

Rilla Delorier:

I'm not saying we should risk an institution. We shouldn't risk our customers' money, but we can take some risk in serving populations that need to be served, or employing employees who aren't the traditional background, or by listening in ways that we've never listened before.

James Robert Lay:

Greetings and hello. I am James Robert Lay, and welcome to Episode 220 of the Banking On Digital Growth podcast. Today's episode is part of the Digital Growth Journey series, and I'm excited to welcome Rilla Delorier to the show. Rilla is an independent corporate director with over 30 years of executive experience, now building a portfolio of board and advisory roles to provide value for organizations looking to transform their omnichannel customer experience, accelerate growth, and unlock new market opportunities. And today, I'm looking forward to talking with her about the intersection of purpose, culture, and change. Welcome to the show, Rilla. It is good to share time with you today. Welcome to the show, Rilla. It is so good to share time with you today.

Rilla Delorier:

Great to see you, James Robert.

James Robert Lay:

Before we get into talking about... We'll just call it your digital growth journey and where you've been, where you're at, and where you can continue to go, looking ahead, forward, with courage and confidence into the future, what is good right now for you personally or professionally, in the present moment?

Rilla Delorier:

Ah. Personally, well, I live in Portland, the Pacific Northwest, and the summer times here are extraordinary. Sun comes up around 5:00 AM, doesn't go down to 10:30, and it is beautiful sunshine the entire time in between. So I actually went on a full moon paddle board trip with a bunch of friends the other night. That was pretty awesome. And taking full advantage of Pacific Northwest. Camping this weekend. Professionally, I am loving my shift from being full-time, from a banking executive for 30-some-odd years, to now being on a series of different boards. So it's a portfolio of work, where I get an opportunity to deal with multiple different problems from different angles. Typically, a higher altitude than when you're actually an operator, and I have found that fascinating. Especially as we're going through this market shift on what is the role of a FinTech in a bank, and how is the recession going to impact everybody, and the change in FinTech valuations from everything being a billion dollars to now people being a little bit more realistic in valuations. So that professionally has been an awesome, awesome shift, and I'm learning a ton.

James Robert Lay:

You're 100% correct. We are experiencing, seeing, feeling even, a tremendous amount of change in the space. If we come up to that 30,000-foot view that you're at right now, what are some of the patterns and trends the dear listener needs to at least pay attention to, be aware of so that, hopefully, we can avoid some surprises down the road?

Rilla Delorier:

So I'm on two bank boards. One traditional bank that's heavy in commercial banking, 20-billion organization on the East Coast. And then also a banking-as-a-service organization that banks a lot of FinTechs, with 25 or 30 different FinTech organizations, and then I'm also on the board of a financial

technology company. And what the previous year, year and a half has been, has been really interesting to see how FinTechs measured different things, were rewarded for different things, had different value drivers. So for example, banks traditionally, as we know as bankers, have been focused on efficiency ratio and earnings per share, and ROA, ROE, ROTCE. A lot of backward-looking financials around performance. And FinTech companies have really been valued on, "What's the opportunity? What's the forward opportunity around total addressable market, revenue per customer, opportunity to get more revenue per customer, adjacencies?" And so therefore their valuations were based on what could happen, not what has happened.

So being in the board in both of those different cultures and those different conversations, it's always been hard for me to balance, like, "Well, don't we care like what's actually happening?" And banks, "Don't we care about what could happen?" What's happened recently with this recorection is, I think FinTechs are now being held a little bit more accountable for things like current revenue, revenue growth rate, profitability, burn rate. Yes, adjustable market matters, but their pace at which they're getting it and the profitability of the market that they are serving is starting to matter a little bit more. And that's been a pretty interesting shift. And of course, the conversations in all the board rooms is around, "How is this recession, how's the war, how's the supply chain, of course, the rate adjustments, how is that affecting the customer?" Because at the end of the day, that's how we make our money. And it's, "How are we serving the customer? And what's the customer's financial stability?" And as that changes, the underlying revenue stream for these institutions changes need to really be thinking at the customer level. And so that has been a good deep-dive in each organization to just make sure we are keeping that customer's needs in mind and staying out ahead of what changes may be occurring.

