HR insights podcast

Series 9 | Episode 5

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Inspired, Not Retired: The Future of Longer Careers

Stuart (00:30)
Hi, Lindsay. Welcome to the show. How are you today?

Lyndsey Simpson (00:33)
I am very good, thank you Stuart, lovely to be here.

Stuart (00:36)
Awesome. For our audience, do you want to give a little intro into you and your background?

Lyndsey Simpson (00:40)
Yes, my name is Lindsay Simpson. am level 48, which is my age. I am the CEO and founder of 55 Redefined Group, which is a global organisation redefining work for the 100 year life. And I'm also the author of, for those on video, The Age Rebellion, which is around how do you supercharge this next phase of life and design a life that you never want to retire from.

Stuart (01:06)
What about personal life? Where are you from? Where's home? And what did what did you do before this as well?

Lyndsey Simpson (01:13)
Yeah, of course. So I live up in Nottinghamshire. I'm married to Andy. I am an ex-banker, was my first eight years at Barclays. And then I become an entrepreneur. So it was my first foray into building my own businesses. I was the CEO of the Curve Group, a HR and recruitment outsourcer. And I've owned champagne and cocktail bars. I've had a financial services consultancy. And 55 Redefined came to life in 2020 during

Stuart (01:37)
Very cool.

Lyndsey Simpson (01:43)
pandemic. And so that's definitely my baby. ~ I don't have children, ~ which is something that I think is quite important, actually, depending on where we get to in this topic, because I think a big part of my work is around looking at our population shift around age and how none of us are having any children anymore as the big

Stuart (02:05)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (02:06)
is the big demographic shift. ~ And then outside work, I love travelling, ~ I like fitness, ~ and I like eating. Food is a big passion.

Stuart (02:18)
Food's a great passion. Favourite, favourite food, do you have one? Yeah, okay. I got that.

Lyndsey Simpson (02:21)
Italian every day of the week. can't,

yes, there is nothing in the Italian cuisine that I do not like.

Stuart (02:28)
Yeah, that's that's really really cool. And look gonna obviously you mentioned the book, The Age of Rebellion, and obviously what you what you do at the moment. What inspired you, I suppose, into behind the book and and to sort of move into this sort of sphere of work?

Lyndsey Simpson (02:42)
So ~ the inspiration to become what I would now probably call myself, which is an ageaholic, ~ I am officially addicted to unlocking the potential of humans as we get older. ~ But my inspiration, my eureka moment came probably about six, seven years ago now when I was leading a HR recruitment business and NatWest Bank rang me.

Stuart (02:48)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (03:08)
and they needed to hire back bankers from the 1990s. They had this big regulated review of work and advice they'd given in that period. And they ~ couldn't decision tree their way out of it with complaints handlers and so wanted to hire people back. But of course they were all at this point in their 60s and retired and they couldn't find them. They weren't on job boards, they weren't on LinkedIn. And so they rang me.

They're like, you like solving problems, you understand banking, you understand recruitment, where do we go find them? And so I still have my Barclays mobile number Stuart from the 1990s when I took them. And so I set about ringing random people that I remembered the name of that I hadn't spoken to in a decade plus and asked them if they'd want to unretire and come back to work as a contractor through our business. And in eight weeks hired 400

Stuart (03:43)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (04:01)
people out of retirement for the banking projects. And it was a wow. And it was a wow in terms of, it was an almost one in one hit ratio of people we contacted wanted to return to work. It really sparked a curiosity in me as to how people describe this rainbow of retirement.

Stuart (04:04)
Wow.

Lyndsey Simpson (04:24)
whereby they thought it was just gonna be like a never-ending rainbow of lay-ins and holidays and seeing your friends and fun times. And like any rainbow, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. And what they typically found was that the first six months were everything they hoped it would be. know,

recharge the batteries, get fit, see people, go on holiday. But six to 12 months becomes a little bit more repetitive.

~ and you're getting through the list of things that you've been putting off to retirement and you kind of burn through that whole list in that first year. And then that 12 to 18 month point becomes the crashing down realisation that people are nothing like their parents' generation. We've added 30 years to life expectancy. They've got decades more of living in front of them and they believe that they have checked out of work and some aspects of their life too soon.

So that got me really intrigued. And so ~ I started digging into that. I commissioned lots of research, 4,000 over 50s as a study with Census Wide. I started researching the companies that we partnered with and asking what they were doing around their aging workforce. And the general consensus back then was not a lot. Everyone knew it was a problem. They all had a burning platform, but no one had any idea of what to do about it. And no one was setting the standard.

Stuart (05:36)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (05:44)
of this is what we do, this is the data you need to store, this is how you design the future of work with a different age profile. And so sold my stake in that business and launched 55 Really Fine. So that's the bit, bit of the business. As for the book, that was far more recent. So the Age Rebellion only published in May 2026. It was ~ never on my to do list.

It was never something that I thought I would ever do and ~ I was ~ really just lucky. I bumped into somebody who I was having a coffee with who happened to be a literary agent and a publisher and they just said, you need to write a book. You have so much knowledge on this topic, you have access to so much insight, but only 5 % of the world's population work for the large companies that you serve.

