

Christine MacKay Animation.

SPEAKERS

Susan Heaton-Wright, Christine Mackay

Susan Heaton-Wright 00:00

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast. My name is Susan Heaton-Wright, a leading impact speaking and communications expert. My aim is to show you how to make an impact. So you will be heard or listened to and respected for career success. Listen weekly to the podcast, and go to our website, www.superstarcommunicator.com Hello, everybody, this is Susan Heaton-Wright from superstar communicator. Thank you very much for tuning in today, as ever, I have found for you a truly inspirational impact for inspiring have I said that before? Guest for this episode. But before I introduce our guest, I wanted to say a little bit about superstar communicator. Thank you very much for all those people who follow me on LinkedIn, leave messages have congratulated me for the recent awards that I have won. Thank you very much, I really, really appreciate it. And remember that you can find out more about what superstar communicator is doing by downloading the 10 top tips to being a superstar communicator, because we will keep you in touch with other things that are going on. I will put the link for you to grab your copy of the 10 top tips. And then you can be part of the community, and to find out more about all of the things that we're doing with individual coaching master classes, Lunch and Learn and of course, workshops on everything communication. So let us get back to the interview today. I have known Christine Mackay for well, 20 months, I met her at the House of Lords, as one does, because we were both named as inspirational female entrepreneurs. There's a F entrepreneur 100 Every year, and we were both two of those 100 that met just before lock-down at the House of Lords and we got on well, from the word go. Now, Christine is the CEO of Salamandra, which is an animation company what is particularly inspiring and noteworthy is the fact that she is a woman in her 50s running a tech company, which typically is run and everybody working in tech companies of this type are up to their 30s and mainly male, and here she is, a female leader in a male dominated and young male dominated industry, which makes it amazing. But since we did the interview, she has finally finished her book which is being published at the end of November 2021. And I will make sure that there is a link to that in the notes so that you can purchase your own copy. It is called animation destination, how smart market is convey complex messages memorably. And in fact, this is a great summary of our interview because I asked Christine lots of questions about animation, and how it can enhance our communication. So sit back and enjoy. So Christine, welcome.

Christine Mackay 04:11

Thank you. Lovely to be here. Thanks, Susan.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:14

Do you know it's great because we've known each other for nearly a year, haven't we?

Christine Mackay 04:19

Indeed, it's flown past really, hasn't it?

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:22

We were both named as inspirational, female entrepreneurs in 2020, which was a huge honour.

Christine Mackay 04:31

It was indeed, it was a great cohort of ladies, I must say.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:35

Absolutely. There are a number that have really inspired me including yourself, Christine.

Christine Mackay 04:40

Oh thank you and ditto. And we had our sort of socially distant walk that lasted about five hours where we talked about everything and put the world to rights, which was fantastic.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:51

And I look forward to doing it again!

Christine Mackay 04:54

Indeed indeed, hopefully not quite as socially distant next time.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:57

Yeah, absolutely. So you are in animation. What on earth made you go into this area of communication? Dare I say it.

Christine Mackay 05:10

Well, I've always been a really visual person. And I think animation is a fantastic tool for business, as well as entertainment, of course. And there's lots of stats to show that it sort of helps to, you know, keep retention, not only engaging people make, but making it memorable as well, which is quite important. When I was a kid, I, my first crush was a cartoon character called Marine Boy, believe it or not, and my sister and I used to fight over him, "No, he's my boyfriend. No, he's my boyfriend, you know". So from a very young age, you know, it's quite harsh, I say, finding the animation was something that really kind of engaged me in lots of lots of senses. But I think from a business perspective, is an incredible tool, you can explain the most complex messages, you can be abstract, you can talk about very sensitive or taboo subjects, you can be genderless culturalless, and really get that message across, whether it be for health and safety, or HR induction, or, there's so many elements where you can use animation where you can't really use film, or if you do use film, it has a very different effect. So with animation, you can create something go back in history, go into the future, become an amoeba, go right inside the the the workings of an engine, or work and sort of show what it's like to work in confined spaces, which you can't do even with filming, in those kinds of situations, you could be, you know, 10,000 Leagues Under the Sea literally, and showing how something works under there, to being up in space and, you know, the next trip to the moon and show how it works there as well, without necessarily being there are filming in situ. So it's it's, it's very malleable. And we're very lucky

that in this climate, we can work completely remotely. So and when once we created a piece for our clients, it's also much easier to amend down the line without having to have a whole reshoot and, you know, get all same actors back and the same weather conditions, etc, etc. So, from that perspective, it's fantastic. And I say, being a very visual person, I work that way. Even when I spell, I have to physically write it as an image in my head, otherwise, I can't remember it. So I'm sure I'm not the only one who's very visual. So I think it's quite useful from that perspective.