James Robert Lay:

I like your perspective on really exploring the past and then also future focus, but then bringing it here. It's almost the present moment. And you've experienced a tremendous amount of change over the last 30 years of just your own journey of growth, personally and professionally. And every step along the way, you've continued to make forward progress, which, I think that's what it's all about. We want to continue to move forward with courage, with confidence, but I want to get your take here because you talked about people, the customer. What role for you personally has purpose played on your own journey of growth? Because I think that's a key opportunity, whether you're FinTech, whether you're a financial brand, whether you're collaborating, how does purpose play into this for you personally? Before we'll flip this over to the professional front.

Rilla Delorier:

Well, gosh, I have my own motto that I actually created in fourth grade, because we had a teacher who encouraged all of us fourth graders to come up with a life's motto, which was a bit ambitious. And my motto has been have fun and make a difference, and I find the two go hand-in-hand. If I'm making a difference at whatever level, to one employee, to one customer, to one part of the community, then I'm also having fun. And those have gone together. And in fact, that motto, which has stayed with me, has really caused me to rethink my job sometimes. "If I'm not having fun and I'm not making a difference, then why am I doing it?" And I think that's true for all of us. We want to make a difference.

We want to feel like the work we're doing is contributing in a positive way, and that we can see that direct link between what we're doing and the goodness it's creating. And I remember very clearly in 2008, which was just hell in the banking world, I remember actually my kids, who were young at the time, telling me not to wear my banker costume to their school. They didn't want me wearing my suit to the school because bankers were bad. And we were villainized. We were even less well regarded than, or disrespected than lawyers at the time. And I was at a very large institution on the East Coast, and we had 27,000 employees who were feeling bad about being a banker, when banking is noble work. And we

should remember that bankers are actually helping dreams happen, helping communities grow, helping companies employ people, helping people manage the stress of their finances. If you think about what we as bankers do, we're hopefully helping people reduce their financial stress.

And so at that time, the CEO and leadership team of that organization said that, "Hey, we've got to remind ourselves why we're doing what we do, and remind ourselves that banking is noble work and we are here to help people, and that was lighting the way to financial wellbeing for customers and companies." And when you have that purpose, you have a different orientation to what you do, how you do it, the types of products you serve, and clearly the types of conversations that you have. The training that you give to your employees, what you reward, what you measure, what you invest in. And so, shifting that organization to becoming purpose-driven, and it still continues on today, made a massive difference in that organization's sense of pride and, frankly, its strategy of making sure that the strategy oriented to truly delivering that mission. It wasn't just something you talk about, which there's a lot of purpose-washing, of talking about them but not doing them. And this organization was very disciplined around, "First you need to be oriented around the purpose, then you need to do things that literally demonstrate commitment to the purpose. And then you can talk about it. Then you can say it."

James Robert Lay:

I want to roll this back a little bit, because I think there's a key insight here for the dear listener to take away, and you were just touching on it slightly. This idea of being versus doing. I am writing about this in *Banking on Change*, where there are the four seasons for exponential growth. There is a season. There's a time to learn, there is a time to think, there's a time to do, there's a time to review. Where I see many struggle and get stuck is in the doing, the season of doing. And we create a lot of attachment to, "This is what I do." We are not human doers. No, we are human beings. And I think there's a lot of correlation here that rolls back for you personally, back to that fourth grade moment when you wrote down this motto. And I can tell you personally, for me, not having a personal purpose or not having a personal motto, I was rudderless.

