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VARIETY PACK

Episode 20: Rethink Pack

Recording: You are listening to the Slack Variety Pack brought to you by Slack. All kinds of people on all kinds of teams. Use Slack to do amazing things.

Host: Welcome to episode 20 of the Slack Variety Pack. On this episode we're going to rethink the way we do things, such as how to make a living or how to start your work day. First, how to rethink resolving conflicts in the office. We're not always going to get along with our colleagues but are there more inventive ways to get past the battle and ease coworker tensions. We asked you how your office deals with conflict resolution.

Voice 1: We sat down for like an hour, locked the doors and we said we're not getting out until we resolve this.

Voice 2: The big thing is to get my own ego out of the way.

Voice 3: One of the best ways was using digital tools, so using things like white boards to actually just put it out there and have everybody brainstorm and master mind around it.

Voice 4 : They used to have these groups where you had to feel the spirits and if you didn't feel the spirits you weren't being a team player and then people quit.

Voice 5: We were too nice to each other because we're also buddies and eventually it came to a point where we had a really awesome argument in the Jeep driving around town and everything got on the table and then we hacked it out.

Voice 6: Times where everything is getting a little bit tense and someone's just gotten up and started dancing, which totally lightens the mood, everyone laughs, don't take yourself too seriously and a good dance never hurt anybody.

Reporter 1: Conflict resolution in the workplace number one. A more creative approach to disputes, taking a cue from a Broadway musical or two. Sharon Glassman is a Colorado based journalist and performer who came up with a more melodious way to resolve conflict.

Sharon : I came across this idea of well, what if we sang our disagreements with changing the melody and the rhythm of the way we communicate allow us to hear better and break out of bad habits? Will that break up the, you know when you disagree with someone, don't you have habit words, syllables like ugh, blah or [inaudible 00:02:51]. Not really furthering the conversation. I got a conflict management expert and I chatted with her a little bit and ran the idea by her and she explained to me, and I found this fascinating, that when you disagree with someone, you're not only having trouble finding the words to say but you're actually tapping in your lower brain into habits that you learned as a kid at home that have nothing to do with the context you're in so you're almost bringing your sandbox training to war with their sandbox training and you're so

out of the actual moment. She was like I don't know what singing would do but I think it would get you out of that pattern and maybe reveal deeper truths.

Reporter 1: Wow, that's actually really profound.

Sharon : Right?

Reporter 1: Okay, so you know we're going to have to do this right?

Sharon : Yeah, I know. What do you want to disagree about?

Reporter 1: Well at the meeting I feel like you threw me under the bus a bit.

Sharon : Yeah, but hold on a second. We were on a deadline and you didn't deliver. I needed the schematic for the [Hoosie 00:03:51] [inaudible 00:03:51]

Reporter 1: There's a reason I didn't deliver and then you have to point it out in front of everybody?

Sharon : I don't want to be the person that's known as the person who brings the guy that doesn't deliver.

Reporter 1: You know what? You just like to show it off. I think you find a power in it. I don't like it.

Sharon : Okay, so you can see, how we've retched up our tone. I actually have weird chills and anxiety sweat going on.

Reporter 1: From our fake fight?

Sharon : Are you feeling good and heard and like your needs are being met?

Reporter 1: No it sucks. Let's resolve this.

Sharon : It's awful. I'm angry that you are confronting me. Let's see if we go deeper. If you'd like to sing your opening line.

Reporter 1: Why did you have to point out to the meeting ... I can't do this Sharon.

Sharon : You're good at this.

Reporter 1: Sharon why at the meeting did you have to point out that I wasn't done my project?

Sharon : I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking. It was something that I said, like playing tennis a ball was being lobbed at me. I tried to hit it back and I hit you. We can be a team instead of playing against each other. What do you say?

Reporter 1: I like that because I can't sing.

Sharon : That's okay.

Reporter 1: Actually I see it. I hear it.

Sharon : Right? Hey, isn't that what creativity and human relationships are, sort of crazy and weird and beautiful?

Reporter 1: Absolutely.

Sharon : Yeah.

Host: Slack. Helping teams work better. Maybe singing people's troubles away could be a great side gig for a musician. Before, the life of a musician basically consisted of this, writing music, hitting the studio, playing gigs, touring, selling CDs and merch, and repeat. These days you have to be a bit more savvy to make a living at it. Indie musicians heading to South by Southwest in a few weeks take note.