Susan Heaton-Wright 07:28

It's really, really interesting. I mean, I've been doing a bit of research of, of animated information for one to a better word. And when it's really done, well, it's so powerful. But what happens when there are things moving around and somebody is narrating it, I found that sometimes the animation can distract me from the words,

Christine Mackay 07:57

I think done properly. And if you use expert animators, then I think it should be enhancing, not distracting. Yes, what we do, and you know, I think we're experts at is really understanding the business of our clients, you know, who they're talking to, what are those pain points to their target audiences, answering those pain points, making sure there's a call to action. But whenever we create something that it's not, as you say, distracting or, or everything's considered. So if there's an element or something that's animated, it's done for a reason. So it's either to support something that's been said, or, you know, to actually help with a narrative. And we really have to understand what the business is about to in order to create that narrative to begin with. But, you know, there's lots of different purposes for using animation, if I may list a few if that's ok? So I guess, one, one, great way of using animation for examples, if you're doing talking heads if you've got people that you want to interview. And so it's got to be people rather than animations, then what we can do is we can green screen behind you, we can support with motion graphics, to whatever has been said. And that again, supports the message rather than distracting so that it stays in in your long term memory, and you kind of get it. And in fact, there's some really interesting stats around that if you just using audio. People remember 10% of what you said 72 hours later, if you use just images, they remember 35% of what you said 72 hours later, but if you combine the two, it's 65%. I mean, that's absolutely bonkers. So it really shows it goes to show that it really helps to sort of set it in your long term memory. They say that text stays in your short term memory and images stay in your long term memory. So I always compare corporate animations to your visual jingle. And we all remember our jingles that we remember as children as youngsters, you know, we could still probably sing it, remember the brand, etc. So, from the same perspective, animation works in that way. So that's number one. The other sort of way that we can use animation is obviously, for presentations more and more that we can't do face to face, we now animate presentation. So it could be animating a graph, it could be animating the entire presentation, which we do for a number of clients where it's still clickable. But it feels more like a movie than slides. So you engage the audience by really illustrating what you're describing what you're talking about. And again, it's supporting, not distracting. And then the third one, which is proving more and more popular, because we can't be face to face are the virtual conferences. So we've created virtual 3d auditoriums, we've created obviously, these animated presentations, but we create multi screens in these virtual auditoriums where, you know, all sorts of different things can happen. In the old days, pre-COVID, we created these international conferences for clients with lots and lots of different screens, including this stage. They're

all animated, everything flowed into each other. And I think the biggest number of screens we heard was 18 screens, including screens on the on the roof screens on the on the stage moving screens that were physically or manually pushed across, and then down the sides of the auditorium. So you know, choreographing that and making it support what the speaker was saying, takes some logistical sort of sorting that and my team were amazing. And the client was really, really happy. So, so yeah, it's it's more about supporting than distracting.

Susan Heaton-Wright 11:30

It's enhancing, isn't it? Yes, yes, yes, yes, definitely. I would be interested to know your opinion on the slides that the government and the health department show with the COVID. Now, for listeners, we are still in lockdown in the United Kingdom, and there is a real laughter attached to the next slide, please, with all of this information on that you would need a PhD in statistics to be able to understand how would you enhance that?

Christine Mackay 12:08

Well, first of all, give them the, you know, allow them to share their screen rather than making it it's so awkward. It's really very Mickey Mouse excuse the buntings with animation but really is inexcusable, it could be a lot slicker, you know, give them the driving seat if they need to, you know, just change, share screens, there's so many bits of technology that can be used, there's no excuse for that. And it just comes across as very archaic, and, you know, and polished. It could be a lot more polished and a lot easier to do. So I mean, if they came to us with visual problem solvers would help them with that.