I floundered around as an entrepreneur. Had some really good early success, but then it led to a crash. And it was through that valley of despair, the dark night of the soul, if you will, that I think that I really found out why I am here. And so if someone is listening, and for me, that is... I've simplified it. 1BxBTR. So make the world a billion times better by getting a billion people beyond financial stress towards a bigger, better, brighter future. Now, I'm not going to do that personally, but I feel that through the collaborations and the thinking, and just all of that. Because I'm just so cerebral. That's my growth ability, and to transfer that and bring people like you and help transfer your knowledge, that's how we're all going to grow together to be even better. But for the dear listener who's like, "I don't have a motto. I don't have something that I can anchor to and provide me personally..." We're not even talking about culturally or organizationally just yet. "I don't have something." What would your recommendation be for them to break free from the doing for a bit, to review, to reflect, to learn, and then maybe even think about why? Like, "Why am I here? How can I really tap back into being a human being, not just a human doer?"

Rilla Delorier:

Yeah. Well, there's so much good stuff in that. It's interesting, because I am naturally wired to be a doer versus a be-er, and my husband is definitely more intentionally focused on being. And he wrote a podcast a while ago that said, "Every good doer needs a good be-er." And he's coached me through the years on how to just pause. Just pause, and actually build pause into your life, to be intentional around, "How are you being?" And as a leader of organizations, when you're leading teams, when you're showing up in meetings, even if you're not leading that team, you're participating on a team, to have a moment of setting an intention of how you want to be in that meeting. Or, in that conversation with your child, or

in that tense discussion with your neighbor. Whatever. How do you want to show up? How do you want to be? And what do you want to make them feel, and how do you want to feel at the end of that conversation? That is actually what moves the needle more than what you do or what you say. It's how you show up, and how they feel about you and the direction that you're setting and the culture that you're creating. So I think be versus do is critical. Of course you need to do-

James Robert Lay:

Of course.

Rilla Delorier:

You need to do. People will do a whole lot more for somebody that they are really inspired and connected with. That they think is authentic and honest and transparent, and not trying to hide anything and not trying to be right all the time. I think a lot of time on how you're being is time well-spent.

James Robert Lay:

As you're talking through that, I can't help but think of the works of Gino Wickman, who has written prolifically around the idea of his methodology called EOS, or the Entrepreneurial Operating System. And for an entrepreneur to build a really successful organization, requires two roles. There's the visionary role, and then there's the integrator role. And in my mind, I almost see the entrepreneur or visionary is the essence of being. Where, like you said, back to Chuck, for every doer needs a be-er and for every be-er that needs a doer, well, that doer, that's the integrator to make sure that the vision becomes reality. Now, you touched on something here that I think is very interesting when it comes to financial services, particularly internal. Because if we think about those leading banks, credit unions, FinTech, very smart, analytical, left-brain-driven leaders. But you're talking about, whether it's purpose or what you just said, this touchy, feel-good, heart piece of the puzzle, piece of the equation. Where might there be some conflict literally rooted in the mind of the leader when it comes to some of these more touchy-feely subjects? How can we navigate some of that? That might be historically a little bit uncomfortable, but you've gone through this experience to bring purpose within a very large organization. What does that look like for you, to navigate some of the complexity here?

Rilla Delorier:

Well, I think it's the hardest part of the job. Banks are people, I think, and the brand is the thousands of interactions that those people have with your customers. And that is not like making a product that comes off the manufacturing line that is always the same and very controlled. You can't control people, but what you can do is inspire them. What you can do is provide vision and direction, and then give them freedom within that framework to use their knowledge, to use their experience, to use their passion, to do absolutely the best they can to deliver against that vision. I think when you try to provide rules, and guidelines, and scripts, and policies and procedures that are controlling humans to try to make them robotic, A, who wants to do that job? People are going to leave. And B, the customer feels like, "This employee that I'm working with has no authority, no discretion and, frankly, no passion. So, why would I be there?"

And I think letting go as an executive and providing direction and inspiration, but also empowering and supporting employees is, in fact, the most important work that you do. And your point around visionaries versus... I think you said integrators. I talk a lot about the fact that organizations, not only is it hard to manage thousands of people in a common direction, but you also have to wear bifocals. You have to look down at the here and the now, immediate. "How are you performing in the near term?" You need to look a little bit on the horizon also, of like, "Where are you going?" And then you need to actually look even further out on the horizon, of like, "Is anyone coming at us? And then what do we

need to navigate?" And having people in your organization that are focused on perform, they might be different people than who are focused on transform, of the organization.

