

Emily Lutyens

Emily Lutyens 00:00

I forget. There's like a tension between like bandwidth and equity like the way you can practice equity in this work too right when that sort of situation happens it's like if you were to truly be as equitable as possible like that takes time and it takes you know human power as you say and and yet often we have to think about our bandwidth and limitations of how many people are on our team and all of those pieces and that's just a really tough tension to manage always.

Mariam Matin 00:30

And I think one of the big themes that kind of particularly came up in 2022 that people were talking about is that it's impossible to never do harm, right? Even if you are completely dedicated to equity and justice, you're going to get it wrong sometimes.

Mariam Matin 00:44

And you our flawed, just like we are all flawed. And so there is that constant stress when you a small team and you really, really trying to do the best that you can, but between two people and boundless flaws between the two of us, you know that things are going to slip through and that we can't be as present.

Mariam Matin 01:02

And then the other side of that equation is in our work, we want to pick people we really want to take a chance on and help them thrive. And there's this constant like, but we also have to make sure we're partnering with people who are ready to support them and be present for them and not make them feel inadequate because I've seen that happen with other programs.

Mariam Matin 01:23

We've luckily not quite had this problem ourselves, but I've seen this with other interns is that they have their first ever internship experience with a very well meaning organization that just assumes that they know more than they do that makes them feel stupid for asking questions like all of this like really, really gets deep under my skin and so it's hard.

Mariam Matin 01:45

I mean, thinking about access to opportunity and equity is really, really challenging, which you obviously know quite a bit about in your own work.

Emily Lutyens 01:55

Yeah. Yeah, I mean like you're in the world of like really just investing in humans and building leadership. And it's just tough work to do, you know, because there's so much that can be misconstrued or misunderstood.

Emily Lutyens 02:11

You don't know whether the result is specifically from your work often, like, it's just a really, really hard space to be working in, in my opinion, and incredibly rewarding, you know, so like maybe hold on to that, like why you do what you in on the exhausting days when you're

Speaker 3 02:29

trying to get through 700 applications. That sounds really hot.

Mariam Matin 02:32

Yeah, I mean, that's, the piece, right? It's for me, one of the reasons that I've loved the nature of our model as well is there is so much face time with students. And so we do see that rewarding element of that light bulb going off of like, Oh, okay.

Mariam Matin 02:47

Like I am capable or I'm deserving to be here. Or I am so. Much more than I thought that I was in so many ways, or i'm in a space where I am finally able to thrive in the way that i haven't been able to drive before those moments are incredibly rewarding.

Mariam Matin 03:03

And we see, that we, see that that transformative impact is there and there is this tension of we can't do that for everybody. And we've intentionally designed ourselves in a way of like, we may not be able to serve all hundreds of people who come our way, but we are going to be transparent.

Mariam Matin 03:21

We're going to be empathetic. We are going to provide as much support every step of the way that we can. Then the people that are able to participate in the program, keeping that high touch element of our program rather than scaling for the sake of scale, because that's where we've seen that impact and that trajectory shift be so big.

Mariam Matin 03:39

And a lot of funders have trouble with that. They're like, oh, if you have this many people interested in the program, shouldn't you have a 500 person cohort? And I tell them, I was like well, we're seeing the impacts.

Mariam Matin 03:51

The program goes way, way down. If we scale without the capacity to appropriately scale. So that might have come to you for funding. And then we get caught in that loop and they say, no, thank you. That has been a big theme of the last couple of years for us.

Emily Lutyens 04:06

God, it's the depth versus breadth thing, right? That is just so hard for funders. It's yeah. I mean, this is why I think education and leadership more often than not needs grand dollars because there is so much customization and like emotional time that goes into a process like this, you know, and I.

Emily Lutyens 04:29

I know we're gonna talk about like three lines in my career, whatever, but like, I went from being an education to like having this like very physical product that helped an amputee to walk. And it was like this black and white thing, right?

Emily Lutyens 04:43

It's like if an amputee gets access to my product and walks on my products, they have independence, they had mobility, they'd have the ability to get to school, the abilities to go to a

job. Like it's was super black -and -white in a really different way from like investing in leadership in Eastern Africa, you know?

Emily Lutyens 05:01

And like the breadth versus depth of what you can do in those two things is like quite different. And I think what really counts is like figuring out what, what it really motivates you when you show up.

Emily Lutyens 05:18

Because we all make these like these choices as to, do I want to be working on maybe a technology that isn't super leadership focused, but it's gonna reach lots and lots of people. Or do I wanna be focused on that deep leadership like empowerment work that is so meaningful?

Emily Lutyens 05:35

Like, where do you find meaning? And you just, you kind of have to make those choices and you learn along the way. I feel like we're diving into what we were gonna supposed to talk about already already.

Mariam Matin 05:45

No, I love that. And I think sort of to your point, there is no right or wrong way to go about it. It's about the intentionality in which you do it and understanding that all of these are different ways to address the same core challenges in a sense, right?

Mariam Matin 06:00

So in the depth piece of what I do, which is thinking about leadership, the reason we do it is not just because it's feel good, it because our theory of change is if you invest in few really, really strong leaders, the level of impact that they can have over the course of their career is impossible to even calculate, it just, it enormous versus making certain products and services more widely available through the power of technology and scale, which is also critically important.