Susan Heaton-Wright 12:48

Anyone listening? It's Salamandra that you need to go to.

Christine Mackay 12:53

Yeah, we help you convey your complex business messages and and your political ones. So yeah, absolutely. Come to www.salamandre.co.uk will help you.

Susan Heaton-Wright 13:03

Now Moving swiftly on to the fact that you are working with a lot of people that are very technical, and possibly a different age group. With respect. How I know you're looking at me,

Christine Mackay 13:20

do you mean Susan?

Susan Heaton-Wright 13:24

Well, I'm sure I'm digging myself out of a hole here a bit of backpedalling, please, pedalling away. Quite often the people that are delivering some of the technical work are of a different generation, the new, okay. How are you able to converse with them and make it mutually beneficial, the conversation, and also to the client?

Christine Mackay 13:55

Do you mean, my team within Salamandra? Yes, alright. Um, I think age is just a number. I really don't think that it matters at all. I think if you stay up to date with what's required, if you're passionate about what you do, as I am, I absolutely love what we do. I honestly, practically jump out of bed every morning. But I've been known to roly-poly out a bit as a bit of a death from my team, but I don't think it really matters. I think, if you've got a good team like I do, everyone can keep their finger on the pulse as to what's going on from a technical perspective. We all share what we've learned, you know, we might find a shortcut or a new piece of kit or a new piece of software, and we're always developing and getting better and better. And where we can we send people on courses to, you know, learn new software, because it's it's constantly evolving. Yes, it should. And that's why it's so exciting. Yeah, it's one of the reasons why I love it because it is constantly evolving and you can't possibly A: get bored because you're constantly learning or B: you know, standstill So, honestly, Susan, I don't think age has got any sort of bearing really, as long as you are a good communicator. I mean, you could be any age and be a rubbish communicator, and still wouldn't work. Yeah, I think it's about having that connection and trust within your team. Having open conversations we've got, there's no such thing as a super stupid question. It's brilliant. Yeah. And, you know, quite frankly, I asked most of them, you know, and it's, it's people are allowed to make mistakes, because that's how you learn. That's how you grow. And I really want a team that does look forward to coming to work and is excited. And I really firmly believe that if you carry on learning, you'll never get bored, and you'll never get bored. Hopefully, you'll never leave, so.

Susan Heaton-Wright 15:46

What an enlightening response. And for anybody listening, please don't put people into different generational boxes. Because you never know the other person, what they might know what passion that they have, and we learn from each other. Would you agree, Christine?

Christine Mackay 16:07

Well, definitely, they say you should spend time with very young children and very old people. And I totally agree with that. Because they have completely different perspectives and wonderful stories. And, you know, they say, What is it children laugh 300 times a day, and we laugh up to maybe 10 or 20? It's quite sad. Well, isn't it? I want to be around more kids?

Susan Heaton-Wright 16:26

Yeah, definitely. Part of the question that I asked earlier was how you're able to translate something very technical, into a non technical client so that they understand and trust you, and you have credibility for them?

Christine Mackay 16:46

Well, we've been able to translate very complex messages into something more tangible, more understandable. For example, we had, we've got a fund management company that we work with, and they've got very complex products. You mentioned technical is technical in a different way, although we've worked with engineering and aeronautical firms, and what have you. So really quite technical. And it just really, at the end of the day, depends on what they're trying to get across. And with that financial firm, for example, we it took us about two, three calls a meeting and a couple of calls with a brand manager to really understand the product, because we're talking at IFA level, which is really quite