Transformation requires some risk-taking. It requires some visionary thinking. It requires looking up, out of the day-to-day to look on that horizon. It might require a different industry experience. It might require a different, just, set of personalities, versus the people who you're asking to perform and deliver the day-in-day-out, perhaps they are a little bit more comfortable with black and white. They're not as comfortable operating in the gray. Maybe they don't want to take risks. Often, organizations need to think about their talent differently based on what it is they're asking that group to do. And it's hard to be in both places at once, to work in the business at the same time you're working on the business, in the future direction.

James Robert Lay:

I like that idea of perform versus transform, and one cannot survive without the other. It's a symbiotic relationship of value creation. And the idea of transformation, and we'll just use this word very broadly, in digital transformation, for example, cultural transformation. I mean, even bringing purpose within an organization, what did that look like? What did that feel like? And I think most importantly for the dear listener, they maybe have batted around this idea of purpose within their own organization, but then they're questioning that present moment performance versus the transformational opportunity on the horizon. Looking back, how has purpose created a positive impact on the bottom line? And while it might not have been experience in the present moment, it was the inspiration to bring the future into the present that was the catalyst to move down that path.

Rilla Delorier:

I think purpose is by nature transformational, and I think a clear purpose can help people at all levels of the organization, whether they're focused on transformation or they're focused on delivering today, understand why it is they're being asked to do what they're doing. And therefore, they bring a different level of creativity and energy, and meaning to the work that they're doing. So for example, if our job as bankers is to help people with financial stress, then empowering our teammates in the branches to have conversations with customers about their financial stress and educating them on how to help customers manage that stress, that may not directly translate every conversation into a product sale and therefore revenue, but boy, it builds goodwill, which then can generate longevity. Perhaps depth of the customer, perhaps advocacy in that customer. And over time, becomes a brand that really stands out, and eventually very profitably.

The same thing is true at the highest levels of, if you have a purpose, then it helps you know strategically what to say yes to and what to say no to. If your purpose is around reducing financial stress, then you want to invest in things. Maybe using data and analytics to understand customers' options and help guide them towards smarter decisions, rather than something that's just a product that is engineered for us to make more fee income, but at the end of the day, the customer's going to be worse off for it. And sometimes you need to sacrifice those near-term profit opportunities for longterm. I often talk a lot about CVS. CVS stopped selling cigarettes. They lost billions of dollars when they stopped selling cigarettes, but that was because their purpose was to help people with their overall health.

James Robert Lay:

Great example.

Rilla Delorier:

And lean into their pharmacy, lean into their insurance business, lean into their MinuteClinics, or whatever theirs are called. And what they lost in a couple billion dollars in cigarette sales actually is now

\$47 billion a quarter in healthcare sales. And by the way, it's the right thing to do. So I think purpose translates into action, all levels of the organization, and ultimately translates into income. And sometimes you need to be a little patient, and we're not great at that. And sometimes it's hard to calculate the ROI, and you need to make investments that take a little while to pay off. That's where transformation comes from.

James Robert Lay:

I want to stay on this idea of transformation versus, we'll call it just performing in the present moment, because when you're performing in the present moment, and then you're thinking about transformation, which is the future, sometimes... And I think we're experiencing a lot of that. We've experienced a lot of that over the last couple of years, and we're probably going to experience this for at least the next decade. Everything that I'm reading, in that perspective, is being formed by history. We're essentially in winter, but I'm hopeful because what comes after winter is spring. And so that is what continues to give me hope in all areas of my life, but when you think about the chaos and the conflict of the present moment, and that future might not feel so clear, it's a little confusing, looking back over the last 30 years, how have you personally managed the complexities of chaos and change?

