



Take on Board Podcast – Episode 361

Transcript – Jaala Pulford on scaling an organisation, managing staffing changes and more

Hello and welcome to the Take on Board podcast. I'm your host, Helga Svendsen. I know that being on a board can be an incredibly valuable, interesting, and exciting experience. Yet, it can also be lonely, challenging, and let's face it, pretty hard. So here at Take on Board, I'll bring you weekly tips, tricks, and advice to help navigate your way onto your first board, your next board, or to build your governance wisdom.

Now, on with the show. Today on the Take on Board podcast, I'm speaking with Jaala Pulford about, well, all sorts of stuff. But it might include setting up a new statutory authority, scale an organisation or scope, and having to manage staffing changes quickly. Before we start the podcast today, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we record.

For me, I am on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and I pay my respects to elders past and present. I acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters, skies, culture, and country. I support Voice, Treaty, and Truth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and I encourage others in the Take on Board community to do the same.

Now, let me tell you about Jaala. Jaala chairs MTP Connect and the Children's Cancer Foundation. She's a non-executive director with several growth stage companies and the Tech Council of Australia. A member of parliament from 2006 to 2022, Jaala was Victoria's first female agricultural minister. Between 2014 and 2022, she held ministerial portfolios including roads, employment, innovation, and fishing.

Jaala lives in Ballarat. She loves scuba diving. She totally loves scuba diving. There's photos of it everywhere. Uh, she loves travel and having the time to read. Welcome to the Take on

Board podcast, Jaala. Hey, lovely to be here. It is so awesome to have you. You and I have had many a chat, sometimes about governance, so it's awesome to have one of them recorded, and also awesome that some of the other ones are not recorded.

And, and f- and for, and for the benefit of our audience, um, Helga is one of those people I have known so long I can't entirely remember when we first met. I can certainly remember my first impression of you, and I reckon it was about 1995, which makes us both about 28 years old. Oh my God, yes. I think it was probably the mid-'90s, maybe a wee bit later.

Um- I have a vague recollection of it. I can't remember what it was about, but I remember coming away, I think you were quite new to the union movement then, as was I, and I just remember coming away going, "She's smart." Um- Yeah. There's tough young women in all of these places across the union movement, and- Yeah

I think we can be friends. And then, yes- Yeah ... our paths sort of separated, and now they've reconverged, which is super lovely. Oh, I love it. Love, love, love. Love those long relationships and how they, yeah, as you say, diverge and converge and come back around. It's just so lovely. So, so now that people know how we met, or when we met, and how young we are- Or that we don't know that we met, yes.

Before we dive on into your governance stories, I would like to dig a little bit deeper about you. So tell me, what was a young Jal like, and when did you get your first inkling, well, I don't know, that you'd e- either end up in the boardroom or perhaps in the Victorian Parliament? I'll let you take that as you see fit.

Well, slick as this podcast looks, we had a whole thing with a microphone a couple of minutes ago, and I was just remarking to Helia that my, um, childhood was really, um, uh, spent, uh, at a community radio station. Like, it really sort of revolved around 3CCC in Harcourt, just outside of Castlemaine. And so my earliest memories include the test broadcast, um, tagging along with Dad to board meetings, my first board meeting.

Um, I suspect my other first or very early board meeting was, um, uh, through Mum's involvement in the establishment of a community childcare centre in Castlemaine. Um, you know, small town, 7,000 people. If you want a radio station, you want a childcare centre,

and so on and so on, you know, you want firefighting service, all of these kinds of things, you have sort of got to do it yourself.

And so everyone was involved in something. Um, lots of people were involved in, um, all manner of things, uh, in the community. It's a wonderful place. It's still a wonderful place. My parents actually just had, ooh, the best part of 30 years away, and have very recently returned, uh, to where they, um, where they were when I was growing up, and so it's really lovely to sort of reconnect with that very special little town.

Um, so yes, I think, um, the, the origin story really is growing up in a very connected community with people that were involved in things. Um, issues, um, you know, local community capability, and just sort of working with good and interesting people to get things done. Um, and, uh, then, like all well-adjusted 16-year-olds, I went off and joined the Labor Party, the Castlemaine branch of the Labor Party.