Mariam Matin 06:27

And I think what's so challenging sometimes about the way we talk about social impact is sometimes we are so one -dimensional, where it's like we need to reach as many people as we can, as best as can.

Mariam Matin 06:38

And that's one way to do it, but that is not the only way. So for one of the reasons that I'm very excited to talk to you today is you sort of touched on it. You've done a lot of different things in your career.

Mariam Matin 06:48

You have done leadership development. you've done tech, you're done responsible tourism, you are now working in racial and equity justice work. For you, what do you see as your through line or a theme that sort of run through your own career if there even is one?

Emily Lutyens 07:04

Yeah, I love this question. I mean, I think there's sort of like the throughline of my what. So like what are the issues that I that underline all of the work that I've been doing. And so if I look for that through -line, I think it's something around building choice and independence, definitely equity, definitely inclusion.

Emily Lutyens 07:22

Like how do we build a world that is more equitable, where individuals have the choice and the power and mobility and empowerment to live their lives with dignity and especially given how much work there is to do to repair historical systems of harm.

Emily Lutyens 07:42

So if you think about my work in education in Eastern Africa and Southern Africa, a lot of it was really around repairing the legacy of colonial racist education systems. My work in healthcare and disability was around repairing developing world export exploitation, you know, and now common future, the work is centered around dismantling systemic racial oppression in the US.

Emily Lutyens 08:03

So I think, I think there's a through line here in sort of the principles of equity and the principle of inclusion. But I also like when I think about my career, think this is throughline in my how So like, how have I approached this work?

Emily Lutyens 08:20

And I've always, always worked for a mission that speaks to me. If that's not there, then I'm not gonna show up. I am not going to say yes to the work. There's always leaders that I respect. And, I think I have sort of been on this exploratory path of figuring out how I can best contribute.

Emily Lutyens 08:40

So, you know, I did that sorta traditional nonprofit fundraising for small checks from individual donors. And then I consulted on development projects that were funded by like these enormous foundations.

Emily Lutyens 08:53

And I got a little jaded. I was like, I don't think this is the best way to make the most impact. So I went to business school and then co -founded this for -profit medical device company with a social business model.

Emily Lutyens 09:04

The idea being that, oh, if I can build a business my revenues are gonna sustain our international impact But I discovered that I still had to do nonstop fundraising. So I feel like I've been on this journey searching for like the structures that I can work within in order to create the most impact in the world.

Emily Lutyens 09:21

And that's also a part of the through line of my career.

Mariam Matin 09:25

So you sort of named three elements, which is believing in the work, the leadership behind the. Work leading that work and identifying where you yourself can contribute. So sort of going piece by piece, starting with the believing in the work itself, right?

Mariam Matin 09:41

This is an interesting concept. There are two things rolling through my brain. One is how often I have the conversation with students and young people who are starting their career of, I don't even know, I care about so many things, right.

Mariam Matin 09:54

They have this sort of like, everything matters. Everything is urgent. How do you know where to start? So I'm curious if you have advice on this, because so that's, that one piece of it. And then the other piece of what I say to people who are in that headspace is everything is so intersectional with which is both great, because there are lots of ways to impact the systems that you care about dismantling and also it makes it more complicated because there's so many different layers to this work as well.

Mariam Matin 10:23

So when people come to you or, you know, if someone is urgent and important, I don't know where to start. I care about everything. And that's sort of the energy they're coming to, this work. What advice do you give?

Emily Lutyens 10:38

You know one of the things that I've had people come to me and ask about is, do I need to have sort of like for profit, sort of consulting experience in order to do this work well. And I'm sort of one of those many case studies.

Emily Lutyens 10:54

I started in management consulting for like a year and a half. It wasn't very long. I knew by my second day that it really wasn't for me, but I am one of these people that sorta got that experience under my belt, worked with like Fortune 500 companies, built financial models, blah, blah blah.

Emily Lutyens 11:13

I don't think that work was necessary, right? Like when people are sort of overwhelmed with what's my first step? There's so many things I'm interested in. Maybe you consider yourself a generalist. My advice is just start, right?

Emily Lutyens 11:26

Like I don't actually think in order to have an impact, there's sort of like, I must check off this checklist of necessary skill sets. I think if you approach each job that you have, whatever that looks like with an open mindset with some humility and try to understand what here is working in terms of the structure, what is here working for me as an individual, you learn those lessons and you take them with you on your career path and move on to your next job and your exploration of finding that fit.

Emily Lutyens 12:05

I think that that is the most important part because no one is really going to get it right the first time around. I know very few people who have managed to do that. We're all on a journey and you know I sort of say like I think I've had two or three careers already and I am excited to have two- or -three careers more and my goal is just to get better at it as I go along and to leverage the impact that I can have because I figured out and had experiences in different models, small nonprofits, large nonprofits consulting, for -profit social enterprises.

Emily Lutyens 12:40

And I've learned about me and how I show up in the work and how i can best contribute. So it sounds really simple, but I think my advice is just go for it.

Mariam Matin 12:50

Stop building those building blocks. No, I 100% agree with that advice. I Think you can read everything in theory. You can talk to as many people as you can and which is all very helpful, but you're not really going to know how you feel about an organization, a certain theory of change, a model for social change until you are in it yourself.

