote. So for most companies, remote was forced on them in the pandemic, without any education or training, it was just, it was a response to crisis and necessity. And it was great because it helps companies keep their doors open their virtual doors, at least. But now, you know, when you're getting called three years on, companies are realising it's really challenging. It's a, it's a huge transformation, you're not just talking about, okay, let's all just move the office to the home. And then we all just keep working as we were, it requires a full change in your ways of working. And that's not easy, right? So we train companies, we support them, we provide them guidance, consulting, resources, free resources, lots of stuff, events, activities, like webinars, and anything that we can do to share what we're learning from the companies I talked about the Shopify is and the like, and share that so that others are able to make that journey as painlessly and as seamlessly as possible.

Suzanne Murdock 07:49
Now, it'd be your right we work. Our flexible workspace here has a lot of remote workers who will work for corporates typically. And they will talk about the challenges that it's brought. It's not just literally the connectivity, but it's the culture side of things as well and keeping everyone together. And they might meet up in the office site once a week or once a month, for those for those important meetings, etc. But it's, it's really all about that workplace experience and the transparency of it and the continuity of it. So you must you must come across that a lot as well.

Joanne Mangan 08:21
Yeah, it's probably the biggest challenge that I hear from companies, and I don't want to get out. I shouldn't let go straight into the challenges. But it's really important to talk about the challenges because solution we as well, absolutely 100%. And if we don't talk about them, what we can't hear what others are doing, then we can't figure out the solutions. So the culture, and that sense of connected to being connected to something is a challenge that employers talk to me about everyday. And for a lot of them, it's the reason why they do keep the offices open. And they do ask people to come in a couple of days a week at because they think that you need that in person collaboration connection. And I understand why they would feel that way, because that's the way we've always worked. You know, we would argue that even though that's, you know, it's up to each company to decide themselves, how they do it. There are other ways to build connection, and a sense of culture in a remote work. It's just about educating companies and helping them along the way. You it is also a misconception about remote work that I hear all the time that people think when we talk

about remote work, it means you never meet in person, but we grow remote. We have no offices, we have a fully remote team, but we still meet each other regularly. It's just not in an office every week. It's it's not this sort of structured, predefined mandate, it is very much thought out and with purpose, so we meet for our team retreats, or we meet for maybe a team planning session, or we do a co working day. If we're living close by to another colleague, we might meet at a co working hub. So there's lots of ways you can bring people together without necessarily having to bring everyone into the office one day a week. Now if you want to bring everyone into the office one day Make? Absolutely if it works for you, and it works for your employees, then that's absolutely fine. But we're just trying to get people to think a little bit differently about it. And think about what why am I bringing people to the office? What are they doing when they come to the office? Are they just sitting on their computers writing emails, they could do that at home. So is that the best use and the other thing, back to that idea of the opportunity for rural Ireland, if somebody still has to go to the office, even one day a week, it does limit them in terms of where they can live, you still need to live within a reasonable commuting distance of the office. And the company still has to keep their offices open. Because there is a day a week where everybody's in there. So they're not getting the advantages, like cost savings, been able to reduce their office footprint. And they're not getting the employees are not getting the advantage in terms of no commuting and better work life balance. So we're just we're just trying to educate companies there. We're not saying that their issues or questions or fears are wrong, because they're not. We're all in a very early stage of learning what remote working is, we just we're trying to education that bit more, we're trying to uncover these problems, and then we're able to come up with the solutions.

Suzanne Murdock 11:04
Yeah, it sounds very familiar to the feedback that we're getting here is that, yes, people might still go in, but they have to have that experience. You know, they have to earn the the employers are having to earn the the time commuting to compute, you know, we're hearing a lot a lot of people aren't necessarily going on a Friday, for example, the ones that are travelling over to England, it's very much Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. So they are getting into more of a routine. And I think it's starting to work very well for for both sides. But there's obviously still those nickels on the education side of things. What are some of the the trends that you're hearing in terms of days people are going in? How many are working hybrid as opposed to fully fully remotes? Can you give me a bit of a few stats maybe on that?

