Brian Gracely (00:01.51)
Good morning, good evening, wherever you are. And welcome back to the Cloudcast. We are coming to you live from the massive Cloudcast studios here in Raleigh, North Carolina. Hope everybody is doing well. Hope everybody's staying safe. It is very, very cold here in Raleigh, North Carolina. It has been for the last week or so. We're getting hit by what looks like sort of an Arctic storm that's crossing the United States as we sort of sit here in the middle of January. January, recording is on January 11th, so January 12th, weekend perspective. Anyway, so everybody's doing OK.

you know, thoughts out to the folks in Southern California who are fighting, you know, dealing with wildfires that are just incredibly devastating. I know we went through that here in North Carolina with the hurricanes here in North Carolina, Tennessee, some areas, South Carolina last fall. So tough, tough time for weather right now, doing unfortunately a lot of damage, at least here in the States. So anyways, if you get a chance, you know, if you're able to make some sort of contribution to things that are helping some of those, if you've got friends or family out there or

You know, it's a space, it's a place that you care about. You feel free to make a donation there. Anyways, welcome back. Good to be with everybody. Another Weekend Perspective show. And was thinking about, I saw a headline this week. I haven't not really followed a whole lot about what's going on with WordPress and, you know, basically what's going on over there is the folks who created WordPress own the rights to it. And then there's a independent company that sort of,

runs a service and there's sort of a fight over, you know, whether or not it'll stay open source and who owns the rights to it and who owns the trademark and all this stuff. Anyways, it's been going on for a while. We haven't really covered a whole lot here because it just sort of relates to websites and it'll work itself out one way or the other. But there was an interesting thread this week going on, interesting sort of article and write up and some stuff over on Reddit and so forth. But basically what happened was, you know, the folks, well,

basically the CEO who originated this thing has sort of been at the center of this and has been kind of frustrated about what he believes other people taking his work and basically said, I'm gonna change the way that this works. I'm gonna change the license. And apparently it frustrated a lot of folks that work there. They like to work there because they thought it was more open source. Anyways, so that's been going on for a while and again, not really gonna get into it, but there was an interesting, I believe Reddit thread that eventually sort of spread out into other.

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social media forums. And basically somebody from the sustainability group for the organization said, hey, you know, we're frustrated with, you know, how the leadership's dealing with stuff. And, you know, with that, we're going to resign the organization or work. I don't know they said they're going to resign the organization, but they just said like, we're very frustrated and we'd like to see things better. And this triggered the CEO to come on board onto that thread. I believe it was on Reddit and he basically said,

Well, first and foremost, I didn't really even know that we had a sustainability group. And number two, since I don't think your group is necessarily doing whatever you were intended to originally do, you're not meeting your goals, you're not kind of doing the things that you were intended to do, we're just gonna get rid of that group. And what was really interesting to me was the initial comment of the CEO saying, I had no idea your group even existed. And it got me thinking.

because of a couple of things. If you are somebody in 2025 and you're sitting there at some corporation, at some organization, maybe that's not your business necessarily, but you work for somebody else or some company, does your CEO know what your group does? And I bring this up for a couple of reasons, right? We have a tendency in our industry, but in a lot of industries to sort of be copycat and to sort of, you know, look at what other people are doing.

and kind of go, hmm, would that work here? Especially when times are more challenging, more competitive, the expectations are higher. And there's a couple of things that have been floating around, right? Obviously, we talked

about Elon Musk acquiring Twitter, obviously renaming it X, but one of the first things that he talked about was the idea that he was able to eliminate 80 % of the workforce. And there's a lot of concern. We talked about it on this show. Would Twitter even continue if 80 % of the workforce went away?

And the service still runs today and he loves to tout it as, you know, he got rid of all sorts of waste and fat and all sorts of stuff. So, okay, fine. If you listen to enough podcasts with venture capitalists, they are over the moon with the idea that they could start going to their investment companies, to the companies they are investing in and start telling them, you know, get rid of as many people as you possibly can, right? You know, reduce your head count.