Rilla Delorier:

So many leaders feel like you need to have the answer. Holy crow, you do not need to have the answer. In fact, I think one of the reasons I was somewhat good at the jobs I was in is because I often, actually, almost never, had I had the jobs of the people reporting to me. So I knew I didn't know their job as well as they knew their job. I'd had never done it before. So I needed to lean on them for their expertise, and my job was to weave together the team and connect it with other parts of the organization. And so admitting that you don't know, I think it's fuel to the organization. It's oxygen for your team to do their best work, so you absolutely need to recognize that you don't know.

But your comment is right, around chaos. And I do think metrics matter. I'm a real data person. And I think balanced scorecards that look at both lead and lag indicators, and a whole lot more lead indicators than lag, to tell you that you're heading in the right direction. Because you may not see a big movement on the revenue or the net income for a while, but if you pay attention at the customer level and you pay attention at the employee level, and you pay attention at the micro level of, "Are we going the right way? Can we tell we're making progress?" And measuring those things that really tell you you are, in fact, going the right way, and using those measures to help the organization know what matters and what they should be thinking about, is really important. And there's so many organizations that just look at financials. They don't look at customer metrics. They don't look at employee metrics. They don't look at community metrics. They don't look at loyalty or promoter score. And I think you need to have those qualitative indicators or those micro indicators, that you are, in fact, going the direction that you set out to go.

James Robert Lay:

I like that idea of more of a holistic approach, because if you're just looking at the bottom-line profitability, I'll relate this to healthcare for a little bit. You wake up in the morning, you're alive, that's a fantastic day unless you're looking at blood pressure, glucose, all of these other areas that we probably need to be paying attention to because that's a predictive measure. "Are we going to wake up tomorrow? The next week? The next month? The next year?" And there's such a tremendous opportunity to combine the perspective of healthcare, physical wellbeing, and mental wellbeing, and financial wellbeing. And if you look at this idea of purpose and using purpose as a North Star to navigate even the complexity of change and transformation, it's not something that we can do as an individual, back to your point, as a leader sometimes.

And I hear this. They take on an extreme amount of ownership, which I appreciate, but it's the way that the world has massively transformed at an exponential rate, and will continue to do so because of just the technological progressions that we're going to make, we're not going to have all of the answers. And I think the more that we become comfortable in that place of being, the more that we can lean on others to fill in those gaps. And that's the role of collaboration here. So culturally speaking, from a transformative perspective, the individual, the team, the organization, as a leader specifically, how can we help calm some of the pain and the anxiety that maybe people internally feel about the subjects of transformation, of any type, for that matter, to put their minds at ease here in the present moment? Because otherwise, they're going to take that pain, that anxiety forward with them into the future, and we want to try to reduce that as much as possible.

Rilla Delorier:

You made me think of two different things, but one is a quote that I love, is, "The more you include people in the process, the more they own the outcome. And the closer you are to the process, the more you own the outcome." And by engaging people in the process of setting the direction, of understanding, "If this is our purpose, what would it look like in your world? How would your job orient around that purpose?" And giving them empowerment to be a part of setting that transformational agenda as it pertains to their area, that engagement, that enrollment process helps them maybe see why changes are happening, feel like they're part of it, and maybe inspire them to do something differently so that they can continue to deliver on that purpose, even if their previous way of doing the job is going to change. And so enrollment and engagement in the process, I think, matters.

The other thing that you sparked for me, though, is really the need for diverse thinking. To engage more or different perspectives, different experiences, different types of people around the table in thinking about what transformation needs to look like so that various facets of the organization, or frankly, facets of the market, are present in decision-making. And it is so clear that the reason why banks are treading on the same products and services and customer segments, and mass affluent, is because most of the time, the people making decisions in banks look the same and have similar backgrounds. And something that I find truly inspiring, and the fact that technology is making new operating models possible and that data is creating new ways of thinking about credit worthiness, is that there's so many niche banking opportunities now that are serving customers who previously have had unmet needs because they haven't fit the credit box or the policy. Or, frankly, the people at the boardroom just didn't even know about that customer need. Didn't have the life experience to relate to it.

