

Pontoon Reimagine Now: Combatting Ageism in the Workplace with CEO Oliver Johnston: Transcript

Shannon Robertson (00:03):

Welcome to the inaugural episode of Pontoon Reimagined Now, a forum where we dissect and discuss pivotal trends in human capital management. I'm your host, Shannon Robertson, and it's my pleasure to bring you insights, trends, and thought-provoking discussions that are reshaping the landscape of human resources and executive leadership in companies across the globe. In Pontoon Reimagine Now, our mission is to provide a platform for exploring innovative ideas, shaping best practices, and reimagining the ways in which we approach the workforce of today and tomorrow. We aim to connect you, our audience, with the minds and voices that are at the forefront of change in the corporate world.

Today, for our very first episode, we have the privilege of hosting a guest who embodies the spirit of innovation and transformation in the realm of human capital, Oliver Johnston, founder and CEO of Stepping-Out, an organisation that has pioneered the development of Stepping-out Coaching for corporate leaders. He also advises organisations on designing and implementing Stepping-Out Policies and practices. The work of Stepping-Out focuses on the integrated balance of ensuring timely and dignified transitions for senior executives while fostering healthy succession and planning organisational rejuvenation.

(01:19):

Stepping-Out's approach addresses several key aspects, ensuring a mutual understanding among top team members about the natural progression of stepping out, safeguarding against age discrimination, facilitating purposeful conversations between the organisation and its leaders, and providing essential support services, like Stepping-Out Coaching.

This thoughtful and comprehensive approach is not just about managing transitions. It's about honouring the journey and contributions of senior executives while paving the way for fresh perspectives and renewed energy in leadership roles. Oliver's expertise in this area is not just beneficial for the individuals involved, but is also crucial for the health and sustainability of the entire organisation. Today we'll explore why Stepping Out Policy is essential, how it benefits both the executives and the organisation and the best practices for implementing such a policy. So, without further ado, let's welcome Oliver. Oliver, thank you for being here today.

Oliver Johnston (02:18):

My pleasure, Shannon. Lovely to see you.

Shannon Robertson (02:21):

It's really nice to see you too. So, I will dive right into my first question. Can you walk us through the genesis of Stepping Out Concept, and what specific needs in the corporate world it addresses?

Oliver Johnston (02:33):

I can, of course, Shannon, thank you. Maybe the first thing I should do is say a little bit just about me because that's part of, obviously, the genesis. So, I'm 71, I'll be 72 this year. I'm on my second encore career. So, I retired as Director of Leadership Consulting in Penna PLC, but I wasn't ready to retire, set up my own coaching practice, ran that for five years, but I wasn't

ready to retire. So, I then started Stepping Out from the Top Team, and that's what keeps me busy a couple of days a week, sometimes three days a week, but it allows me plenty of time to do all the other things that 71-year-olds should be doing. And I've worked with about 200 senior leaders. I think it's 197 senior leaders in this transition.

Shannon Robertson (03:19):

Wow.

Oliver Johnston (03:22):

The other thing that is maybe relevant to set the scene is, last year we did a study, it was called "Retiring Senior Executives can look after themselves, can't they?" And I was really looking at this whole area, and there were some very interesting findings from that, because we asked 90 senior HR people for their opinions. Only 5% of senior executives are very well-equipped to step out successfully. That means 95% aren't very well-equipped. Only 23% of organisations are considered very supportive of their senior leaders in the process of transitioning, and only 9% of the organisations that completed the study with us have a formal approach to helping people to step out. That means over 90% of organisations are leaving at to chance.

(04:21):

So, those are just some things which maybe set the same. I think there are four lenses that are worth looking at this through in terms of the genesis of. The first one is the company view, the second one is my own journey, the third one is what I've learned from coaching others, and then the societal view.

And just to set the scene, and then we can talk about them in more detail as it comes up, McKinsey in a recent report said, "Hardly anything that happens in the company is more important than a high-level transition," but yet we tend not to give high-level transitions that much focus, and I'm sure we'll come back to that. It was also in a report around the same time, it was 2019, from Deloitte, that up to 46% of transitions are regarded as failures or disappointments. So, almost half of the transitions of the most senior people in organisations are disappointing. That's a huge amount. And the costs of that are not just money. If it goes wrong somewhere, it's not just money.

