

Bruce Daisley of Twitter on the power of amazing culture businesses (Part 1)

 By [Jon Ratcliffe](#)

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Bruce Daisley is VP for Europe at Twitter and runs the *Eat Sleep Work Repeat* podcast. In part 1 of this three-part article, I chatted to him about Monk Mode Mornings, the power of laughter, his new work manifesto and more.



Bruce Daisley, VP for Europe at Twitter. Image supplied.

■ ***Thanks so much for taking the time. I thought it a really good place to start would be to get a little bit of your background, and what your current role is, and how you came to be in your current role.***

Yeah, so let's start from today, so I work at Twitter now; I've worked at Twitter for the last six years. I run Europe Middle East and Africa for Twitter. Prior to that, I worked for Google, so I worked really helping to build the YouTube business from scratch cross the UK and so I've probably spent the last 10 years in those two tech firms. Before that, I worked in various different jobs, largely in digital but across traditional publishers and traditional radio companies, so I guess from where I am today, I've spent quite a while in digital but the last 10 years specifically, just in pure-play digital.

■ ***Awesome. One of the things which I picked up over the last year is your amazing podcast – I'm not just saying that, it really is quite something. I'm in the process of building a business, and one of the things which is so clear to me as how getting your culture right has so much impact. So, for those who don't know, [Eat, Sleep Work Repeat](#) is definitely worth checking out. Do you want to tell me how you came to start that podcast and what your combination of interests is?***

So obviously, you have a bit of a radio background, and working and such 'amazing culture' businesses, but I'd love to hear your journey to start. The interesting thing for me, the way I got into it, was that I was always complimented, whether it was by my teammate YouTube or by the team here at Twitter.

People always come to me and say 'Wow, there's such a good buzz to these teams, such good energy'. And so, that led me to make the mistake of thinking that I was an expert. I think it's fair to say, and I say this quite often, but I don't think there's any easy jobs anymore, so I don't think there are any jobs where people go to work and they think 'Wow, that was that was a breeze,' and then they go home at the end of the day with no stresses or anxieties.

But about a year-and-a-half ago, I found myself in this situation where I was thinking, 'People around me don't seem to be

as happy as they used to be,' and I actually challenged myself and thought, 'You've told yourself you're good at culture, but you don't know what you're doing!' So I found myself looking for a book on it and searching Amazon for a book on work culture, and I couldn't find anything that seemed suitable.

So it was a big logistical jump, but from there, I decided to do a podcast on it and I think specifically, I'll give you an example: I spent the last week thinking a lot about the research about creativity, and the interesting thing is that if you look into the research on creativity, there's a lot of evidence for what situations provoke creativity. There's some wonderful work by a lot of very prominent female researchers, like [Alice Isen](#), [Teresa Amabile](#), and [Barbara Fredrickson](#).



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All of these women have found that the most creative environment are ones where there's something called 'positive effect'. Positive effect is largely where there's a good mood, a positive environment where people feel the space to be creative.

Positive effect has a really strong correlation with creativity. In fact, Teresa Amabile found that normally, good ideas and creative ideas in an office seem to come a couple of days after the atmosphere was really positive and energising.

OK, so that's interesting because when we think about work over the next 20 years, the one thing that's really critical is that creativity is going to be the most highly demanded property, because as robots and automation start taking the routine parts of our jobs, then the things that require inventiveness, require ingenuity and invention, they're going to be the most highly coveted, and yet we find ourselves in an environment where none of us really are trying to think about what the creators of a positive work culture are, of a creative work environment. Very few of us are ever schooled how to do that.

For me, it's a little like the amateurish way that we approach the creation of work culture is a bit like it we allowed chefs not to learn how to cook food, or we allowed people who were designing buildings to not learn the fundamentals of architecture and how these things work and yet, normally what will happen is if someone is capable of a job, maybe in sales or marketing or someone who's a lawyer, will end up dictating the culture for a company and the culture for an office, largely because they're the most senior or experienced at that thing.

❏ ***So you hear people cancelling lunch hours or arranging evening phone calls, completely oblivious to the fact that all of these things crush creativity. So it was fascinating for me, because if these are a comparative and competitive advantage in creating the best working environments that produce the most ideas, it just seems remarkable that we don't spend more time looking at the massive body of science and evidence that shows how to do that. That's really fascinating. Listening to all these people, do you find that you have changed since you've been running the podcast? Because if you keep on hearing all these different nuggets, do you find you're a different leader today than you were before you started?***

I think it gives you more evidence for the things you like.

I've always said the thing that drives me and motivates me is the sound of laughter at work. Laughing every day was one of the things that I felt was life-affirming. When I wasn't laughing every day, I wasn't too worried about anything else. The thing that has really been beneficial for me is that that has gone from being my sort of indulgence, the thing that I offered myself as my own little personal motivation, to realising that's one of the critical elements of building an office with affinity.