And I love that now there are FinTechs primarily, some banks, who are saying, "These underserved populations have unique needs that, with a little bit of technological investment and creativity, and understanding and empathy, we can serve those needs. Create a new market opportunity for us, go deep in a niche, differentiate, create loyalty. Do it efficiently now, because it's not about brick and mortar, it's about digital proposition. And make a difference in the world." Because there are people who need access to a credit card or a checking account, or they need to get a credit card in order to get an apartment or they need a check account to have their paycheck deposited. I mean, historically, students that are coming to study abroad or immigrant labor that's coming here haven't been able to even access that, but are they a lower risk? No. Not if we think more creatively.

James Robert Lay:

And that's where I see such tremendous opportunity, looking ahead. It's taking time to critically think about, "What are those opportunities?" But more so it's like, "Where are the big problems? What are the common people patterns causing common people pain?" So that we can then put together prescriptions that resolve those. Back to your CVS example, it's almost taking a healthcare approach and not just thinking about product first, but problem first, and then reverse engineering it back here. I do

want to come back to something that you shared before about the inclusiveness of it, because I do see that there is an inclusive opportunity to co-create with the market now because of exponential technologies like digital and being able to build communities. Joe Pulizzi has written prolifically about this through his Content Inc. model. Joe talks about building an audience first.

And I agree with that, but I like to take that thinking even further. Don't just build the audience, because audience is still a one-way communication platform. I'm like, "No, no, no, build a community first, and then co-create with the community." And that's a multi-year investment in some cases, to build the community. Because when you build that community, you're going to be a part of that community from the very beginning, versus trying to enter into the community as an objective third party. Now, let's take some of this thinking internally. Because as you mentioned before, it's the inclusiveness of inviting others to be part of the experience to learn together, which, there is one of those four seasons for exponential growth. And I can tell you, historically...

And I apologize for my sins today, for taking the wrong approach, but once again, you just don't know what you don't know until you know it, I was doing training and coaching with marketing teams to begin with. Well, it was great. Marketing teams would get excited. They'd go forward and they're trying to bring the thinking within the organization. Ah. Why? Because people cannot see what they now see. And so this is one of the reasons that we're taking marketing and sales teams, or marketing sales and leadership teams, and even inviting compliance and other key stakeholders, into the conversation to learn and grow together over the course of a year, because they see different. Yes, they think different. Yes. But just because you think different doesn't mean that you're going to transform your behavior or your actions, your habits, going forward. To bridge the gap between the thinking and the doing, it requires the feelings and the emotions that we were talking about before. So, I want to really dig into this here. In thinking about cultural transformation through the lens of purpose in your own experience, what role did training play to not just help people see different, think different, but I think most importantly, feel different about the path forward?

Rilla Delorier:

Training is such an odd word, and the way most people are learning things today is they go on YouTube. They search for, "How to. How to." And I think for employees, teammates, really, first, for them to create an unbelievable sense of empathy with the customer to understand what is it that the customer is trying to figure out how to. "What's the customer's unmet need?" As you said, "What is the unmet need that that customer has? What's causing their financial stress? Where are they confused? Where do they need help?" And then giving the employees the opportunity to help figure out, "Okay, what do they know, or what do they need to know to be able to help answer those questions or meet those unmet needs? And is it a training issue? Is it a product issue? Is it a policy issue? Is it an empowerment issue?"

Probably a combination. Because you can train people on what you want them to do, it may or may not meet the need of that customer that has an unmet need. So I think training goes both ways. It's helping the employee understand what it is you're trying to accomplish, asking the employee what they need to be able to do that, giving them some training to the extent that you have that information, but also giving them the tools, the permission, et cetera, that may not exist today, so the employee can do what they need to do. Training to me has always historically been this top-down, "We will show you what you should do." And I think it needs to be this co-creation and a shared goal of product and risk, and policy and operations, shoulder to shoulder, with the customer in front of you, and saying collectively, "How do we change our organization or change in the way we operate in order to empower that frontline employee to deliver what the customer needs?"