I did some research, and this is before we started, it also will impact on market value, it can create strategic dislocation, so the senior leaders move and the strategy gets interrupted, loss of confidence in senior leadership if the transition doesn't work well, reduced customer/supplier confidence, if you think about it just in terms of, if you can't get the leadership at the top right, can we be confident in you? Operational disruption, reputational damage, more generally, diminished firm performance, loss of employee morale and productivity, and loss of institutional knowledge. So, there's a big long list of things that are impacted -

Shannon Robertson (06:16):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (06:17):

If we don't get these right. Just from my own journey, I was thinking back to it, I'm thinking, because I'm still on that journey 10 years later because it's an ongoing journey, but I think I just kept putting it off. And I put it... The idea of think about retiring, think about stepping out, think about finishing a career, it's much easier, and you're really busy, so just put it off. So, I was always too busy and always too young to bother. And then, one day I realized that, actually, I'm

too scared to look at this. And I don't really have many role models of people who have done it successfully. So, that was, I think-

Shannon Robertson (06:59):

Right.

Oliver Johnston (06:59):

Genesis for me. From coaching others, I think everyone is different, but there are some common themes that form the genesis of this. And I had been working with senior people as they transitioned. So, before we set up Stepping-Out from the Top Team, I had a body of people, and I could get their experiences. Many senior leaders put a brave face on it, because it's their job to look resilient, it's their job not to be vulnerable, it's their job, whatever. So, you ask them, they say, "No, I don't need any help. I'm great. I'm all set up for stepping out, and I'll do it at the time that's right."

However, once you peek behind the magician's curtain, and I might probably just sit and travel with people as they think all of this through, first of all, for a lot of people, they are more fearful than they might tell people they are. And it's things like identity. My identity is wrapped up with the role that I play, and I'm very successful, I'm very senior. Once that stops, what's my identity? I think there's also... which is... I have a story. So, senior leaders, I was working with one senior leader, and I asked her, and I said, "Look, are you clear about your financial situation?" And she said, "Yes, I'm very clear about it." And I said, "Do you think you're going to need to work?"

Now, this is someone whose annual salary was seven figures, so it was a lot of money. And she said, "Well, actually, my lifestyle is really quite frugal." And I went, "All right." She said, "Now, I do have three racehorses." And I thought, well, your [inaudible 00:08:47] maybe slightly different. But-

Shannon Robertson (08:50):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (08:52):

... if you turn 60 today, statistically, in the Western world, you have better than 50% chance of living to 90-plus. That means it's another third of your life to fund, also to fund what you're going to do. And the final thing just about society is, as a society, we're living longer. So, Linda Gratton's book on the 100-Year Life is very realistic, that idea that, turn 60 today, you've got a life expectancy of 90-plus. That's changing organisations, it's changing people's understanding of career. Also, lots of people increasingly are not investing in pensions, so when they can step out and whatever is affected by it. So, all of those things I was aware of when we set up Stepping-Out. So, that's where it really came from.

Shannon Robertson (09:47):

Yeah, that's fascinating to me. I think the piece around identity, I can see it even now, people my age, when you introduce yourself, one of the first questions that comes up when you are speaking to someone or getting to know someone is, "So, what is it that you do for work," and that's because it's so core to who we are is what we do every day. And so, I can imagine when you've identified in a role or an industry for 20, 30 years of your life, that that does become a bit scary to think about stepping away from that and now just being Shannon as opposed to Shannon, partner at X, Y, and z.

Oliver Johnston (10:26):

I don't know if people who are listening to this will know of the children's character, Postman Pat, but Postman Pat, English, and he spends his life as a cartoon character going around the deals of England, and whatever. And there is that question about, what do you call Postman Pat when he's no longer a postman? It's just-

Shannon Robertson (10:48):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (10:48):

It's just Pat.

