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Welcome to the Business Leaders Voice podcast.

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I'm Emma Carroll, Head of Client Voice here at Source.

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And today we're speaking to Andrea Lattimore Group, Global Director, Compliance and Business Integrity at Vodafone.

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And together we're going to discuss how you can go about using trust to drive growth and resilience in a global business.

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Andrea, it's so good to have you here today, and it's definitely a time that businesses need resilience.

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Welcome to the podcast.

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Thank you so much.

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I'm really delighted to participate.

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Yeah, I'm really looking forward to to good dialogue and and some tricky questions perhaps brilliant and I won't ask with start with A2 tricky one, but can I get you to introduce yourself and and introduce the business, of course.

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So as you've rightly articulated, I'm Andrea Latimer.

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I'm the Group Global Compliance and Business Integrity Director for Vodafone Group.

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So I'm responsible for the strategic management of the delivery of all of our core compliance programmes.

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It's a quite an expansive set of programmes.

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So I cover anti bribery, anti money laundering, trade compliance, export control, code of conduct, privacy, digital trust and ethics.

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So quite a significant portfolio and I'm really privileged to be part of an amazing business that's got a very strong purpose around connecting everyone through networks and technology.

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And I'm sure most people when they hear of Vodafone, they just think purely of mobile.

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But actually we are far more than just mobile.

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You know, we have mobile and fixed services to over 300 million customers across 17 countries and we've got a huge partner network extending to more than 40 additional markets worldwide.

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Our networks support hundreds of millions of people every day, connecting families, communities and businesses and really underpin critical economies and social activities across really wide, diverse and often complex operating environments.

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Just to give you an example, in Africa alone, we serve over 160 million mobile customers, which is an amazing number and more than 50 million financial services users supporting financial inclusion digital access.

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In Europe, we serve around 300 million customers and have over 17,000,000 fixed broadband customers.

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So alongside our customer footprint, we also have our Vodafone business operations which supports millions of organisations globally.

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We operate one of the world's largest IoT platforms with over 200 million connected devices, which helps enterprises manage operations, supply chains and critical infrastructure in an increasingly interconnected and global world.

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So a very eclectic mix in terms of the portfolio of services that we offer.

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And you know, I think really just is testament to the complexity of connecting everyone.

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You know, the, the, our recent CEO statement was about the fact that we connect from cables under the sea to the stars in the sky with our satellite.

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So I'm, I'm really delighted to be part of such a complex organization.

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So interesting.

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Thank you.

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Now we can pull on so many of those items as we go through today to kick things off.

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As somebody who oversees compliance and business integrity, what are perhaps the top two things that sit at the top of your agenda at the moment?

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22 is a very short list.

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I have a long list of many things that fit a high priority, but I would say probably the two priorities consistently that sit at the top.

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Firstly is building and sustaining trust with our customers, especially around expectations with privacy, data ethics and digital responsibility.

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Connectivity today is inseparable from data use and customers expect companies not only to protect their data, but to use it in a way that's transparent, ethical and aligned with their expectations.

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And that's a really important key aspect of what we have to deliver on a day-to-day basis.

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And I think secondly is, is really about embedding responsible and ethical AI across our organization.

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AI is becoming increasingly integrated into our networks, our customer interactions and decision making processes from a product portfolio perspective and ensuring that it is fair, ensuring that it's explainable and safe is becoming an increasingly critical pillar of compliance and business integrity.

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So I would say they were probably the top 2.

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And then underpinning all of that, both of these priorities is really sort of linked to culture and where we're deliberate about creating an environment where everyone understands that data we hold really isn't just about information.

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It represents people's lives, it represents people's choices and their identities.

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So everyone in Vodafone really aren't stewards of trust, not just custodians of data.

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So this means that they need to recognise that trust is something customers lend to us and it can be so easily withdrawn and every colleague who touches data is responsible for protecting it in the same way they would care for their own personal information.

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So those two are probably the key ones, I would say are sort of at the top of the list.

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As I said, there's, there's many more that sit below that, but definitely in the top 2 and that ethical AI and the transparency around AI.

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What would you put out there that's kind of occupying your time and important at Vodafone at the moment?

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I, I think it's really ensuring that we have the rigor and robust architecture to ensure that when I reference stewards of trust that we are managing AI in incredibly responsible way.