James Robert Lay:

That's a great point on top-down versus more of a holistic view. I'm thinking about the concepts of open strategy here. We talk a lot about open banking, but then there's the principles of open strategy. And in this whole discussion that we're having here on... And I'm just calling it training to fit this somewhere within the mind, but I think it's more deep than that. I think there's the training, there's the coaching aspect, because if you're telling people from on high, "Well, this is what you should do. This is how you should think, this is how you should feel," my kids. I think of my kids. They're so resistant to that. That's basic human behavior. No one wants to be told what to do, what to think, let alone how to feel. That's bad. But I've been doing so much studying over the last, really, three or four years. Pre-pandemic, going back and reading some of the ancient writings of the Romans, the Greeks, the Stoics.

And I mentioned Socrates before, but there's the Socratic methodology of, we introduce an idea into a group, and maybe provide a little bit of context and perspective, but it's through the questioning, that that is where the learning really happens. Because it's through the questioning that people begin to, what you'd said before, take ownership of whatever the subject matter might be, versus it being shoved from an organizational level to a team level, from a team to the individual. And there's going to be so much resistance. It's almost like you have to transform the individual to transform the team, transform the team to transform the organization. And when you transform that org, that's where you continue to put the transformation of people that you're serving as a financial brand or FinTech at the center of all of your thinking and doing. Now my thought here, though, is change and transformation, no matter what it is...

What holds us back, I've talked about these before, it's the three fears. It's unknown. It's change. Its failure. But you were having a conversation with Chuck, and I'm glad y'all leaned into this, and I want to bring this full circle as we wrap up this conversation. It's been a great one, so thank you for your thoughts and perspective. But maybe there's that fourth fear, which is the fear of success that holds us back from achieving our exponential growth potential as individuals, as teams, as organizations. And the poem that you noted with Chuck, the one that both of you had on a wall, really resonated with me. I've never heard it before. It's called Our Greatest Fear. Yeah, Marion Williamson, It's Our Greatest Fear. Would you mind sharing a little bit of this poem? Because when you read this on the Cool Change podcast with Chuck, I'm like, "Man." Oof, it hit me right here in my heart, because I do think that sometimes we fear our potential. We fear our success, and that holds us back maybe even more than the fear of the unknown, change, and failure.

Rilla Delorier:

Yeah, it's a really powerful quote. And I'm terrible at memorizing, so I don't know it off the top of my head. But the whole idea is, we often tell ourselves, "Well, who am I to be the one who brings this big, crazy idea into the room? Who am I to lead an organization? Who am I to be in charge?" And the quote is really, "Who are you not to? You are doing the world a disservice by not playing big, by not being bold, by not living up to your greatest potential to make others comfortable." Because you want to shrink to make others more comfortable rather than being bold and pushing people forward. And it's really inspiring to say, "Go out there and play hard. Don't hold back. Leave it all on the field." And when you do, people will follow and you'll encourage other people to play large. And it becomes this momentum that enables all those people around you to do the same, and not try to shrink. So, it's a pretty powerful poem.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. I have it pulled up here, and I do want to read a couple of lines just for a minute for the dear listener for context, but I can't help but think of digital stoicism here and something that I'm writing about in Banking on Change. And one of the Stoic philosophies was memento mori, which is Latin for,

"Remember your death." And I spend a tremendous amount of time reflecting on my death. Not from a morbid perspective. In fact, in my mind, I'm going to live to be 158 years old. So I still have 118 years left to keep doing what I'm doing, because it is also thought and cerebral. As long as my mind is healthy and my body is somewhat capable, there's a tremendous amount of value that I have to share and give to the world at large. But I do think when we reflect on our death for a minute, that puts things into perspective. And it's a great daily habit, weekly habit, monthly, whatever it is, to just think about. It's like, "Am I living up to my full potential or is the greatest fear..." Which, here are a couple lines from the poem.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, back to your point, of what you were sharing, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, handsome, talented, and fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You're a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do." I think this idea of shrinking and contraction is something that we really need to give a lot of consideration to through our work in financial services. Particularly over the next decade, when things are going to feel confusing and chaotic, because when things feel that way, we do tend to shrink and go within. We do tend to contract. So we're going to have to fight that natural instinct to go within to continue to grow outward. And when we have that confidence internally, as an individual, as a team, as an organization, I'm telling you, confidence is contagious, and it will continue to spread out to your account holders and to the communities that you serve. What's your take on that?