Mariam Matin 13:11

So kind of staying in this particular area, something that you have said to me before, which I am still thinking about, is rather than picking one path, like you said, you're gonna have a lot of

different careers, being dedicated to impact is about not throwing your full weight at one sort of way of looking at social change or one particular cause.

Mariam Matin 13:34

If you're truly dedicated to social change, you are going to have a lot of different careers. Can you unpack that a little bit for us?

Emily Lutyens 13:40

Yeah, absolutely. So, oh my gosh, here's the thing. We're never going to be done. And maybe God, maybe I just sound really negative, you know, but I sort of actually think of it more as just like this, this opportunity.

Emily Lutyens 13:58

So common future we envision a new economy that works for everybody, that includes everybody that doesn't extract. That is a huge vision, if you really think about it. And it's, in my opinion, lifetimes of work, generations of what we're dismantling stuff that has been around for centuries and so if you go out there and you think that your one solution is going to like make a fix, I don't think you're thinking big enough.

Emily Lutyens 14:24

And so the work of making the world a better place is sort of like lifelong work, and that's why I think we each go through, if we are dedicated to the space, each goes through multiple journeys. You know, I said I've had two to three careers already, like, I have been through a multiple stages on my own personal equity journey.

Emily Lutyens 14:45

And so we're not gonna get it right the first time. I think that that's wishful thinking. And when we think about dedication, so I'll like open up a little bit here. Like I think as you do this work, you learn things about yourself and how you can best contribute.

Emily Lutyens 15:02

And I had a wicked muscle of perseverance. Like, I was strong and I really, really passionate. In like first decade of my career, I was just like go, go go. And what I came to realize at some point was that perseverance isn't really enough in this work.

Emily Lutyens 15:20

You need more. You more tools in your toolkit. And I had this experience where I had to actually walk away from the company that I co -founded from my role as CEO because my body literally shut me down.

Emily Lutyens 15:34

I wasn't going too hard for too long. And my buddy just said, OK, enough is enough. And so I took this health sabbatical and really thought about how can I show up in this work sustainably for the long term, because I know I'm dedicated, but what form does that take?

Emily Lutyens 15:54

And I think we can give the best contributions if we focus on the work that we believe in. And also if find that place, that role in the sort of structure that makes sense for us. Like this mix isn't going to like naturally fall into your lap, right?

Emily Lutyens 16:12

But like, I think your career should be an exploration. I thing that we all learn about how we'd like to work, the things we're good at, things that maybe we don't like doing, e .g. for me, fundraising.

Emily Lutyens 16:26

I was good it, but it rained me. You know, so I we need dedication, but we also need like self -knowledge and exploration and practicing those muscles as well.

Mariam Matin 16:37

Yeah, I'm processing that because I think that it, that is the piece that particularly in social impact, we neglect so much. It is still very much a culture of if you care, you are going to just go for it and you're going make it work and you going put all of your energy into it.

Mariam Matin 17:00

One of the interesting things that I am on Facebook still for some reason. I don't know why, but I'm part of a like nonprofit professionals group and it is wild to hear the kinds of conversations that nonprofit professional are still coming up against, particularly from, you know, folks who have been in the industry probably too long or people who are funders who hold social impact employees and community members to this insane standard.

Mariam Matin 17:33

And there is this tension of like expectation and status quo and also us having this conversation with ourselves of this is not a sustainable model. We are not going to be able to one, move the needle on change the way that we want to.

Mariam Matin 17:49

And also we are going to exclude a lot of people who have a lot to contribute, but maybe don't have that same energy or bandwidth. So I think there's just so much there that's important to name and to push back on.

Emily Lutyens 18:04

Yeah. And like, if you start bringing in gender norms or sort of like the way that female leadership is viewed or the ways that BIPOC leadership has viewed and the heaviness and weight and extra mile that is necessary depending on, you know, how you show up in the world.

Emily Lutyens 18:28

It's, yeah, it's definitely hard. and I think those conversations are starting to happen slowly and part of this is as we as we learn more about ourselves hopefully we learned to practice the muscle of discernment around what is the type of team that I want to join, what are the cultural values that I would look for in an organization, or what of the culture values I wanna build in my own organization.

Emily Lutyens 18:57

What leadership traits do I respect? Do I trust? Do I follow? Because it's really complex. And if we if we ignore it, and we just try and persevere, no matter what, at some point, I think we all each individually hit our limits.

Emily Lutyens 19:18

And I would much rather have a human who is dedicated and talented in this space. Stay in the space for 50, 60, 70 years with, you know, building in maybe a sabbatical here and there or whatever it is in order to take care of themselves.

Emily Lutyens 19:41

I'd much rather see that than somebody who, in my case, how long did it take me? I had several burnouts along the way. But like my big crash was sort of like 13 years in. And, you know, I think there was a possibility that I wouldn't have returned to the, well, actually, I don't really think I would have return, but it was, it wasn't big thing.

Emily Lutyens 20:05

It was really big thing for me to take stock and say, okay, how can I continue to show up in this work

Mariam Matin 20:11

sustainably? So what do you do differently now? What did you learn from that crash 13 years in. And how is that also impacting the way that you lead your teams now and the way you act as a mentor to others?

Mariam Matin 20:24

I'm curious how that's shown up later in your life.