So how does this inflation get to the 95 % of everybody else who doesn't work for those companies or have the benefit of this insight? And so that was the origin of the age rebellion.

Stuart (06:54)
Ver very cool. That's a good story. And I suppose to follow up to some of the stuff that you just meant. So you mentioned at the beginning when you were talking about a hundred year life. What do you mean by that?

Lyndsey Simpson (07:05)
Yeah. So we have had a remarkable period in history. So in the last century alone, we've added 30 healthy years to life expectancy, which is more gains in the last century than in the entirety of mankind up until this point. And statistically, it means that every baby born in the Western world today should have a lifespan that reaches to 104 on average.

But this isn't just about babies, because the benefit that you, I have had as people in midlife is ~ improved nutrition, improved healthcare, different environmental factors, lower smoking, know, all of these things and things that have contributed to the fact that perhaps even if you're 50 years old today, you should comfortably live until your mid-90s. Yet people are still acting as if they're gonna die in their mid-70s and are cutting out.

10, 15, 20 years of life, which actually are now going to be our most productive years. ~ And so this 100 year life is no longer the preserve of outliers or famous people that you see on social media. It is likely to be the majority of our destiny to be triple digits. And the crazy thing amongst this, Stuart, is all of those gains, all of those 30 years have been…

delivered by improving infant mortality. So what were the things that used to knock us out before we reach the age of five? So whooping, caught measles, all of these types of things. All of that money, plus a few more trillions of dollars is now in later life health, trying to solve for cancer, dementia, Parkinson's. We just need one breakthrough in our lifetimes. And we're adding five, 10, 15, 20 years on whilst we're still living. And so

You know, the fact that we still even talk about 50 as late career or 65 as a retirement age is insanity when it's literally only part way through the journey.

Stuart (09:11)
Yeah, that that's not it it's weird you say about the infant ~ infant. I read a book around sort of the fifty best inventions. And one of one of the one of them in there was baby formula. ~ and it was super interesting about the reasons why, and to your point, the infant mortality and how that had decreased rapidly over the last sort of hundred years or so. but it's also interesting you mentioned the cool. Mmm. Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (09:34)
On that one, it's just a quick aside because I love a little fascinating fact.

So infant formula, so in Asia, which is our oldest ~ and fastest aged population in the world, we've seen some big shifts in their culture. For example, adult diapers, nappies outsell children's, dog strollers now outsell.

push chairs and prams. But baby formula in the last 12 months, so the big producers like Nestle, for example, there's such a declining share of babies being born everywhere in the world as we have really low birth rates, that that formula has now been pivoted and it's now a senior formula. So that baby formula is now served into care facilities all across Asia as the way of delivering essential nutrients and vitamins in a drink format.

but it's exactly the same. is baby formula, but it's served to seniors. So just a little fascinating fact for you.

Stuart (10:30)
Wow. That I no

I love that. And I think it's interesting because when you talk about I suppose age I I think back to when I was growing up, like for me, I think to back to my grandparents at the age of like sixty and that felt really old. And even when I look now, and to your point about health and lifestyle, I look at six year old now, they look young. They look fit and healthy and they're doing sort of things that

I would never have associated with say let's say my grandparents back when I was when I was a lot younger.

Lyndsey Simpson (11:03)
And that's partly because we are literally nothing like the previous generation. So the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, released a report last year which showed after a significant study that a

70-year-old today has the exact same mental and physical acuity as a 53-year-old in the year 2000. So in that one generation...

you have 17 years of gain in terms of our abilities. And so, yeah, when people get to their 60s and they're like, well, I don't think I dress like my mum or my dad, and I don't think I, ~ I don't feel anything like I thought I would be feeling at this age. They're quite surprised, they're quite shocked. ~ They're very grateful and they're actually quite excited about the future. But equally, they're a little bit lost because people are going there.

Stuart (11:39)
Mm-hmm.

Lyndsey Simpson (11:57)
They're the first generation to have the benefit of this brand new life stage. They've got no one they can follow in the footsteps of because these are the first humans on the planet that have got the benefit of these extra years. And so they are what I call age pioneers, people who are in this 50s, 60s, 70s demographic. They are absolutely pioneering what the future of work will be, what our societies will look like, ~ and are ripping up the rule book as to what it used to be about getting older.

Stuart (12:27)
I honestly I couldn't agree more with you. It's funny. I I'm sorry, I'm forty eight years old and honestly it's funny when you suddenly think, God, that I'm yeah, halfway through, like only halfway through potentially. And it is funny how you don't feel that much difference to how you did 15 years ago. Like, yeah, the physically there's things you can't do as well, but you don't feel very different. And that that I think is so interesting. And yeah, I think I think people now are much, yeah, as I said, much more active. But

I wanna touch I wanna move on to like some of the myths then around older workers because even I as I talk, I'm sort of thinking about that. You sort of associate people with sort of let's say fifty plus, you know, old and slow and all these other things that I think just naturally come to mind. But yeah, what are the sort of the biggest myths I think that I suppose organisation organisations and people believe about older workers?