Rilla Delorier:

Absolutely. And I think we as bankers typically are risk managers. Risk managers typically like to have more of a herd mentality, "Don't stick your neck out. Don't go too far outside the box. Do what others are doing and follow." And I think we need more financial institutions that are sticking their neck out for what is right for customers who have needs that are unmet, for opportunities to make a difference in the world, and to play a bigger, bolder game. And I'm not saying we should risk an institution. We shouldn't risk our customers' money, but we can take some risk in serving populations that need to be served, or employing employees who aren't the traditional background, or by listening in ways that we've never listened before. And admitting we don't have all the answers, and enrolling others to help us come up with those answers. And I think that, that mentality, can totally transform organizations, and maybe even an industry.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah, that idea of courage. And I highly recommend to the dear listener, if they've not read the works of Brene Brown on this subject. And I want to wrap up here, get really practical. And thank you for the wisdom and the knowledge that you have shared, and have imparted with all of us today. But as we look ahead towards the future, creating the future that is bigger, better, and brighter than what we have in the present moment, it's about being even better, it's about being even greater, what is one thing that the dear listener can do to bring purpose, to make purpose the forefront of their mind? That guides their thinking, that guides their doing, that really informs their being even, so that they can navigate some of the complexities that exponential changes bring to all of us?

Rilla Delorier:

I'll get super tactical, go listen to calls in the call center.

James Robert Lay:

Oof.

Rilla Delorier:

Go listen to calls in the call center on the 15th and the last day of the month, and hear the stress in those customers' voices. Hear the questions that they're asking, hear how on the edge they are with their finances. Talk to the small business owner when they're worried about making payroll. Talk to the small business owner who cannot get their arms around the paperwork to fill out a stinking loan to get the cash to buy the equipment for the deal that's already sold. Spend time with the customer to hear what the stresses are in order to uncover what is the role you and your organization can play to meet those needs. And I would say the same thing goes to your relationships. Listen. What's on their mind? Ask them how people are doing, listen and find purpose in bringing a intentional energy to how you're making other people feel. Are you really making them feel heard and understood, or are you trying to be smart and be heard yourself, and have all the answers? And if we can shift from tellers to listeners, from doers to be-ers, we could find lots of opportunities to enrich the lives of ourselves and the people around us.

James Robert Lay:

Wow. You just hit something for me. Because the frontline, they are bank tellers, and we transform that into being just a listener, the good that we can do. Because it's all about going all in on people. Asking good questions, listening to what they share, but also learning through observation, because it's sometimes what they don't share. It's more of their actions that sometimes do speak louder than words. This has been great. I like that. Listen. Listen internally, listen externally. And speaking about listening, this has been a good conversation. What is some way, or what is the best way, that someone can connect with you to continue the discussion we started today?

Rilla Delorier:

Well, you mentioned Cool Change podcast. My husband has a podcast called Cool Change with Chuck Allen, and there is a podcast with me there. A lot of other really good ones on intentionality and purpose and being versus doing. And then you can always reach out to me, first name, last name, @gmail.com. So that's Rilla, R-I-L-L-A, D-E-L-O-R-I-E-R, @gmail.com. And love to talk to anybody if anyone has questions. Great to chat with you again.

James Robert Lay:

Connect with Rilla. Check out the podcast with Chuck. You've got a lot of great episodes over there. Learn from Rilla, grow with Rilla. It is always great to share time with you, so thanks so much for joining me on another episode of Banking On Digital Growth. I appreciate it. Until next time, and as always, be well, do good, and make your bed.