Emily Lutyens 20:30

People call me the mother hen. Or sort of like they say I am like the glue on the team. That's sort like some of the things that people have said about me. I think that I just, I care pretty deeply about the humans around me and generally try to have a pretty good understanding about what they're good at and also what they enjoy in work.

Emily Lutyens 21:02

Because I think forcing people to continue to do work that they are good at but they don't naturally do instinctively and where it's a real big push for them. I think long-term that is unsustainable.

Emily Lutyens 21:14

And it's not like you never do it, right? Like, I that there are a lot of humans, myself included. Like when I first started pitching, I would physically shake, you know, when was pitching me, I was so scared.

Emily Lutyens 21:28

I hated going on stage. I hate it people, you being the center of attention. It just didn't come naturally to me. It never has. But, you know, I did it for seven years. So by the end of it, I was pretty good at it.

Emily Lutyens 21:44

You know the last big picture I did was on stage in front of like 3,000 people. It was a live pitch at 43 North and we won half a million dollar investment. And so I'm going to learn this. This is a strength that I need to have.

Emily Lutyens 21:59

And I totally understand that. I get that and if the direct report comes to me and says, hey, I want to improve on this, I will 100% support that, I think it's just like seeing the longer term pieces of like, okay, this is really draining your energy and there are ways for you to be to, to really contribute to work in a way that fits you better finding those out and coaching people towards that is really important to me.

Emily Lutyens 22:27

For myself, I took a sabbatical and then I became a new mother for the first time. So it was sort of like a double whammy of how do I reenter the workforce in this way? And I specifically looked for a role where I felt like I had confidence.

Emily Lutyens 22:48

At that moment, I was like, I don't think I need to be super challenged as a New Mother. This is not my moment. Again, it comes back to the multiple careers thing. Like there are moments to really push and there're moments where you need to rebalance how you live your life and how you contribute in your lives.

Emily Lutyens 23:06

And for me, being a new mother, I thought a lot about what are the things that really drain me? I'm not gonna fundraise. That was a really clear boundary I made for myself. And I also found an organization that practices a four day work week.

Emily Lutyens 23:24

And so I get a Friday off every single week and generally use it to, you know, go see doctors, spend time with my family, practice some self-care, check in on all the general life administration that piles up.

Emily Lutyens 23:38

And that's been really helpful for me to balance out and keep sustainable in the world.

Mariam Matin 23:45

That's amazing. And it sort of ties to one of the elements of what you mentioned, you now are in a position where you are a leader kind of setting norms, setting standards for how your team shows up and how there should be this balance in the way that we think about work and life and purpose.

Mariam Matin 24:04

And so one of the elements that you mentioned that have always sort of looked for in your own career is not just what is being done, but how it's being done who is leading that work, right? And something that, you and I have also talked about and actually had this conversation with an executive director I know yesterday as well is the role that ego plays in the work of social impact.

Mariam Matin 24:25

And it can be potent, it could be dangerous. I think what I've been thinking about so much particularly as a co-founder who is now entering my fifth year of doing this work and hopefully bringing on a new hire in the next, you know, a couple of months.

Mariam Matin 24:41

I think about this so much of how do I balance the amount of ego that gives me the feeling like I can contribute, right? When you are looking down the barrel of centuries of harm as you put it and inequities and actively trying to shut entire communities out of opportunity.

Mariam Matin 25:03

That's a terrifying thing to take on. But there has to be a little bit of ego there that feels like I can do something about this, even in a small way, I could do something this. And that drives that passion, that conviction and that duty.

Mariam Matin 25:14

But then the other side is that it can get really out-of-hand. And suddenly the work doesn't become about the work. It becomes about you and feeling good about yourself. And so I'm curious what you have observed about this, do you think I characterized it in a way that resonates, and what your thoughts are on this challenge of saviorism, which we see so much in this space?

Emily Lutyens 25:38

So much, soo much. And there's another time that I really like, which is heropreneurism or heropronorship, right? So this is my friend, Daniela Papichontin has written extensively about this. But like this self-sacrificial side to social impact work is really powerful.

Emily Lutyens 25:55

Also, like, there's also nuance to it and international development work, which is, you know, what I started out doing. And I think what it means is that humans often have a really hard time letting go of the things that they've built.

Emily Lutyens 26:09

And what we have to remember every single time that is hard to remember is we don't build things alone. We build things upon the ideas and efforts and movements and learnings of others. And so we have to remember that and contribute to the future generation, right?

Emily Lutyens 26:26

So like, what are we learning along the way? Where are failing along way and how can we share that externally so that we can continue to contribute? I will own that in my personal case, when I was co-founder and CEO, I felt this like gosh, like it felt like a weight of responsibility but definitely there was ego in there, right so like this responsibility to to the patients we were serving, responsibility to my funders and my investors who like believed in me, my team who trusted me to make payroll.

Emily Lutyens 26:59

And so when I finally walked away, I had entirely forgotten who I was without this like label of co-founder CEO. I Was like a complete empty shell. And I have to just basically rebuild who i was on this spherical.

Emily Lutyens 27:15

And So I do think that ego is sort of part of the human condition and so much, especially in the West, we're just told, produce, go faster, get it done. And I think the best teams that I have been on are teams that practice humility, and it's embedded in a team.