Lyndsey Simpson (13:21)
Yeah, well, the top one, and they're all false, by the way, you know, as with any kind of bias, you know, these are, you know, assumptions and stereotypes that fit a very, very small percentage of any cohort. But the biggest one that we heard, and certainly it got accelerated during the pandemic, was that they would get ill more often, you know, so if you hire an over 50, they're going to get ill, you know, they're vulnerable, and they're expensive, you know, from a healthcare perspective.

Stuart (13:25)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (13:51)
And the reality of the data is that 50 plus workers are 200 % less likely to take a day off work sick than a colleague under 30. So even actually when they're served up with a critical health diagnosis, so let's say I've been given a cancer diagnosis.

Stuart (14:04)
Wow.

Lyndsey Simpson (14:11)

The one thing that older workers typically want to do is keep their work routine within their life. It's their normality. They have no desire to sit around at home on Mopal Day and overthink. They want to work. They want to contribute. They want to be with people. And so they show up. so sickness is actually one of those big misnomers. And if you only have to look at any park run around the country, and you'll see the people that are doing the couch to 5K and the storm in the triathlons are people in this midlife.

Stuart (14:32)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (14:40)
But we see it presented, I mean I remember being in one meeting with a very large, they shall remain nameless retailer internationally, who told me without any irony that they couldn't possibly hire shop floor staff that were over 50 because they wouldn't be able to change all of their rest breaks. And I went, I don't know what you're talking about, what do mean you need to change your rest breaks? They're like, well our square footage is so big.

that their hips and their knees aren't gonna be able to cope with our size of our shop floors. I mean, literally, there was no irony. She was deadly serious that this is, that was her held belief that you cannot hire somebody over 50 because they can't walk a shop floor. And you're like, my good God. I mean, when did she last speak or meet somebody? So, and so these are real things that are hampering people. Because when you have somebody like that, that leads talent.

Stuart (15:27)
Wow.

Lyndsey Simpson (15:35)
it doesn't just impede talent acquisition into that entire organisation by having such a misbelief, but it also impedes talent development. So people who are in the organisation stop being served up career development opportunities or growth because you have these same lingering assumptions of, they can't learn tech, you know, because they're not tech native. And it's just all absolute bollocks as far as I'm concerned. And so, you know, but the reality is, you know, six years on,

Stuart (15:59)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (16:04)
from launching 55 redefined, we now have billions of data points. So, you know, what we knew was instinctively right six years ago, we can now knock each one of these off with concrete data points, which prove, in equivocally, that older workers are generally...

the backbone of businesses that are showing up for productivity. They generate a higher net promoter score. They have lower absenteeism. They have lower turnover in high volume roles. So they reduce recruitment costs and attrition costs and, and, and, and, So it's just wonderful being able to sit on this data and kind of now being able to knock some of these ~ stereotypes in the back.

Stuart (16:47)
Yeah. It's great to hear. But that that that you gave on sickness and people like I suppose older people being off sick more. What where did that come from? Why is that? Why do why do people believe that?

Lyndsey Simpson (16:59)

We have, so people, one of the things that people do with bias is they attach to other people, so they think of somebody in their mind. So when people think, so if I'm in my 20s and you said it yourself, when you're in your 20s and you're thinking about someone in your 60s, you're thinking of your grandparents, right? And therefore you're thinking they're old, you know, they only see me to make me a cup of tea and...

slice up a Mars bar and play cards with me. They're my grandparents. They can't possibly somebody who I'm thinking of now recruiting to do a big job and go through training. And so people anchor on these stereotypes. Likewise, if they assume that somebody, let's say you have somebody midlife ~ and they're making assumptions about somebody in their 60s and they assume that they can't learn tech, that will often be because they have a parent who can't learn tech or won't learn tech.

Stuart (17:27)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (17:54)
~ and they'll think that, you know, they'll picture their mother, you know, not wanting to send a text message or just pressing OK and not wanting to learn AI, and they'll assume that every single person in that age group is like their mum, when the reality, as we all know, is that, is completely false. You know, it's like energy. You have people in their 20s that are full of energy and people in their 20s who have no energy at all.

and exactly the same at 50, 60, 70 in every age group. And so, you know, my dad is 81. He's always loved tech. He is the first in the queue for every release of Apple products ever. You know, he teaches me how to use certain new releases when Apple do a release, you know, and he's 81, you know. And so it is just this absolute fallacy when people anchor on somebody who can't do something.

Stuart (18:36)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (18:49)
and then label everybody else to be as deficient as that one individual.

Stuart (18:54)
Yeah. I that's nice. So it's interesting, you mentioned there we're talking about the myth. So sickness is one of them. Can't learn tech sounds like an another one that's a regular myth. Are there any others that we're missing out on as well?

Lyndsey Simpson (19:04)
Yeah, ambition. Ambition is a real problem. ~ So as we get older, different things become more important to us. OK? So you and I are the same age. We're both 48. OK? There were things I would have done for money in my 20s. That sounds really inappropriate when you say that out loud. ~

Stuart (19:06)
Okay. wow.