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So, so with responsible AI think the key is for us, it's making sure that we've got a really strong governance architecture where wherever we are engaged with products that have AI, that we are ensuring that it's designed responsibly, that there is no bias, that there is significant transparency, the awareness of what is in in the product portfolio for the end consumer.

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So it's making sure that at all parts of the life cycle of product design, we're consistently reviewing and critiquing to make sure that we are doing everything within our gift to ensure that we continue to embed responsibility at every level.

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It doesn't just fit sit at a functional or a policy level, it sits with every individual.

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So this is making sure that responsible data use and ethical eye becomes lived behaviours, not just a mere compliance requirement, you know, so, so it's a day-to-day process.

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OK, Thank you, Andrea.

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And in our title at the beginning, we actually talked about growth as well.

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I'm wondering how, how can you really leverage trust to drive growth?

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Oh, I think it's critically important for me.

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Trust and compliance really are a commercial differentiator, Vodafone.

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We see repeatedly that when customers feel confident in our governance, in how we handle data, in the fairness and transparency of our product, it directly influences their behaviour, the law, it breeds loyalty.

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They're more likely to stay with us, they're more likely to recommend us and choose additional services if they're confident that we are a trusted provider of choice.

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A really good example I think is really evident with Vodafone Business.

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Our enterprise customers are entrusting us with critical connectivity, sensitive data, increasingly complex digital solutions.

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When they trust how we manage the risk attributed to their data and protect and deploy technology responsibly, it gives them confidence to deepen that relationship and grow with us over time.

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So demonstrating really strong trust, really strong compliance and that foundation doesn't just drive growth, I think it durable long term partners with our customers and it also strengthens resiliency, particularly in our very uncertain environments that we have at the moment.

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OK.

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And you also talked about the importance of making really well informed decisions around risk and how that could actually drive growth as well.

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It isn't just about saying no to things, it can actually help drive growth.

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Do you have an example of that as well?

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Yeah, Risk for me is critical in in making well informed decisions throughout the organization.

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It is embedded within our business both strategically and operationally.

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A good example is how we work with complex markets with low Cpis where we've got real challenging geopolitical uncertainties.

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In example, for example countries like Iraq and DRC where it really does require careful evidence based judgements.

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And rather than reacting to headlines or instincts, we're very deliberate in bringing cross functional risk based intelligence that is coordinated through legal, compliance, security and commercial functions to build a really objective understanding of the content and the real risk landscape.

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And how do we adequately and effectively respond to that risk landscape in a very really pragmatic and proportionate way?

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And that discipline allows us to make decisions that are really commercially sound, aligned to our values, and also resilient over the long term.

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You know, we can't be a knee jerk.

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We have to make sure that we can introduce, introduce new risks, but don't undermine trust.

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So it is a fine balance, but I think if we can as an organization make sure that we're disciplined with our approach to risk management, it can actually enable faster decision making, informed decision making and by virtue improve our growth.

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And I think the other thing is we play, we apply the same approach far beyond just geopolitical uncertainty that we have at the minute.

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So you know, we use good risk management through our supply chain risk management, particularly where we've got technology dependencies.

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You know, we we look at how we have our third party relationships and the regulatory intersects decisions about our partners and how we source and how we manage the third parties is managed through the same risk and integrity lenses about balancing commercial priorities with security, resilience and long certain term sustainability.

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So risk taking and risk decision making is day-to-day business, whether it's product design, pricing, data usage, customer propositioning, no, we encourage all of the teams to pause and consider not just what what's possible, but what's appropriate.

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That means asking things in a slightly different way, should we or as well can we and ensuring the decision standard ethically, reputationally and commercially over time.

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And this discipline also is covered in an M&A and strategic transactions.

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So for me risk management is such an integral part of our day-to-day operations.

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You know it is throughout the life cycle of our customer journeys, not only from the beginning, but right through to to the end.

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And, and without making informed risk decisions, we, we don't make the right growth path for our organization.

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You know, the integration of risk into strategic and operational decision making enables us to move with confidence.

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It really allows us to make really considered risks, pursue growth responsibly.

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And also, I think really importantly, it helps us build resilience.

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So I think it's important that we know that the decisions that we make as a business are grounded in evidence, guided by integrity and really designed to protect trust over the long term.

