



## SuperStar Communicator Podcast

# "Can we just get along" a return to civility.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Hello everybody. Thank you very much for tuning in today. This is Superstar Communicator podcast and livestream co hosted by Nick Simon and Susan Heaton Wright. We talk about everything related to being a great spoken communicator, and I don't necessarily mean speaking. It's communicating. It's two way. And this is really important to to really think about because so often people consider that, oh, I've got to speak like a boss. But in fact, you've gotta communicate like a boss.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And part of the super superstar communicator work that we do is to have effective two way conversations. And a number of our clients find it very difficult, very challenging to have difficult conversations or conversations where people have opposing views. Either it is a difficult conversation or it is within a meeting where there's opposition to a particular idea and this can be very difficult. So I was delighted when I was approached by our guest today, who has is an absolute expert in navigating these difficult conversations. Best best selling author Diana Peterson Moore is a former practicing employment lawyer. She focuses on people, strategies and organizational systems to support strategic workplace goals. She's a blogger, a guest columnist and a frequent conference presenter. She's been featured in CEO Magazine and on numerous podcasts.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Diana's first book, Managing in Turbulent Times, A Practical Guide to Leadership is on Amazon and a number one bestseller, everybody. Her second book, Come Get It, Just Get Along, Rodney King, Courageous Communication, A Return to Civility, was published last month and is also an Amazon best seller. She received a BA from UCLA and JD from Loyola Loyola Law School in the United States. So I'd like to welcome you, Diana.

### **Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, thank you so much, Susan. I'm thrilled that you invited me to participate.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

What made you write the book?

### **Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, I think probably the contentiousness around politics in my country and certainly the rise of authoritarianism worldwide. And just because I think that, again, in my country in particular, families are broken apart via politics, people, neighbors, communities. And I just thought it was important for us to find a way back to having civil dialogue.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

That is a really, really good reason. Nick, you're you're nodding. What what are your thoughts on this?

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. I was, interested to see, you've been, a lawyer executive officer and an HR lead, and I was just wondering how, which of those, would you say has influenced your writing the most?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

I would say it's an accumulation of my life experiences. When I was coming up in in the corporate world, I had advice from people who are far more senior than I. And one vice president, I'll never forget, he said, you need to take the 15 second pause. And then fast forward to a couple of jobs after that. And somebody said to me, you need to contemplate in the cool of the evening. And I think that's because I have, I'm very verbal. I kind of I'm a trumpet, which I describe in my first book, meaning, you know, kind of brain to mouth to out. And there are a lot of people who are French horns, brain to mouth and then out.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And so I've learned to not respond right away if I have, you know, bodily reaction, a lizard brain reaction, and to respond after the fact. So that's something you know, as I say to people that I work with, I made a lot of mistakes as a first time manager. The good news is I learned from those mistakes. The better news is I'm willing to share those mistakes with you so you won't make them. So, truthfully, it's just really, a life spent observing others, being fascinated by how people are aligned with organizational values and and personal experience, really.

**Nick Simon:**

And you mentioned, the lizard brain

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Yes

**Nick Simon:**

Kind of thinking. Can you elaborate a bit more on that?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Yes. It it's, and it's in it's found in my second book. In fact, I think the second chapter is on the lizard brain. It is the oldest part of the brain that's really the fight or flight mechanism. And I did some research on it, which is really fascinating for me, but it's that somebody says something and you respond right away. And it's often yeah. And it's often not pleasant. It's really kind of a survival mechanism.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And and for me, because I am kind of a trumpet, I would respond right away. And I learned over time that I would often say something that I regretted, and, of course, we all do that. So an apology is appropriate. But by waiting, I was able to be more objective, more neutral in my language. I, I have a story about that, a personal story if anybody's interested.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Please share that. My

**Diana Peterson-More:**

last corporate job was head of human resources for the Times Mirror Company, which was the enterprise level for a whole bunch of companies. So it had a newspaper group and a magazine group and a training group and blah blah blah. And there was a person I had 6 direct reports. There was one who reported to me who was a challenge. An individual who was very competent technically, but had very poor, get along get along with others skills.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Okay.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