Joanne Mangan 11:49
Yeah, um, so hybrid does seem to be the most popular option. And even if you look at some of the research that's been put out there, there's a professor called Nick Blum. He's a Stanford professor, and he does a lot of work on research and promotion. Recently, he said

that employers are more in favour of the hybrid model than any other from our side. Anecdotally, from talking to companies that garage, which is something I do every day, there's still quite a good number of companies who are looking at fully remote. And we've had a few even approached me in that say, January, I think I've had three different companies come to me say they want to go fully remote. And how did they do that? So I think it's a mix. The larger companies who still have big offices are tending more towards keeping those offices and then maybe you feeling like they have to use them or wanting to use them for some of the reasons I talked about earlier. And for them, it's a little more difficult to pivot to fully remote, there's more complexity involved there. I think, from a startup point of view, a lot of the startups now are starting up without an office. Why not? I mean, it makes total sense, you're gonna save so much money if you don't have to lease a building. So it is very much in a state of flux. And anyone who tells you that we are, you know, at the steady state when it comes to remote work, I think he's wrong. I do think though, this year is the year we're going to see the rubber hit the road, and companies are going to start making decisions over the last two years. So the first year it was, you know, remote as a crisis management option. And nobody was really thinking about the future. It was just let's just get through this. Then, as we moved into the offices reopening it became very experimental companies we work with ESB is a good example. They're one of our partners, they talk about their year of learning. Last year was the year of learning, trying out this model, trying to see but bringing people back or not, or the time which time was needed. But now I think the time for experimenting, is is over. Because you need continuity, you need clarity, employees need clarity. And once RC, we're moving to closer to the legislation on the right to request which means employees can then request remote working. And employers are in a bit of a tricky spot. I do feel for employers, I have a lot of empathy, because they may want to have people in the office one day a week. And the employees would have said yes, we're happy with that. And I know a lot of companies who surveyed their employees and employees said yes, we're very happy with one day, a week. But when it actually came to it, compliance with that, that route, or that mandate is just not happening. Employees are not coming in. And I've seen employers do ice cream trucks and family days and all this stuff trying to encourage people come back to come back in and adjust not and not as an employer do that and they force everyone back. You don't want to do that. That's right. Because then you're gonna have a how do you how do you do that? Or do they go more flexible? So that's why I think employers are at this decision point now, do they go all in more flexibility? So can keep the office obviously you don't need to give up the office but make it more option, a more choice more flexibility for the employee, or do they bring everyone back in full time? I think that's where we're at right now.

Suzanne Murdock 14:54
No, I agree. And then they've also got the state of flux with skill shortages in a lot of scenarios there with talent attraction and retention. So they have absolutely, that that

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flexibility as well and carry it through. I know, we've seen a lot of employments who are advertising in certain job descriptions, but not following through.

Joanne Mangan 15:12
Yeah, big problem for job seekers. And it's very hard to see. I did a search on LinkedIn recently doing a little bit of research. And I searched for jobs, remote EMEA. So the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, which will be our time zone, and there were 150,000 jobs open that were remote. Now, not all of those jobs are available to people in Ireland, right. Some of them are, specifically for a country, for example, might be Germany or Spain, but a lot of them are wage. So then when I started looking into them, so many of them had a location specified, or it wasn't clear, I couldn't tell, is this actually a remote job that I can apply for? Or is it not? And jobs secrets are telling us that as well, I've heard cases where, you know, an employee might think the job is, would understand 100% Rules are fully remote to me, and people never meet in person. Back to what I was saying earlier, that's common misconception. Whereas then going through the interview process, it emerges that there's a team retreat, like we do go remote, or there's a some events that they have to go to. And for some employees, that's a bit of a deal breaker because they they rightly or wrongly think remote, fully role means fully remote. So there's all these misunderstandings. And I think it's amazing, you know, it's three years later, almost since the pandemic started. And we've been doing remote work for so long. But it's so surprising to me, it's there's such a lack of understanding about the fundamentals of what is remote work, what is hybrid work? What do I understand as an as a job seeker versus that person advertising the job as the employer remote the and I think there's so much more education, and awareness that needs to be built around that much more clarity should be put into job descriptions, but employee expectations as well, I think have to adjust, because it has to work for business. And you mentioned retention, and attracting talent, very important. And even though things have slowed down a little bit in that area, companies are still looking for talent. So they have but they have to balance that with this need for what's working for the business. So it's it really, there's really so much more work to be done there in terms of what the employee thinks they're that they, that remote work means to them, what an employer thinks that means even companies that we've worked with that have been doing remote for a long time behind closed doors would express their frustration at this, that it's so unfair, what it means to be hybrid, what it means to be remote first versus remote versus 100%. Remote. It's it's a minefield.