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And, and you speak about resilience there.

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From your perspective, what does resilience really mean for your business?

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Great question.

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I think resilience and even more so I think to in today's politically and geopolitically and certain world, it's have, it's about agility, it's being able to act very agile to the needs of the landscape of regulatory changes that we have, the landscape of the consumer dynamics that are changing the, the pace of change for most organisations is so fluid at the moment.

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So it's having an operational architecture that enables flex and enables us to respond to all of the changing landscape at once.

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And this means that we have good preparedness.

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You know, we understand the volatilities and where they land across the organization and have appropriate plans in place to mitigate the the what ifs and the potentials.

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So for me, resiliency and for our organization, it's it's about being incredibly well prepared for potential for future scenarios and remaining very agile to respond to current needs and demands.

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So at source at the moment, we do talk a lot about how the world has in a way become more unreliable rather than just uncertain.

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And I'm wondering with that, just things changing so far, so constantly at the moment, is there anything that's had to change in the way you deal with resilience and risk management?

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Yes, great, great question.

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I think the key is making sure that our colleagues are appropriately prepared.

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We are as individuals, not only in our personal lives, but in our professional lives, bombarded with a significant amount of information, some of which could potentially be unreliable as, as you say, you know this, this dimension between reliability and unreliability and what is fact and what is fiction.

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So it's making sure that we are basing decisions on facts and making sure that our employees and all of our colleagues really have the skills, the capabilities, the toolkits to unravel some of this complexity to enable them to make agile decisions in a very swift way.

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So it's about enabling them to have a toolkit that facilitates swift agile decision making that is informed, that's based on reliable information and considered risk taking, as we mentioned earlier with with having the right facts and data points.

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And that tool kit is that about, I'm wondering what that tool kit is access to the right data from what you said.

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Anything else you'd put in there?

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Access to the right data?

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Actually the tool kit in terms of good robust change management methodologies and processes.

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You know, how do you create agile change?

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How do you manage programs and respond to the needs of the organization in a systematic way that gives you the ability to have respite but also transform quickly.

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So the tool kit is not only sort of about the information, it's about the systematic and programmatic way in which you respond to the demands of the organization.

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And that is really about having agility.

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And we're incredibly lucky.

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I think within Vodafone we have got a very good cross team collaboration across multitude of functions.

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And with obviously the demand, the regulatory landscape being prolific in terms of change at the moment, having having the teams collaborate really well and being very agile to respond to not only the demands of regulators, but the geopolitical landscape is incredibly important.

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So I think it's a mix.

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It's it's about good people, it's about good processes and good information that is reliable and accurate and complete.

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OK.

17:53

And what do you think businesses more generally get wrong when it comes to trust?

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Oh, good question.

18:02

I think again, it really is a is a people dimension.

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So in it for me as a compliance officer, one of the key things that is so important is internal psychological safety.

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Many organisations, I think, profoundly underestimate how psychological safety shapes behaviours and decision making and risk outcomes.

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When individuals fear negative consequences, whether it's reputation or career limiting or social, the impact is rarely over silence.

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More often it manifests as subtle self censorship.

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Messages are softened, risks reframed.

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You know, it's sort of, it dampens people's appetite if they don't feel psychologically safe.

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And I think this is one of the key risk exposures that organisations have if it's not managed incredibly well from a trust perspective, especially when we live in, as we've been talking, very uncertain times.

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And what happens is over time, the this creates A systematic distortion of reality at senior level because, you know, people think it's all running OK, but actually there's either incomplete information or over overly sanitised information.

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And I think one of the other areas really is also about being nice and avoiding challenge.

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We're linking to psychological safety.

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Again, you know, this is about in in volatile times where you want good trust.

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It's about enabling calendar and constructive challenge and open debate, particularly when there's divergent views.

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And how does a business create a really strong culture that enables teams and individuals to be able to, to raise without fear of blame?

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And I think one of the other things that's really interesting, again, sort of linked to to trust is the whole situation with regards to groupthinking bias, where you get passive belief that it won't happen to me, or unconscious bias or affinity bias.

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Where there's cultural shortcuts, where teams are just too comfortable together and there is consensus all the time, a narrowing perspective.

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And that, for me, really reduces the organization's ability to rigorously test assumptions.