Shannon Robertson (10:48):

Pat.

Oliver Johnston (10:50):

And what does that mean? And for people, particularly people who've been successful, who've got to the top of their organisations, that's a big thing to think through. So, it can be-

Shannon Robertson (11:00):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (11:03):

For some people it's very easy, and not everybody needs support. It's just quite a lot more people than we think of might well.

Shannon Robertson (11:11):

Do you think that... Because I know, historically, being vulnerable when you're in the leadership realm, it was not as prevalent, I guess, and so there's this whole idea that I've seen, or I've heard people speaking about much more frequently, especially post-COVID, around the empathetic leader and leading with empathy and vulnerability. And so, do you think that this next generation will experience the same kind of challenges when stepping out? That's hypothetical, of course.

Oliver Johnston (11:46):

Yeah. No, I think the idea of supporting senior leaders in their transition from full-time employment, full-time career into whatever happens next is an idea whose time has come. I think a few years ago it was a need that hadn't become a want yet, as Drucker said. And I think the reason for that is, we are more accepting of the fact that it's okay to be vulnerable, it's okay to go, "I don't know," it's okay to go, "[inaudible 00:12:21] meant to flourish for 30 years with," whatever. So, I hope that you're right, and I hope that the next generations will increasingly go, "This is worth thinking through. There is no reason that I need to put a brave face on," or whatever. But I think, at the moment until the next one, we are still in a situation where senior leaders go, "I can't express vulnerability in the way that maybe I'm feeling." And therefore, those people missioning support for senior leaders need to take that into account and go, "Even though there's a brave face, there may be support needed." Yeah, it's that idea that, "I don't know how to do this," is maybe the reason why people put off doing it. And for organisations, there's a huge cost to senior leaders who know they should step out, who know they should transition, but are hanging on. There's the notion of, they have the Goldilocks dilemma, which is,

you can leave too early, you can leave too late, or you can get it just right. If you leave too early that's when people go, "I'm fed up with this," and "There's another change," and whatever, and they throw their toys out of the pram. And that's a...

(13:44):

On the other side, there's the people who hang around like the unwanted last guests at the party who refuse to leave. That can be hugely expensive. I'll give you one example of why it's expensive in succession planning terms. I worked with someone, I was coaching them, and they were getting ready to step into a senior position. And I said to him, "When do you expect this to be?" And he laughed and he said, "My boss, Margaret, is leaving in three years' time, and always will be." And I said, "What do you mean?" Said, "Well, the three, she's been saying that for the last five years. And it's always three years ahead." And he said, "I'm the person earmarked to take over, but I'm getting more and more frustrated." And actually, within a very short time, he was approached by a competitor, and he took the job there. So, the business lost one of his most valuable resources. And we were talking about it, and he said, "What has happened is, this organisation has ripened me for this job only to be picked by my competitor." In the war for talent, businesses can't afford that.

Shannon Robertson (14:56):

I like the whole Goldilocks concept. It's very visual for me, and I can identify with many different stages, like you just explained.

Oliver Johnston (15:05):

And I think... perspective of the Goldilocks dilemma, which is for the individual, them saying, "When is the right time," but it's also going for the organisation. Organisations need to go, "We need to help people to leave and leave well at the right time so we can get our succession right." So, the Goldilocks dilemma works for both the organisation and the individual.

Shannon Robertson (15:30):

Yeah, it's a great concept. So, Oliver, how does the Stepping-Out Policy align with modern organisational values and leadership models?

Oliver Johnston (15:40):

I think if you look, first of all, organisational and leadership models, I think, first of all, the traditional career model has broken down, and the traditional career model of education, career, retirement, it's broken down. And particularly the bit, the transition between full-on career and full-on retirement has broken down. So, I'm a good example of it in that I retired 11 years ago, but I'm still working. And I work because I love it. I work because I get a lot from what I do, and I don't feel any need to not be working, I don't feel any need to be retired. But we don't even have a name for that bit, an agreed name between full-on career and full-on retirement. So, we're in this no-person's land, if you want, with even the language around this. So, I think the career model, first of all, is changing and changing fast. And that will accelerate as people are living longer and funding their pensions less. The number of people coming into this, not just senior people, but everybody coming in are going, "I feel great. I don't want to retire because one, because I can't afford to, but even if I can, I still feel really creative, really energized." So, that's changing.