Lyndsey Simpson (19:24)
in a workplace context to get promotion, get a bonus, know, get up the earning ladder because I'm trying to buy a house or I'm trying to, you know, get some savings. Yeah, you're in your attaining phase of life. OK, you know, I wouldn't put up with any of that stuff now at 48. You know, I wouldn't work for a bad boss. I wouldn't work in a terrible culture.

Stuart (19:34)
Work ladder.

Lyndsey Simpson (19:49)
~ I have different boundaries, but equally I have different things that are more important to me about doing something that has meaning, that has purpose, that actually helps other humans so I can look myself in the mirror at the end of the night and go, I have done good work today. And that shift becomes more and more prevalent as we get over 50. So the data proves that the top three reasons why people show up to work over 50 doesn't include money. It drops to number four.

So what is at number one is flexibility. What you want to do is design a future where you start to work less and live more. So you want more flexibility to do the things, your passions. It could be that you've got caring responsibilities. It could be that you want to be spending a week, a month in a different European city. But there are things that you want to do and therefore flexibility becomes number one priority. The second priority becomes purpose.

meaning, so I want to do something that helps other humans. And that isn't grandiose. That isn't I'm working for a company with the best ESG ratings and that we're saving the planet. It can be as simple as I'm working in a contact center, solving people's ~ inbound queries when they've had a car accident and doing that with empathy and care, knowing that they're at the side of the road having a frightened moment and I'm going to be the voice at the end of the phone that makes them feel safe. That is purpose.

And then the third one is feeling included. I want to be in an environment where my age, my value, my experience feels valued and I don't want to keep feeling like I'm walking into a nightclub as the oldest person in the room and having to apologize or shame or hide my experience. And then at number four becomes the pay check. And so if we start to recognise this, what happens is organisations, many of them have got up or out type structures. We are always about

forward career momentum. And so when someone starts to express a desire to go sideways or backwards and do something more interesting or, you know, I know I'm in a leadership role because that was the only way I could attain, but I don't really want to lead. I want to get back to doing financial analysis or I want to get back to playing with the tech rather than leading a tech team. People assume we run ambitious. People assume that we're there for not a cultural fit and they get exited.

rather than recognising that this is just human nature and if we're going to add 20 odd years to our careers, we've got to expect that we're going to get bored and we're going to need to take on new challenges and go sideways and backwards before we then go forward again in a career. And that gets amiss. And so then what happens with pay, if I then put a recruitment lens on this, because I see this really play out ~ in the markets and every market actually.

is that people will take big pay cuts. 92 % will take a pay cut to retrain to do something different. I can keep being an accountant. I've done it for 30 years, but I would really like to be a photographer. I would really like to be a postman. I'd really like to learn how to drive an articulated lorry. I know I've worked in a bank. And what happens then is that they will accept the pay rate that's being advertised. Yep, I know that's...

£80,000 less than what I was earning in my corporate career. And the recruiting body or the hiring manager just don't believe them. They just think there's something weird going on here. Why would somebody take such a pay cut? There must be a skeleton in the closet. They must be a bit odd. They must be running away from something. They don't ever just realise that that's no longer their motivator and they want to learn something new.

Stuart (23:26)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (23:34)
And so the more we start talking about this, the more we start sharing stories on podcasts, in our workplaces, on social media, that this is normal. This is just what normal humans want. We've just never had humans staying in our workforce this long before to experience it. And so that's one of the other big barriers that we see.

Stuart (23:56)
Yeah, I see that a lot. I'd probably say if you took me, I said people aged between forty-five and fifty-five, I'd say I see so many that maybe get made redundant, then try to find another role, can't find another role, don't get looked at for a sideways move, don't get looked at for something lower down, let's say. ~ actually I saw my dad go through this, my dad went through it, and interestingly, after being in banking all his life, ended up

working at a funeral parlour as his first job out of being in a corporate world because it was the only job he could get.

Lyndsey Simpson (24:31)
Yeah, well if I hear the two words that drive me mad more than anything, they should be banned from our workplaces, is overqualified. How can you possibly be overqualified? How can any hiring manager go, no, no, no, I would rather have somebody who is less capable and less experienced to doing it? What they're basically saying when they say overqualified is that they don't believe that

that they don't believe your story. They either think that you're gonna come in and then want their job. So there's a threat. If I'm a young hiring manager maybe, someone who's done my job 10 times over says that they're happy to come in at a junior level. They assume it's because they're struggling to get work and they're gonna use that as an entry position and then they're gonna threaten them and wanna take over. It's like, no, it's like.

They don't want your job. They don't want to leave people anymore. They've done many performance reviews that they ever want to do in their lifetime. They just want to do good work and show up. And so overqualified is the phrase that is, it might as well just be you are too old because in what other guys would you ever go into hospital and you're going in for major surgery, you go, sorry.

I don't want that consultant because they're overqualified. They've got way too much experience. I don't want any of that experience operating me. I'd rather have a novice, please. Of course we wouldn't. But in our workplaces, we somehow seem to think that people with less experience have a better outcome.