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number by as much as possible. And so you go, okay, so there's this sort of momentum going on. maybe it's just a Silicon Valley thing. Maybe it's just a, hey, let's go re-examine our business thing. But then you're also starting to see CEOs and CFOs start to think about technologies like AI in terms of not just augmenting workforce, but reducing workforce, right? Like how much, you know, and I think that's going to be an interesting discussion in 2025 is, you know,

Are your AI projects there to augment your workforce or augment the services that you deliver? Or are they there to replace what they deliver? And I'm sure we'll start to hear things like AI first way of thinking as opposed to sort of like AI modernization and all the other things that our industry tends to do when new stuff comes along. And then finally, we've got this sort of ever brewing work from home, return to office policy.

debate that's going on and everybody's kind of got an opinion about it and different companies are being more or less stringent about you know, whether or not you are required to return to the office X number of days a week, three days a week, five days a week, whether they will continue to be work from home, know, sort of extending COVID policies and so forth. And it feels like those sort of things are bubbling up as well. So you've got a bunch of stuff kind of bubbling up in terms of how many workers do we need and where is the workforce going to be? And

I, it sort of kind of all bubbled up for me when I saw the sentence where it said, you know, the CEO basically said, I don't know what your group does. I didn't even know your group existed. And, know, you can look at that one of two ways you can look at it as, you know, the organization has gotten so big that things are just happening that aren't visible to the CEO. And, know, you could, you could sort of go, well, how is that possible? They should know about everything. And the reality is as organizations get bigger,

and there are layers of management or layers of organizations like, trust me, there are tons of people in your organization today that have no idea what 85 or 90 % of the rest of the company does, because people tend to focus on what they focus on, what they do, what they work on, what they think their goals are and so forth. So that's not an unusual statement. But it did get me thinking, and Aaron and I did a show last week where we talked about career advice. It got me thinking,

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if you went to any of your colleagues, if you looked at yourself and where your organization is today, where your group is today, does your CEO know what you do? Does he know what your group does? And more importantly, does your CEO respect and value what your group does? And it got me thinking, you know, this is probably something given some of these trends, some of these, you know, sort of headlines that are floating around. It's probably something that's

a worthwhile thing to do, especially early in the year, to start to think about, you know, how does your group align to value creation in the company? Right? So sort of do an honest assessment of yourself, of your group, and sort of ask yourself, like, if somebody were to come up to you, let's say it was, you know, just a stranger off the street, or your parents or the CEO, and they come up to you they said, What does your group do that aligns to creating value for our business?

And this is probably a question that isn't uniquely new to 2025. It's actually a question that probably should be asked of every group all the time every year. But I think given these new sort of macro level things, whether they are, you know, the success or evolution or change of something like Twitter and X, which is very high profile these days, whether it's going to be things like the Doge group that's going to be looking at streamlining government in the United States with the new, you know,

group and, you know, Trump's group taking over, Elon Musk, again, running Doge. And again, I'm not trying to make this all about Elon Musk. But again, it's something that's going to get a lot of headlines is sort of accountability and where is, you know, where's the best use of funds and so forth. But it got me thinking, you know, if you are an organization, you know, how would you do that? So that's sort of the fundamental question to ask. And then I started thinking about, okay, well, let's say that was that was your task for the day you did a

You did a team meeting and you said, Hey, we're going to sit down and work through this. thought, would, what would be the questions that I'd want the team to focus on? What would I want us to, to really kind of hone in on and think about in terms of how do we want to recognize what we do, but also how do we want to go about communicating that and making sure that the things that we are working on are understood, and, and visible, right? So that you don't get yourself into a situation where, the CEO says, I don't know what you do.

Brian Gracely (09:34.448)
So here is my list of questions. First question, how does your group measure the value they bring to the company? So I started with a measurement-based value because, when we get into things about accountability and things are tight or you're looking at how do you divide a budget for the year or how do you prioritize or whatever, having some sort of number is always a good starting point. So we've gone through periods of time when

you know, money was wildly available and people didn't care a whole lot. But at a time when we may be getting into accountability, which it does feel like 2025 is going to be very much a year of accountability. You know, how do you value the how do you measure the value that you bring to the company? Right? You know, do you are you on the are you on the cost side of the business? Are you on the revenue side of the business? You know, do you have a measure for that? Is that would be the first thing that you sort of ask yourself is

How do we measure what value you bring? The second thing is how do you measure the cost of what you do? Do you measure yourself in terms of an ROI? Do you measure yourself in terms of for every dollar that goes into our organization or every unit that goes into our organization, we create X amount of output? Do you measure yourself? Do you baseline yourself against other organizations? Is there a way to baseline what your group does?