(17:10):

So that leads into the recruitment and retention model, which is that we can assume that people will retire around 60. If you look back at that, why is 60 the age that retirement was ever decided

on? And from what I've looked at, in 1880, it was, I think, the Chancellor in Germany at that stage first introduced retirement pensions. And they set it at 60, but the average life expectancy was something like 49. So, it was very few people actually got to 60, nevermind to retire.

Shannon Robertson (17:56):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (17:58):

Even in 1935 in the United States when it was introduced at 60, the life expectancy was, I think, at that stage, 56 or 57. The life expectancy now is 90-plus. So, that whole idea of how long people will be in the workforce and how long they will be contributing, that's changing quite considerably as well. So, that traditional model is going down. And succession planning as a model, I would suggest, and for different reasons, also needs to be revisited. I did a Google search of the definition of succession planning, and the 20 people I looked at, Harvard Business Review, Cass Business School, et cetera, et cetera, they all said exactly the same thing, maybe using slightly different language, which is, "Succession planning is about selecting and developing the person to take over."

Shannon Robertson (18:59):

Okay.

Oliver Johnston (19:00):

To me, that's only half the equation. The other half of the equation is preparing the incumbent leader, in our case because I work with senior leaders, preparing the incumbent to be ready to leave and to leave well in a timely way, and have the person ready and willing to succeed. So, we need to rethink succession planning as a model and add that other half into it. So, that's in terms of the models. In terms of values, I think I would be pretty sure that the duty of care that we have to the people we employ is much more on the radar now and has been increasing. And the interesting thing about senior leaders is, we're not saving pandas here. Seniors are not an endangered species. They're tough, they're robust, they're imaginative, they're creative, they get things done, or whatever, so they don't need any sympathy. But we do need to respect them, and we need to respect the contribution that they make, which often, and I'm not singling them out particularly, but being a senior leader for 10 years or 20 comes at a cost. It takes-

Shannon Robertson (20:17):

Absolutely.

Oliver Johnston (20:19):

One person said to me, "Senior leaders, it's the equivalent to running a marathon every day, not physically, but emotionally." But yet, people that run marathons know they better rest the next day, seniors just get up and do it again. So, we take a lot from our senior leaders, so we do have a duty of care, and I think that has changed and is changing. Once you start to think about the age, ageism raises its head, right?

Shannon Robertson (20:46):

Yeah, right.

Oliver Johnston (20:47):

And to me, ageism is the last discrimination that dares to speak its name. Lots of the other areas of discrimination, nobody would ever dream of mentioning it, doing anything other than

trying to be whatever, but it is quite common in organisations have conversations about, "Well, basically, our senior leaders are passed their sell-by date by the time they're 52." Or that belief, which you hear quite a lot is, "Of course once people get into their 50s and into their 60s, they're slow, they're unable to change, you can't teach an old dog new tricks," which isn't even true for dogs, losing their intellectual capabilities, losing their drive, they're becoming unhealthy, none of that is statistically or evidentially true.

Shannon Robertson (21:40):

Right.

Oliver Johnston (21:41):

So, all those decisions about, let's say it's 53, are usually based on absolute nonsense.

Shannon Robertson (21:49):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (21:50):

So, that's where the next bit would be, where is it we get to and what that is, but the idea of everybody gets it in a fair way and everybody gets the same thing as the critical bit.

