Digital Podcast Show Notes Episode 45 with Guest: Matthew Burrows

Hosts: Barclay Rae, Ian Aitchison

Greetings section
BR: Welcome! And welcome to Season Two!
IA: Trivia? Yes… There are now batteries powered by algae!
BR: Let's meet our guest, welcome Matthew Burrows.
MB: Hi, I got into IT from a music background, but then moved towards people and skills in technology.
BR: This involves SFIA?
MB: Yes, SFIA is the common language for describing the skills and the jobs that we do in IT. Been around for 20 years, continually updating. All about the people.

Detail
BR: Into the detail section. There are lots of discussions at the moment about the importance of Experiences and employee retention. Do you see these all converging?
MB: Yes, it's now recognized that it is hard to get people and that you must hold onto good people. Many people leave due to lack of development skills. So to keep employees, employers are focussing on what is needed to develop those employees.
IA: Is there a fear that training staff may cause them to leave? Or does it make them stay?
MB: That fear is wrong. You have to do this. Companies that get this right see their retention rate increase.
IA: I use KPIs to help people enjoy their life as well as doing work.
MB: As a manager you should ask 'how can I help you'?
BR: There is also growth in understanding other skills that are there, maybe better to develop than to hire new.
MB: Some managers get it wrong, writing the job description as a goal for the employee to achieve. This is wrong, better to understand the employees skills and develop them and benefit from them.
IA: Another management shift - from old style dictator management to enabler and helping.
MB: Don't assess performance against job descriptions. Be more agile.
BR: Yes, in the 90's there was matrix management. What happens now?
MB: It depends on the organisation, some are very hierarchical and have to do a bit. But when trying to be a flatter structure they can be more flexible and more agile within the job family.
BR: What's a job family?
MB: It's about different levels of skill-sets within the same broad job role (junior, senior etc).
BR: Not teams then?
MB: No, job families can be different or the same roles but with different skills sets.

IA: Any skills in IT/digital that are foundational and essential?

MB: no, it depends on the job, they all need different skills. But responsibility attributes are foundational: autonomy influences complexity knowledge and business skills. These are foundational but also have levels of ability.

IA: Ah yes the people skills.

IA: What about outside of IT?

MB: Yes, digital skills now are relevant outside of IT as well, often seeing that.

BR: What about Enterprise Service Management and Enterprise Architects. Are there SFIA skills needed for that?

MB: Yes, Australian Gmvnt are sponsoring a digital skills organisation. They are encouraging non IT people to consider jobs in that space. Transferable skills help, and SFIA assessment can apply to non IT people. Also need to recognise the difference between knowledge, proficiency and competency. In IT people often only recognize knowledge. Don't trust your teenage son who passed his driving test yesterday to drive through Paris. Recognise the limitations of theoretical knowledge.

BR: Service Management is a whole mix of different things, you need experience to be proficient, you can't be good with just knowledge.

MB: Some hire for personality, saying that they can learn, but they need to be the right job for that and need lots of training and coaching. You have to allow people time to practice and to become proficient.

BR: Back to service management. What can people do to get better?

MB: first, make sure senior leadership understands the value of retaining and training staff. Then reassure them that it is not scary. Push IT to try scary people-skills things. Start with what you have and develop and be proud of what you have. 1. What skills we have. 2. What skills we need, 3. Gap analysis, 4. Action Plan to improve.

BR: What if the culture of the organisation is against this? How can you show benefits?

MB: It's about helping others recognize the importance of this at every stage.

Matthew's Recommended Drink
- Bitter. No brand name. Just a pint of bitter.

Useful Links

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewburrows
SkillsTX.com: https://skillstx.com/
SFIA: https://sfia-online.org/en

Bar Bio

Matthew is all about skills, knowledge and competency, and knows more about SFIA than most. He lives by the sea which is probably lovely. I would like to live by the sea. Matthew also collects accreditations. He is accredited as a consultant, assessor, trainer and a member. Also as a President which is pretty impressive. He is not bitter, unlike his favourite drink which is. Any bitter ale. Any one will do. He is probably sitting by the sea, right now, enjoying a pint of bitter with great skill and competence. Thanks for coming on the podcast Matthew!