

# One Knight in Product - E103 - Hanne Ockert-Axelsson

Tue, 1/4 9:41PM 36:22

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, team, product, feel, pm, gp, work, loads, bit, solve, building, big, challenging, high performing team, problem, healthcare, managing, business, product manager, tech

## SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Hanne Ockert-Axelsson

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Jason Knight 00:00

Hello, and welcome to the show. I'm your host, Jason Knight, and on each episode of this podcast, I'll be having inspiring conversations with passionate product people. If that sounds like your type of thing, why not head over to [OneKnightInProduct.com](https://OneKnightInProduct.com), where you can sign up to the mailing list, subscribe on your favourite podcast app or follow the podcast on social media and guarantee you never miss another episode again. On tonight's episode, we talk about taking a passion for healthcare and technology, combining the two and ending up producing a platform with 98% market penetration in the UK. We talk about the importance of cross functional teams, why it's so important to put the work in to make sure they're successful and how to create a high performance team culture. We also ponder how to identify your own leadership style, making sure you're true to yourself, but ensuring you're the best version of yourself for that important presentation to the leadership team. For all this and much more, please join us on One Knight in Product. So my guest tonight is Hanne Ockert-Axelsson. Hanne's a former NGO country manager turned product leader and also a mezzo soprano and fancy dress addict, so you can be sure that any intermissions in tonight's recording you're purely down to costume changes. Hanne and I first met when we were both on the same panel at a conference, and she had enough energy to retake the stage later on and give the best talk of the day. She's here tonight to make it three for three and talk about building high performing teams or, if she can't build them, at least turning low performing teams into high performing teams. Hi, Hanne, how are you tonight?



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 01:29

I'm great. Thank you so much for having me.



Jason Knight 01:32

No problem. It's good to have you here. So, first things first, you are a senior product manager at [Pur](#). Can you tell me what your role is at [Pur](#)?

at accurx. So what problem does accurx solve for me?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 01:40

Really great question. So accuRx is a health tech company that builds communication software for the NHS, which is the health care system here in England. Our flagship software basically allows GPs, or healthcare staff in general, to be able to send SMS to patients. This functionality, which - accuRx was founded in 2016 - like, didn't exist before. And even though it's not revolutionary functionality, by any means, it really created loads of like task efficiency within healthcare, and our flagship product is now used by 98% of GP practices in England, which is crazy.



Jason Knight 02:12

Yeah, sure is. And one of my questions was going to be because, you know, I live in the UK, and I'm well aware of the NHS and what it's like to go to the GP. I mean, I would never sit there and think that GPs are like a massively tech enabled cohort of people, like it's never been my experience in all of my life going to the GP in the UK, that that's been the case. So that may be a cliché, I'm being completely unfair. But how easy is it to get digital solutions into the hands of these practices?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 02:39

Yeah, so I would say that there is some different challenges that you have when building software in healthcare that you don't have, when building say, a consumer based product or even another B2B product. One of the elements, like first and foremost is around like, data security, clinical risk, patient risk in general, which makes this group of people typically a little bit less on the cutting edge. They're not really going to be ... want to be an early adopter of a new piece of software that could potentially leak a bunch of patient data. That's just, that's literally not an option for them or for us. So there's a very different kind of risk appetite that we deal with. I would say another thing, having spent quite a lot of time in the last couple of years, shadowing GPs and getting to know kind of the different pain points of their day to day is that, you know, they've been... a typical GP does years upon years of training just to get to their very advanced level of medical knowledge. So to also expect someone to have an advanced level of technical knowledge, like a dual ability there, is a quite a big ask. So it is challenging, for sure. But it also presents with lots of great opportunities, because it's definitely an underserved market. And healthcare deserves to have great technology, just like consumers deserve great technology. So lots of exciting work to be done there.



Jason Knight 03:50

Absolutely. I think that point around healthcare deserving it is absolutely valid as well, like, yeah, it could be tough, but I'm sure it's also really meaningful. It's definitely something that I've been looking to maybe do one day, you know, get into health tech, transfer a few lives. But so far...