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You know, you need good, healthy dynamics in teams.

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You need incredibly diverse teams that enable the ability to scrutinise environments and you know, raise early warning signs that are not ignored deliberately.

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So I think I think this whole piece around psychological safety culture, speak up and group think are incredibly important to really generate that trust environment.

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You know, overtime, collective overconfidence weakens organization resiliency and cognitive diversity is really diluted.

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You know, dissented voices and marginalised challenge becomes the exception rather than in the expectation.

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So for me, this is 1 area that most organisations really should continue to focus on, especially in a volatile world and where we've got sort of huge regulatory environment challenges.

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Complacency can become a huge, hugely material risk and emerging threats where regulatory technology and ethical and reputational rarely presents themselves fully formed, which you know, at the time, at this point in time, that's sort of the norm.

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They surface incrementally through weak signals and anomalies and uncomfortable questions and without deliberate mechanics to counter the bias and encourage dissent and, you know, allow individuals to really open up.

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Then it can lead to blind spots that unfortunately lead can lead to really serious signals.

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So I know I've talked a lot about this, but it's probably one of my most passionate topics.

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But ultimately trust internally with employees and externally with customers.

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It's, it is so, so important that people believe that integrity come, become, it comes before convenience, that speaking up will be met with fairness rather than retaliation, that doing the right thing is consistently reinforced both through words and through actions, You know, embedding psychological safety and actively countering groupthink for me, and not optional cultural initiatives.

23:01

They are really strategic imperatives for resilience, for for long term creation and sustaining certainly Vodafone's reputation as a as a trusted global organization.

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And for me, I think it's a business imperative for all, all organisations.

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Yeah, no, no really true words.

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Thank you so much for that.

23:21

Really interesting.

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And I'm thinking quite a lot of people who are listening to this podcast will be leaders in consulting.

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And I'd love if I could get some insight from you on that as well.

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Firstly, I'm wondering where do you think consultants will be most in demand to support businesses around risk compliance, resilience, trust over the next 12 months?

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Yeah, great question.

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And I think there certainly will be significant demand for consultants over the next 12 months.

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But by the nature of the the demanding shift from interconnectivity with regards to regulatory preparedness, responsible AI, digital governance and in an integrating that risk intelligence that brings together geopolitical, technical and compliance insights.

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And I think this is really the area that I anticipate that there will be greater demand for consultants and also to really sort of look at joining the dots up on this.

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There's, there needs to be, you know, a lot more focus, I think in terms of no longer siloed, but organisations are really struggling to keep up with the pace of scale and speed and interdependency of these changes.

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So I think this is 1 area where there is greater potential for consultancy support.

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You know, if you look at regulatory preparedness, it remains a key driver.

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Organisations are facing unprecedented volume of new and evolving regulations, AI, cyber resilience, the Cybersecurity Act, supply chain sustainability, consumer protection, the list goes on.

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And many I think are no longer looking for the theoretical advice, but really practical support in interpretation, in interpreting overlapping and sometimes conflicting regulatory expectations and translating them into really good operating models that can stand up to scrutiny.

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So I think this is where I think there'll be a greater demand, where consultants will be pulled in.

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And I think organisations are becoming increasingly stretched and timelines are compressed.

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And I think this is where the, the demand will sit.

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And, and as I mentioned earlier, certainly AI and digital governance I think will be an area where it will create significant demands for consultants who really can bridge the, the, the dynamics between legal compliance technology and ethics and helping organisations move from high level principles to defensible governance models that actually enable innovation rather than slowing it down.

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And then probably the last one is, is dealing with the risk insights around geopolitical volatility and supply chain disruption.

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There is so much convergence of different risk topics now.

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And I think consultants have a great ability to bring a much more holistic view of joining the dots up on all of these areas and providing much more holistic strategic insights and really drive value towards the, the, the organization.

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I've observed over the years, I've, I've worked with many consultants that sometimes it is very one-dimensional.

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And I think one of the the key areas of opportunities for consultants is actually to bring much more holistic data to an organization.

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We use within Vodafone Consultants quite a lot and there's domiciled in a number of parts of the organization.

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But actually having the big \*\*\*\*\* picture view of all of the areas that they're working on at once, I think would provide a real impact to to really connect compliance, technology delivery, commercial strategy.