technical. Oh, definitely. Until we understand the product, we can't do the narrative. So it took quite a while and took one of our team Emma, who's very, very, very quick to understand. Mostly, she's a real polymath, and she got it before any of us and then explained it back to us. To the point that one of their marketing team, he said, God, you understand this product, but and I do. And only then could we start the narrative. And then just to emphasise how amazing animation is for that particular project, for example, it was quite, you know, quite a dry subject, a lot to take in. But we, we created all the visuals to take you through that narrative more easily and really get to understand our right that's what what it does. Fantastic. But also we never forget that with b2b, for us, it's h2h is not business, the business is human to human. Yeah, so we always try and add in some kind of element of either humanity of humour. And in that particular case, there was one scene where it talked about old age, and it showed at no density down into a wheelchair. But as he sat down, there's a little squeak sound that we added, which just adds a little bit of humour without taking away from the seriousness of the product at all. And it's little elements like that, that actually the team come up with, they've got fantastic sense of humour. In fact, I do laugh a lot at the office, and it's thanks to them. And it just makes everything lighter and, and more fun to be around. Really. So yeah, so you can be very, very technical. We, for example, we do product explosions are very complex tools or pieces of equipment. And you know, that again, can be with call outs as to how these things work, or, you know, what are the benefits or what have you of certain, you know, parts of that product, and those can instantly tell somebody, oh my gosh, that's how it works. That's what it's all about, etc. And, you know, literally, a picture will paint 1000 words. In fact, if I can tell you another stat foresters reckons that 60 seconds of film or animation is equivalent to a number of words if you had to describe everything you saw. So the animation, the narration, the the feeling, it gives you the colours, the sound, the music, etc, etc. And is a bonkers numbers of words. They reckon 60 seconds is equivalent to wait for it... 1.8 million words.

Susan Heaton-Wright 19:45

That's incredible, but it makes sense, doesn't it? Because if it's done well, yeah, and it's all enhancing everything else. And we we buy and when we make decisions from emotion.

Christine Mackay 19:59

Yes, exactly. business decisions and buying decisions, you're quite right. And, you know, in fact, speaking of emotion, we did a augmented reality campaign for pharmaceutical company, unfortunately, under NDA, so I can't give you too many details, but it was an infant illness that we were trying to illustrate. So that the reps could show the clinicians, you know, what happens, etc, etc. And we use AR for it, which means that you can, you know, you download the QR code with your tablet or your phone. And of course, now you don't need that to do that. And then you can anchor the piece in your own environment, walk around it, etc, etc. Anyway, the client was actually very moved by it, because being about, you know, child illnesses, his father himself, blah, blah, blah, and it really had an effect on him. In fact, the campaign was so popular that it started off in the UK, it then was translated to me, I went off to Asia, Pacific and then is global, because it worked so well. So it can be very, you know, it, it does appeal to your senses, it can be very immediate, put into your own environment in an AR, sort of perspective, and it really has amazing results. So yeah, I can't, I can't sort of tell you enough how excited I am about how you can use animation and in business, as well as entertainment, of course.

Susan Heaton-Wright 21:20

Now, not all, all of the listeners today will have the budget for a very, very complex piece of animation. Do you have a tip for people in smaller businesses that might be thinking of one or two ways to add animation?

Christine Mackay 21:42

Of course, the simplest thing to do is to animate their logo, and then they can use that on their email signature on their website, on the presentations, etc. And that is lovely. And obviously, on social media, it's a lovely way to bring your your message to life. Because, you know, within a few seconds, you can actually say quite a lot. I went to a Animation Festival in Cardiff a couple years ago. And they had one section, which was just a set of stories around one second of animation, I can't tell you how much you can pack into one second. It's unbelievable, a whole narrative in one second. So I mean, obviously, you know, for business, you might want a little bit longer, but so with with what I'm saying is animating your logo can actually speak volumes just by itself. And there's other ways, you know, you can create GIFs, which are shorter animations of, say, three to five seconds, that you can then use potentially as a series about particular topic, topic or services that you offer. Again, you can use them on on social media, or on your website in different sections, or on an electronic white paper, for example, where it can, you know, highlight different services or. Oh, that's an idea. Yeah, this is so many different ways of you know, repurposing. And, and now, you know, if you use QR codes and use our services for augmented reality, it can be used on printed material as well as on electronic, so websites or social media, and can be used on both the same campaign, which is quite fun. I mean, we've anchored augmented reality to people's business cards, we created animation of you know, half house, the architects that their house coming to shape on top of your business card in 3d, and you can turn it around, have a look at it as it builds on. So, you know, you could do that with anything, you know, a shoe or I don't know putting together a piece of engineering. It's just people will love gimmicks, we all love something new. And we all love something, explain something quickly, and is easily digestible, because we're all time poor, got too much to take in. And you know, at the end of the day, if there's a shortcut way of doing it, why not?