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 04:04

It's cool over here, you should try it!



Jason Knight 04:05

One day, one day, maybe I'll get a job off you. But you touched on it a little bit there around some of the discovery that you'd be doing as part of the workflow that ... y'know building the solutions. So are you primarily dealing with them, with the doctors, the GPs, or you also dealing with, say, practice staff or administrators of these NHS Trusts? Like, do you have to go to all those people or do you really hyper target your discovery around certain types of people?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 04:28

So accuRx's kind of flagship software was targeted at GPs, but that quickly grew to, like, GP staff in general. So, typically, when I'm saying GP, I'm probably saying anyone who works in a GP practice; that could be a receptionist, an admin, Practice Manager. They're all probably using our software in different ways. So trying to enable different solutions to solve their different problems. There is also now a separate business unit at accuRx, not the one I work on, but a separate business unit that is looking at building products for communication in Trust. So in hospitals, in district nursing or in community services. It's a very different landscape in secondary care because if you think about your interactions with primary care, typically you go in to your GP, they're sitting at a desk with a desktop computer, you're sitting in a chair next to them, it's pretty much the same all over the country. Versus if you go to a cardiologist versus dermatology versus you see a district nurse or at home visit, maybe they have a smartphone, maybe they have a tablet, maybe the internet connection is not very good. So we don't have the same kind of hardware capabilities that we do in primary care. So we have to look at very different kinds of tech and communication solutions that way,



Jason Knight 05:34

Well it'd be boring if it was easy right? But you just touched on it there, kind of expanding out into different use cases. So how does the product organisation look there at the moment, so you're a senior PM, do you have a team reporting into you?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 05:45

So I'm not sure if this is typical, but at least at accuRx... So, I do have a cross functional team composed of a designer, a user researcher, some software engineers, who are all brilliant, and I have an Associate Product Manager on my team as well, which has been a really great opportunity for me also to upskill as someone who's mentoring and training someone who's learning kind of the ropes of product management. So that's kind of the typical structure at accuRx. Some of our teams, depending on the amount of clinical risk, they have also have a clinical lead, which will either be, say, a GP, or a - because we also have a business unit that focuses on secondary care - say, like consultant or a junior doctor from the hospital setting. And that's more or less the structure kind of across the company. Currently, I think we have seven

product teams, we're looking to grow that to about 10 product teams. And then we have loads of support systems, obviously, around that we have an amazing talent team, amazing people ops, we have a amazing team of EMs that help keep everything afloat. So...



Jason Knight 06:40

Yeah so I was gonna say if you got seven teams, could be considered some challenges trying to keep all of those people aligned. Now, I don't know how different the things that you're working on are more, or how much you have to keep aligned. But is that a challenge that you think you've solved, or is that kind of a constant battle to make sure that you're on the same page, everyone knows what each other is doing and any dependencies are managed effectively?



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 07:00

I mean, I think this is maybe the the battle that will never be won. And we joke about it in accuRx that, at some point, we're going to realise that like a product team across - like, currently, we have two business units, this primary care and secondary care, but at some point, we'll have three, four or five - that we'll have a team in two different business units, we're building the exact same thing or solving the exact same problem. And that is probably something that happens at Google every once in a while or all of these, you know, giant tech companies, I can only imagine. So it's a constant effort to make sure that you are communicating or providing those types of updates. Slack is obviously an immensely powerful tool. But I would say that accuRx is now around 120 150, somewhere in that range. And it is effort to keep up with everything that's happening on Slack. And that is a big responsibility that product managers across the organisation do shoulder to make sure that they know what's happening in all of the other teams. It's becoming more realistic to be really in the know of the different product teams within your business unit and a rough idea about the product teams in the other business unit. But even that is a stretch because that's seven moving pieces to try to keep an eye on at all times. And yeah, it's a constant kind of effort to make sure that that is going as smoothly as possible.