Again, um, somebody that was, uh, you know, friends of- My parents and friends of friends are like, "Oh, yes, go, go talk to Malcolm. He runs the local branch of the Labor Party." And so off I went. Um, uh, because, you know, in a place that size, everybody does know everybody. And, um, it was the 1990, um, federal election.

Um, Bob Hawke was Prime Minister, but had been around a while and had, you know, s- s- super fabulous Paul Keating kind of, um, at, at, at his heels as the ambitious treasurer. Um, but the person who really caught my eye, um, through that period, um, when I was near 11, was, um, Janine Haines, who was the leader of the Democrats.

Um, yes, and I'm just trying to think of, uh, for the, uh, younger folks here, um, what the political equivalent is. I mean, this was a time where the major parties commanded about 90% of the primary vote. Very, very different to where we are now. And, um, the Australian Democrats were formed, um, after a former Liberal Party, uh, uh, senior leader, um, declared he was heading to the centre to, quote, "Keep the bastards honest."

And anyway, um, they were quite a force for a while, and then they weren't, um, as is often the way with, uh, minor parties, or certainly used to be. And, uh, but Janine Haines was the first woman to, um, have a leadership role, and she was amazing. She had these, like, you

know, big hair and, like, big glasses and, like, a lot of personality, and really just jarringly different to all the blokes that were running things, um, really, you know, since federation and probably since, you know, white settlement before that.

Um, and I just thought she was awesome. But not so much her politics, more her style. And anyway, I got kind of mesmerized and swept up into the Labor movement. And, um, yeah, here we are. Amazing. Well, that would've been the period of Joan Kirner as well in Victorian politics, presumably. She was premier around that period as well.

Yeah. Yeah, just one of the very first, um, Labor Party branch meetings I went to, like, pretty early on the first year, um, for sure. Um, John Cain stood down, and our local member was one of the, um, very small number of, um, non-aligned members in the parliament, and he came along. It was just our scheduled branch meeting, and he would often come along, um, if he was able.

And he came along, and this was all happening. And, and that contest was on, um, between Joan Kirner and, uh, if my memory serves me correctly, Tom Roper. Amazing. So yeah, and it was a, an exciting and interesting time. And yeah, women were, um, uh, being taken seriously in politics in a way that had, um, really eluded previous generations.

Amazing. Okay, so then, uh, we're going to get onto your current story in a minute, but I just need to check. 16-year-old Jaala, were you the youngest person at your branch meeting? And just out of interest, how many women were in that branch meeting room? I was most definitely the youngest person by, like, 20 or 30 years, like, by a lot.

Yeah, no, it was quite a gender-balanced group. There were, um, a couple of women, Val and Nola, um, who I think had been there a really, really long time before I got there, and yeah. Anyway, it was actually a very welcoming environment. I've been to plenty of meetings since that are less welcoming to new people than that.

Um, but yeah, no, they, um, they were pretty pleased to have somebody along who was, uh, very young and new and keen to find out all about it. Amazing. Okay. Well, I'm guessing you've taken some of that experience now into... Well, I know that you've taken some of

that experience into boardrooms. So maybe let's turn to the more recent experiences of governance.

Oh, Jaala, you've got so many stories to share about boardroom dynamics, about style, about change and growth. I barely know where to start. So I'm just going to pass it to you and say, where should we start? So just a couple of, um, a couple of reflections because when a person embarks, I have learnt in relatively recent times, on this whole non-executive director type of work and endeavour, there's this question, this question of, "So how long have you been on a board before, and when did you first be on a board?"

And blah, blah, blah, all of this, right? And which people will e- have encountered, no doubt. Um, and it's kind of weird because for 16 years as a member of parliament, you know, that's like the whole thing. Like, if you're a member of parliament, you can't really do other things because you're inevitably running into conflicts with the fact that you need to be all things to all people in all kinds of different ways across different communities and different issues, and the job kind of- Yeah precludes that. You know, so people maintain membership of their footy clubs, and they'll sort of, you know, sign up to a few local organisations. But your relationship with them, um, it's just, it's different, right? Um, and so, and so I hadn't been on any boards as such that whole time, but I had spent huge amount of that time working on governance in government and governance-related issues.