Shannon Robertson (22:00):

Yeah. And would you agree that then these, I'm sure you will agree, that these Stepping-Out Policies do help in combating age discrimination in the workplace, especially at the executive level, or across the company, I would say, but-

Oliver Johnston (22:17):

I'll address it from the senior perspective because that's where I do my work. I suspect ageism is felt more throughout the organisation at lower levels of the organisation than those who are at the top. But if you ask yourself the question, does ageism exist for senior leaders, then I'm absolutely sure the answer is yes, it does. And there are judgments made. I hear people talking about them, and they just go, "I'm just getting the sense that people think I'm getting old for this job," or, "I'm getting a sense that people believe there should be new blood coming in, and I'm part of the old blood that should be going out." And they're often very subtle, but their message... And senior leaders pick them up. A couple of other things about that is, very often our own ageism plays into that. So, I worked with one very senior director who, she was thinking of retiring, but she was having difficulty with dealing with a certain situation and it was annoying her, and she was worried about it. And at one point she said, "But maybe that's just because I'm 62." I went, "Hold on a minute, hold on a minute. Where is that coming from? What means that at 62 you're any less capable of dealing with that situation you were two years ago or 10 years ago, or you will be..." And when she thought about it she went, "Yeah, I'm just picking up the loose talk about age."

(23:57):

I said, "When I think about it, that's totally nonsense." But that's what she was saying to herself. There's also some very interesting work done that HR can be the seat of a lot of ageism. If you look at the views of a lot of younger HR professionals as to how they view older workers, it can be very much that they hold views of what happens to people as they get older, or whatever. So, I'm not beaten up of younger HR professions at all, but we all need to get onto this and go, "So, policies that go, 'Let's make sure we're guarding against this. Let's make sure that we're getting the best out of our people.' This is maybe just... But with the people I work with, when I

listen to them, when I see what they're doing, when I see what they go on to do, the late 50s, early 60s is the time that most people still step out, a lot of those people are only just coming in to the very best of their professional careers.

(25:05):

Because they've got the experience, they've got the drive, they've got the intellectual acumen, they've got the changeability, they've got all of those things, and they've got the wisdom of experience. So, why on earth would we squander that? Why would we say, "Oh, well, we don't need those people anymore?" Surely we're smarter than that, especially in the war of talent, of let's hold onto the people as long as we can, and therefore we need to honour them, so that that would be...I think that's, to me, where ageism sits in relation to this, and policies have to address it and go, "How do we make sure that we're doing the best for people and avoiding the trap of ageism because it's bad for business."

Shannon Robertson (25:43):

Yeah. Well, and I think about my generation, and I think when we hit our early 50s, late 50s, early 60s, we won't have the same kind of restrictions on our time because families will be older, so you have a bit more freedom in that aspect as well. What measures would you say your approach includes to ensure that the policies are fair and unbiased towards senior executives?

Oliver Johnston (26:12):

There are a few things. I think, one, they need to be transparent. So, you need to say, "This is our policy. This is how we do it." It needs to be well thought through and tested out. So, you involve senior leaders and say, "What would make this fair? What would make it psychologically safe for you?" So, you engage with people. And that's why what's right for one company will not be right for another firm or another organisation. So, you do that. As I mentioned earlier, also that you ensure you have buy-in from the most senior level. I think, for the most senior transitions, boards need to play a part in this.

The board of directors need to be bought into this and say, "We can't afford to have disappointing transitions; therefore, we've got to get it right. And we believe we need to honour the people who are coming to the point where they're stepping out." One of the key reasons is, increasingly we want our exiting senior leaders to go on to be ambassadors and advocates for the organisation because they hold the networks.

Shannon Robertson (27:25):

Right.

Oliver Johnston (27:25):

So, if we don't look after them well, how do we expect that they're then going to play that role to its maximum? So, the board needs to be bought into it, the chief executive needs to be bought into it. It very often falls to the Chief People Officer or the Chief People and Culture Officer, or whatever, to put this together. And the only thing I would say about that is, it's really smart to stand on the shoulders of giants, find out what other companies have done, find out how other organisations are doing it, learn from that, then talk with your people, and then create the policy that absolutely is bespoke to what you need, and then refine it over the next 100 years because you won't get it right.

Shannon Robertson (28:11):

Yeah.