So, one evening, she I happen to have been a female. She walked into my office. And, you know, I don't remember the content of the conversation, but I could feel myself starting to get upset. And I said to the person, and let's just call her Rosemary. I said, Rosemary, I need you to leave my office. This is not a good time for me, and Rosemary stayed. And I said, Rosemary, I need you to leave my office. And Rosemary stayed, and I got up, and I left my office.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And I was angry. And I have, advisors, so I called up 1 or 2 of my advisors to find out if I was overreacting or if I was not, the, again, the content of the conversation, which I have no memory of. And they all said, no. That was okay. So I walked in the next morning, and I called Rosemary into my office. And I said, Rosemary, I said, the reason I stopped the meeting last night was because I was getting angry. I said, I'm still angry and let me tell you why. And that was devastating to her.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Had I reacted by showing my anger, she would have dismissed me, and it would have gotten around the department. Oh, there goes Diana again, you know, flying off the handle. But this way, she couldn't dismiss me. And, it was a very potent lesson for me and one that I share with others. It's actually in my first book because because I think we all have those experiences. And for me, personally, if I start to have one of those negative reactions, I have a physical reaction to it. And anytime I feel that, I just kind of cool my jets, slow down, delay a conversation. And so Nick, that's a very long winded way of saying that that was the lizard brain reaction.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

That's kind of the fight or flight, which we need. I mean, there are times when you need to have that. If you're in Ukraine right now and you're in the middle of the war, you need to respond to those feelings. But in those same feelings that can protect us, and way back when at the beginning of of of of of our humanity, it saved us from being, you know, eaten by animals or whatever. But now, in what I would call civil society, it can harm us as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Do you think that there are situations? Because you said that with Rosemarie, she already had issues with getting on with other people, that you you were triggered even before you had that meeting. Oh, no. It's Rosemarie.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Yes. I think so. And, I think we, you know, we there are certain people we like and certain people we don't like. And I think as a manager, one has to have the ability to separate out personal from professional, which is something I've always prided myself in doing. But then, honestly, that and that's why I have kind of these trusted advisors because there are a few people that I didn't like for whatever reason, and I would kind of bend over backwards to be fair with those individuals, sometimes to my detriment. So if I was confused about how to proceed, I would use one of my advisers, and I have 3 of them, and I know they all have my best interest at heart. So they are people that I continue to call upon. But, yes, I think you're correct there, Susan, and I think, I in fact, once again, back in my at at times mirror, I I would get the leadership team together, and we would literally force rank people by performance.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, I really think leaders have to be followers as well. Leaders have to you know, somebody wants, the kind of consultant I am today, I took advantage of through my own corporate career. And somebody once told me, think of a band. And I happen to live on Pasadena, California very close to the Rose Parade. So I see a lot of those bands every year. And this individual said, you know, a band leader, if you watch him or her, usually a him, they move forward and they come back. They move forward and they come back. And that's how they're leading the band.

**Nick Simon:**

want to ask, the book is based on 3 years of survey data. Yes. Did the survey data surprise you in any way?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There were 8 questions. There were a couple of demographic questions because I know people, me. I don't like to when someone says there's gonna be 20 or 30 minute survey, I tend to not sign up. And and I kinda ask people if, the survey data are really the the summary data are in the first chapter of the book. And I kind of asked people, you know, what are your how would you self describe your worldview? And their people were pretty much across the board in terms of being conservative, pragmatic, you know, liberal, progressive, whatever. And, the one of the questions was, you know, who do you speak more frequently with? And, of course, as to be expected, most of us tend to speak more frequently with people who agree with us.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And then I one of the questions was, what do you think about people who have different world views? And I fully expected people largely to say wrong and really 3 separate times. And this was international data. They came back and said something to the effect of they're just different or they different background. And I kept saying, no, that's wrong. People are in denial. They're not being honest. And finally, after the 3rd survey, I looked at one of the other questions, which I found to be really compelling, and it said, I'm willing to listen to people with a different point of view and always or almost always with 70%. And I thought to myself, okay, Diana.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

People are and likely because of differences within families are willing to listen to others. And that then set me on a path. I trust me, I had several false starts about this book because I thought, geez, I'm not a psychologist. I can't, you know, talk about people being in denial, which is what I thought. Now interestingly enough, I recently had a conversation with somebody who was head of the, public TV station in our area. I had done a project for him, and he retired and became a mediator. And he called me up and he said he was also completely stumped by the data. Just aspirational.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Maybe people really aren't being honest here. And I said, well, whether they're being honest or not, perception is reality. And if they perceive themselves as being willing to listen to others, that, assisted me in how I was gonna write the book. But, yes, Nick, it surprised me. So who knows? Who knows what the answer is? But if that doesn't really matter at this point, now it's about what are tools that you can share with others that they may use to assist them in coming back to a more civil environment.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Now, first of all, if anybody is listening in and you've got a question or you want to say hello, please leave a message, and we'll make sure that it gets passed on to Diana. You mentioned early on that in your country at the moment there are 2 very opposite sides in many things, and we see this with lots of international events