Emily Lutyens 27:33

It's imbedded in work. You know, you're constantly doing retrospectives. Your thinking, what are the learnings here? What are the failings here, how can I share them? Embracing those as being okay. And I think this was something that we did really well at Uncharted, which is my organization before Common Future, the sort of balance between exploration, experimentation, driving towards those results because we believe in the vision, but at the same time saying, we're not the only ones in this space.

Emily Lutyens 28:03

What can we contribute to this base? Where are we messing up and owning up to that and sharing that, and just practicing humility along the way.

Mariam Matin 28:16

I had a conversation with someone and I might have already told this story but I just think it's really interesting so I'm going to tell it again which is that someone came to me and said you know one of my managers she was a tutor at a tutoring company reached out because she wants to start a non -profit to support young mothers in the community and she's like I don't really know how to feel about it and i said is she herself a mother she said no it was like is there a particular like focus that they have on how they're supporting young mother's didn't sound like it.

Mariam Matin 28:45

And I told her to go back to this woman and ask her, have you landscaped other organizations in the community that are already focusing on supporting young mothers? Have you thought about other ways that you can maybe just embed more services into your existing organization?

Mariam Matin 29:03

Have, you thought, about how you're going to engage the community in this work since you yourself are not a mother? Ask her those questions and see how much she squirms. That's going tell you a lot about what is behind her motivation for starting this organization and how she's going to come to that work.

Mariam Matin 29:19

So I should check in with her and see how that conversation went, but I've seen this so many times. It comes from seemingly a good place, but this particular piece of who is already doing this work, right?

Mariam Matin 29:31

There are 1 .5 million nonprofits in the US alone, we're all working towards very similar goals, but for some reason there is this instinct to, you know, carve your own niche. And I think this comes from this sort of ego element of the human existence, which I agree is sort of very much inherently part of our wiring.

Mariam Matin 29:51

100%. It's like,

Emily Lutyens 29:52

it's, like you built a hammer and you're going out there with your hammer and your looking for a nail. It doesn't matter if the nail actually exists. I will create the Nail from scratch, but here's my hammer and I believe in it.

Emily Lutyens 30:03

And like that is not the way to create change in the world. it's really not.

Mariam Matin 30:07

And then I'm curious because you mentioned, you know, you're coming out of your sabbatical. You're a new mom. You know sort of what your priorities are. You've been in this world for a while, so you know the things that you care about.

Mariam Matin 30:18

How did you tactically identify the qualities of Uncharted at that time and what made them an organization that aligned with your own values or had leadership that you actually felt were really walking the walk and not just talking the talk?

Mariam Matin 30:33

What are some of the questions or things that we can be looking for as job seekers who are trying to identify what is the right fit for me?

Emily Lutyens 30:41

Yeah, I feel like my analytical side is going to come out here. Generally, I like thinking spreadsheets. I build spread sheets. Anyway, the four buckets that I think about in terms of sort of like going out there and thinking about job opportunities.

Emily Lutyens 30:56

Number one is mission. Does the mission speak to you? That one to me is just like a gut instinct. things, you know, is this something that I want to contribute towards? Time is precious. So with especially as a new mother, right, with the time that I have to contribute to make the world a better place, is this where I wanna put my time, my energy, my skill set?

Emily Lutyens 31:19

The second one is culture. And the third one is supervisor and the fourth one is role. Okay, so mission we already talked about. Culture is what are the cultural values for this organization? Do they practice humility?

Emily Lutyens 31:35

Are they, you know, get it done no matter what and just move as fast as possible, no, matter, what? Do the care about a division between work and life? Or do they want you to show up authentically in your work and sort of there's more of a blur?

Emily Lutyens 31:55

Like what do the culture values embedded within this team? The third thing is, you know, who do you report to? And will you learn from this human? Can you respect this, can you trust this? And the last is your role and the function.

Emily Lutyens 32:10

Like what would I really be doing day to day? And I look at those four pieces. And first two are the most important because those are pieces that do not change in organizations. Like when you show up at a new organization, the idea that you will contribute towards the culture, but culture is organic, right?

Emily Lutyens 32:26

It's sort of like this nameless piece that is kind of there. Yes, you can list out your cultural values with this. Lots of organizations that sort of list them out but don't actually practice them. It is hard to just sort of instantaneously shift culture.

Emily Lutyens 32:40

It was hard shift a mission. Those things are sort of the water that you choose to swim in. So make sure those align, right? Like those are important. The other two, who you report to, what your role and function is, I hold that a little bit more gently because I think that when you are part of an organization that explores and learns and looks at the strengths of the team and figures out where they go, if they are a good organization that does that well, they will find you a spot over time.

Emily Lutyens 33:09

You just have to be patient with it. And so this is kind of like the way I break it down in my brain, those four things. And with Uncharted, we had a lot of female leadership and new mother leadership that was important to me at the time, I knew and trusted the CEO, he was brave, he practiced humility.

Emily Lutyens 33:28

He was really a deep learner at heart. Those are all things I respect. The mission 100% was there for me. And I will say at that time I was looking for a more established organization that I new would provide some level of stability.

Emily Lutyens 33:43

I took a lot of risks in my 20s. Then as a new mother, I started thinking, okay, I really need health insurance.

