

TRANSCRIPT

Learning Unboxed



Episode #281.

Jeff Utecht:

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When we start looking through a generational lens, you start to see the way that different generations learn because of the way, specifically when they were adolescents, the systems that were put in place when they do it.

Annalies Corbin:

Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I'm your host and chief goddess of the PAST Foundation, Annalies Corbin. We know the current model for education is obsolete. It was designed to create fleets of assembly line workers, not the thinkers and problem solvers needed today. We've seen the innovations that are possible within education, and it's our goal to leave the box behind and reimagine what education can look like in your own backyard.

Welcome to Learning Unboxed. This is your host, Annalies Corbin. And as always, I'm excited to talk with another great innovator in the transformative education space. And joining us today is Jeff Utecht, co-host of Shifting Schools Podcast and an AI consultant. So Jeff, welcome to Learning Unboxed.

Jeff Utecht:

Hey, thanks for having me. I'm really excited to be here and do a little podcast swap for our audiences. This has been a fun day of recording on each other's channels.

Annalies Corbin:

It's true. We spoke earlier. And so, now, it's my turn to pose questions to you. So, let's set just a bit of context for our listeners as we get started here. Shifting Schools podcast dives deep into weekly conversations that span the educational landscape by bringing the thought leaders who are actively shifting the paradigms of modern schooling. Their mission is to equip educators with insights and tools to prepare for the next generation for a future that's still unfolding. And they believe that we're not just teaching for today, but we're teaching for a world that we can't yet fully imagine.

And it's within this capacity or this lens, in particular, that Jeff and his work with organizations, schools, school districts helping to leverage generative AI and understanding generational expectations as it relates to our students and our future workforce. This is the thing that really appeals to me. And so, it's fun to have a podcast swap, but I'm really interested, Jeff, in diving into the work that you are doing

within those capacities and the conversations that you are able to have with folks all over the world through the podcast as well. So, again, welcome to the program

Jeff Utecht:

Thank you. I appreciate it.

Annalies Corbin:

So, I want to start with this idea of generational expectations and workforce. And just to give an additional bit of context for our listeners, we talked about this a little bit earlier today because the reality is the kiddos that we are having in our classrooms today and, certainly, the students that are entering into college and early workforce, their first jobs, they are not what we have seen before.

So, I want to hear from you a little bit about how you work with organizations or with schools or post-secondary. How do you help people prepare for, either, what's there right now or what's about to show up.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah. Well, thank you. It's great to be here and I'm excited to talk about this. A lot of times, I get stuck talking about the AI stuff, which is great, it's a passion of mine. But this generational stuff, I think, is having a bigger impact on organizations than I think we even have realized. It's becoming a thing. I think you're finding more and more help out there, books and consultants coming in to support. It's very interesting, in the United States alone, we spend almost \$320 billion a year across organizations in the United States around dealing with generational conflict within teams. Just think about that for a second, \$320 billion.

Annalies Corbin:

That's a ton of money.

Jeff Utecht:

Isn't that incredible?

Annalies Corbin:

Imagine what we could do with that.

Jeff Utecht:

Imagine, because we have all this conflict within teams. And it's in schools too. And part of it is that for the first time ever, we have four generations in the workplace. That's never happened before.

Annalies Corbin:

Correct.

Jeff Utecht:

We have boomers who are supposed to be retired and living the good life on the beaches who are not retiring. And you've got Gen Z who is coming up and there are these crazy kids who are nowhere near what a boomer expects them to be. And in between, of course, you got Gen X and millennials, and we're all just trying to figure each other out.

Annalies Corbin:

Correct.

Jeff Utecht:

And I think the part of it is, it's like as educators specifically, and I talk a lot about this in the education realm is educators have a unique standpoint in this. Not only are we working in generational teams ourselves. I was a fourth grade teacher. In my heart, I'm a fourth grade teacher. So, most of my stuff comes from a fourth grade teacher lens.

Annalies Corbin:

It's the best lens to have, fourth grade. I mean, you can't beat it, right?

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah. Well, and it's very funny, there's something interesting about fourth grade. If you ever ask people, like, who's your favorite teacher, it's almost always the fourth grade teacher. And I think there's something developmentally, you probably know this better than I do, but there's something around fourth. It's like your fourth or fifth grade teacher is your favorite.

Annalies Corbin:

I think it's because, just to circle on that, I do think it's because kids in the fourth grade, they still love their teacher. They're not quite in the space where they're starting to love each other. There's-

Jeff Utecht:

That's so true.