Suzanne Murdock 17:39
Yeah. No, I know, I completely agree. And I think that for me, there's the whole sustainability side of things not in terms of the green side, but more the energy as well, you've got all these individuals working flexibly, remotely hybrid. And you they have to be able to sustain that energy, that creativity, regardless of whether they're in the office, working remotely from

home, working from a co working space, for example, and really balancing you know, where is their best working environment? Where can you get your optimum energy from? So there's certainly there's the individual approach as well, that the employers and the employees have to balance when they're thinking about this, there's so many different things to think about.

Joanne Mangan 18:16
There is a lot of people really like meeting people face to face. And some a lot of people really don't like doing that. And up to now the office has been very much built for the extrovert the office is is founded on on, you know an idea of a very person who can do the nine to five or 96 or 97 and doesn't have outside responsibilities like caring responsibilities, for example, and is an extrovert who loves being one around the whiteboard and loves chatting to people at the watercooler not everybody's like that some people are do their best work at home or in a hug or remotely where they can think they're not disturbed. They can have focus time. So it is the the personalization and individualization of work is the future of work. Again, how you do that gets tricky, because employers don't want it to be a free for all, you know, an employer would think, Oh my God, how do I manage that? How do I manage different working models for different people, but it's about just letting go of the old system. To me, the office office working is is the old system. It's like analogue. We're in a new world though, and you can't just expect to flunk remember just throw remote work into the mix and expect too much work. You know you're not if you get a I'm going to use analogy I'm trying to think of something this morning because I was I was really thinking about this. If you think about you get an HD box for TV, you know Alexa, supposed to give a great picture but then you plug it into your crappy old TV then your picture is not going to be great. So it's the same idea this has changed the system you need to change the underlying norms, policy structure of how we work. I'd love to be a challenge all the answers I've had to do that but I don't, but there's other creative people working on that. And that that's the future of remote working of of work. It's thinking differently, letting go of the old structures, thinking about the new ways of doing things.

Suzanne Murdock 20:11
And thinking differently about how you measure output as well. It's not just when people are in the office, when they're turning up, how many days of their work, think about the output, look at that percentage measure it in different ways as well. I would be an introvert, I'm not always good. Working certain projects in the office. I like to I mean, I'm lucky enough that I have that choice. So I can work in different environments, depending on what I'm doing. And the mood I'm in I am lucky, I admit. Not everybody has that flexibility, I guess. So finding sensible ways around it and balancing that. Measuring pros and cons for employer employee. But yeah, individuality is a big thing. I think going forward, and it's, it's almost the new commodities is choice and flexibility, I guess.

Joanne Mangan 20:57
It is, and to me, it's a very intuitive way of thinking about the workplace. Because if you, again, the person who can work long hours, be at their desk, work through lunch, still be there late to do late meetings, do that networking stuff in the evening, maybe with the boss. Not everybody can do that, you know, it's a subset of the population because people have, as I mentioned, caring responsibilities. You've got parents, you've got people looking after elderly relatives, you've got people that haven't illnesses, disabilities, neurodivergent seas, I could go on and on, you know, not everybody fits into that box. So I think the individualization of work is going to be a great thing in terms of bringing more people into the workforce, and enabling them to be really successful and grow their careers as well. Because in the past, asking to work remotely, was kind of seen as you didn't care about your career. So we need to change. So that's what I mean, by changing the norms, we need to make it a norm that remote work does not mean you don't care about your career. And you mentioned outputs that, you know, we need to change that norm, the norm was that you were sitting at your desk, the more you were perceived as being a hard worker, or more committed to your job, we need to change that. It's not about that. It's about what you're producing. It's about your output.