Reporter 2: Welcome to Austin, Texas, unarguably one of the coolest cities in America. The indie music capital. Austin City Limits and South by Southwest. The barbecue, the burritos, the liberal arts scene. Austin is a rare gem inside a very Texasy Texas. Now, there's more. Austin is in the middle of a massive tech boom. Thousands of technology professionals from all over the world are moving into the city. For the mecca of music, that's a game changer.

Jackie: My name's Jackie Vinson, thanks so much for coming out to the art show, well just all around art showing.

Reporter 2: Of course, digital culture is shape shifting every job out there but here in Austin, it's the music industry that's getting creative with tech.

Jackie: Making money out of music, it's like you have to have a lot of different skills and you have to know how to hustle.

Reporter 2: Singer songwriter Jackie Vinson has lived in Austin, Texas her whole life. The life calling of a musician is tough enough but instead of throwing up her arms, Jackie, like many forward thinking musicians, decided to use Austin's tech boom and start up community to her advantage.

Luke: My name's Luke Phillipos. That's one thing that I think musicians really understand, is that they are building something that you can't see and necessarily touch and that allows them to grasp concepts really well sometimes.

Jackie: Are you sure you're here my baby?

Reporter 2: Luke is encouraging more and more musicians to embrace programming through the Austin Code Academy. Here, players like Richard Davis are becoming students using the technology that was once a threat to the industry to make a better living.

Luke: Well, I'm a musician. Been playing since I was in middle school and been teaching 26 years. I learned to code because I want to explore things outside of music and just to be able to create different things, and I like the challenge of being able to do that through the technology.

Jackie: Why you choose to ignore it ...

Reporter 2: It's not an easy learning curve, but if musicians know one thing it's rehearsing.

Jackie: You have to practice coding the way you have to practice an instrument and if you want to be ahead of the game as a musician you have to be the best you can be at your instrument.

Reporter 2: If programming and coding are too big of a concept for a street strummer, there are more ways Austin is morphing tech and making money from music. Like changing the way players traditionally pass the hat.

Luke: For years folks have been saying oh, why can't there be an app for tipping. We finally created something for it but I think the hardest thing is to try to get folks to download and adopt this application of tipping.

Reporter 2: Renee [Lolosmordes 00:09:29] is one of the founders of Tip Cow, an app that lets fans tip their favorite acts. [Seraphina 00:09:36], one name just like Madonna, is a jazz and soul singer and the very first musician to sign up for Tip Cow.

Seraphia: I'm very much a guerrilla marketing person. I used to be in sales so I have no problem promoting and being like hey guys, we got this awesome app in town. If you'll pull out your cell phones and download Tip Cow, I have no problem doing that. Maybe other people will feel awkward about it but personally, me, nah, not at all.

Reporter 2: It may be tough to make it in Austin but it's not for a lack of ears. Austin is proud of its music scene and another company has found a way to tap into that.

Matt: My name is Matt Ott. I'm co-founder of Black Foot.

Reporter 2: Black Foot is a crowd source network of people who sponsor a small group of local musicians. Patrons of the arts online.

Matt: Just like the opera, the symphony, the theater, we believe that by creating a group of patrons of local music, of which there are over 250 already joined in

the Austin, we can create a group of people who nominate their favorite bands who come to over 20, 30 private events a year and then who award grants to those musicians.

Reporter 2: Miguel O'Hara is the lead singer of Migrant Kids, a band sponsored by Black Foot.

Miguel : Really we've been playing music for about ten years now and five years in Austin. I think also winning the Austin Music Awards last year, that was really what I think caught Black Foot's attention and made us a nominee. It's 20 bands that get nominated and we are one of those 20. Very proud of it.

Reporter 2: Worlds are definitely colliding in Austin, Texas. It's no longer musicians versus the man. It's becoming a marriage of tech and tunage. It's all happening within the city limits. For hard working songwriters like Jackie, that means more options above and beyond the good old fashioned art of the hustle.

Jackie: I'm always going to find a way to make a dollar out of music, whether it be me being Jackie Vinson on the guitar or me being that keyboard player in the corner. I'm always going to find a way.

Sidewalk, [inaudible 00:12:17]. Small town lovers take me home. Sing for me quietly, walk ...

Host: Slack Variety Pack. Tweet us at SlackHQ.

Recording: Channel change. Wake up channel.

Working nine to five. Not a way to make a living.