versus other organizations? So let's suppose you are sort of a shared service for your organization, whatever that shared service might be. Do you measure yourself against other organizations that have shared services? Is there even a way to do that? But I think first and foremost, you kind of have to have a sense of not just how many people work in your group or what's the budget for your group. Maybe you have a budget to create content. Maybe you have a budget to.

you know, deliver what is, you know, know, pay for computing to be able to deliver your service or, you know, you've got, obviously you got a budget for the number of people you have, how much travel you do, all those sorts of things. But, you know, I think first and foremost, how do you think about, you know, those, those two things? What, what sort of top line alignment do you have to value for the business? Meaning how do you help drive revenue, drive profitability, drive customer satisfaction, whatever those things might be. And then how do you measure the cost of, you know, how do you

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relatively measure the cost of delivering that thing because obviously, you know, you could deliver amazing amounts of value, but if the cost of delivering that value is astronomical, you know, that that may not be necessarily something

that in a time of accountability is a great position to be in. Okay, so that's the first piece. The second piece is thinking about communication, right? How do you go about communicating what your group does?

both internally and externally. So how do you think about, how does your group communicate their value upwards in the organization? So for example, every month you have to assume if you're like most organizations, big or small, maybe it's on a weekly basis, maybe it's on monthly basis, how does your management organization, how does your management team roll up or communicate what your organization does?

You know, is it a, it's an email that goes out? Is this a presentation that goes out? Is it a video that goes out? Right? How, how do you go about doing that? And, and this is kind of an important thing, I think, because the way that you go about doing that, do you do something that makes you stand out or do you just make yourself look like yet another report? So for example, if your group just sends out an email with a whole bunch of links to it, why would anybody want to read that? Like what, what have you done to identify your highlights even?

Right? So I think that's, it seems like a very small thing, but in the context of people have a lot to consume these days, they don't always have time to get through all of it. What are you doing just in how you communicate what your team does, what your organization does to stand out in that communication, right? Do you make it worth clicking on and opening that email or clicking on and looking at that report? Do you make it easy for them to understand the value of what you do or do you only put it into your

your terms, your way of thinking, such that they have to then sort of translate it and figure out in their mind, like, well, is that valuable? I don't know if that's valuable. Like, that metric doesn't seem like something that I would immediately understand or want to forward to higher up in the organization. So I think that's important is how do you communicate sort of up the chain in your organization? And do you do something to make your communication visible and want to be opened?

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and easy to understand. I think the next thing is how do you communicate your value outward in the organization? So meaning not just how do you sort of manage up, if you will, but you've obviously likely gonna have a lot of stakeholders either internally, these could be your customers directly, these could be your partners, these could be other groups within your organization. How do you go about communicating to them what you do, right? Because you have to remember everybody within an organization is sort of fighting for the same budget.

They're fighting for headcount. You know, and I don't mean like fighting, but I mean, they're competing for that because they ultimately want to do a great job. And everybody is starting from a place of, Hey, we probably don't have enough resources to do everything we want to do. So how do you go about communicating to that? And I think that's important to think about in terms of, do you communicate in ways that sort of show one plus one equals three wins? Do you communicate in ways that just show what your organization did? Do you communicate it in ways in which you

highlight your customers or you highlight how you are driving value for the company. How do you go about doing that? And I think there's a lot of different ways to do that. Some of them might be better than others. But I think that's an important thing, again, to think about is not just what you're communicating, but how are you communicating? Are you making it easy for people to understand it? Are you making it easy for them to understand why they might want to work more with you and all those types of things? So I think the second piece really gets. So first.

First thing, measurement, like how are you measuring it? Second thing, how are you communicating it? And then think the third thing really starts to get into how do people talk about your organization? How do people talk about your group? So how do your stakeholders, whether they're up the org chart or horizontally across the org chart or your partners and your customers, how do they talk about your organization? Do they speak about your organization in the same way

that you would speak about it? Do you give them the language to use in order for how they speak about it, or do they just sort of think like, yeah, I don't know, there's that group and they just, they do that thing. They make sure that something just works, or yeah, they're the group I just email and I don't know, something happens and whatever. Or are they the group that those stakeholders go, we're only successful when they deliver what we need. We're only successful because