Suzanne Murdock 22:09
Yeah, yeah, completely. And there's so many different discs for generations, I was reading an article about reverse mentoring, and now we've for generations, you know, in different workspaces, it's never happened before. So you all have those skill sets and expertise, and marrying those up as well. And that can be done remotely in the office. So I think, yeah, there's an awful lot we got to work with now, I'd love to talk a little bit about the community side of remote does and how that really benefits people, especially in rural areas. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Joanne Mangan 22:40
Yeah, absolutely. As I said, that's, that's what we were founded on. And we had this before my time now. But at the starker remote was just a bunch of community people who got together thinking about how remote work could benefit. And actually were very forward thinking when you think about it, because this was pre pandemic, everyone thought they were mad, right? They, they really were seen as being a little bit off off the wall, coming up with this idea, which only makes sense now, but at the time was quite innovative. And the community so our community is made up of groups of people, all over the country, we have over 200 chapters. So in a you know, and every time around Ireland, you could find a girl remote chapter, which is a group of individuals living in that area, who are very passionate about developing and growing and thriving, making their community thriving on. And the way they're doing it is they're spreading the word locally about remote jobs that are available,

because people still don't know about them. And I was actually on a session yesterday with a group of people. And we asked them, How do they know how many remote jobs were open in their area, and they were coming back with ones and twos. And then we mentioned the 150,000. And they were absolutely blown away by this. They could not believe that this. Now as I said that number may not be as high but you're still talking about in the 1000s that could be done from where they were living. So it's awareness. That's what our community do they create awareness. If you think about it, remote jobs aren't advertised in the local paper. You're not going to I live in Atlanta. Right, right. So we get the goal, we advertise, I'm not going to see a remote job from Shopify, advertising that paper. So how do we get the word out there? And that's what our chapters do. They let people know, they're kind of the equivalent of the noticeboard in the shop about jobs, but they're a physical embodiment of that. And they also social isolation is one of the biggest killers of remote work. So we need to be able to bring people together. We're humans, we're social beings. We want to meet and interact for the most part with others. And it's really important so they bring people together for events and if you go onto our website, it's groups dot E and just forward slash community would bring you into our community page. And you'll be able to see all the events that are happening near your local area. They do everything I mean, there's just regular meetups like coffees a couple of drinks on a Friday evening. There's hiking here walking We did a huge event, an initiative around culture night, which was back, I think it was September, where we ran, I think was something like 200 cultural events all around the country, music and art and theatre, it was fantastic. So there's always something happening. So that's, and that's part of it is bringing people together. We're, even though we're all about remote work, which is digital and virtual. We're also all about offline connections. And that's, I think, what makes us a little bit unique. Because you don't always think about that when you're thinking about remote work. Sometimes it's just about the nuts and bolts of how we do it. But actually, the other side of it is how do we keep people connected. Another area that our our chapter leads working is re energising the town. So in attracting people back to the town we have a great example of in Donegal are in more islands, they put up a cot put out a call for people to come back to the area. And I think they were able to track back 40 Sorry, I think that's like 40 people, maybe something like that, for a population of about 500, they were able to keep the school open, which you know, it's really that is the kind of impact you can have, you bring some people back to the area, and they have good jobs, that creates more jobs locally to get there's a statistic every remote job creation in local town generates wants to other jobs remotely, because are in the town, because people are shopping and they're able to set up their own businesses because there's more people there to purchase their services or goods. So it really has that the community aspect of what we do is very transformational. Without that we wouldn't be able to do what we're trying to do, because we don't have that reach to be able to get into every town, in village in Ireland. So they're really critical to our overall mission.

Suzanne Murdock 26:38

And that's going to have a domino effect on towns as well. I mean, you bring in a skills expertise that in turn is going to make new jobs. And I think for me when we were working, certainly working at home through the pandemic, it's it's those niggly questions that you might have going through your mind that you haven't got anyone to ask. And actually they can become big, big challenges and issues in your head if you haven't got that person to bounce ideas off of. So you for me for me commute communities absolutely massive and having those skill sets and and expertise and the contacts as well. I mean, you could in effect create a number of jobs from that side of things. And I was doing some of the the chapter lead trading with Donal there for Christmas, fantastic opportunity. really keen, really keen to grow that here, actually. And I know it's a few chapters in Northern Ireland. And I know that you also have a few, or partnerships that you worked with in the Republic, through grow remotely connected hubs you work a lot with as well that you Yeah, yeah. I just wondered, are there any partnerships that you work with across Northern Ireland and you're looking to grow, um grow this side?