Reporter 3: Getting into the office at 9am has been the work standard for decades, but not all of us are very productive first thing in the morning and for some people the commute makes the start time challenging. Luckily some companies are rethinking the one size fits all work start. Maybe it's time to ditch that alarm clock for good.

Do sounds like this start your mornings during the work week? That could be because you're starting your work day way too early. What if it didn't have to be that way? Flexible start times have proven to work really well for some organizations.

Alex De Rijke: I can say that we are noted for being a productive and efficient, also happy team. The tensions that might exist on the strict nine to five routine don't really exist. People don't get called off for coming in at the wrong time because there is no wrong time.

- Reporter 3: That was Alex De Rijke. He is the director of DRMM. That's an award winning architecture firm based in London. They did away with stringent time tables back in the mid 90s to cater to younger staff who preferred to start later and others who wanted to avoid the grind of the daily commute.
- Alex De Rijke: I live an hour away from the studio so I hate coming in in the rush hour traffic. Very uncivilized. I love coming in just after it. I usually get in half past nine, sometimes ten.
- Reporter 3: Chloe Carreau hit a wall trying to fit everything in within a nine to five day. She works for a company called All of Us, which provides project management and recruitment services to IT companies like Microsoft. Chloe is also juggling a toddler and a husband who runs his own contracting business. Here's where she was at last spring.
- Chloe Carreau: At the time our daughter wasn't quite two yet and I was working 40 hours a week almost out at Microsoft and the commute and trying to keep up with my husband's business, I was losing my mind. I was very stressed out. I was totally at my breaking point, and I did go to All of Us to say something's got to change probably soon. Like I'm okay now but just to put it in your mind and they were immediately so supportive.
- Reporter 3: All of Us gave Chloe the flexibility to come into the office later and wrap up her work day in the evening. She now strolls in at about 9:30 or 10:00, allowing her to sleep in.
- Chloe Carreau: It's just so much less stress to not be under the clock. Just having the flexibility to start earlier some days if it happens and to start later if I need to and just know that I have the bandwidth to get it done as I need to and not necessarily within the constraints of some finite time frame.
- Reporter 3: Dr. Paul Kelley thinks other organizations should take a leaf from companies like DRMM and All of Us. Kelley is a neuroscientist with Oxford University's Sleep and Circadian institute. He studies the body's natural clock, also known as circadian rhythms. Our clock is set on and off only by natural light. Dr. Kelley thinks most of us would be more productive if we were allowed to follow a more natural schedule and start later in the morning.
- Paul Kelley: The sort of average, non work behaviors of people of many ages is approximately, very approximately 8am to midnight. If you imagine you're waking up at about 8am and you're starting work in two hours. That's about right.
- Reporter 3: Kelley says that ignoring your biological tick tock weakens both your mental and physical capacities.

Paul Kelley: Society's times are not set to our body clock, but we can't change our body clock so when we stay up too late, when we eat at the wrong time of the day, when we don't get enough sleep, which is the easiest one for us to understand, then we feel bad and it does have a big negative effect. If you do it five days in a row, over and over again, work or school, then it causes serious, long term harm to pretty much everything you do and your health.

Reporter 3: Is this idea even practical in a world where many industries are glued to the nine to five and beyond? Here's Alex De Rijke of DRMM Architects again with advice for you nervous nellys.

Alex De Rijke: I understand the anxiety but I would reassure them that they need to simply be clear about how they operate and people will learn not to call them at 8:30.

Reporter 3: What can we do for people with jobs that are totally linked to wacky start times like emergency room doctors working the night shift? Dr. Kelley says that's where human resources professionals have to come in with more savvy scheduling and profiling of their staff.

Paul Kelley: What you do is you remodel the shift. There's a number of things you take into account. One is age but another one is morningness or eveningness. People are naturally genetically either stay up later, get up later people. You have to be aware of the circadian rhythm of the people you're employing and they have to be aware of their own. It's called Kono types.

Reporter 3: All you habitual yawners, stretchers and caffeine addicts, it's time to pitch your boss on flexible start times. Maybe you should be starting your day later or earlier. Your employer just might get a whole lot more out of you if you do. Just ask Chloe Carreau.

Chloe Carreau: I think that when you give people flexibility to make decisions for themselves on how they manage their time, it's just the sense of self satisfaction and accomplishment to get things done maybe better than you had been able to before. It's just so incredibly, it's kind of inspiring. You start figuring out better and different ways to work and be productive and be efficient when you're not constrained.