Annalies Corbin:

That's a developmental thing, right? So, the teacher is still like this, "Oh, it's awesome," right? Okay, just a segue, but I had to throw that out there.

Jeff Utecht:

Learning is fun, and you haven't been taught how to school yet, which you and I talked about on my podcast, right? Like there's just this perfect thing. So, I love being a fourth grade teacher. But you know, as a teacher, we find ourselves in intergenerational teams a lot of times. And I would just ask whoever's listening to this,

whatever team you have, do you know their generations? Do you understand that you are trying to communicate different values?

And that's the difference. Like when we talk about generations, we can get into the nuts and bolts of it. But really what it comes down to is every generation has a different value. And those different values play out in the way we view the world, the way we view work, the way we view our colleagues, what our expectations are of each other. And that same thing happens with us as teachers with our students, right?

One of the things that I try to... and I think about myself often. I'm 48 years old, almost 49 as we're recording this. I'm a Gen-Xer. I'm born in 1976. So, you're a Gen Xer too, okay?

Annalies Corbin:

I am, yup.

Jeff Utecht:

I'm born in 1976. So, I'm on this cusp of I'm a late Gen-Xer, but I do have some millennial tendencies. I don't like to tell people that.

Annalies Corbin:

Yeah, keep that to yourself, Jeff.

Jeff Utecht:

I know.

Annalies Corbin:

I'm an early Gen Xer, right kind of in the middle. Cool, yeah.

Jeff Utecht:

Okay. So, the way that Gen-Xers were raised, and I think about this from a teaching lens, we were raised, the majority of us Gen-Xers, just to kind of talk about this generational stuff and how it kind of plays out, for the majority of us Gen-Xers, we were the generation that came home to empty houses.

Annalies Corbin:

Correct.

Jeff Utecht:

You might remember that we were called latchkey kids. We were the first generation in American history, and we'll just speak America, but this actually applies to all-

Annalies Corbin:

It's global. It's global.

Jeff Utecht:

It's global. It's global for this generation in Western worlds that we are the first generation that for the majority of us, both parents were in the workforce. And both parents are in the workforce, and schools don't have before and after school programs yet because this has never happened. We're that generation. So, we came home to empty homes.

Annalies Corbin:

We were on our own.

Jeff Utecht:

And I'll ask you, this is a really interesting one. At what age do you remember spending one hour at home alone with no adult supervision?

Annalies Corbin:

That's a really great question. So I bet you I was nine or 10.

Jeff Utecht:

Okay. See. For our generation, on average in the United States, is aged nine that a child is at home alone with no adult supervision. Do you know what it is for a child today?

Annalies Corbin:

I have no idea.

Jeff Utecht:

Fifteen.

Annalies Corbin:

I was gonna say 14.

Jeff Utecht:

Fifteen.

Annalies Corbin:

Wow, so we are coddling our kids.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah. And this is the thing, are you telling me kids are less trustworthy than they were two generations ago? Of which most parents are like, "Yes, I would never trust my child." No, it's not. It's a difference in value. And so, we have different values. As a Gen-Xer, we were taught from a very young age, again, majority of us around aged 9 or 10, that we spent one hour with no adult supervision... when I say no adult

supervision, we're not talking cellphone like these kids have today. They're never alone.

Annalies Corbin:

Oh no, there is nothing. You were on your own until someone showed up.

Jeff Utecht:

You are on your own. You had a phone on a wall with a six-foot cord. That was what you had. But because we spent so much time alone, specifically in our adolescent years, we like to try and figure things out on our own. We do not do well working in groups. You tell a Gen-Xer that they've got to go to another meeting and collaborate with other people, and we're just like, "Oh, my gosh. Just let me go back to my room and shut my door and do my thing." Because we have learned from a very young age, just tell us what to do, tell us what to do and let us go figure it out. We don't want to be micromanaged. Just go tell me what I need to do, boss, and let me go do the thing.

Annalies Corbin:

Yeah. What outcome do you want? I don't care how you think it should be done.

Jeff Utecht:

Exactly.

Annalies Corbin:

Just tell me what I'm supposed to produce.

Jeff Utecht:

Exactly. And we like to figure things out on our own because from 9, 10, 11, 12, we were able to play. We had all this unstructured play time. So, as a teacher, and I made this mistake as a teacher because I didn't understand this where this was coming from, but as a teacher, then, when kids approached me, I put myself like I was a horrible fourth grade teacher when I think about it, right? Kids would approach me and kids would say, "Mr. U, I need help with X problem." My response always, always was, "Why don't you try to go figure it out for yourself first. When you can't figure it out, then I'll support you."