Jason Knight 08:15

Yeah, no, I've definitely been there that it's definitely interesting to try and keep in... But to be honest, I think even with relatively small teams, sometimes it can be quite tricky to keep everyone aligned across the business. So I don't think it gets any easier. But yeah, obviously with scale, it definitely has its own unique challenges. But before this, you had a very varied career. So you were working in senior roles at a 600 member NGO in the Philippines, 1000 member NGO in Malaysia covering, amongst other things, HIV, sex education programmes. You've been programme officer for sexual health London, you've been a business and contract manager for a medical research company. So you've obviously got a strong background in, and passion for, health and health initiatives like... that's throughout your career, right? So I can understand why you got into accuRx to try and help solve some health problems. But what got you into accuRx as a product manager in the first place? Because this is your first product job, right?



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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 09:07

Yeah, so I love telling the story.



Jason Knight 09:09

This is gonna be good.

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 09:10

And hopefully I love telling it... I love telling it because I hope to inspire others. Ever since university, I thought I was going to go to med school. Realised pretty quickly. I wasn't going to go to med school just.. I wasn't cut out for it. It wasn't the right fit for me. I ended up going to Southeast Asia for several years, did loads of really cool, like, social health projects, and then came to London to do my Master's in public health, and then ended up in university research. And I think one of the things I became really excited about when I moved to London is, I did this research with my Masters on access to the NHS for undocumented migrants. Now I came to London in 2015. So this is like peak Brexit time. And my research got published and then it got picked up by The Independent and suddenly I have a... I had a little bit of a buzz around, like that this research was really important and hopefully was going to influence some decision making. And I was really excited by that. But then I kind of started losing the momentum. And if you're in academia or in research, formalised research, it can often feel that hopefully, you do loads of research and collect lots of data so that you can publish so that someone influential hopefully reads what you publish and remembers it, and then potentially makes a policy that in 10 years time helps the people that you did the research for initially. And that feedback loop was a little bit too long for me. So I, I started having a think about want to do a career shift. And I never really done a pivot in that way before. I wasn't like that old, I was like, 27. So it's not like I'd had loads of experience beforehand to like, lean back on. But I did go to university for my undergrad in Seattle, which means half of my friends are at Amazon or Microsoft, for big tech companies. Yeah, I know loads of people who were in product. And they basically said, like, you can try to upskill. So I did like a bunch of online courses, I read like loads of books. And then I just started applying to ... literally the only requirement was health tech. Like, I applied to any health tech company that like I could get my hands on the application. And I would say, "never worked in a startup, never worked at a tech company never worked in product, but I'll work really hard and I'm really enthusiastic and I know how to build strong teams and I'm here to learn". So I got lucky that accuRx kind of took a bet on me in that way. And in many ways it's, like, worked out brilliantly. I joined accuRx when we were 18 people, I was the first product person at accuRx... they quickly hired some additionally more senior products people than me, which I was able to like learn and was mentored and line managed by and have since then been able to take on bigger teams and more difficult challenges and have been able to like learn and become quite confident in my product abilities since starting.



Jason Knight 11:58

There you go. That's a great origin story... should make a film about that one day. But you said you obviously had to kind of skill up, you probably took loads of online courses, you've talked about a lot of books like was there one book that really sticks out as like a big enabler for you

on that journey, like one thing that you'd recommend to someone that was maybe trying to go down that same path?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 12:19

So I actually have like a study list. I've shared this around to... there's like a women in tech groups called Elpha, like an online group. And they had like a call out for like people who got into product, how what was their path, and I shared my little like, study guide, they published it as part of like one of their findings. So I can link that over to you, Jason, and you can share it to your podcast. But I think the first book that I read that I think was pretty influential just because it was the first book and it was one of those things where I like, took loads of notes. And even sometimes I like look back at those notes. Not that they're like particularly brilliant, but because there was so many like, "aha!" moments that I had while reading it. That was "Cracking the PM Interview". Which is a great book. And there's lots of great product books, I think, like "Inspired" is obviously great. There's lots of different books that you can get kind of different takes on on this. But "Cracking the PM Interview" I found was really accessible, especially as like someone who didn't know what Agile meant, or like, kind of all like the key terms that you're supposed to know, as a product manager. It really broke it down and made it easy.