I've read a brilliant book and am chatting to this guy in a couple of weeks, a guy calls Robert Provine, who's an American professor who did a lot of work on laughter. He said laughter is one of the most joyful things that we can ever do, what a delightful pursuit. But he actually studied it, and he said laughter is, in fact, a human signalling action. Even though it is enjoyable to do, laughter is about demonstrating an affinity with the group you're in.

“ I wrote something for the BBC about the importance of laughter at work. <https://t.co/LruRjooTmW>— Bruce Daisley (@brucedaisley) [April 4, 2018](#) ”

So, he did this remarkable thing, where he looked at the instances of laughter in a group and then he recorded the statement immediately preceding it, and what he found was that only in about 20% of the time did people actually say something funny before they laughed. They normally said 'It's John's turn,' or 'here you go' or 'let's see.' They're things that weren't funny. So what happened was, and we all recognise when people would say these comments and then they would laugh, why because it makes the team feel... any subconscious action, it's an animalistic thing that we do, that bonds us together.

So, me feeling like I loved laughter at work, actually laughter is the thing that gradually brings a team together, makes them feel more affinity to each other. So like my feeling like I love a team that laughs a lot, actually what you tend to find is that teams that laugh a lot collaborate more, they assist each other more, they often do things that are altruistic.

So if someone has a piece of knowledge, it's almost a piece of altruism to share that with other people. It's always thinking about the group rather than yourself. So we can find ourselves in very individualistic cultures, with people not sharing information, people not bothering to think about the wider group. Laughter makes us feel part of that group, and so consequently makes us share more. So actually, the thing I found is that my instincts have now got real science behind them.

Another thing that we did, myself and a friend created an 8-point manifesto. Anyone can see this, it's at newworkmanifesto.org and there are just eight changes that anyone can make to their working environment. What we found there was this fetishisation of working long periods of time. There's no science to that, and actually, all the evidence suggests that if you work 60 hours a week, you kill your creativity.

“ Let's make 2018 a year of better working. We've created the New Work Manifesto - 8 simple changes to make work happier. <https://t.co/9Xjw73l64r> pic.twitter.com/QjEgYAsvG7— Eat Sleep Work Repeat (@EatSleepWkRpt) [January 8, 2018](#) ”

So we don't witness it, but by doing all these blocks of extra work, what you're removing is your spark, your ability to connect ideas to make new ones. But we don't recognise that. We think we're working harder to get more done.

So we created this eight-point manifesto, which includes things like '40-hours are enough', 'the importance of taking a lunch break'... The number one thing I put down there, very strongly informed by the work I've done, is presume permission. Because quite often, here at Twitter, for example, we don't have a work-from-home culture, and there's really strong evidence against us having a work-from-home culture, but people have come up to me and said, 'We love what you're doing,' they're interested in the podcast, but what we found is that if I've got a big presentation, I don't know if I'm allowed to go home and work on that from home. I don't know what I'm allowed to do.

So we put it as the top point to the manifesto, we said 'presume permission'. Presume that if you've got something big that you're working on, you've got the permission to go and work on it at home. One guy here has a long commute. He said to

me, 'Can I get a slightly later train – then I can get a table, and I can sit and open my laptop and do emails on my table?' What it will mean is, he arrives at the office at about 10:45am, but he's done an hour-and-a-half to two hours' work on the train.

And I said, 'look, presume you've got the permission to do that'. But until someone told him that he had the permission to do that, he felt like he wasn't allowed to. He was getting up a lot earlier, he was on a really crowded train, he was getting no work done. He was getting into the office two hours earlier, but in a more stressed state, a less productive state.

So one of the things that have happened, since the arrival of email on our phones, is that the average person is doing two hours a day more work, so all of us find ourselves in a position where at times we wonder where people are. Dan, a guy who runs a publishing-on-demand company, said to me he hates it, but inside of him is an 18th-century mill owner. What he means by that is, when he looks out in the morning and it's 10:30am and people aren't at their desks, part of him is like, 'Where is everyone?'

Dan is progressive and he's enlightened, but even he wonders where everyone is. And I think that's what's happened. All of us have got this instinct, whether it was from schools calling the register or schools asking where we were at 9am, we've all got this thing that if we're not at our desks at 9am, we feel like we need to apologise to someone. Forgetting the fact that all of us have email on our phones so we're doing two hours more work than we ever did before when we operated on '9-to-5'.

Keep an eye out for Part 2 of this article that will be published under [Jon Ratcliffe's profile](#) next week. Follow Daisley [on Twitter](#) for more and [click here](#) to listen in to the Eat Sleep Work Repeat podcast.

ABOUT JON RATCLIFFE

Jon is the CEO of engage Video Group, a data-driven, social video publishing business. Jon is also the chairman of the Cape Town branch of the Advertising and Media Association of South Africa (AMASA) and the African representative to the World Economic Forum's global agenda council on the global creative economy...

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