Because do you know how we learn best as Gen-Xers? We like to go figure it out ourselves first. And then, once we get stuck, we call the consultant, we call in for help, we call the friend, we do whatever. But we were raised in this mental mindset that you should try to figure out things first. And I'm not saying that's wrong. I'm not saying that's wrong. But that's our default. Not every child works that way.

You know, we talked about cultural learning, cultural responsive learning on my podcast, one of your key pivotal parts of your book, this is part of it. Not every child

learns best by going... Some kids like a cookbook. Some kids like a recipe to follow. Not every kid, but some kids do. When we start looking through a generational lens, you start to see the way that different generations learn because of the way, specifically when they were adolescents, the systems that were put in place when they do it.

So, when we talk about generational leadership, it impacts us as what is my default as a teacher? If I'm a boomer, if I'm an X-er, if I'm a millennial, we have a default way that we expect others to learn and that might not be the default for that child.

Secondly, when I'm working within a team of other generations, I need to understand that I like to work alone. Do you know who hates to work alone? Gen Z-er, our kids under 28, your colleagues under 28, they wanna do everything in group work. And it drives Gen-Xers freaking crazy. They're like, "Just go do it yourself. If you can't figure it out, I'm across the hall, I'll come, I'll help you. But don't ask me to do it with you. I don't want to do it with you. I want you to go figure it out." So, we end up. And then, all of a sudden, there's this frustration within teams.

So, this generational stuff, I love it. It's fascinating. I got into it because I taught both millennials and Gen Z students. And as we were coming through, and then I was helping universities and saying the universities were expecting kids to be one way, I was like, "Those aren't the kids. I just had them. I just had them six years ago. These are the kids you're getting." So, it just kind of rolled out. And it's the work I'm doing a lot now with schools and an organization.

Annalies Corbin:

I love it. But partially that's the anthropologist in me, like I can't help myself, right? So, you know. And I vividly remember as an undergraduate student starting my journey in anthropology the book *Generations*, the first real big book. I mean, you know, those of us who geek out on this generational stuff and my staff, they laugh about me all the time, because if anybody talks about it, if there's an article that comes out, they all get it. They're like, "Seriously, we know about ourselves. You need to stop sending us this stuff." And I'm like, "No, it's so fascinating," right?

Jeff Utecht:

It's so fascinating.

Annalies Corbin:

You know. And so, it is so fascinating because to your point, it really, really informs what's going to be possible at a classroom level. It's going to inform what's going to be possible as it relates to the way a child is going to journey through the story of their life. And if we fail to recognize and understand these things, we will never be successful, fully successful educators, because we're going to leave something on the

table for that child that we don't need to leave behind. And it's absolutely going to translate when these young people find their way into the workforce.

And so, you know, our Gen Zers, they are in their early careers, they're in workforce, managing their way, finishing up college, many of them. And then, we have the alphas coming up, and that's an entirely different creature as well. So, how do you help schools in particular as they are navigating this endless cycle, it's not going to change, this endless cycle of new generations coming in and balancing out the educators who have spent 20, 30, sometimes 40 years in this work, being able to really serve the needs of a different group of children as they're coming through?

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah. So, there's two things, and I get a little harsh sometimes with educators. Usually in my keynote, this usually slips out. But one of the things I always try to come with the lens of, and this is me, 25 years being an educator now, the thing that I keep coming back to and I say this all the time, it's not about me. I'm an old 49-year-old white dude, right? It's not about me. I chose a profession. I chose a profession as an educator that it is my constant duty to make sure it's about them, not me. So, it is my constant duty to think about the views and ideas and social norms that they are being raised in that are completely different from me.

And I don't get it. It's awkward, I don't understand Snapchat, I don't understand why everything is so wrapped up in Instagram when you're in middle school. I mean, I do because I study this stuff and this is what I help schools with. But if I'm a teacher, you don't have to understand it, but you have to understand it's their culture. It's never going to make sense to me and that's okay. But I chose a profession. It's not about me. It's about them.

So, I think about this thing, you bring up Gen Alpha. We don't know a lot about this gen yet, this generation.

Annalies Corbin:

We do know they are going to be radically different. We're already starting to see those things.

Jeff Utecht:

And so here's just a couple of key points. Before the pandemic, the average child in America touched a connected device, and we're going to use the cellphone because that's usually the first device that they touch, given to them by their parents. The average child in America touched a connected device around aged two before the pandemic. Since the pandemic, these are all our gen alpha kids, that's down to 18 months, right? So, actually, kids are touching connected devices better.