Stuart (25:58)
Yeah.

So why so why is it whenever w whenever we speak to companies, they're always talking to you about Gen Z, millennials. I never I never see anybody saying, Do you know what? I wanna focus on Gen Y, Gen X and baby boomers and see if we can attract why is it that there's just such a focus on Gen Z and Millennials and not on anything else?

Lyndsey Simpson (26:27)
Yeah, so the good news is it's not everybody. So we call over 300 global corporates and they are in every sector, whether it's, you know, AXA or Diageo or Nestle or Allianz or Sanofi, you know, they're doing great work. And interestingly, what we do see is it's very sector driven. So there are some sectors that are all over age.

you know, because they have to be, because they're aging faster than anyone else. If I go into the telecom sector, for example, and particularly the engineering, the infrastructure end of telecoms, 65 % of the UK telecoms infrastructure workforce are white male over 50. 65%. So you can have as many snazzy new distribution brands for phones and Wi-Fi, but if these guys will retire in the next 10 years, we're screwed. We have no cabling, we have no...

poles, have no infrastructure for our telecoms industry. If you then go into the energy sector, so one of our brilliant customers is Veolia, are at waste management, water treatment works, that type of industry. Again, 48 % of their workforce are over 50, 1 % are over 70. And they've got many colleagues into their 80s. And so, you know, once they started to shift and realise the value of that population,

Stuart (27:42)
Wow.

Lyndsey Simpson (27:51)
their recruitment, you just have to go on their website and you'll see that they are massively recruiting over 50s who have never worked in the sector. Because they're like, as we transition to green energy and these new skills, no one's got them. So if we're going to train a load of 20 year olds and 30 year olds, why can't we train 40 year olds, 50 year olds and 60 year olds at exactly the same time? And then they bring the experience they've got from other sectors or other industries to our bear. So there are plenty of companies that are getting it right.

Where we see companies that are getting it wrong is often where they use generational labels. If I could, I would ban generational labels because they create, they just create false confidence that you know what a group of people want and need. So, you know, we talk about millennials like they're this homogenous group of people and Gen X like, you know, we're all the same. ~ And the problem with generational labels is they never get older.

The first time you hear them is when they kind of lock into your head. So I will talk to businesses and go, you know, we think you've got a problem with your over 50s, under 50s distribution. And they'll go, no, no, no, we don't employ any baby boomers. ~ We've only really hired people in millennial. We don't really have many Gen Xs and we don't really hire early careers. So we just get like, you know, early experience professionals.

and I'll go, right, okay. So they're just looking at generations. And then I go, you do know millennials are gonna be turning 50 in 2031 in five years, yeah. They're not like just eternally aged 32. They're 52, you've got three generations that are gonna be aged over 50. And they don't. And so then when you analyse their businesses by age cohort, not by generational labels,

Stuart (29:33)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (29:46)
you'll find that actually they are most exposed to risk because within 10 years, 90 % of their workforce will be over 50 because they've never done a distribution around all of the age cohorts. They've just lazily assumed that if we hire millennials, they would just stay age 32. And they don't.

Stuart (30:04)
Muyolavá

So it sounds but it sounds like c obviously companies have got a blind spot, but it also sounds like correct me if I've got this wrong, but the DEI agenda has been heavily focused elsewhere outside of age, would you say would you say?

Lyndsey Simpson (30:23)
Yeah, so very few companies have necessarily called out age on their DE &I agenda. Interestingly enough, we're not really a DE &I company. We're a data and technology company. So we're a future of work company. We're designing SAS systems and technology and data benchmarking products. The fact that we then improve age inclusion is almost a byproduct of the analysis and work that we do. It's not our driver. I'm not here to try and solve ageism. That's not my mission.

Stuart (30:33)
Right.

Lyndsey Simpson (30:52)
You know, my mission is to enable everyone everywhere to feel inspired and not retired, is to extend careers. That's my mission. And so what's interesting around the organisations is actually the US U-turn on DE &I with the current administration has actually given us tailwinds rather than headwinds. So it's given, it's given.

Stuart (31:17)
Okay.

Lyndsey Simpson (31:18)
massive headwinds to the DE&I industry, particularly if they're working with companies that are US headquartered, where so many things are restricted in terms of what you can and can't do. But the whole of that movement of anti-DE&I is about benefiting one unique ~ profile of person over another. Whereas age doesn't do that. know, we are all...

one day older today than we were yesterday. So it doesn't matter whether we're black, white, male, female, gay, straight, we are all responsible for getting older in the workforce. And so actually it's created a level across businesses. So businesses that want to continue to deliver ~ inclusion programs have actually used age as the banner, the kind of the horizontal, and then lent into age around the other characteristics. So maybe

I don't then have enough young black professionals joining my business as one of those age pillars. Or maybe I'm not doing enough to hire women in midlife postmenopausal back in and re-skilling them. That might be an age pillar. But age is then the inclusive of all. And then really interestingly, ~ if I look just at the US, so we have a US business. We acquired ~ the Age Friendly Institute ~ back ~ in January 2026. So we have a team in Boston.