Host: Slack. Bring yourself to work.

Recording: Channel change. Conflict resolution channel.

Reporter 4: Conflict resolution in the workplace number two. When talking it out isn't enough. Is there room for something like martial arts? It's an unconventional approach yes, but we talked to a tough guy who looks to Akido philosophy to solve tough disputes. It's not as hands on as you'd think.

Tim Spies: My name is Tim Spies. I'm an Akido instructor in the Chicagoland area. In Akido when somebody attacks you we look to blend with that energy rather than fight against it. Akido teaches us to not enter into these situations with the ego controlling the situation. We want to have a relaxed mind. We want to have a relaxed body and we want to allow ourselves to be able to A, hold our position when we need to hold our position and B, try to see our opponent's position as well so that we can seek to restore the harmony.

Reporter 4: Yeah, let's role play, okay?

Tim Spies: Okay.

Reporter 4: Okay, I'm really mad at you Tim because you didn't deliver that assignment on time and I'm really pissed off. It makes me think you're just an [inaudible 00:21:29]. Now I'm waiting for you to come back with something.

Tim Spies: That's okay I'm going to wait for you to get it all out.

Reporter 4: Oh, is this what it's about?

Tim Spies: Yeah, fire your bullets. You can explain to me why you're really upset.

Reporter 4: Well, because I got yelled at and then it made me look bad. It's like a whole snowball effect. You made me look bad.

Tim Spies: I apologize for making you look bad. My intent, is of course, not to make you look bad. You're my friend, but by the same token, please understand that I've done everything I can do to get this to you on time. Whether the situation's my fault or not, maybe doesn't make any difference but that's where I'm at. My intent was not to hurt you. I like you as a person and I'm sorry that you're angry with me. You have a right to be angry with me.

Reporter 4: Well, that makes, that's very reasonable and I feel better. I also know that you could kick my ass if I disagreed.

Tim Spies: Pat of letting me just have you shoot through all your bullets gives me the opportunity to sit back and relax for a moment, and sort of take stock of how I feel. I feel the blood rising. I feel my eyes turning red. I'm ready to explode but I'm going to try to let that pass before I respond so I let you do what you need to do to get it out of you. Then I can respond, hopefully from a stronger position.

Reporter 4: Wouldn't it be nice if the world could do that?

Tim Spies: Yeah, it's difficult. It's really difficult. We see what's going on in this world. If people were able to see other points of view, maybe we'd be in a little better situation than we find ourselves in today.

Recording: Channel change. Get a job channel.

Host: You're listening to the Slack Variety Pack and on this episode we're rethinking how we do things. Take jobs for instance. What if you had a full time secure job with benefits and you didn't want it anymore? Are you nuts? Or is the job juggle approach not nearly as bad as it seems?

Reporter 5: I quit my job last week and part of me is freaking out right now. I left a full time, nine to five job with security and health insurance and a pension plan and right now I have none of that. I have a mix of freelance gigs, some side projects and a small business that I want to start. This wasn't an easy decision but I made it. I took a deep breath, I wrote my resignation letter and yesterday I quit.

Kevin: Congratulations I guess.

Reporter 5: I mean, right now I feel tremendously excited but also a little bit like I might have made a terrible mistake. Is that normal?

Kevin: Well yeah, it's totally normal.

Reporter 5: This is Kevin Maney and he speaks from experience. Kevin hasn't had a full time job in seven years. Instead he has what he calls several overlapping mini careers.

Kevin: I'm an author. I'm a columnist for Newsweek and a consultant to some companies about writing.

Reporter 5: Kevin thinks the type of full time job I had is going away.

Kevin: The full time job as we've known it is dying and it's being replaced by overlapping mini careers that people are doing through online platforms. Increasingly people are going to have several different businesses that they are doing for themselves and some of those might be related like mine are or some of them might be very different. They might be operating a couple of AirB&B properties in one hand and doing freelance marketing and something else entirely.

Reporter 5: According to Kevin, this type of work is possible in part because of online marketplaces like AirB&B, Uber, Task Rabbit, Etsy. These might not be your only source of income but they can be part of it.

Kevin: These platforms are absolutely essential to making it happen and it's driving a really grand economic change that actually is about the disassembly of the corporation.

Reporter 5: I worked for the same company for ten years before I left. My dad, he still works for the same company that hired him after he graduated. My dad's dad, he was a company man too. Priorities are changing.