Speaker 3 33:51

I live in the United States. I need a job that's gonna give me health insurance so I can take my baby to the doctor. So therefore I would like a slightly more stable organization,

Emily Lutyens 34:00

right? So like, yeah, those are some of the things that I thought about with Uncharted and their cultural values were on point,

Mariam Matin 34:07

so yeah. And the CEO obviously at that time, very well known in our industry, but curious, what were some the structural elements of what you saw or maybe things you heard in your interviews or conversations with people that to you indicated that they really were living those values because I think, so a four -day work week is an amazing indicator, obviously, that an organization deeply cares about their people and are willing to try something different for the sake of like doing right by their team.

Mariam Matin 34:39

But I'm curious if there are other things that are not necessarily as obvious or how can you really pressure test the flashy values that someone puts on their about page, right? Which we see a lot of those.

Mariam Matin 34:50

But how do you actually get into it, understand what is my day to day going to feel like? How are they, how did they actually take on this work? Curious if there's anything specifically that you saw that were your green flags along the way that people could kind of think about as they're asking questions or engaging in conversations with a new organization.

Emily Lutyens 35:10

Well, let's talk about like this piece around experimentation and learnings and practicing humility like Uncharted had a whole tab on the website around the things where they failed and it was just out there it's like we didn't do this great here's what we learned and I really appreciated that in the interview process I met I don't know like it, was a small team but it was like I've met a lot of people in interview processes and there was a lots of listening I appreciated the questions the question were based around their cultural values.

Emily Lutyens 35:44

And in addition, the way in which they showed up gave me a really good indication of the type of cultural values that they valued. Their communication throughout the hiring process was very professional and I appreciated that a lot.

Emily Lutyens 36:07

I also think that I had a of fear around sharing that I was pregnant when I was searching for a job. You know, when I co -founded a CEO, I was part of a sort of roundtable of CEOs, all women, and I went to them.

Emily Lutyens 36:27

I said, I'm pregnant, and I am going to go back to the workforce. When do I tell people during the interview process? What do we do? What should I do here? All of them, every single one of them said Emily, you don't say anything.

Emily Lutyens 36:42

you wait until you have the job offer before you say anything, because there's just too much unconscious bias in this. So I had this fear of like, oh my goodness, like does that mean that they want me to work for them, etc.

Emily Lutyens 36:55

And the way in which the CEO as well as the director of people at the time responded to my sharing that I was pregnant was just, they didn't skip a beat. They're like, congratulations, that's amazing.

Emily Lutyens 37:12

There was like no qualms around like okay, we no longer want you in the team. That was also meaningful to me.

Mariam Matin 37:20

That's so striking because two things really stand out. One is the details of how someone treats you and the transparency and even the way that they email you and their timeliness and respect. Those things do tell you a lot, right?

Mariam Matin 37:35

Don't discount those. I think that I want to triple underline that. And then the other element of what's so striking is it's so fundamental, like humility, kindness, just congratulating you that you're pregnant rather than turning into a whole thing.

Mariam Matin 37:50

Yeah. That is so basic and also so foreign in the context of our times and that's wild and something that we could spend probably two hours unpacking of telling people you are pregnant in a workplace and what that can lead to.

Mariam Matin 38:07

Um, and I don't have that lived experience, but I, I'm sure you have had, um, your own journey with it. And so just something that I think is really helpful for people to hear is, is those are the sort of things and trusting your gut with how those interactions are going.

Mariam Matin 38:22

There's so much power to that. Um. So you've talked about uncharted and one of the things that uncharted is very well known for is being very transparent with their learnings, their, uh, mess ups, all of that sort of thing.

Mariam Matin 38:36

And one of the ways that you and I were connected is that you recently helped lead, as my understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, but helps lead the recent merger of Uncharted and Common Future. And the first piece is that mergers as a thing are not something we often associate with the nonprofit world.

Mariam Matin 38:52

So we'd love to talk about that. But it's interesting you're working on a project to sorta lay out what you all have learned about the merger process itself for people like me to learn from, which I think is amazing.

Mariam Matin 39:05

And again, just speaks to the values of uncharted and common future. So sort of starting with that first piece of why are mergers in the nonprofit world not talked about? What makes them different from air quotes, traditional merger's that we hear about in a corporate world?

Mariam Matin 39:23

Curious to kind of get some basic background from you on

Emily Lutyens 39:27

that? Well, I should call out that I'm not an expert on this. You know, I've experienced this one nonprofit merger, and that's it. It wasn't really something that I had ever studied before. There's a lot of articles that you can read up on.

Emily Lutyens 39:40

But I will say that, like, I think in terms of for profit versus nonprofit, in the for-profit world, you consider. There is a valuation for everything, right? There are these indicators, it's like revenues.

Emily Lutyens 39:54

And generally, it's like, okay, how do we create more revenue? And sort of like there's a really easy North star of, like let's make more money and provide more quote value to our shareholders or whatever that looks like.

Emily Lutyens 40:06

And so it, it sorta like it easy to unpack the blueprint of the steps along the way. Okay. A non-profit, the quote, value is measured so differently depending on, you know, what very, very complex. So I do think there's a piece there of like, once you are in the world of impact, where you're not measuring everything by dollars and cents, it just becomes harder to create a blueprint, because it's that the North stars are just a little bit different and a bit off.