180 US customers out there. And when we look at the US, which is also obviously an aging Western ~ developed nation, the employers there have always had two other levers they could pull. So they've never actually had to hire older people really, because they could go, actually, I'm going to import talent.

I'm going to bring in people from Latin America. I'm going to bring people in. And therefore, I can staff my hospital. I can staff my retail establishment. I can keep my bank operations going with imported talent. And then the second lever would be, well, actually, if I can't find local talent in the US, I'm just going to move operations to the Philippines. And then I'm going to ship back the product and distribute in the US. Both of those, with the current administration, have been blocked. So I can no longer.

bring in immigrants and I can no longer import and export in the same way as I could. And so just this week in the news, you'll see a big piece around the Ford Motor Company who are having to build factories in the US, who are having to hire, they were called grey wizards, not the phrase I would use, but anyway, hire back ex-car manufacturing people where they couldn't use AI to do the same quality build.

Stuart (33:52)
Ha ha

Lyndsey Simpson (33:59)
But for the first time ever, organisations across all sectors in the US are having to hire and train locally, which means for the first time they're exposed to having to hire a range of ages, a predominant midlife and later career population.

Stuart (34:17)
Yeah. It in interesting. It's interesting you say that Grey Wizards is such an I don't know who would have come up with that, I'm not quite sure I like that. ~

Lyndsey Simpson (34:25)
No, it's caused

a lot of comment on my LinkedIn post about it actually. There's a lot of Gandalf stuff going on. ~

Stuart (34:29)
I'm I was gonna say I'm sure I'm

sure there I'm sure there would be. But I suppose then then talking about that. So if you've got more people coming let's say back into the workplace who are older, it also means you've got multi generations now. I think I was checking someone yesterday, I think you're gonna have what five different generations, is that correct? ~ how do you how do you stop? How do you how do you sort of navigate that? 'Cause I suppose if you've only had two or three, is that easy? I'm not sure it is. However

Lyndsey Simpson (34:48)
Yep. Yep, we do.

Stuart (34:59)
I suppose naturally you do migrate to people that are similar age and profile. Is that true? Yeah. Okay.

Lyndsey Simpson (35:04)
Yes, it is. So one of our customers is Tesco and they

share with us their age gap, which is 76 years. And the age gap is the difference between their youngest and their oldest employee in the same store. All right. So in Ireland, isn't that just? So they're stretching into six generations together, but most organisations have at least five generations now together in the workforce.

Stuart (35:13)
wow.

That's amazing.

Lyndsey Simpson (35:33)
But yeah, so we see lots of age gaps in lots of our employees from Axa, know, Yeruli, to Tesco, of being 60 to 70 years between the youngest and oldest. This presents quite a few challenges. So first of all, let's unpick the word multigen, all right? Because people use multigen and intergen interchangeably, but they have different meanings. So a multigenerational workforce is just what you end up with. You have...

people of different age groups decades apart doesn't mean that they like each other, doesn't mean that they work well together, doesn't mean they even talk to each other in some of the organisations we go in. They'll have never had a conversation with each other even though they're in the same space in a building. Intergenerational is where the company intentionally brings the generations together. So they either design their teams. So if I'm going to design a marketing team,

I'm going to make sure I intentionally have different age cohorts so that when we're producing an advertising campaign, we don't have any invisible consumers that we haven't kind of had someone in the team go, well, that's patronising. If I'm going to design a recruitment ~ function, I need people of every age demographic within that function. If I'm going to try and solve a problem, if I'm going to try and train AI, I need to intentionally build teams where we are problem solving together.

And Gartner reports that those companies that build those intergenerational teams report a 288 % higher performance than those that don't. So intergeneration, bringing people together is absolutely the magic. But we're then really lazy. So we then some just assume that, you know, let's say we've got a first line people leader and let's say they're 30.

Stuart (37:17)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (37:26)
We somehow assume that they magically know how to influence, lead, motivate somebody who's 21 and somebody who's 63 and everything in between by the magic of their human leadership skills. And of course they don't. No one knows how to do that. It requires training. It also requires processes. It requires the company deciding how we're going to downplay some of people's personal preferences.

which could be around communication style or use of systems and say, do you know what? I know we all like doing different things, but in this team, this is how it works. We all use Teams or we all use Slack. You know, there's none of this, you're on WhatsApp, I'm on email, you're ringing me, you you're sending me a Teams message and everything's just getting frustrating and lost in translation. You have to train people.

But then you have to create the opportunities for storytelling. You have to start celebrating people of every age in your business and sharing their stories that are beyond work. So get everyone to go, who went to a Taylor Swift conference? Probably half of the workplace of every age. Who's interested in knitting? You'll get loads of people of different age groups. Whose favourite holiday destination is Italy? Who's got a new baby?