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Mhmm.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And thoughts. So for example, the COVID, the vaccine was very polarizing, wasn't it? Certainly in this country, in in the United Kingdom, we have Brexit. And, you know, I have to be honest, I was in the library and somebody was with her finger in my face because she had an opposing view. I thought it was I thought it was a civilized conversation, but something triggered her. And these are nasty things. What tips do you have for managing that sort of situation?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, thank you. And, yes, I mean, that happens to all of us, me recently at the dry cleaners. I think part of it is listening. And there are, I'm fortunately, when I was at Times Mirror, I became a trained facilitator. We have 3 training companies, one of which was Zenger Miller. And I think it's really important, and as a facilitator, there are little phrases that one uses and learns about. And I would say things like, that's interesting. Help me understand.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Tell me more. Can you put some more words around that? So you're really trying to understand instead of, one of my chapters, a legal term, assuming facts not in evidence, assuming what somebody else is thinking. And I think that, listening without comment and really trying to understand is a way back, But it it's difficult again because of that good old lizard brain and and so forth. And so I was recently at the dry cleaners, and, I parked my car and a big truck came in right after me. We have a lot of these, large trucks that are a little bit scary when you're on the roadway or the freeway here. And the sky goes darting in to get in front of me, because I had to walk around my car and get my clothes out. So I walk in and he's, picking up a shirt. And then he says, oh, I'm gonna be traveling to those only individual working.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

My dog's getting ready to protect me from whomever is walking by. And, I said, yes. Climate change. And he goes, And I said, I said, I didn't, you know, say why climate change, but wouldn't you agree that the climate has changed? And he kinda said yes and calm way down. And then I proceeded to say, you know, there are things over which we have no control and things over which we do have control. And I said, I tend to watch science programs on our public TV. One of them is called Nova. And I said they had just shown something where, the reason they finally figured out why the pyramids at Giza were built there because in that time frame, there was a finger of the Nile that came around.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And then there was something about whale bones found in Sahara. So I said clearly climate changes that there are climate changes that have nothing to do with human activity. But I said then there are things that do have human activity involvement, and I said that's what I personally focus on. But it was interesting because his I mean, climate change is really a neutral comment, but it triggered something in him. Yes. And and so, I worked very hard to fall you know, to practice what I preach as the saying is here. And it was interesting because then he kinda calmed down and then he was fine. And he finally apologized for kinda cutting in line here.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

I thought I thought the whole incident was interesting to me, but it's you know, sometimes things happen when you least expect them. So it's kinda tried and true. If you practice and practice makes perfect. So if you practice, the change in conduct, it then becomes kind of second nature.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Do you want to go and get the dog?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

No. I apologize. I think what I'm gonna do is close the door. Actually yeah. I apologize. Be right back. Okay. Okay.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So while we're waiting, if there is anybody that's listening who wants to ask a question, do feel free because, Diana clearly knows what she's talking about, and this is a a a really good opportunity to ask questions. I know that in the United Kingdom that it's evening, so it might be that you want to ask questions later. And I'm sure that Diana will see and be able to ask answer questions as well. I'm not quite sure what's going on in the background.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

So I'm so sorry. We have, the gardener was here with the leaf blower and my dog goes insane. So I had to run I'm upstairs. I had to run downstairs. I apologize. Okay.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Okay. So you mentioned you know, we've talked about the lizard brain, and we've talked about the power of listening. You also talk about facts and opinions and going back from the emotion to look at the facts. Can you elaborate on that a little bit more?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Sure. You know, facts are provable. Opinions are just what we kinda think. And I think what's happened at least in my country when it comes to politics that and and I use this expression in the book, opinions masquerading as fact. Yes. Part of the problem is, I think, the proliferation of online media and, you know, TikTok and x and just all of these various programs. But I also think that, and and there's a consumption of a lot of conspiracy theories. And I really feel like individuals are moving away from facts because there was a politician, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who's no longer with us with us, who who would say, you know, you can argue on opinions, but not on facts.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And facts have become just very muddied. I don't I I suspect that's probably going on outside of this country as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah

**Diana Peterson-More:**

But people's beliefs and this kinda this I mean, so many of these concepts are intertwined because I'm a real believer in conflict management as opposed to conflict resolution. And that's because most or many, at least seemingly today, most conflicts arise from a difference in values, heritage, culture. I mean, people religion, and those values are constant, and those values inform our beliefs. But, I've done conflict management training, and I use abortion, and I use gun safety as an example because these are seemingly intractable. I am intractable intractable, excuse me, issues. But my feeling is if you kinda say, okay. What divides you? And then what do you have in common?

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Then what are the, activities that will support what you have in common? So you kinda go to that hackneyed phrase of the win win. So, you know, that can happen also with with opinions masquerading as facts to really look at facts. It's it's kinda tough though because people argue about facts just because, we have a head of a political party that doesn't tell the truth an awful lot.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And the people who follow that individual tend to take everything he has has says as the truth, and that's a huge problem. You know? Fortunately, it seems to be a percent that's less than 50%, which is the good news, so we shall see what happens. I mean, we have an election coming up pretty darn quickly.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. We've had a message from Abdul. Abdul, lovely to see you. Hopefully, we'll see you tomorrow at our dinner. Abdul says there are many there are times we struggle with the unspoken words, especially with the ethnic minority and people of color. You feel from the conversation there is a lack of genuinity. What is your advice on how to communicate effectively to diffuse the situation and also make a statement? What a brilliant question. Thank you.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Yes. And and not an easy one. I, there's something in my book and and, I was my I was raised as a kind of a generic Christian, and there's the golden rule. The golden rule is doing to others as you would have them doing to you. And I think most of us tend to communicate that way. Diana has a way of communicating and and preferences, and so I assume that Susan does or Nick does or Abdul does. And I kind of said, okay. What about the platinum rule, which is I should be communicating with Susan the way she takes in information or Nick the way he takes in information or Abdul the way he takes in information.



**Diana Peterson-More:**

And as a as a sometimes you can you can ask somebody. You know, some people prefer things in writing. Some people especially in the workplace. Some people, you know, I'm the kind of person if you tell me something, I tend to remember it. But there are a lot of people that you tell them something and you have to follow it up in writing.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And, you know, and I've had managers say, well, that's too much work. And so I'll say, well, you know, let's say Nick is is someone who takes in information that way. I might say, Nick, I wanna make sure I was clear. So do me a favor. Go back to your office and send me an email with your understanding. And even though I might think I was clear as a bill, if Nick's email doesn't reflect, I'll say, I accept responsibility for that. And I'll say, you know, Nick, I apologize. Let me try it this way.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

And, you know, I keep kinda shifting. So it's tough with what Abdul is saying because a lot of us live in very we all live in very diverse environments now. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, so I have always lived in in a multicultural diverse environment. I was having this conversation with some friends over the weekend. I went to, Venice High School, which was extremely diverse, with races and ethnicities and religions. I mean, everybody was there, and we all learned how we could understand and get along with one another. But, honestly, I have friends who are white, who are my age, who will say, how come you have black friends? Or how how come you have Asian friends? And, you know, it's so it's hard for me. I don't know.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

I mean, I people are people. And and, ultimately, I think we all have the same hopes, dreams, and aspirations. We wanna roof over our head, food in our bellies, good education, and a better life for our children and grandchildren than what we had. So I think part of it is Abdul is really listening and also being able to say to someone, you know, I felt this way when this was said. And and and one of the things that I try to do is minimize the you. I try to own everything by saying we should all use I statements. And it's not, you said something mean. It's I felt x when this was said, and it's obvious the other person said it.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Using you statements often feels like an accusation, which then triggers the lizard brain, then you get into a big fight. So, I recently had something I have, you probably can't see it now because it's faded, but I went I've had white hair for a long time, so I put purple on the bottom. And one day I was with a friend and we were walking someplace. And just coincidentally, 3 different people said, oh, I like your hair. Oh, I like your hair. And finally, she says to the 3rd person, well, don't you like my hair? And the guy said, well, yeah. Sure. If you put purple in it or something like that.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