And, uh, as a minister, I'd appointed a lot of people to boards, including a new one that was, you know, a bra- like, brand spanking new authority. Um, a really, really, um, very significant one in the Transport Accident Commission, sort of in the sort of- Handful of, um, sort of most large and complex in terms of its responsibility and its budgets and its revenues of all those that Victoria has.

Um, and anyway, so I was casting my mind back. I thought, "Cool, okay, I've spent my life in board-like committee meetings and parliamentary committees and all of this." Da, da, da, da. Anyway, so I cast my mind back, and there were actually a few in my time in the union movement. For example, um, Victorian listeners will know the, um, Victorian Trades Hall Council building.

I was a, a trustee for that building. Um, turns out that's not a renovation bill you really want to kind of be on the receiving end of, that beautiful old heritage building. Um, and, uh, but I

was also on the, um, board of the childcare centre that, um, uh, our kids, Sinead and Hamish, went to. Um, and so there, yes, there had been a bit, and then there was this whole big block of years where there was sort of similar but different.

But mostly you'd be on the receiving end of, um, talking to people about things that their boards had decided or that their boards were doing, or you were oversighting the performance of a board. So it was sort of funny, um, different angle to look at it all from. And then, um, more recently, um, very, very soon after I left parliament, a friend sent me a text, and he'd seen an ad, and he said, "Oh, you should apply for this."

And I thought, "No, that's... No, I'm not going to do that because I'm going scuba diving because I've just been, like, a politician for 16 years, so thanks." Um, and but I did have a look at the recruiter's website and thought, "Ooh, that's nice. I really like their, like, all the people they work with and the things that they work on."

So I rang just to say hi, and, um, they similarly thought I should apply. And so here we are. So that was MTP Connect. And, um, the Children's Cancer Foundation, uh, was similar, um, in that, um, as soon as I, I'd, like, worked with them a little, uh, and given them some advice on a few things as a, um, fellow traveller, as a, a parent that had had a encounter with, uh, children's cancer in the worst possible way.

Um, and so I didn't know them well, but I knew them a little bit and, and they said, "Hey, now you can come and join our board." And so those first two, um, really very, happened very quickly actually. Yeah, and it's interesting, isn't it? I think when boards... You know, it's often about that alignment of the skills that you've got are the skills what, that board needs, and there is that alignment in purpose and passion in as well.

Yeah. It's funny, isn't it? I, um... You know, you see roles advertised, and we used to advertise them. The, the government ones we would appoint. Not always, because we weren't particularly strictly required to, like, um, particularly for some roles. Like, there- Appointed when the minister recommends to the cabinet, and the cabinet recommend, well, the government, the executive government recommends to the governor that the person be appointed.

So it's when it-- that language, under governor and council appointment, sort of how it happens. But even if you've got somebody in mind, it's nice to kind of see who else is out there. And then there are others where you've got absolutely no idea who you would like to appoint and just really, you know, throw it open and see what happens.

Um, which is, I think, what happens most of the time with most of them. Um, and, um, so it's good to know, you know. It's good to know who's around and, and what's possible. But it's not in the sense that you would hire someone for anything else- Yeah ... looking for the best person. You're actually looking for the best person that fills a particular gap, that balances out the rest of them- Yes

um, that has a particular set of attributes or experiences. Because it's, it's like that old game, you know, like if you were having a dinner party, who would be the six people you could invite, right? And so, you know, I mean, it's, um, it's Oscars season, right? So, you know, like we all want to meet the people who wrote Sinners surely.

But anyway, whatever your answer to that question is, who would you, living or dead, who would you bring to your dinner party? And so board recruitment's much more like that. And, and, you know, and I, you know, so I had s- had, had, had some experience in board recruitment as a minister, but a lot of that was sort of, you know, very, um, very much managed, um, and undertaken, uh, all the interviews and, and the like undertaken by department.

Um, and, and you'd get involved really quite late in the piece, um, or very early in the piece or both. Um, but not so much in the middle bit. And then, um, subsequently, um, the boards that I'm on. And so the person that you're-- You actually go out looking for something knowing what you're looking for, rather than g- cast- casting the net and, um, and going for, you know, the best candidate, the most qualified person.