Joanne Mangan 27:45

So you're right, we have chapters in Northern Ireland actually Dónal Kearney who is our, our community manager, and he would have been with you on when you did the training on July students training. By the way, the Chapter D training is fantastic. And it's all about enabling those people then to play it forward, and do all the things I talked about to have that impact locally. So Dónal, is very involved in our chapters in Northern Ireland. And we have, we call them remote advocates. And we also have local leaders. So remote advocate is someone who just wants to help out in some way or another there's nothing really strict about it, they can maybe just write a blog or do a post or something like that about remote work. And then we have local leaders as well like your the training that you did, which is about leading a trap a chapter. And we have those in Belfast, we have the man county down in seed fields, and Hillsboro and in driving it down. So it's really it's becoming more active in Northern Ireland. Dónal has told me a little bit about the Down chapter there, they really want to foster more connection locally and build a community around the local remote workers. It's led by a guy called William Redpath, and you know where their mouth so they're doing great. They're doing a lot of great activities. They had a networking event, they're in service in January, I think they had coffee and networking and all the time they mince pie Christmas. So just getting to know each other trying to figure out what they can do to to bring the awareness to their area. We don't have partnerships, yes, but we are I think I can safely say this year 2023 is looking to be a big year for girls in Northern Ireland. And if anyone's interested in the events, there is one in February it's in Newcastle and countdown in the wild hare Pope. So do come along and take a look at our website to see what else is coming up. But definitely lots of opportunity for us to grow in Northern Ireland and a big appetite to do that too

Suzanne Murdock 29:42
Brilliant. I know there's a lot of employers across Northern Ireland who will be advocating for remote work as well. So now that's really good news. There are a couple of case studies and people that you've worked with that you could tell us a little bit more about.

Joanne Mangan 29:57
Yeah, um, I think a couple of examples. So We, eBay is probably a great example of a company that we've worked with very closely. And they've been involved with us since the very beginning. I guess I to me, they would be very pioneering in terms of remote working, you know, way ahead of others, they started looking at remote work back in 2017. And they rolled it out with initially started with a group of 30 people in Dublin and trialling it out, and then they expanded that to 200. Now their whole customer support team is working remote, and they're looking at other roles as well, becoming more remote. They've had some great results. Impact wise, one of the best from our point of view is, since they made the move to remote, a massive percentage of the employees and job seekers who come to them are outside of Leinster. And I'm not saying there's anything wrong with let Dublin or Leinster but it's great to see that that unlocking of jobs has led to more opportunity for people outside of that normal sort of traditional area. Because even if their offices in Dublin, they've seen great results in terms of their productivity, no no impact, no negative impact on productivity. And things like their employee satisfaction scores are really high. So they're also brilliant sports girl most and we're so grateful to them and their sports phone partners, their country manager, she will come speak at an event with us that some of them have come through our training, they actually heard they took out a Ukrainian group, a group of Ukrainian refugees. It's a programme called Stepping Stones. And they came to us looking for some help with the training. And we brought them through our thriving remotely training programme. So it's a brilliant example of a company working with a social enterprise and supporting a social enterprise and having a real impact on people's lives as a result of making remote work available.

Suzanne Murdock 31:53
Fantastic. So I was going to ask you, could you give me some top tips? Just general top tips for for remote working? If you're new to it?

Joanne Mangan 32:04
So for our worker, remote for a person, that employee? Yeah,

Suzanne Murdock 32:07
yeah, yeah, give me give me a couple for each for employee and employer.