Oliver Johnston (28:11):

Things keep changing. So, you need to get back and go, "How can we make this better," and what we can do. But I can tell you that in the big global consultancy firm I mentioned, when they introduced the policy, they had very low-level buy-in to it. And when they offered support services, very few people showed up to get the support. After five years of really focusing, explaining it, involving people, getting it right, the great majority of senior leaders wanted to be part of it, so they joined. But that was because they could trust that they felt it was fair and they knew that the support they were getting was really good support, and it was delivered with a sense of honouring them and wanting them to do well, as well as looking after the business itself.

So, those would be the sort of things I think... I would love for Shannon to be able to give you a, "Here's the five-point plan," or "Here's the one we prepared earlier," but I don't think that serves organisations well. And one of the things that I increasingly do more of is to help organisations in that process of putting their policies together. Now, I don't believe that I can tell you how to do it, service I can offer. I can share what's going on, I can share what other organisations are doing, I can plug you into other people who are two years ahead of you in this, or whatever. So, I'm really happy to do that, because doing it on your own makes no sense. It's learned from others as you go.

Shannon Robertson (29:49):

Yeah, no point in reinventing the wheel.

Oliver Johnston (29:52):

Yeah.

Shannon Robertson (29:53):

So, I think learning from others is the best way to evolve.

Oliver Johnston (29:56):

These are the three considerations that I think most people, when they're thinking about this, need to take into account themselves. The first one is, how do I finish well? So, I'm a senior leader, I want to finish in my role with the trajectory of my bit of the business going up, not down. I want my legacy to be to secure because I've done all the things. I want to have finished all the products. I want to have handed over in succession terms to somebody really good as... So, they want to do all of those things, and that needs to be thought through and planned. That's the first bit. The second bit then is this thing, "Okay, I turn 60 next year, and I'm retiring." That's another 30 years plus. How do I get my head around what I've got to do with those 30 years? And there's a lot of time to fund it, but it's also a lot of time to fill. So, I'm as an example of, in terms of going, "I wasn't ready to put my feet up. I wasn't going to ever sit on the sofa and what's daytime TV." So, I needed to decide am I going to continue to work, if so, on my terms, what does that mean, or...

(31:03):

I had one person who said, he was very senior in a big global accountancy firm, and he said, "I am retiring. My last day here, I will completely retire." I went, "That's great. What are you gonna do?" He said, "I'm gonna climb Everest." And I thought he was being metaphorical, but he wasn't. He was actually going to climb Everest. So, he spent the next three years getting into training, doing all the things, and he did climb Everest. So, he thought through that, "I need to

be purposeful, but I'm not gonna do it in work, I'm gonna do it in what could be considered a leisure thing." But it's that...

Shannon Robertson (31:43):

Right.

Oliver Johnston (31:44):

One thing that I have noticed, Shannon, which I think is really important for people to think about, and I very often talk to the people I'm coaching about it is, most senior leaders have never settled for mediocrity in their lives. That's the reason they're senior.

Shannon Robertson (32:01):

Right.

Oliver Johnston (32:02):

They want quality, they demand quality, they drive for quality, and they've never been prepared to take second best, they're always going to be best. They get in this thing about, "I was thinking of finishing my career," and all of a sudden, they're prepared to settle for mediocrity and go, "Well, you know..."

I'm forever going, "This is the greatest opportunity to make this wonderful. This should be the summation of all the hard work, everything you've done. And it can include work, it can include not working, it can include more time with your family, or no more... It can include those hobbies and dreams." How do you put that together in a way that you're going to wake up in the morning and go, "Isn't this brilliant?" That's what the quality of it should be. So, you've got the two horizons; they finish well, plan the 30 years ahead, and there's quite a lot in that which needs to be worked through. But then, the third horizon is what I would call One Step Beyond, how do you survive and flourish in the first six months? So, what are all the changes have you got... So that's where the coaching will focus. The critical thing for me about coaching is, my job is to enable people to think at their very best, not to tell them what to think. So, it's that sort of a process.