Okay. because it's actually, you get a whole bunch of people that are exactly the same. Like, what's the point of that? Yeah, totally. It's, it-- I often say it's a team sport. It's not about the best individual. It's about creating the best team, which means somebody who has, I don't know, greater tech skills might miss out on a board role to somebody whose tech skills, for argument's sake, are perhaps not as strong as person A, but they bring a more r- well-

rounded view, or they bring something else in their kit bag that that board might need as well.

So yeah, it is different to a b- to, to a job. I f- I find that I always really, really like The board director that I have least in common with in terms of knowledge and experience. Like, I sort of sidle up to the, you know, sidle up to the accountant in the room and it's just like, you know, "Ooh, this is interesting."

Like, they'll come at it from a completely different perspective. Um, yeah, and so, you know, I'm not sort of shy about very, very significant budgets and financial oversight, but you know, somebody who spent their entire life, like, looking at financial spreadsheets, they just see problems differently to people who've spent their entire- Yes

lives looking at community, um- Yeah ... and legislative or regulative requirements. And, and you know, it's funny, I've, I've, like, sort of traded o- observations about this with a few of the directors I've worked for, and they're like, "Oh, that's a very interesting experience that you bring." And it's like, "Well, you, like, you should meet yourself," you know?

That's right. because it's... Yeah, it is. It's the sum of the parts. It's the dinner party thing or the team sport thing, for sure. Exactly. And it's often the things that are in your experience. You're like, "Well, that's not special," because, you know, everybody's got that, surely. Yeah. But it is special- Doesn't everybody know that?

because other people don't have it. Exactly. So then- Yes ... can I- Funny, isn't it? Can I just check, so your first board, possibly, was a childcare centre where your kids went to childcare, and then your second board, if I'm hearing rightly, may have been MTP Connect, where you came in as chair. And obviously in between, you know, you're a minister- Yes

in various portfolios. So just a little bit of experience there. Uh- I think that's- But is that possibly right? Yes, long time ago. Okay. So tell me, MTP Connect- Not the MTP Connect bit, but the childcare centre bit was a long time ago. Yes. I'm a baby- Well, that's right ... soon 24 in a heartbeat. So then you join the board of MTP Connect.

You join the board as chair. Well, first up actually, what is MTP Connect? And- Oh, yes ... tell us about your first board meeting. Like, if you're the chair, you're just kind of landing this board meeting. Tell us about how that played out. So MTP is MedTech and Pharma, kind of industry lingo for, um, that sort of combination of things.

It's medical technology devices, biotech, so drug development. Um, and, uh, the space between somebody doing something very clever in the laboratory and somebody creating a product or a drug that can actually help a person get better or live longer or better, um, more comfortable life. So think about the last time you, like, you know, put a pill in your mouth.

I sliced my thumb open last night and I had, like, a couple of Panadol. Like, the years of development, um, to get a drug to market. Now, the, now I, I was speeding all this up really fast, but the kind of traditional rule of thumb is it takes 20 years to get a drug to market. Um- You know, it takes 10 years to get a device to market because you're talking about having to go through such a rigorous process that somebody's going to approve you putting some substance in people on the, um, expectation that it will make them better.

Um, so it's kind of as heavily regulated as you can imagine a thing to be. Which I really like about it. Anyway, so what MTP Connect does is, um, uh, so we're Australia's life sciences, uh, innovation accelerator. Um, it was established 10 years ago by the Australian government. Um, so the coalition government, um, uh, sort of in the Tony Abbott, Scott Morrison as industry ministers era.

And in fact, I think it was, um, Greg Hunt, who was the industry minister the moment the, the thing was launched, which was kind of ironic because then he went on to be the health minister, um, and remains a great friend of the organisation and a great supporter of the organisation. Um, which was incredibly successful over a number of years, over many, well, over the best part of those 10 years, um, in delivering some of those really important MRFF or Medical Research Future Fund, uh, programs.

Um, so helping, um, academics, uh, clinicians, so doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, um, you know, really you name it, take that kind of kernel of an idea and turn it into something. So it manifests itself in a couple of different ways. Some re- uh, really wonderful, um, programs around entrepreneurship, around how to actually commercialize a product, because if no

one's buying it, like, it's not going to help a patient, which is a really important detail in this sector.

