



SuperStar Communicator Podcast

Communicating remotely when you work remotely or leading remote teams

Nick Simon:

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast of your hosts Nick Simon and Susan Heaton Wright. We're here to create intriguing interest about spoken communication to empower you to speak and communicate with confidence, clarity, and credibility in all of your business conversations. We interview expert guests from all over the world. Listen twice a month to be inspired to be a superstar communicator.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Hello, everybody. This is Nick and Susan from Superstar Communicator. We obviously work remotely. We are not in the same studios, and, I know from my perspective, I work with my suppliers, of course, Nick's one of them, remotely. So we are not together all the time. And, Nick, you are you work for other companies as well. What is your perspective on that?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. It's, it's it's very useful to be able to essentially work remote with people. I work with, an Irish, podcaster who sends me their stuff. And I'm able to instantly, receive it and edit it and then send it on. And, it's convenient in that way, but also there's a a kind of, I've never met them in real life before. So there's that kind of, different dynamic you get than, with a boss that might, work in the same building as you.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

So one of the challenges in 2024, and it was there in 2023 as well, was that business leaders were particularly your age group are very keen to work remotely or have more flexibility in your work patterns. What are your thoughts about that?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. I think, the, the kind of commutes, problem that a lot of jobs have, being that that a significant amount of time out of their days taken from commuting from, their home to the office. And, there are solutions for that such as getting a rent renting a place or buying a place in, closer to the work. But that can be incredibly expensive. And instead, you can opt out to get a job that's remote. And, that kind of makes it less less difficult to, less stressful because you're not having to travel. But, there there's also cases where, I read an article, about this man in America moved to Georgia, in Eastern Europe where the prices are incredibly low, and he was able to work completely remotely. Although George, in Georgia, they don't speak a lot of English, so you'd have to learn their language.

Nick Simon:

So there is there was that kind of barrier. But, working remote opens up a lot of opportunities to be able to work without, having to pay high prices.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

But there is the problem. And and for leaders, this is a challenge, really. How do you monitor what people are doing at work? Are they actually doing their work or are they watching films on Netflix? How can you check that people are doing the work?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. It's quite difficult. I I can't really think of a solution other than setting up, remotes or or giving company, laptops to the, employees. And in that way, you can access, software remotely, but at the same time, you can, also have a separate device to watch that kind of thing. And in a way, working from home can be more distracting because there's less, you might be working in your bedroom or something like that. It's it's, not as good in terms of, being able to focus on work.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

But do you think working at in an office where there are other people around you, you can be distracted by a conversation, you know, it's the final of the of the traitors today, there being massive conversations about who's going to win the money, which remotely you wouldn't have.

Nick Simon:

Yeah. In a way that's sort of, up to managers, I guess. That sort of, managerial problem in itself. I would say, personally, I work remotely, and I would say that there is a benefit a benefit to going to an office and having those kind of loose, relationships with other coworkers because it's sort of, a mutual, interest and that kind of thing. So I'd say there's there's plus sides and, positives and negatives to working at home versus in the office.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

With regards working remotely, it can be quite isolating at times. What sort of tips do you have for making sure that you don't feel isolated?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. It's quite it's quite difficult, especially if you, live in an isolated place and you're working isolated. There's not much reason to go out. I would say the best way is to simply move. Well, I say simply, but, move to a a lively place if you're able to. But also have plenty of friends online that you can meet and keep an active lifestyle so that you're not always working and staying at home. So

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Now what about though if you're in an office and you've got a question, you pop round to that person's desk or their office within the within the organisation and that's how we all learn from each other or perhaps having the opportunity to discuss a particular challenge. How does that work remotely?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. The one of my friends is a programmer. He works he lives in Scotland, but I think he the company he works for, is either based in Czech Republic or that that they have strong leads in Czech Republic. And he essentially works completely online. So in that way, you could with the Internet, it is easy to connect to people and especially tech support tech is based around the Internet and having servers. So I would say that, really, it is quite easy to, find solutions to those kind of problems. And if you can't find them, parts of, depending on what job you're doing, part of that is based on experience, but also being able to call up coworkers and seeing what they think.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