Emily Lutyens 40:43

And so I think that that makes it harder. I also just think in non-profit, you just don't really think about it too, too much. Maybe this is part and parcel of sort of like the piece we were talking about before, but I think that often nonprofits, they're trying to decrease their general operating expenses, so they can show up with five stars and not seem to be too expensive.

Emily Lutyens 41:12

That often means that as an employee of a nonprofit, you are heads down just trying get it done. And you don't often pop your head up to think, aspirationally, what are the opportunities out there to create?

Emily Lutyens 41:27

I think that often we tend to be a little bit more fear and protection goal driven. Like, oh, we need to do X to prove this to this funder so that we can get this amount of funding and keep doing the work.

Emily Lutyens 41:40

That's really different. That sort of like narrative is so different from gosh who are my peers in this industry who believe what we believe maybe are doing some compatible work and could there be a partnership here?

Emily Lutyens 41:58

I think it's much easier to sort of withdraw into sort -of like fear protection especially because often we don't have the resources to like have that sorta aspirational time in the same way that maybe for -profits do because they are constantly trying to increase the dollar, dollar dollar number.

Emily Lutyens 42:21

Yeah, that's kind of right stuff,

Mariam Matin 42:22

but again, not an expert at all. No, but it's interesting because we talk about the nonprofit starvation cycle a lot and often talk it in the context of, right, you're trying keep your operating dollars as low as possible and your employees are wearing 10 different hats and you are trying seem as inexpensive and impact -driven as you possibly can.

Mariam Matin 42:45

which, you know, there's, I take a lot of issue with that way of thinking. And the other piece of that is not just, you that sucks for a nonprofit employee, but also to your point, it doesn't leave

room to think aspirationally, to think strategically to level up in that way because you are constantly in survival mode.

Mariam Matin 43:07

That is what I have felt in this space, not just in my own experience, but from talking to so many other people who do this work. And it's, you're just constantly trying to keep your head above water.

Mariam Matin 43:20

And you know, not to say that for -profit startups who are trying raise capital don't face a certain type of, stress as well, but there is inherently you are pushed to be innovative and to think outside the box and to figure out how can I really take this to the next level.

Mariam Matin 43:37

and nonprofits are never given that same challenge or room to think. And it's because we have free dollars, right?

Emily Lutyens 43:44

Philanthropy is giving us these, quote, free dollars. And so the free dollars need to go towards something that is proven. And the philanthropy is often like way behind social innovation often, because they're also practicing in fear.

Emily Lutyens 43:57

Oh, my goodness, I'm never going to see these dollars again. So what has been proven? And I've not even talking about, like, does this, you know, has this organization done an RCT? It's like, is there enough literature out there and is that enough belief out there for me to put my free dollars in versus what common future does?

Emily Lutyens 44:16

And I mean, I really appreciate this visioning from the revenue team at Common Future, but like invest in R & D. Think of this as R and D dollars so that we can figure out the pilots and the demonstrations that nobody's really done before that truly build power and build wealth in

marginalized communities, give us the money to experiment so we can find your next big thing, that then we'll have, you know, the two years of data so that the more traditional philanthropists can then say, okay, yeah, I'll put my money in, right?

Emily Lutyens 44:47

Like, we need to find those dollars that are okay with a certain amount of risk, because that is where the innovation is. And that, 90% of the time, it just doesn't happen.

Mariam Matin 44:58

Yeah. I think that's been my single biggest frustration being a nonprofit is, is exactly that, right? It's being caught in that loop of, Oh, what you're doing is really innovative, but we don't really see anything else like that.

Mariam Matin 45:09

So we're not going to give you funding because we don't see nothing else. Like that right. Which is a crazy loop to get caught in and it's been happening for years. So I think that it is really interesting.

Mariam Matin 45:21

And I am curious, how did your experience in the for-profit world color the way that you look at the nonprofit world now, having been a co-founder and CEO, is there anything you've carried from that chapter of your career into where you are now?

Emily Lutyens 45:41

Anything that I've carried on from being like a for-profit social entrepreneur back into the non-profit world, because I keep switching.

Speaker 4 45:51

What am I carrying with me? That's a good question. I would say probably one of the lessons that

Emily Lutyens 46:13

I learned is that even as a for profit social entrepreneurs, like this sort of like fundraising starvation, sorta whatever you wanna call it, valley of death, as a startup it exists whether you're for profit or whether your nonprofit.

Emily Lutyens 46:29

And that was kind of a wake up call for me because I really was just pinning my hopes on if I build a strong enough business, I can sustainably have impact. but it's really hard to start a new business.

Emily Lutyens 46:47

Full stop. And then from a personal perspective, I took away some really deep learnings about myself, which I've been able to apply. And I don't think that has really much to do with whether you are for profit or non -profit.

Emily Lutyens 47:00

It just had to with the roles and responsibilities that I said, yes, I can do this. And when I got to take away from that, I'm good at this and I enjoy it versus I am good at it and hate it, versus oh, I just really bad at this.

Emily Lutyens 47:14

You know, all of those things, knowing those things about myself, really, really helpful.

Mariam Matin 47:20

Goes to your point of we are always on a journey. This is not one sort of linear clear path. If it was, life would be much easier and it probably wouldn't be doing this podcast. But as we kind of bring our conversation to a close, curious if you have any final advice for people who are listening, who thinking about their own role in this space, in the space of social change and advocacy and equity work, whatever that might look like.