Jason Knight 13:21

No, absolutely. It's a fabulous book and obviously got a nice follow up as well now, this year as well, Cracking the PM Career so you can read that if you need any further inspiration,

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 13:29

I'm gonna pick that up.



Jason Knight 13:31

But how did your non product background inform, or maybe not inform how you've approached product management? So like, you've worked in a bunch of NGOs, I'm assuming that they've done quite differently to say a digital product startup. Was it challenging moving to this more empowered cross functional setup and working more agile and moving into this whole world of startups, or were you kind of already working a bit like that in some of the other places that you worked at before?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 13:57

So the NGO that I worked for, we would often be working on like different projects with different teams. So that kind of be this constant flux of like meeting new people needing to like, build that foundation of trust and understanding and vulnerability and getting to know each other really quickly, so that you can work together and deliver these different high impact projects as as quickly as possible. And it was very on trend, so this was probably like 2012-2013, to read

like business books and try to apply them to the NGO world without any money, which like, it's funny, because now a lot of the business books do really encourage - especially like tech business books - around like the financial investments in like creating culture and creating teams. And NGOs don't typically pay very much in finance lots of fields instead. But I think I read Lean Startup in 2013. And I was managing a team at the time. And so we started implementing daily stand ups in our nonprofit world. I remember thinking I was so clever back then, like having these daily stand ups, but it worked in a lot of ways, like it gave this team a really good understanding of like, what everyone was working on. And I think some of those just like fundamentals of communication, like, regardless of what kind of thing you're doing, can really just help make that work much more smoothly.



Jason Knight 15:16

But we chatted before this around some of the management style differences between, say, working for those NGOs and working for a company like you're working for now. So this kind of idea that now of course, we're cross functional, we're collaborative, it's all about managing by influence and best idea wins and all that sort of thing. Whereas maybe working for some of these bigger organisations, working for the NGOs, maybe it's a little bit more top down. Is that a fair assessment?



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 15:42

Yes, typically, I guess, because a lot of NGOs, it really depends on like, what your funding or grant sources are. And so if there is a very specific, especially if you're doing like working with like a private corporation, and they have a CSR initiative that you're helping deliver, like they'll have really specific deliverables. That being said, there is still an element of like cross functionality, where you might have someone who's doing like some marketing work or design work or, and then you also have someone who's kind of managing logistics or someone doing operations. So there, there still is an element of different people, each coming with their unique skill set to the group to contribute an element of this project to make it work together,



Jason Knight 16:21

I think you'll be surprised, there's probably a lot of top paying stakeholder things going on in some product companies as well. So it's not all as different as you might think. Now, I know you're super passionate about building effective product teams. So before we dig into that a little bit, what do you mean by effective product teams? Like what are some of the hallmarks, in your opinion of an effective product team? What are you looking for?



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 16:42

So I would say typically, you know, when you're there. So people who are in a high performing product team or high performing team in general, it's not a question of like, are we in the high performing team? You probably know. I think one of the most obvious things for me personally, especially as a product manager, is that I don't need to be chasing results, the results just seem to start happening, or like you just start delivering at this crazy pace. Because like, it's

such a well oiled machine, that problems pop up, and they solve themselves almost immediately. And that's what it seems like it's that people are, you know, raising things immediately at stand up, because you know, that you've broken down those like barriers to communication, and people feel ready to have conflict or to challenge each other. And then when those come up, someone else volunteers to, you know, sit with them for 10 minutes to help unblock them on that problem. And things just start happening really smoothly. That's probably like my top telltale sign, I think in that you can also break down that like that conflict, the healthy conflict being really present, people being really open to communicating and everyone in the team having that chance to, to kind of voice their opinions. And this has nothing to do with like having a team of extroverts or a team of loud people, quiet people, or people who are, might be more hesitant to share their opinions, a team that is high performing, knows how to kind of support and encourage those people to also be able to share their thoughts and provide the like psychological safety where they feel that they're able to have their opinions portrayed as well.