And how would you reassure I know that that the type of work you do you do, you have managers, you have leaders who you report to. How do you reassure them that you're getting the work done? How are you communicating that?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. It's, it's quite an interesting one for I do video editing, and, that that's it's quite straightforward in that in that way that you get receive a, a video to edit on an online spreadsheet. You finish it and then post it. And I guess, it's in in terms of communication, it's quite simple to simply just communicate and give an ETA to when you'll post it. So I guess, there's an experience part of that of being able to know how long it takes you to do that kind of video.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Do you think because we we we discussed a little bit about how leaders could monitor work. Do you think that they should think of jobs, work being a series of small tasks or small projects so that they can see when they are completed?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. I think that that sort of goes, it can easily go quite in into micromanageal, kind of thing where it it might be over over the top trying to control every aspect. I think, there's a a balance between having those steps, but also allowing your, employees to do the work and trusting them to do the work. And I guess, from a remote point of view, it's quite quite a bit more difficult to do that. But I guess, remote working is relatively new as a a thing, so there'll probably be a solution to that soon.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Yes. I mean, I know that there are these spy spy software that can analyse how often you move your mouse and you're using the keyboard. And, yeah, I mean, that could be a solution. But personally, as a leader, I I would feel very uncomfortable about micromanaging in that way. I just wonder whether it would be better perhaps every half day to send routinely send an email to the manager or the leader saying this is what I've done so far to or or to have some sort of, I I don't know, project management package, even something as simple as Slack to let people know what you've done that morning or that afternoon. So you're you're justifying what you've done.

Nick Simon:

And also, I think, there could be a software, similar to Microsoft's, Teams or, if you're depending on what work you're doing. If you're doing accounting, it could be, a special remote work Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, that kind of thing that, monitors and gives a kind of history of entries, something like that that could be, created in the future, to do that kind of work. But I guess, yeah, it's it's very difficult to keep tabs on, what people do.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

So what would your 3 top tips be as a remote worker to somebody like me, leader, you you know, obviously, we work together. But if I were your boss, what 3 top tips would you say to make sure you reassure me that you're getting the work done?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. Communication is key, I think. So say if you sent a client something, you would the client should make sure that you're aware that they've received it and are beginning on it. So, there are online software that, kind of do this remote work kind of thing so that I use Asana and also monday.com. Yeah. And so that that's the first thing. The second thing would be

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Just one second. For those people who might know what Asana or monday.com are, could you explain what they are?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. They're online, data pay database and scheduling tools, that are used, and you essentially are given tasks. You have to you have a not a login given to you, and you essentially, once they're finished, you make sure, on the software that you say that the task is finished.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

And Okay.

Nick Simon:

Yeah. So I think the second thing, would be for, to set up a schedule, a deadline, and making sure that for instance, me as a video editor, I would make sure that you are aware of how long the type of video would take to edit.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

So So you're managing x you're managing the expectation of the client?

Nick Simon:

So so it'd be it probably work both ways. And Yeah. If if you're on a tight schedule and you wanted a video done quickly, you'd have to make sure, that that was clear. And then I guess the third thing would be, this yeah. There's communication, there's scheduling. So I suppose, manage expectations in general. Don't be too I guess if you're work creating new work relations, it's quite difficult to manage expectations with someone who's new, and you're not aware of how long they take. But in the long run, having trusted people to do that work without having to micromanage them, that's the key to keeping a a a healthy kind of work balance.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Yeah. It's working together. It's it's working on what's gonna work best for both of you.

Nick Simon:

Yeah

Susan Heaton-Wright:

It might be that the manager or the client needs some to be given some suggestions. I've used monday.com in the past and this shall we try this as a communications, piece?

Nick Simon:

Yeah. And also I think, if you're working remotely and you've never met your boss before, it might be nice to actually go and meet them because that's, yeah, it's it's a nice kind of get together and you can have a nice, coffee. And I I work I did a 6 month placement working on a database, and I don't even ever met my boss once. But, I got to show him around my, the local city nearby, and it was quite nice meeting him in real life.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Oh, that's brilliant. So, I mean, I know that you one of your clients is based in Ireland. Perhaps when they are in London, you could arrange to meet them.

Nick Simon:

Yeah exactly.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

What a great idea. So what we've been talking about really is one of the essentials of being a superstar communicator and it's thinking about the ways that we can build up trust and mutual respect and how we work together through using communication. If anybody else has got any ideas, please put them in in the post below because it's very interesting to see and to get tips from other people because remote working is here to stay. Is there anything you'd like to add before we finish, Nick?

Nick Simon:

No. I don't think so.

Susan Heaton-Wright:

Thank you very much for watching everybody, and thank you very much for your input, Nick, because, you know, you're seeing things from another perspective and that's what makes these conversations so useful. So until next time, thank you very much for watching. Remember that we can help you. Well, Nick can help you with your video production, editing and also podcast editing. And Superstar Communicator, we can assist in communication skills whether you're wanting us to facilitate workshops, master classes, individual coaching, or speaking. Thank you very much for watching. Bye.

Nick Simon:

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