Um, it's got to pretty much be the best in class or everybody will use the other one. Uh, and, um, a- a- and m- navigating that, that regulatory approval. Because Australia has such a small population, um, also these businesses need to know how to, um, engage with, uh, export markets, um, both for, um, regulation for selling products and indeed often for attracting investment because it's such a long and expensive road to hoe.

So that's MTP Connect. So first board meeting, I can actually remember much more vividly my interview- Okay ... which was kind of strange because I hadn't had an interview since 1994. And I had gone off to go scuba diving, so it was like 6:00 in the morning and I was in Indonesia in my like, kind of cleanest shirt.

Um, and, and they s- and so I'd headed off, and then they said, "Oh, we'd like to do your interview." I was like, "Oh, I'm away." They're like, "We don't mind." And so I had this interview with all of the current directors. Oh, one's, one's since left, um, and one come on, but three of the, um, current directors and, uh, the CEO, and it was very strange.

Um- Perhaps not for them, but it was pretty strange for me. Anyway, um, so yeah, it was good. Uh, one of the funny things that happened though, both at MTP Connect and at the Children's Cancer Foundation, coming into them in early 2023, was at some point or another we did a bit of an evaluation of where we were at, and it came up that both had been meeting in person before COVID.

Nobody told the new girl that. And so we were, um, having these meetings online, and there was this, this sort of, um, sense in both. It's like, "Oh, it's so nice when we used to get together in person." It's like, I didn't know that we used to do that. So, so we changed them actually the same month really. Uh, it's like, did we used to meet in, in person?

And, and, um, so now we do them, now we do them h- uh, sort of on and off. Yeah. So you've got all the, uh, you know, all the advantages of all being in together, um, but also the, um, you know, the convenience of, um, the convenience of, of online. Um, but yeah, strange. Hey, like just I literally stumbled upon that information.

MTP Connect is a national organisation. Children's Cancer Foundation, everyone's volunteers, you know, people are time poor, and didn't occur to me that they might have used to meet in person. It's so interesting, isn't it? When you-- There's a couple of boards that I've chaired, I've come in as the new chair, I haven't been on the board previously, and it is interesting because you don't know the pre-existing culture.

You just- No ... kind of go, "Oh, well, this is today. This must be what it is," when there is a whole pre-existing culture that you're blissfully unaware of. Sometimes that can be handy, sometimes it can't. Um- I, uh, I think after a lot of years as cabinet minister, I like my board papers pretty orderly. And also, I think particularly for chairing a meeting that's remote or with a big group of people, it's nice to have your issues and your topics in bite-sized chunks.

And so one of the things that I've done, this has happened in boards that I'm not the chair as well, but in the ones where I'm chair, just sort of working in an iterative way with everyone to just sort of move the process along to be as effective a use of everyone's time as possible. You know, getting the administrative bits and pieces important as they are kind of like squished down to a particular size so you can spend your time on the medium-big things.

Um- Absolutely. Yeah, and there's lots of ways to do that. And fresh eyes can be so useful. Mm-hmm. Well, isn't that the case? You know, you, um- You know, like at MTB Connect, I came into an organisation that was brand spanking new seven years previously, but it had been going for seven years, and so it had been running in a particular way, and I, to this day, do not know what that was like.

What's great, and it really does feel a bit like a hack, but, like, you see something really excellent on one board, and actually, "Ooh, I think I could do that over there." And so it's really-- You get this kind of accumulative, uh, uh, sorry, accumulation of, um, of knowledge, and you get to kind of see a whole lot of best practice.

Like a couple of the other boards I'm on, like they have chairs that have just been doing it for ages and ages and ages and, and, um, and some in, like, say, a listed environment and some in a public sector environment. And so, uh, but, but then also in a, in a, in a small private sector organisation, like in a growth stage startup, like the last thing you need is to suffocate everybody with a whole lot of, a whole lot of administration.

Like you're running on-- You might be running on fumes between, uh, capital raises, and you're running on other people's money and y- you know, you've got to, um, be able to return to them, you know, their investment and the growth that they're hoping for. Um, and so the last thing you need is to get bogged down in a kind of processes and reporting that's going to take a really lean organisation further away from its objectives rather than closer to them.