Jason Knight 18:09

I'm sure that your team now is working exactly that. Because you're so passionate about it. And if they weren't working like that, you'd presumably put those things in place to get them to work like that. But were they working out that when you got there? Or do you think that there's been some work that you've put in, not just you, of course, you and the team have put into kind of improve and adapt and optimise how you work together across the last couple of years that you've been working with them.



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 18:32

So I've probably had four or five different product teams at accuRx. It's just because they're... as I think is necessary that people within a team have different interests, they want to try on a new skill, they want to work on a different product. Movement within a product company, I think is really natural and should be encouraged. The team that I'm currently working with, we were part of a bigger team, and as of June split into two teams. And when we split, there was only three of us. And now there are seven of us. So in the last six months, we've had four new joiners, which is also massive in terms of how much our team has grown and how we've had to onboard and support and kind of norm to that new way of working. Each new person that either comes or leaves a team has an effect on that team's makeup. So the most recent, we had someone join at the beginning of November. And we're probably now at that point where we're like, we're in a really good place. It's been about you know, five weeks, five, six weeks, where we're really, you know, in a good groove and are able to have really effective meetings and have found kind of a rhythm in our ways of working. That works well. But definitely not always like that. And sometimes you can't fault the team because it takes time to build that, especially, like baseline foundation of trust. And that is part of the journey to get there.



Jason Knight 19:47

But when we're talking about that cross functional team, aside from the Associate Product Manager that you've got, those are people that you don't directly manage, right. So these are people that your - cliché alert! - but these are the people that you're managing by influence?



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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 19:59

Even the APM I don't manage her as well. So I mentor her, but she's managed by someone else in the company.



Jason Knight 20:04

Right. So again, a lot of this is through influence. And I guess one question then based on some of the stuff you were saying was, like, how much responsibility do you take personally, or, I guess, on behalf of the product organisation to kind of lean into that whole idea that this has got to work properly, and someone's got to take responsibility for making this work and that person has to be me, versus making that kind of a team responsibility? Like, do you think it's important for you, for example, to actually lead from the front and try and drive home some of these well functioning product practices?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 20:36

So I would say, at accuRx, we have a saying, which I'm not going to quote correctly, but I'm going to quote, approximately, and it's something like "the PM is responsible for the health outcomes, and deliverables of the team". But I think all that saying is like, ultimately, it's your head that rolls, it's like, you're the one who needs to stand up in front of leadership and present on behalf of your team's OKRs, your objectives, key results, and how you're really delivering against what was expected of the team. That being said, like, especially given that I have an APM, that is starting to take on more responsibility, like I show up to meetings, and I'm often silent and like, watch things be solved in front of me, where people kind of put their hand up and take responsibility for thing. Every once in a while, like all obviously raise something or if I noticed something in our like quality channel on Slack or a bug being raised, I might try to bring different people in. But I don't necessarily think of it as the PM is the one responsible for doing the thing, it's more responsible of the thing being done, which I really take to heart that I ultimately believe if anything gets dropped is because myself or the PM didn't really keep an eye on it as closely and everyone has spinning plates and is trying to make the best call at every given time, which spinning plate to spend the most time on, every once in a while it gets dropped. And that's the PMs kind of role to make sure it's not the wrong plate.