Shannon Robertson (33:23):

Yeah, I love that. I know that when my mom was looking at retiring, she got a lot of advice not to retire in the wintertime because in Canada there's a lot of snow, so you'll be locked inside. So, she made sure to think about her retirement summer and beyond, because for the first six months, like you said, I think that's the crucial time, I've heard. So, Oliver, thank you so much. You've given us so much to think about. I have one last quick question for you. Do you think that there are, or are there any emerging trends or innovations in the field of executive transition that you find particularly exciting?

Oliver Johnston (34:08):

I think, along with the idea that this is an idea that's time has come, and for all the changing and values and whatever, we should honour our senior leaders, but we also need to get succession planning right so we help people to leave well, as well as have the right people coming through to make all of that work. And we can't afford the cost of getting it wrong, not just in money terms, but all about reputation and damage and all of those things. So, to me, that's the most exciting thing is that we've arrived at the point where people are recognizing this is a need, we need to be doing this, not for sentimental reasons, or sentiment reasons alone, because I think we should be sentimental about good servants and people who serve as well, but for good business reasons as well. So, to me, that's the biggest emerging trend. And I can tell you that

even three years ago, the conversations I were having we're speculative as to, "Well, we might need this. This might be useful." The conversation might be, even now, three years later is, "We need to be doing this." So, I think that's already happening, and whatever.

(35:19):

So, I look forward to seeing where it's going. I was going to leave you with one story again that really is about honouring senior leaders. And it's a friend of mine whose father was a senior Civil Servant and had been involved in the Fisheries Department.

Shannon Robertson (35:42):

Okay.

Oliver Johnston (35:44):

And this was in the 1960s and early '70s, and it was at the time the Civil Service did a really good job. They got the policies and practices really well, they really looked after their people who were fishing, as well as... They did a great job. But also, Ken, is his name, was one of my favourite adults from my parents' generation, and I really just loved him. He retired. 15 years later they bought a new shipping vessel, so a new big ship, and they called it the Ken Vickers. So, 15 years later they named it after him. And you have to go, "What was it that would give an organisation, that doesn't have a long memory, to do that?" It's because they actually honoured this individual for what he had done. And it wasn't just that he was successful in the business, it was how much he helped other people, how much he did all of those things. So, I think that's the sort of honour we need to be making commonplace in organisations, not just for the individual, but because that's so good for an organisation to say, "We do honour the people who went before. We do give them their place in..."

Shannon Robertson (37:01):

Yeah, that's an amazing story for the individual and his family, but even me hearing that makes me think of that company in a nicer light as well. So, the reputational side for businesses, it extends beyond just doing right by the individual. Thank you so much, Oliver. As we bring today's episode of Pontoon Reimagine Now to a close, I really just want to say thank you for being our first guest on the podcast. Your insights were invaluable. I think the Stepping-Out Policy and its transformational impact on leadership and organisational health is very clear. Your expertise has not only enlightened us, but also offered a fresh perspective on navigating executive transitions with dignity and strategic foresight. To our esteemed listeners, today's conversation has highlighted a crucial, but often overlooked aspect of organisational dynamics, the art of graceful transition in leadership.

(38:02):

The Stepping-Out Policy, as we've learned, is not merely about making room for new leadership, but about honouring the journey of seasoned executives, and ensuring their legacy continues to enrich the organisation. For HR leaders and CEOs in our audience, this discussion serves as a reminder of the importance of proactive succession planning, the sensitivity required in managing executive transitions, and the value of fostering a culture that respects and supports these pivotal changes. Implementing a Stepping-Out Policy is not just a strategic move, it's a commitment to the ethical stewardship of human capital and the cultivation of sustainable leadership pipelines. As you reflect on the insights shared today, I encourage you to consider how your organisation can benefit from adopting a similar approach. Embracing such progressive policies can significantly contribute to the vitality and agility of your leadership structures. Thank you for joining us. We look forward to bringing you more thought-provoking

content and exploring the intricate world of human resources and executive management. Join us on our next episode as we continue to delve into the topics that shape the future of leadership and organisational success. Don't forget to check us out on LinkedIn and our website, pontoonsolutions.com. This is Shannon Robertson, wishing you inspired leadership and strategic excellence. Until the next time, keep leading with vision and purpose.