Absolutely. It is-- I think I know of one organisation that reported to board how many hours collectively it had taken to get the board packed together, um, which was a wild revelation for the board about the hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours and hours of the executive team, um, yeah, to do that.

So yeah, it is often surfacing some of that stuff can be really important to do. And why are we doing this? Why actually are we doing this? Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was one... I mean, there's one example, um, from one of my boards where we used to, um, have this chunk of information in our board packs, and it was like this kind of like moderately interesting, but really like so far from what we need to be looking at.

And it was a reporting, it was a reporting on social media activity, and it clearly had its origins from when social media was like new and the board was like interested to know if anybody was looking at it and how often it was happening, and it just kind of kept being reported, and it's like I don't need to know that we posted on LinkedIn.

Like- Yeah ... really don't need to know that. Like- Yes ... you know? What I'm interested to know is, you know, um, how we're thinking about our audience, how we're growing our audience, if indeed we're trying to, how that sort of, it complements the actual strategy and objectives of the organisation. I'm interested in that.

How many likes that YouTube thingy got, really don't care. Oh my goodness. Yeah, exactly. I- Yeah, that's funny, isn't it? Because the things that are important at a particular stage in an organisation's life might not be later. Yes. Absolutely. So impact and strategy, not activity. Yeah. Oh, Jaala- Yes ... like- Well, you just made that sound so much more succinct.

Yeah. That's, well, it, it- That's like put it on a T-shirt. Yeah, but then you don't get the, the context for it and the story, which is the important part of it, um, which makes it come to life, which is what the podcast is about, is those stories that make it come to life. So tell me, setting up a new statutory authority, scale, organisation scope.

Again, the story. Yeah. Tell us the story there. Okay. So the story of the new statutory authority was the Victorian Fisheries Authority. Um, so I had the enormous joy of, for nearly six years, being Victoria's Minister for Fisheries. Fisheries, you might ask, right? That's what I thought too. Most amazing community of about a million people, um, that are just completely mad for going fishing.

And, you know, I would not describe myself as somebody who, who's mad for going fishing, but I was totally mad for being their fisheries minister. So interesting, fascinating, um, recreational pursuit, really important, high quality, high value, super amazing and interesting industry, um, export industry. Um, and, like, if you're a regulation nerd, like, you couldn't find a happier place to be.

It was all kinds of rules about this and that and, you know, it was, um, it was just excellent. I loved it. But, um, before the election in 2014, we'd promised to create a statutory authority for fisheries, and I was not really involved. We've, not really, like, at all. I was not involved in, um, that commitment. Um, and so we had to kind of go and unpack it and get the backstory of what that was about and what people wanted from that.

And, and so really kind of complicated legislative process, um, to do, and we needed to appoint a board. And so, um, we made it really clear that anybody who had skin in the game was ineligible to be on the board. So anyone from industry or anyone who participated in recreational fishing was excluded, which kind of was a lot of people, and it was most of the people who cared about fisheries.

And so we went out looking for some good governance folks. And, um, the- Department came back with the recommendations at the end of the process and said, "We have somebody who, um, has no previous experience with fisheries but has twice before been the inaugural chair of a board, and that's a really, really special skill that you'll want to have here to get all of those procedures in place and, and make sure it's all humming, and, you know, like actually just build the thing from scratch."

And, and I think about that a bit now because at MTP Connect, like I follow in the footsteps of the person who did all of that. All those policies and procedures, and getting the staffing balance right, and getting the budgets right, and, and the relationships with organisations you have to work for.

And so that was, um, that was a really interesting lesson and, and you know, we were fortunate to have a, a wonderful, wonderful chair, um, there at the Victorian Fisheries Authority who, um, picked up the fishing stuff in no time and came as a bit of an expert in how to run a board for a brand-new organisation.

What else were we going to talk about? We're going to talk about- Managing staffing changes quickly Yeah. Managing staffing changes quickly is really interesting, particularly in a smaller size organisation. I think if you're in a massive organisation, you know, there's always somebody acting something, understudy for this, understudy for that, somebody who can jump in if somebody is on leave.