Jason Knight 21:56

Yeah, that's fair enough, and obviously making sure you're always working on the most important things. But I'm now remembering and I'm going to misquote this as well. A quote from a while back from some Facebook PM who, to quote badly, said something along the lines of he's not involved in any kind of day to day product management or writing tickets or kind of getting the day to day work done. And all his work is spent on strategy and direction. Now, some people reacted badly to that... I can kind of see where the guy was coming from, but also thinking this may be unrealistic for quite a lot of companies that to be the case. But do you feel that it's good for you to be, kind of.... or you and your APM to be down and involved sort of in the mud, getting stuff done, moving stuff along, and being involved in that project

management side, as well as the kind of overall strategy and definition of where you're going? Or is that something that you think is best handled by, for example, the development team themselves?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 22:48

So I have a good friend of mine, who is a PM at Facebook. And I remember sending him a draft of some OKRs ones to get some feedback on. And he sent me extensive feedback, which was all like really, really appreciated. But we did have a good like chat around how different our product roles were accurate, doesn't run that model. But the pm has an element of responsibility of like coordinating with stakeholders and identifying some of the bigger user problems. And you know, what metrics are we able to drive to be able to solve some of these problems or implement different ideas or run experiments around trying to move some of these metrics, but there is a big chunk of delivery. I would say at accuRx, we probably have the PM taking on an element of scrum mastering or in between the tech lead and the PM. They're sharing that scrum master role. Also at accuRx, we don't have anyone who does QA that falls on the PM or the non devs. So our designer, user researcher plays a play a big role in helping QA anything, making sure that they kind of fit to what the spec initially was, and what we were hoping to achieve with that ticket. So very much down in the trenches involved with the team. And I think that there is something really nice about that, because the team feels very even, there's a quite flat hierarchy in the team, when the engineers aren't siloed away kind of doing the delivery, code monkeying the things that they were given by the rest of the team. Like, our engineers go to practices and shadow GPs, and are really involved in user research and come to design crits and give their opinions on like, "Oh, I think you know, the initial problem we were trying to solve was this. And we could do that much easier in this different approach", which maybe none of the discovery team would have thought of. So it creates a really nice kind of open communication and opens up for people to problem solve, which is ultimately what you want out of a high performing team.



Jason Knight 24:40

Yeah, for sure. You don't want to get loads of clever people into a company and then just give them tasks to do right. Like it's really important to those people involved as much as they're comfortable with although obviously not all engineers always comfortable with that. But as long as you can get the ones that are comfortable that to do it then it's definitely a recipe for success. But talking of then, effective product teams Are there any approaches that you've taken, like you say, when maybe some of these people have come in or maybe when you've moved into a team, and it wasn't working quite the way that you thought and you've needed to work out how good or bad or ugly some of the practices within that team are? Or some of the problems that might be personally within the team or any other things that can hijack a team's performance? Do you have any, like Hanne special frameworks or techniques to do? Or do you use any existing frameworks to try and work out what the problem or lack of within that team is?

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Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 25:31

I've probably been influenced by loads of different like books or blogs, or mentors. I would say if I was, you know airlifted into a team that I was told, is maybe not performing as well as it could.