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:49

And it's memorable.

Christine Mackay 23:51

Yes, indeed, that is a massive thing that it stays in your long term memory. Yes, fantastic.

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:57

So we move on to three top tips for the listeners, because I'm sure that people would love to know more about animation.

Christine Mackay 24:07

Sure. So as I say, we work our businesses conveying complex messages for b2b clients. And we're always trying to find the best way to get the message across. So the top tips would be, you know, if you do have something that you want to convey, verbally, or as an auditorily or in writing, remember to support it with some kind of visual, whether it's a static or animated doesn't matter, but the visual will help to bring up the memorability. So, if it's static, maybe it's an illustration or an infographic. We also

do, we create infographics and GIFa graphics, which are infographics with little bits of animation all the way down, and you can extract those little bit of intimate of animations that you can then put onto social media as well. So you know, don't forget to support whatever you're saying or writing with images. You know, include animation in your marketing mix, in whatever capacity you can, because we are attracted to something that's moving, we can't, for those of your audiences that have visuals, or they'll see, so our mascot in the background, 3d animation, he does a little Samba for you. And it never fails to make an impression. And people go, first of all, because he's quite still, first of all, go, Oh, I like your your salamander, and then they go, Oh, my God, it moves. And then there's no way they're not gonna remember that. So it's very, very memorable. And I guess number three is, you know, find the best way to, to connect with your target audience and say what it is that is going to be important to them visually, as well as you know, with your wording or your voice. So, you know, pick out what are the the takeaways that they should have, and keep that as a sort of visual as well as, as I write in the audio.

Susan Heaton-Wright 25:58

Absolutely fantastic tips. And I'm sure that people are gonna want to find out more about you. So can you say a little bit about how people could contact you, whether they need your services, because they they're running a business, or whether they they're just interested in your work.

Christine Mackay 26:20

Of course, they're very welcome to follow me on LinkedIn, it's Christine Mackay ma-ckay. Or they can have a look at our website, which is www.salamandre.co.uk You can follow us on Twitter, do follow us and like us, we also run a couple of meetup groups, we've got a pharmaceutical marketing Meetup group and a tech and SAS marketing Meetup group. And that is where everyone shares, stories and case studies have worked, what worked well. And we have some fantastic speakers. In fact, we've got one on Wednesday, if people want to join us, but those you can find on our website as well. Otherwise, if you want to send us an email, you can send it to hello@salamandre.co.uk And we will get back to you as soon as we can. But yeah, do follow us, like us go on our social media, we're on Facebook as well, and Instagram and various others. So lots of different ways of seeing us. We're also on Vimeo, but most of our information is on our website. So you should be able to have a look, it's quite comprehensive. And there's there's forms on there, you can fill in and we get back to you as well. So I do invite you to like and follow us or contact us anytime.

Susan Heaton-Wright 27:29

It sounds absolutely fantastic. I'm absolutely certain that there are people that are listening today that would want to know more about what you do, and explore that new area really.

Christine Mackay 27:44

Well, they'd be very welcome. And I'd love to talk to them myself or any of my team to be fair. But But Thanks, Susan, for this opportunity to really talk about my passion, which is animation.

Susan Heaton-Wright 27:55

And listeners, it's obvious that this really is Christine's passion.

Christine Mackay 28:02

Very lucky to work at something which is almost like a hobby. So I do count my blessings every day.

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:10

Thank you so much for coming on and spending some time in your busy day.

Christine Mackay 28:15

Thanks, Susan. It's been fantastic.

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:17

So I hope you enjoyed that and were inspired by it. Remember that Christine's new book animation destination will be available at all good book shops and online and I will leave a link for you to be able to purchase your copy. And another reminder that if you want to grab your 10 top tips to being a superstar communicator, don't forget to look on the notes and there is a link for you to register. So until next time, thank you very much for listening. You have been listening to the superstar communicator podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and review the podcast on iTunes and all that. Please contact us if you want to discuss any topic with suggest a topic for us to include or a guest who could come on to the podcast go to www.superstarcommunicator.com

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