Brian Gracely (16:47.76)
They're constantly available. They deliver a great foundation for what we have to do. They give us flexibility. They're constantly coming up with new ideas to think about how to improve the process or reduce cost or whatever that might be. It's really important to think about how do your stakeholders or your customers think about your group? How do they talk about it? And if they're talking about it in ways that aren't what you believe to be favorable for where you want to be, not meaning you don't necessarily do a good job, but

They speak about you in terms of like, well, you're just kind of a commodity. You're just a thing. You're a process that they have to deal with. You're a whatever. You've put yourself in a situation in which people don't really respect what you do, or they don't really value what you do. So again, sort of fits into communication, but it fits into communication from a outside in perspective, not an inside out perspective. And then the last thing I've got on my list, and this sort of goes directly to the...

the Reddit thread that involves sales for WordPress and so forth is, this is kind of a weird one to say. I know people are going to go, well, that's a bad way of thinking about it, but how much does your group complain? You know, does your group complain too much? Is your group known as one that is easy to work with or is your group one that's a complainer? And in this case, you know, this whole sort of thread got started because somebody decided they were going to take an internal problem that was going on.

to a public forum and just sort of start complaining about it. And I know kind of old school ways of thinking about it was you kept problems internal and you solved them internally. You didn't take your sort of air your dirty laundry out in public. I know that's obviously gone away now that we have all sorts of ways for people to be anonymous or people to just go on Reddit or Glassdoor or wherever it might be, send an email off to a writer. But you kind of have to ask yourself, do you

Are you known as a group that complains a lot? Are you a group that is known as problem solvers or are you a group that is kind of difficult to deal with? I'll put it a different way. What's your annoyance factor? Are people happy to work with your group or do they feel like your group is annoying? Is your group the one that enforces all sorts of difficulty upon working with your group or does your group go out of their way to take on the difficulty and then

Brian Gracely (19:12.902)
you know, make the simplicity what's put forward to your customers, to your stakeholders, to your groups, and so forth. So, you know, in this case, it was, I think if somebody had kept that internal and just said, hey, let's work through some things, you know, you're probably not going to have something bubble up to the CEO, to the point where the CEO says, not only am I frustrated with you guys, because I don't know what you do, but I'm just so annoyed with having to deal with this stuff.

that you decided to air this out in public, that I'm just going to take the step to get rid of your group. I can solve my problem with one step as opposed to solving it with three steps or five steps or whatever it might be. So anyways, I'm not trying to tell people not to complain about stuff or not to try and solve problems or whatever. do keep in mind that level of

what the perception is of your group, whether your group is perceived to be complaining, your group perceived to be annoying. That's not the way you want your group to be known by your CEO. So anyways, so three or four tips in there. Make sure you understand how to measure your value, right? Make sure you understand how you communicate

it up and down the food chain. Make sure you understand both internally focused inside out as well as outside in communication. You know, and if you find yourself in a situation in which you're saying, you know, I really just

I've gone through all those steps and I really don't know how we're going to communicate value to the CEO, then I think you've got to give yourself a kind take a hard look and say, what are we doing? Are we best using our resources? Or is this a holdover from some other era of when your group got started? I'm not saying to forcefully get rid of yourself, but it might be a reason for you to think about reinventing what your group looks like.

Anyways, I'm gonna wrap it up with that. Again, just some thoughts and again, connecting some dots between some things that kind of bubbled up and started last year. We're starting to see some of that manifest this year and I think with some of the overlap between life and politics kind of invading everything that we do, I wouldn't be surprised if some of this stuff becomes more relevant to people. So just kind of want to give people just some guidance, some heads up of ways to kind of...

Brian Gracely (21:38.278)
Kind of make sure that your CEO knows what you're doing, because he doesn't necessarily have to know everything about what you do, but it would be helpful if he doesn't think you're less than valuable. anyways, with that, I'll wrap it up. Thank you all for listening. Thanks for taking the time. Apologize for me having a little bit of a raspy voice. The weather here is one that's kind of got us all a little bit under the weather. So I apologize for you having to listen to that. anyways, we'll try and get it cleaned up before next week. But anyways, thank you all for listening. Thanks for telling a friend. Show at thecloudcast.net.

If you've got any feedback as well as our social media channels are linked at the bottom of the show notes of every show. So with that, we'll wrap it up. I'll talk to you next week.