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So how do we get a more enterprise wide risk lens rather than a functional lens I think would add enormous value moving forward.

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So it sounds like almost the the consulting firms themselves can be siloed in the way they work with you around.

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Yes, yeah.

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And I think this is where there's a huge opportunity, you know, how they can bring coherence to complexity, you know, actually provide much more of a dynamic view of their their entire ecosystem of support to an organization rather than just the individual assignments that they might be supporting on.

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And anything else you would throw into the pot that would help them create more value for businesses.

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It really is focusing on that in terms of sort of joining the dots up for the business.

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You know, many global large organisations like Vodafone may have the use of consultants or one particular consultant working in many different legal entities across the organization.

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And I think sometimes we don't necessarily get a big picture of you and that fragmentation of what they're doing could actually be something that could actually turned into something that would really add commercial value to us as an organization.

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So not looking through the silos, but providing a big picture view, provide integrated oversight to the organization of where the support lies in, in a group organization as a as us, it could be that somebody's working on something in India or Greece or Romania.

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And actually having the insights of the big holistic view would provide significant value.

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And I think that's where I think a number of consultants could really look to add some strategic value.

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Thank you.

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And Andrea, we always like to end on a really practical take away.

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So for any business leader listening today who's really worried about the level of risk and geopolitical uncertainty in the market and actually I can't imagine any aren't at the moment, what's the one thing you suggest they do around trust and integrity to make their business more resilient?

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So yes, geopolitical volatility and risk fragmentation I think is on the radar for everyone at the moment in business.

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And I think the one thing is for me would be make trust and integrity non negotiable strategic anchors.

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They shouldn't be slogans.

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They're not statements of intent, but anchors that actively guide decision making when the operating environment as we all know today is complex, it's fast moving and politically charged.

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Geopolitical risk is not abstract.

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It shows up whether it's in sanctions, supply chain disruption, data localisation, regulatory diversions and the growing tensions between speed, growth and control.

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It it means that in every environment, resilience is not just about agility.

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It's about having a clear internal compass where the external rules are shifting.

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Organise need to Organisations need internal principles that are incredibly stable and for me, that's why trust and integrity become so decisive.

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They allow leaders to make hard trade-offs under pressure, to say no when short term gains create long term exposure, and to act consistently across markets even when geopolitical expectations pull in different directions.

31:01

Organisations that navigate and certainty best are those who value, whose values are operationalized, where integrity governs, how risks are taken, how partners are chosen, and how decisions are defended when scrutiny inevitably follows.

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These principles are deliberately simple, but they're designed for a complex environment.

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They give people a shared language to challenge decisions, to pause with geopolitical pressures when we've got ethical tensions, and act decisively without waiting for perfect information, which rarely exists in a volatile environment.

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So for me, you know, I'm, I think the key is don't negotiate when it comes to trust and integrity.

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Resiliency is a geopolitically uncertain world, starting with leadership.

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When leadership teams visibly live the code role model principle judgement, and they're open when trade-offs are difficult and things go wrong, they create organizational muscle memory, which is so important.

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Team service risks early, escalations happen faster, and the business becomes better to absorb shocks rather than fracture under them.

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So practical take away for me is embed trust and integrity into how geopolitical risk is assessed, how decisions are made under pressure, and how leaders are measured when integrity is the lens through which uncertainty is navigated.

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Resilience is not reactive.

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It's built in.

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It's it's by design.

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A long answer, but hopefully that gave you some food for thought.

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Oh, Andrea, it did.

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And thank you so much for not only your openness today, but also your real lived examples.

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I, I'm sure all our listeners will have found them so valuable.

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Thank you very much.

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Thank you.

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And finally, for those leaders in consulting today who really want to understand how their firm can support clients on their resilience journey, then I'd like to highlight our most recent Future Trends report, which is all about helping clients build a resilient future.

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It examines exactly what clients want from firms in this space today.

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And as with all our reports, it's full of data insights that can really help firms explore this challenge.

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It looks at clients transformation needs, it looks at how they want to work with firms and it looks at where precisely they are set to invest.

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So if that sounds interesting, then please do reach out to us, contact us to purchase the report or to access it as part of an existing subscription.

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And other than that, I look forward to speaking to you on the next podcast.

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