I think my first steps would be, which is very much based on like, horror stories, what other people have told me is, like, don't try to change anything on day one. Like, sit and try to observe, try to understand like, are there things going well, because if there are things that are going well, and you go and implement a new system, people can really easily take offence to like, "Well, we had this thing, the one thing that was going well, you went and broke", to try to figure out if there are those things are, there probably is something to sit and observe. I would say that another thing that I've noticed in general is it can feel really busy. And especially in a retro, if it comes up, there are too many meetings, that's usually a symptom of people don't feel that they know everything that's going on, and they're not able to complete their work. And a simple exercise like giving everyone a post a note pad and telling them to write down one post note for every single thing that they did this week, and get that up, like on a board, and then do the same exercise again, for one thing that they're planning to do next week. You now have basically like a Kanban board, or a backlog that you're able to evaluate how the team is doing. And suddenly you have now like overwhelming transparency of everything that's going on. So that's, I would say, like kind of step one. In the last six months where I've not had a new team, but I've had progressively additional new members on boarded, I would say one thing that we try to always do is we always try to do a social within the first week of a new joiner. And a social doesn't need to be something big, it can be like, go to lunch together. Or if you're completely remote, like, do it like 20 minute online game, there are so many fun, silly online games, my team loves Scattegories online is really fun. There's a great game called Draw Saurus, which I could highly recommend. We play like Ticket to Ride, we can play Catan online, there's so many online games that like just give you a chance to like, have something that keeps you busy, but also gives you a chance to chat non work stuff and get to know each other because this is a good baseline of vulnerability and getting to know people. There's also lots of like, great kind of get to know activities, which my team has probably not like, especially the people who are with me at the beginning of these last six months, we probably done it three or four times. But I don't think they would say that they're bored of it. Because like, it's also a really great reflection for yourself to think about your progress as you go. So a really nice easy one is called Moving Motivators, it's like it's one that you can get for free online, it's basically 10 different cards about different things that can motivate you about work, then you rate them from like lowest to highest. And then you share as a group, which one was highest, which one was lowest. And it just starts like a really nice conversation about like, what do you care about and what's important to you. And then people can bond over the things that they voted lowest together or things that they voted different and like acknowledging those differences. Another really fun one is personal mapping. So it's basically like when you do like a story map where you make like a circle in the middle, and then you do like a little, you know, tree branch off of it, you have like circles off of those tree branches, but you make it for your life. So you have your name in the middle. And then you have like maybe a list of like suggested categories, like education, family, friends, movies, interests, hobbies, goals, values, behaviours, anything like this. And then you give people like 15 minutes to make their little tree. And then I love doing it, where you trade it with someone else. And then someone else has to present you by reading your mind map. So there are... I know it, it becomes quite silly, but people really pay attention when someone else is presenting on behalf of them. So it's really, really effective. So there are so many like endless amounts of these activities that are really like low budget and easy just to do both in person and remote, but help establish that trust, because without that trust, you're not going to get anywhere. And if you're at a low performing team, you need to establish that trust. If you're in a new team, you need to establish that trust, you're not going to get to that point where people are actively challenging each other and stand up and helping unblock each other in a in the most effective way if they don't feel that trust between their teammates.



Jason Knight 29:35

No, absolutely. And obviously that's something that's been made challenging with the remote stuff that's been going on the last couple of years. But there's been a bunch of online spaces, almost like proto Metaverses is that you can log into and go and have these chats and... things like Orbital and stuff like that. So I guess there are still ways to do it. But... I know that you and I both have a slight hankering for the office from time to time. So you know, hopefully we'll be able to keep doing that as well. But one of the things that you're very passionate about is being an effective team leader. And obviously talks about some of the stuff that you've been talking about already. But very specifically, what does being an effective team leader mean to you?



Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 30:11

So I think a big element of being an effective team leader is understanding your own like, brand of leadership, which is definitely something that can change. And you can be a strong leader, with a very different brand than my brand. And I think that's what makes different teams like work really well, in different, like groups work well with different people. So I think that I've recently and I probably will spend some time like over New Year's also, like reflecting on this a bit, thinking about like, how my personal brand has changed. One of the things that like will always, or has at least the last few years come at the top is that like, I am positive, and I don't try to like hide that to be more professional. That was definitely something that I like, joined to the business world that I was like, "Well, I can't be so silly, I can't be so you know, just like goofy and like, making jokes all the time". And then I realised "No, like, that's, that's really a big part of who I am. And that's a big part of me feeling comfortable and being vulnerable. And, and I want to kind of let that positivity be infectious, and hopefully encourage other people to like, be their own version of themselves". So that's definitely like a number one. I would say another one that ranks very, very highly for me is like, I start everyone at 100%. trust first. You don't build trust with me, like you have trust from day one. And like, if there are things that maybe don't work out, like I might revisit that perception, but I try to always trust first and assume positive intent with everyone's actions. And that very much dictates how I lead. I think, also, given that I'm obsessed with all this high performing team stuff, like I don't love metrics. I find metrics really important. I find data really important. I try to keep a good eye on my data. But it's not the thing that like, motivates me about like, "oh, we gained half a percent today, like we're so excited", like, what motivates me is about the impact of the stories and like, especially working in healthcare, what real influence are we having on these people and on health care providers, and on patients, and that's kind of what matters. So I always want to try to bring it back to them. And I think storytelling in general is such a positive force for really making those things concrete. So I'm probably not going to rave about the half percent increase. But I'm definitely going to share a couple of testimonials of like, what difference this product made.