Stuart (38:39)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (38:50)
coming into their family brings together new parents and new grandparents. Who's moving house in the next six months? ~ So suddenly they're all searching house porn and trying to find that white vase that they want in that. And so when we start creating these opportunities to bring the different age groups together, again magic happens. But we're not, we're lazy. So we rely on what you said right at the Stuart, which is people's human preferences. And our human preferences is to stay in our lane.

They're to stay within 12 to 15 years of our own age group and they're not to go outside of the borders of that because it feels weird.

Stuart (39:27)
Do you think some of that laziness has been brought about by agendas of late, I say of late, over the last probably ten, fifteen years, of things that you're worried about saying. Because I'll give I'll give some good examples. There's someone on my team actually, I I'm sure I'm sure they were born in like two thousand two, two thousand three. And I and I end up saying something like I wasn't even born then. You sort of end up like a realization of like, my god, I don't sometimes I don't even think about that 'cause I didn't know that, or until you sort of highlight it, you sort of forget that sometimes. But

Again, little things where obviously people don't ask ages, people don't ask about because they're worried about discriminating or they're worried about saying something that will get them in trouble. Do you think that laziness has been brought about because that inquisitiveness has almost been kicked out of us in case we say the wrong thing?

Lyndsey Simpson (40:15)
Yeah, there's definitely some of that and it's no shock to people that we have such different preferences between the generations. So you've got to remember the backdrop. This is the first time this has been our workplace situation. We've never had people working at the outer extremes of age profiles with each other.

When you start to actually bring people together and share stories in a non-work context, you start to understand people's different backgrounds. So if I look at the ~ LGBTQ agenda, ~ we get stacks of feedback from older gay and queer employees who say they feel unbelievably frustrated by the corporate efforts around this category. So every time a company wants to support Pride Week,

It's a 20 year old with a rainbow at a pride festival, know, with a banner. And they're like, where are the two 62 year old lesbians who just look normal who are walking long hand in hands on the beach? You know, where are the two dads in their fifties with a toddler, you know, who have adopted, who just look normal rather than it being so extreme polarisations. And then as we then get even older into the category and particularly into people that are not.

Stuart (41:14)
Mm-hmm.

Lyndsey Simpson (41:38)
necessarily of British heritage or from different religious backgrounds who have had to shield their sexuality through fear of death, you know, or severe penalty for decades of their life, no, they're not going to suddenly come out loud and proud because this is not their identity, you know, and that fear.

And so their younger gay colleagues get frustrated that they're not, you know, wearing it on their sleeve, but they don't...

Stuart (41:46)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (42:04)
appreciate that the times were very, different for them and it was penalty and still is, sadly, in some parts of the world by death. know, and so sometimes we see that storytelling is a way of really doing this. you know, when we see employers do it right, for example, in Pride Week, it is sharing these stories. It's not putting out a great poster and we're sponsoring, you know, the Pride parade.

Stuart (42:11)
Yes, there is.

Lyndsey Simpson (42:30)
~ It's that actually we're going to share real stories from very generous volunteering employees who are going to tell us what it was like 20, 30 years ago and what they've been through to give them the lived experience that they now have. ~ so, yeah, so some of that kind of misplacement. I heard a great phrase from one of our clients, which is publicists, ~ who are media comms business, if you haven't come across them. They use this phrase ~ of calling in, not calling out. So,

When someone gets something wrong, which invariably you will do, it happens and it's genuinely 99 % of the time unintentional. Rather than call them out in front of everybody, you know, can't say that, we don't do that here, you know, that's offensive, you privately call them in. And so you go, do you know what?

Stuart (43:04)
Happens.

Lyndsey Simpson (43:23)
You use that phraseology just so you know it feels more comfortable now if you use this one rather than that one and you call them in. You don't shame them, you don't embarrass people. They haven't done it intentionally, it's just a different phraseology of what they were brought up with. ~ And you call them in to, you know, how can they be better? And most people want to know how they can be better. They don't want to get it wrong, you know. And so, but again, we've got to create these kind of cultures and environments that people feel comfortable and safe doing this.

Stuart (43:53)
Yeah, completely agree. If we talk if we talk about ~ ha a business having an age strategy, is that is that something you're seeing more of now?

Lyndsey Simpson (44:03)
Yeah, 100%. So ~ age is ~ not actually just for HR. So age is a corporate threat and it's a corporate opportunity. So if we look at that age profile of our workforce, well, that's happening obviously in our population. And that means that our customers, if we're a direct-to-consumer business, so perhaps we're retailer or a financial services company, we're seeing our customer base age.

Even if we're a B2B company, so let's say you're one of the big four consulting firms or an accountancy firm, the average age of a C-suite B2B buyer of services 10 years ago was 45, and now it's 54. So the people you're selling corporate services to, if you're B2B, are 10 years older and therefore wanting somebody of their same experience level that's facing into them. ~

Stuart (44:44)
Yeah. Bye.

Lyndsey Simpson (44:58)
So one is around this understanding our customer and how do we mirror customer bases. One is then understanding where the money is. So this is business, right? So 75 % of the world's wealth is held by 50 to 70 year olds. 75%. In the US, it's 83 % is held by that. Less than 50 to 70 year olds, 50 plus.