Um, but yes, I have had a bit of experience with unplanned absences and needing to sort of backfill positions temporarily, um, needing to, um, encourage, uh, somebody to step up into a role that they'd perhaps not ever imagined themselves stepping up into, and really sort of holding the fort a bit in the interim while things are in a state of flux.

And I think my advice to anyone in that situation is sort of back yourself and move fast, because the most important thing the organisation's going to need is stability, uh, and continuity. Um, and then the rest you can work out later. Um, so, you know, find the best person you can in the circumstances that you can, and keep the organisation moving forward.

Excellent advice. I've been in a similar circumstance, and yes, excellent advice. You don't want to spend three months messing around. You're just kind of- Exactly ... you know, having the thing atrophy. Jala, who'd have thought we would have too much to talk about in this time? Um, fortunately we can continue the conversation at another time.

But for today's conversation, what are the main things you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today? Well, we didn't get to scaling things, scaling

organisations. And in just a sentence or two really, that's about, I think, focus Having a plan, supporting the team to execute it, um, and, and reviewing it along the way, making sure that you're using your scarce resources on the right things.

I think that one of the key things that, um, probably emphasize as w- as you're calling time on our lovely chat is, uh, that to successfully lead an organisation takes a village, not an individual. That there's probably not a whole lot of black and white and right and wrong. You've got to sort of trust your judgment, bring the right people together, and think about things in the right way, and having a shared objective about what you're trying to achieve.

That's my favourite thing about this kind of work. It's why I've chosen to do this kind of work now, really to the exclusion of anything else. The idea that with a team of people, uh, you can, um, do something significant, um, by putting a plan together and then supporting the people who need to execute it to do so.

It's just a real joy. Yeah, totally, isn't it? Love it. Fellow governance geek. Love it. Is there a resource you would like to share with the Take on Board community? I am currently listening to Abundance, and I not long ago finished listening to The Coming Wave. Um, I think that... I say I like a good trashy bit of crime fiction in paper form by the bedside table, but if I'm out for a drive or a run or whatever, walking to the train station, I, I do love, love a good audiobook, but, you know, however you, however you take your content.

I think, you know, we're in an exceptionally rapidly changing world. You know, we have this, all this global instability, you say, like there's sort of fundamental shocks going on to our, um, political systems, to the world order as, you know, people our age have only ever known it. Um, I think finding the time or the interest to think about things from quite some distance is very, very helpful.

This has a couple-- Yeah, so I'm, I'm only about halfway through Abundance, but it's, um, it's pretty interesting reflection on how we've collectively managed to get to the sort of political situation that we're in at the moment where, where you've got this sort of massive, um- Massive emphasis on difference and not a lot of emphasis on what we've all got in common, which obviously far much more than we have different.

Um, but also *The Coming Wave* is, uh, I think a really interesting look at, um, the use and application of artificial intelligence technologies. And, you know, I, I think it would be unwise

for anyone to think this is a passing fad and to not, and to not engage with it. I know there are plenty of people who do, but, um, this is, you know, this is a pretty interesting steam engine kind of moment in human history, and it's probably not a bad place to start that book, I thought.

Ooh, okay. And if they're both on audiobook, so we'll be looking them up because that is my preferred method of consumption as well these days. Nice. Unsurprisingly, being a podcaster. Oh, Jaala, thank you. So awesome to be able to have this conversation with you today. Um, I know there's many more stories in there as well, so we might get you back someday.

But thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with the Take on Board community today. Lovely to see you, and lovely to chat and to join the Take on Board community for this conversation. So that's a wrap for the Take on Board podcast today. Thank you for being here and for being part of the community. I do this podcast because I love bringing good women and gender diverse peoples together.

So I invite you to join us over in the Take on Board Facebook group, an active group that helps, supports, and cheer squads each other. Just search Take on Board in Facebook to find us. Or you might like to let me know your email address, and you'll then have the Take on Board Times and the Take on Board Community Digest delivered straight to your inbox.

You'll also get advance notice of events and programs so you can meet others in the community. Finally, I'd really love it if you could do some of the podcast things. Share this podcast with someone you know who you think might get some value from it. Subscribe if you haven't already, either on podcast or over on YouTube, and I also love it when people rate and review.

Thanks again for being part of the Take on Board community. Now go and put these tips, tricks, and advice into action so you can be your best in the boardroom.

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