Kevin: The younger generation, the millennials classically are growing up not thinking they're going to work for anybody for more than a couple of years. Instead of valuing job security and a steady paycheck, they're valuing flexibility and where they can work and who they're going to work with. They're not looking for the same values that come with working inside a same company for ten or 20 years. They're looking for something else. This is a generation that grew up with the internet. They don't know anything else and are much more comfortable with the idea that that's their pathway to work and that's their platform rather than a place where you have to drive to and park your car and go inside and sit there for eight hours.

Reporter 5: Speaking of millennials ... This is your office?

Rachel: This is my office. Welcome.

Reporter 5: This is Rachel. She's 23, she recently finished school and I met her at her office. The back table at a coffee shop.

Rachel: Sometimes I'll go to three in a day just to get change of scenery. I will go anywhere with a WiFi signal, anywhere where I can sit for six hours without somebody kicking me out because if I spend this amount of time alone in my apartment I'd go totally crazy.

Reporter 5: Now, Rachel didn't always work out of coffee shops. Soon after she graduated Rachel got an office job at a pretty big company, but she hated it.

Rachel: I broke out in hives. I hated it so much I broke out in hives. I cried at my desk a few times, which was described to me by HR as sub optimal. I just did not like it. I openly resented it and I realized I don't belong here. Why am I here?

Reporter 5: She was there because she thought she was supposed to get an office job. That's what you do when you graduate. She did like the idea of a regular paycheck.

Rachel: The stability was the appealing thing but there wasn't even very much of that. Not in this economy. People my age are being offered contracts and that's as good as you can hope for.

Reporter 5: Rachel left the job that made her break out in hives and now she does a mix of things. Writing, online marketing, the occasional odd job. She's also part of a team that runs a pretty popular Instagram account and they recently opened an online store, so they sell merch. Mugs, t-shirts, buttons and they feature illustrations from that Instagram account. Now, on their own, none of Rachel's

gigs pay the rent but together they usually add up to enough. Rachel says she's way happier now.

Rachel: I think it's a much better, less anxious way of living. Before when you have your entire life and your entire income riding on one thing, on one source, if you think about it, that's pretty taxing. You have all of your life riding on this one thing. When you have your income divided amongst six or seven different sources, if one of them drops off or one of them stops working, that's fine. You'll find another replacement. What I hated the most about working a nine to five job was spending that much time doing one thing. When I realized my day could be a collection of different things and as a result a different collection of things that were giving me income, my world opened up.

Reporter 5: In a lot of ways, the work lives Kevin and Rachel have chosen are a series of trade offs. On one hand, they've gained flexibility, control over their own time, who they work with, where they work, but what do you give up to get that control?

Rachel: Oh, I miss the security of it for sure. As much as I can talk about how exciting and entrepreneurial it is to be making your own way, I still miss that paycheck that you know is coming on Friday. You know you're not going to have to go hound somebody for an invoice. It's just, I miss it. I definitely do.

Kevin: When you do work in an office with a bunch of people that you like and you see them every day and you have people to go have a drink with after hours or you make friends, all that kind of stuff is something I don't have in an easy way. I have to work at that. I have to make sure that I go meet people and get out to lunch with people. Sometimes that can be a little isolating.

Rachel: You know what? When things get really dire when you're living the freelance life or you're piecing together your income from a bunch of different sources, I have to say that stability is a siren song and it remains a siren song and in your darkest moments you'll be sitting there and thinking why the hell am I doing this. What I have I done to myself? Do I hate myself? Am I putting myself through this because I'm a masochist? To get through that all I've been doing is remembering the things I hated the most about working nine to five and that will get you through.

Reporter 5: I'm still pretty new to all of this and I'm still figuring out the trade offs. Yes, there is more freedom and flexibility and control over the day but there's also more uncertainty and worrying about the future. Honestly, there's more isolation. Striking out on your own is not just scary, as Kevin said, it can also be a bit lonely. If I ever feel too isolated, at least I know I can head to the coffee shop and there will be other people just like me and we can work on our own together.

Host: As work moves onto online platforms and new digital marketplaces, how do we stand out? How do we find meaning in multiple jobs and unstable employment? How does collaboration shift and what does teamwork mean in this new reality? We'll continue to explore these questions in future episodes. That's a wrap for episode 20 of the Slack Variety Pack. No need to rethink that one.

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