Stuart (45:07)
Yeah.

Wow. In eighty three percent in the US of that age rate, that fifty to seventy year old.

Lyndsey Simpson (45:27)
and buyers in the US digitally would make up the third largest economy in their own right. Yet less than 5 % of global advertising spend targets consumers aged 50 plus. And when it does, you know what I'm going to say, don't you? It is Viagra, it's HRT, it's incontinence underwear, it's vitamins, know, it's everything you don't want to be advertised, you know, funeral plans.

You know, it's never the cool jacket that you want or the new car or the great holiday. It's the crap that you get served up as if you're 30 years older than you actually are. ~ And so companies are waking up to this. So financial services companies are recognizing that what customers want in terms of products, in terms of their engagement, their relationship management, ~ that needs to mirror match. So you need a work for strategy and an age strategy that matches your customer strategy.

you need, it doesn't matter whether you're Diageo or Nestle, if I'm Johnny Walker whiskey, do I want a 22 year old advertising and doing the marketing strategy for Johnny Walker whiskey? Or do I want somebody who buys Johnny Walker whiskey knowing why do I buy it? Where do I buy it? What would improve the buying experience? What advertising would appeal to me?

Otherwise you get these massive misses which cost money and cost millions to these organisations. And then if I then look at the third lens, which is the ESG lens, the corporate lens, ~ economies are being downrated because of their lack of response to an ageing population. So 18 months ago, the USA and France were both downgraded from being AAA status to AA status because of their

inability to get an extension to people working and living longer. And Mood Ears, Paws, all of those rating agencies have forecast that within the next 10 to 15 years, most of the developed world will become junk bond status unless we enable people to work longer and save more. So from an economic perspective, big corporates are being pushed and encouraged by governments to enable longer working lives.

their access to capital is important. And even with us, we're the largest data holder of workforce demographic data in the world. And so we're informing the public investment strategies for those companies that wanna have an ESG investment in corporates that have an age strategy. And so it's so layered. It's not about being nice to older people, not at all. It's about where's the money, where's the people.

Stuart (48:17)
Yeah.

Lyndsey Simpson (48:21)
Where's the growth? If we know that our over 60s population's growing by 40 % in the next two decades, whilst our under 20 population is shrinking by 25 % in the next two decades, where do you place your bet? Do you place your bet for growth, or do you place it on a shrinking pool?

Stuart (48:40)
Yeah, that's amazing. And so last question for you for you then, Lindsay. ~ if you're a business now and you haven't even looked at I suppose a strategy or thought about it, where do you start?

Lyndsey Simpson (48:54)
Okay, I'm going to give you two places to start. So the first would be with the company and the second would be with you as an individual. ~ And so with a company, you've got to understand your data. So you've got to understand and get underneath the bonnet of your business around what's happening to age in this company. So does the age profile of my workforce mirror that of my customer base? What happens to revenue per age in this organisation?

Stuart (48:57)
Okay.

Lyndsey Simpson (49:22)
What percentage of my workforce are able to retire, could afford to retire in the next five years? And what does that mean in terms of skills that I'm going to lose from the organisation that I don't have a Plan B for? What happens to promotion velocity by age? What happens to absenteeism by age? Really start to get under that hood of the business by age data. And we can signpost and help people with that if they don't have their own data scientists to look at it.

And then the personal one goes right back to the beginning of this conversation, which is read the book. you know, genuinely, you know, the age rebellion is so much of me in it. I mean, if you've listened and embraced this podcast, then you will, you know, if you listen on audio, you'll see it's my voice again. But the book is really me trying to share.

Stuart (49:59)
Epic.

Lyndsey Simpson (50:19)
the very privileged position I have on sitting on these billions of data points. But equally then, how do you as an individual, what does this mean about you and your life? What does this mean about your family, your parents, your children, your loved ones? What does this mean for your own personal career? How do you think about this so you start to get rid of this notion that it's a slippery slope downwards and actually start to realise that your best years are in front of you and not behind you, but only if you design them with intention?

~ And so I would say for people that want to personally really get underneath the topic and understand it and think personally, read the Age Rebellion, for those that are in leadership roles, then you've also got to get under the hood of the business. ~ And the 55 redefined site has a free insights library. So we publish so many reports on the topics of so many markets. So have a little dig around there if you want to look at best practice or see what companies are doing there or case studies.

Stuart (51:12)
That's awesome.

Lyndsey Simpson (51:18)
to really just give you some inspiration to move forward.

Stuart (51:21)
Yeah. Well I just want to say a big thank you for your time today, Lizzie. It's been a super pleasure to like to have you on the show and talk to you. And it's a topic that I just think is not talked about enough. it really isn't like I said, every time I go somewhere, this is not the sort of topic that people openly talk to you about. And therefore I just think it needs to be brought to everyone's attention way more than it than it is.

Lyndsey Simpson (51:46)
well thank you very much for having me on the show Stuart.

Stuart (51:49)
No, real pleasure. Thanks so much, Lindsay. Cheers.

Lyndsey Simpson (51:52)
Bye.