Mariam Matin 47:53

How do we show up to that work? How to we continuously check ourselves? Any advice you had of staying rooted in service of others and keeping our egos at the door as much as possible in particular.

Emily Lutyens 48:09

I'd say remember that that's what takes time and it takes much more than each of us individually. Much, much. The world is incredibly complex, its problems are complex and so we need many humans trying different things and listening to each other.

Emily Lutyens 48:27

I think that discovering and crafting a role and space for yourself that feels true to your intent, but also your talents and what makes you feel like strong and abundant in your work is really important.

Emily Lutyens 48:39

And you know, don't force yourself to do the stuff that you think is expected of you, right? Like I have a Japanese mother in Asian culture sort of like a pathway that was supposed to follow. And I think that when you do the work that drains your energy, there's a price to pay.

Emily Lutyens 48:59

And so practicing setting those boundaries where needed is important. Practice humility. You know, I am still learning lessons. And I'm 17 years in. Like, I feel like I still have a really long way to go.

Emily Lutyens 49:23

And the last thing is to practice bravery, which I think, again, and often as women were taught not to ask, Japanese women taught to not ask culturally, make that ask right? Because we have to be brave in this work, knowing that yes, there's lots of things that could go wrong but like in our work how can we paint that bigger aspirational picture of what things could be and how do we work towards that?

Emily Lutyens 49:52

I think if you do those things, that was a really long list but if do do things things that you can leverage the impact you have more and more as you go through your career.

Mariam Matin 50:00

It's simple. Just do all of those things. No, I so appreciate this time, Emily. I really enjoy our conversations. I think it is such helpful grounding for me and always helpful to hear someone who has that level of perspective, having seen so many different sides of social change.

Mariam Matin 50:21

So I'm so very grateful that you gave me an hour of your time and look forward to more conversations in the future.

Emily Lutyens 50:29

Good luck. I really enjoyed this conversation. Thank you. Boom, cut. Well done. I Really did enjoy that, you know, I appreciate you Yeah, it was great. It was Great. Please cut out all the really long pauses and oh yes.

Emily Lutyens 50:50

stuff is unhelpful.

Mariam Matin 50:52

My amazing producer editor who is listening will do all of that for us. We'll take out all our pauses and ums and ahs and.

Emily Lutyens 51:01

Did you know I kept like I, so I like have some allergies today. So I keep muting myself so that I could like sniff.

Mariam Matin 51:07

I was like, yeah, I'm on my like third cup of coffee and I started to get the jitters and was I okay, need to mute, so like catch my breath. Yeah, no, 100% understand. Uh, so I have a couple of like, I think there's like one or two in the queue ahead of you, but I'll email you when the episode goes live, tag you all the usual things.

Mariam Matin 51:28

Um, I had your bio. So I, think I'm, I thing I said, but thank you again, uh, Emily, I am super grateful. This was fun. And we'll definitely kind of keep you posted. I don't know if I explained this last time we talked, but we are building this like hybrid for profit, non -profit situation right now.

Mariam Matin 51:45

and it is wild. It's wild, but it definitely is the right call for us. I'm just going to pour. All right, I am going read her bio. I would say in terms of snippets, I really liked when she gives the advice of just start, just the work.

Mariam Matin 52:10

I liked her heropreneurism line. I like the four buckets she laid out. I liked when she talked about impact is not just dollars and cents. And I think her final words of advice were also really helpful.

Mariam Matin 52:23

So when you're picking through videos, those are just some ideas.

Speaker 4 52:28

So I'll get started.

Mariam Matin 52:35

I thank y 'all are really gonna enjoy my conversation this week. It is with Emily Mochizuki Lutyens. Emily grew up in London, Tokyo and New Delhi and is passionate about making the world a more equitable and inclusive place.

Mariam Matin 52:48

Emily has driven social change in education, healthcare, responsible tourism and agriculture, spanning for -profit, social enterprise, and nonprofit organizations in Mexico, Uganda, South Africa, the UK, and the U .S.

Mariam Matin 53:00

She is currently the VP of Portfolio Strategy at Common Future, where she leads a team -building Common Futures Impact portfolio focused on the incubation and co -creation of field -defining initiatives that closed the racial wealth gap in the U .S.

Mariam Matin 53:14

Previously, Emily was the managing director at Uncharted where she was responsible for the day -to -day of the organization, leading and managing the team and ensuring Uncharted delivered on its strategic goals.

Mariam Matin 53:25

Before joining Uncharted, Emily, was co -founder and CEO of LegWorks, a for -profit social enterprise with the mission to enable amputees globally to walk with confidence. Prior to Leg Works, Emily the founding County Director of Educate, an education nonprofit developing young leaders and entrepreneurs in East Africa.

Mariam Matin 53:44

She studied international relations at Brown University and has an MBA from the University of California Berkeley where she was a Haas merit scholar. Emily once drove from Uganda to South Africa and you can generally find her eating chocolate or just eating.

Mariam Matin 54:01

Emily and I spent a lot of time talking about the role of ego in social change. We spent lot time talking finding your particular niche and really unpacking some of the challenges of working in impact in general, but where a lot of opportunity lies as well.

Mariam Matin 54:15

So Emily, thank you so much for taking the time and feel free to kind of mishmash all of that.
Awesome, Thank you.