Jason Knight 32:34

So you're more of a qually than a quant?



 H

Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 32:36

Definitely.



Jason Knight 32:37

But that's an interesting point that I wanted to loop back on this whole idea of like, obviously, is really great to be your own best version of yourself at work, for sure. And like you say being infectious and funny. That's a great thing to be. But also that comes with certain connotations, certainly, if you read some of the books like especially for say, women in tech, women in product that, like they have a hard enough time getting treated seriously anyway, because of the inbuilt biases of a male dominated workplace like, Have you ever felt that that attitude has ever held you back in any way throughout your career? Or has that been something that you've not seen?

 H

Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 33:13

So this was a conversation I had... feels not that long ago, but it was probably over a year and a half ago, when I was a product manager before I got promoted to senior product manager. And I remember speaking to my line manager about how I found it really difficult to kind of control the room when we were having like progress updates with our leadership board. And that I really felt like we were having these runaway conversations and that, you know, people would just kind of sub in with these like tangential questions, and I wasn't able to kind of keep it focused on like, this is what we're working on right now. And I'm trying to give an update on this. And what he encouraged me to think about is not to like, not be myself, but to figure out what were my different personas for different scenarios. And now when I do my leadership updates, I have a bit more of a, I wouldn't say stern persona, but I have a like a seriousness. And especially if I'm delivering something like, "Oh, we're behind schedule, or", you know, we've had this setback, or we're facing this risk that we're really worried about, I'll probably turn up the scale on that. Versus if I'm giving an update being like, "we shipped these five things last week, and they all went well". Like I'll probably lean into the silliness a bit more. And I think that you have to do it in a genuine way, which is really hard. There's no ... There's no kind of formula to like getting this right. But it's finding that balance of like, you know, who do you need to be in this room with this group? And I would expect most people are a bit different to their mother than they are to their like romantic partner, but they're still genuine in both cases. But that's kind of how I think about it. In terms of what meeting need what version of me.



Jason Knight 34:47

Yeah, for sure. I mean, I've certainly been in situations... I mean, I'm definitely a person who likes to use humour to defuse tension and that's certainly something that has, I think, been to my detriment in certain meetings in the past and something I've tried to tamp down. And this is coming from someone who's got all of the societal benefits. Even for me, I've still felt that that's been limiting from time to time. So I can't even imagine what it'd be like for people that have those biases against them as well. So definitely an interesting one. But like you say, wanting to

be yourself is a really important thing. And where can people find you after this, then if they want to chat to you about products, or maybe find out a little bit more about leadership styles, or maybe even trying to do some fancy dress trading?

H

Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 35:28

Yeah, so on Twitter or medium at like hanneOA. So H-A-N-N-E-O-A. Those I think are all of my social handles. That's all me. So can find me kind of on most things there.



Jason Knight 35:40

I'll make sure to link it in. Well, that's been a fantastic chat and obviously really happy that we got the chance to have more in detail conversation after the last couple that we had.

H

Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 35:48

Yeah, definitely.



Jason Knight 35:49

Obviously, we'll stay in touch. But as for now, thanks for taking the time.

H

Hanne Ockert-Axelsson 35:52

Thank you so much for having me. As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to pop over to [OneKnightInProduct.com](https://OneKnightInProduct.com), check out some of our other fantastic guests, sign up to the mailing list or subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share it with your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but, as for now, thanks and good night.