Joanne Mangan 32:12

Okay, I think for an employee, it is important to understand your own working style. How do you like to work? So for example, I know I'm really good first thing in the morning, and I'm really terrible. After three o'clock, if you come to me, after three o'clock, my motivation is gone, and my energy is gone. I have all my energy in the morning. So I tried to schedule a focus time. In the mornings, if I weren't, if I want to get something do done. So that's one. So know yourself, when you like to work, don't try to force it. If you if you're working on a presentation, and it's five o'clock in the evening, give it up, come back to the morning. And vice versa, if you're an evening person, some people don't my I have a friend who's does her best work 11 o'clock at night, which to me is just I don't know how, because I can already speak at that time. But she's, she's flying at 11 o'clock. So same as that. And that you can be flexible with your, if the company allows it, which hopefully they do, you can be more flexible in your time. So you can take a block of time off in the middle of the day, if your slump is from, you know two to four, then take the time off, go for a walk, don't be so you know, back to that whole thing is don't try to just plug remote into the existing system, you don't have to do your lunch at 12. So be a bit more flexible with that. Obviously, if your employer allows it, meeting free days, I block meeting free Wednesdays or whatever day suits, and I put it on my calendar. And for the most part, I don't take meetings on Wednesday. And that gives me a full day of focus time. Because you can get very interrupted people tend to just stick meetings in your calendar, or standard default. And I come to this with employers still default to the idea that we need to jump on a meeting every time we want to figure something out or get something done. So block off your time and be as strict as you can about it. And if somebody asked for meetings, I am sorry, I don't do meetings on a Wednesday. If you can, and use that time, then take regular breaks, it's really easy. If especially I work alone at home, my daughter doesn't want from school to four. And there's been times where I literally look up from my laptop at four when she's coming in the door. And I realised I haven't taken a very good day. And that's not good practice. So I think make sure you get your breaks go out for a walk, I have a dog so I take it out for a walk at lunch. And make sure that because you can very easily overwork and forget to get up and move around. I also think a great skill for a remote worker is being able to communicate in writing. I talked about this a lot. And it doesn't mean you're able to write big long essays or really long emails, but just being able to be very clear in what you're asking for. Because a lot of communication in remote working is written whether it's chat or on sock or in an email. And I've seen so many cases where there's over and back and over and back. Even just trying to organise a meeting with someone where it's just too takes forever because the conversation, it's like, let's meet on Thursday. And then the person writes back, I can't meet on Thursday. And then you go back like, well, when can you meet. And this is three emails later. So just very simple things. Here's some times I'm available this time, this time. And this time, if that doesn't suit you suggest sometimes that you're and just think about condensing the communication and making it really, really clear. So that's employees. For employers, I would say, same as I was saying things like you don't if you can, again, not every business

can do this. But if you can, don't get you don't have to sticks originally to somebody being online at nine in the morning, and checking to make sure they're still online and five, it's about a culture of trust. And if you give the right objectives, if you work with your employees to build a set of objectives of outputs, and then they achieved those doesn't really matter if they were at their desk at nine in the morning, and they're still at their desk at five. So I think try and let go of that idea of micromanaging and monitoring, and look at embedding a culture of trust. And to me, that's really important. Back to what we're saying earlier about employers are worried about culture, culture is not necessarily a place it's not, you know, foosball tables and ice cream. Culture is how you feel when you're doing work. So if you can make your employees feel trusted, is not the best culture you can build a culture of trust is better than, you know, a fun culture where people are socialising all the time. For example, look at being remote first, no matter whether you're in an office, or hybrid, or in a halt, or whatever you're doing. And by that, I mean, you you set up your processes and your policies as if everyone is remote, even if they're not. So it may be a better word for this digital first. And that way, if you so if you build your your policies, your communication policy, for example, your meetings around the idea of remote first, making sure that that meeting is a trigger for everybody, so people are dialling in and some people are in the office. Very simple stuff you can do, like make sure everyone's dialled in on their own device, that people at home, who are working home can can be heard, that they have opportunities to speak that you have somebody in the meeting so that they're watching if someone has their hand raised or something is in the chat, so that you're making sure it's inclusive. So being remote first is probably the number one for employers who want to make that transition to remote if you're not remote. First, there's a massive risk that your remote employees are going to be at a disadvantage in terms of access to information, access to opportunity, access to time with the boss. So you need to shake things up that all office first approach isn't going to work if you have some of your workforce working from home. So make sure people get time with the boss, even if they're working from home, do it virtually, that they have access to information, put everything in a central location, single source of truth to make videos and send them out so that everyone has it. Just be always thinking of being inclusive and having that remote first approach.

Suzanne Murdock 37:49
Very wise words. Thank you know, I got a lot out of that. Okay, so where can people learn more about you and grow remote?

Joanne Mangan 37:58
Yeah, so they can go on our website, Suzanne, it's www.growremote.ie. And they can also find us on Twitter. We're on LinkedIn, and we're on Facebook. But the website's probably the first best place to go. Anyone who wants to contact me directly. My email is Joanne@growremote.ie. Happy to hear from anyone and I pass it off to the right person, if

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it's not for me if it's community related, for example, but we're happy to speak to whoever comes our way. We're always looking to connect with others. So feel free to reach out anytime.

Suzanne Murdock 38:29
No, brilliant. Thank you so much for your time too. And and I really do encourage people to get in contact with you grow remote, fantastic work that you're doing.

Joanne Mangan 38:36
Thank you so much.

Suzanne Murdock 38:39
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