I didn't think anything of it. She she looks at me, and this is someone who's known me for a long time. And she says, is that why you do it? And I said, what? She said, do you put purple in your hair so people will compliment you? And I said, no. I said, I do it because I like it. And I was very hurt at the time, but didn't say anything because I was afraid of what I might say. And after the fact I had a conversation, I said, you know, I have to let I have to tell you this. I haven't been able to let it go. But when we were at, you know, wherever and this comment was made, I was surprised and hurt.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

That's all I said. I was surprised and hurt. And, then there was a long silence and the individual then responded. But I could not have said that at the time because I probably wouldn't have been as, neutral sounding as I am now. So I guess the keys are listening. The keys are honestly giving feedback using eye statements and maybe waiting before you respond right away.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So they get you you, really, these are your top tips, understanding the lizard brain and how we can get triggered or, you know, have a response, and then using facts rather than opinions. Yeah. And finally, the superpower of listening without comment. Oh, Abdul has lovely. Thank you for a wonderful response. And when we tomorrow, Abdul, we can discuss this further.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, thank you, Abdul, because sometimes I'm not I'm not always sure if what I'm saying because I know what I'm saying. I'm not sure if I'm communicating in a way that's helpful. So thank you for the comment. I appreciate that.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So before we finish, Nick, have you got any anything else to say?

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. I wanted to ask, your book is dedicated to, Rodney King. Can you explain why that is?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Yes. Now, at least in my country, and I suspect in the UK as well, Anytime there's a police incident, somebody whips out a cell phone and does a video. Well, Rodney King I live in Pasadena, California, and, just north of that is Altadena, California. Rodney King lived in Altadena, California. He was, driving along the foothills and was stopped by the police for, I think, drunk driving. He was severely beaten, and somebody had a video camera. This is prior to cell phone, and this had to be in the, gosh. I think those are the early 19 nineties.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Took a video of it, and then gave that video to a TV station which ran it. It caused then a series of and, again, this is usage of words in South LA where a lot, Run the Kings African American, all of the police officers were white. Where at the time, excuse me, a lot of African Americans live. And, some called it a riot, some called it civil unrest, some called it a revolution, but there was several days of, looting, a a white truck driver was pulled from his car and severely beaten, and it was really pent up energy and a lot of bad stuff. Well, here's Rodney King who was at the center of all of it. And at the time, the governor called for, kind of a breather, shall we say. And Rodney King was a spokesperson and said, after having been severely beaten, said, can we all just get along? And and I dedicated the book to him because that has always been seared in my memory. I mean, how amazing was that for him to rise above what had happened? And then actually the last chapter kinda details the facts of what happened and there was, you know, litigation and there was, anyway, Rodney King died at a very young age and who knows was it from I mean, he had his head was severely beaten.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

It was really a sad and unfortunate incident. And, I don't know. I've always just because of where I live and where he lived, he was always kind of a hometown boy from my standpoint. And, I mean, I one has to ask himself, herself, would I have had the grace to do what he did? Calling for peace and calm after having been severe and I mean severely beaten. It was it was, very scary. And then after that, of course, now again with the proliferation of cell phones, people are taking videos left, right and center, but this was the first one.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Oh, well, thank you very much for that. I don't think there are any more questions. So I'd like to thank you, Diana, for coming on today, for being so honest and so human as well. Because one of the things about being a leader is that authenticity and that humility to understand when you make an error or have a mistake and to understand what's going on inside. I wish many more people would adopt that approach to leadership because the world would be a better place, wouldn't it, if we understood this? Are you going to say something, Diana?

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Well, I agree. And, yesterday, I just happened to have seen something on Anke LaMerkel and her leadership and and kind of the backlash. Because over the weekend, I think a far right party in Germany won some seats in in in in parliament. And I thought, you know, change is never linear. It's kinda 2 steps forward, 1 behind, 3 steps forward, 2 behind. But, I think it was Martin Luther King Junior who said this and president Obama did. The arc is always forward thinking and always to, a better a better way. So fingers crossed that that's that we're just at a period where there's a slight pause, but we will continue on that long art of, civility, humanity, and social justice.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. So thank you very much. I know that there are going to be people listening today that are interested in Diana's book. It is, can we just get along, Rodney King, courageous communication, return to civility by Diana Peterson Moore, which is available on Amazon and other sites. I will put information about this to make sure that people are able to book it, to buy it. Thank you so much, Diana.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Thank you. And I apologize on behalf of my dog and me.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Alright. Take care, everybody. Bye.

**Diana Peterson-More:**

Bye