For us to sit here and think that that is not going to somehow change the way this child learns and believes the world around them is just insane. Like it's going to. It has to. So the research is starting to pile up now that if I've been touching a device and learning, which is what a lot of what they're doing, parents will download all kinds of educational games for them, they expect learning to be done in games.

Annalies Corbin:

Correct.

Jeff Utecht:

They expect learning to be gamified. So, now, I'm a first or second grade teacher, and I can't figure out why kids can't sit still and don't understand why because I'm not culturally relevant to that generation.

Annalies Corbin:

Correct.

Jeff Utecht:

Right?

Annalies Corbin:

Right.

Jeff Utecht:

And we have to, we have to, no matter your age and how long you've been teaching, you better understand game-based learning theory. Now, we live in a world, again, I went to university, I graduated in 1999, right? I was never taught game-based learning theory. I was never taught how to create pedagogical understanding through games. That was never in my wheelhouse. But it just also happens that we live in the most incredible time ever to be a human in the world of generative AI that can take any lesson, it can take any outcome, it can take anything we want to do, you can copy and paste that unit that you did last year, copy and paste that into ChatGPT, or Gemini, or pick your AI and say, 'What would this look like if you applied game-based theory learning to this?' and it'll do it for you.

Annalies Corbin:

It'll give you all kinds of amazing suggestions. Take the one that feels great to you.

Jeff Utecht:

You don't have to go back to school to be an expert. You understand learning. You understand kids. You just need a different approach that would have taken you four years ago, you'd had to go back to school and gotten another master's degree. Now, you've got these tools at your fingertips. And for me, that's the crossover of the work

I'm doing right now. It's this understanding generations, but then how do you leverage the tools of our time, which are AI, to help lift that load for me? And to me, that is a beautiful, beautiful place right now to be an educator.

Annalies Corbin:

It is. It's an exciting place to be an educator. And I think that the other thing that I hope that people will also sort of glean from this piece of our conversation is it gives you, as the educator, the opportunity to tap back into the whole pieces of yourself, right? Because so much of the time in education, the minute we walk into that school or into our classroom, we leave 80% of who we are as humans at the door.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah.

Annalies Corbin:

We don't bring our full, authentic selves into the experience of learning because we've been so caught up for so long in a group of students who needed us to be something different. But these students, to your point, they need you to be your fully authentic self. And they need you to figure this out.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah.

Annalies Corbin:

It's exciting.

Jeff Utecht:

It's so exciting. And we have the tools available-

Annalies Corbin:

We do, we do.

Jeff Utecht:

... to do this for us, which is just is... you know, I was thinking as we were preparing for this, because again, we just recorded you on me. So, you've got to go listen to Shifting Schools, not because you need to subscribe, but you actually get to hear Annalies be the... you know, all the passion that you have. And I love this because we're both very passionate about education, about the work we do. I was really thinking after our last conversation, you bring up this idea about wicked problems. And I love this idea, right? It just hits home with me.

I love the idea about wicked problems. And I'm thinking to myself, you know what? I can show up as my full authentic self that my other business outside of education is my wife and I invest in real estate. I grew up on a farm. I believe like I can weld, I can

do all the things that you do on a farm, right? I was a farm boy growing up. And I love real estate and I like building things with my hands. That's a part of me that didn't always show up in the classroom but I have tools now where I can go to AI and say, "I'm teaching fourth graders. I'm teaching fourth graders about three dimensional shapes, but I also want to bring in my passion around building stuff, building houses." And I can put that into AI and say, "Could you give me five big wicked questions that are relevant to a fourth grader that my kids could work on?"

And it's not gonna know probably the wicked questions the way you frame them in the book, but it's gonna understand enough to give me these big, beautiful questions that allow me to bring a part of myself into the teaching of 3D shapes with my passion of building stuff, and I'm still gonna be able to hit the standard.

Annalies Corbin:

100%, yeah.

Jeff Utecht:

Like we've got the tools. I can show up as my authentic full self and find ways to bring that in because you're right, it is so true, our kids need us to be our full selves. Our kids need to learn when we fail. We talked about this, this idea of failure. It's okay. And when did I explain failure when I'm with students and when I'm with teachers, is we have to stop this continuum of succeed versus failure. And it's even set up in our grading system, our traditional grading system, that you have A's to succeed and F means fail.

The change needs to understand, and the change that I am trying to support teachers and students in doing, is understanding that failure actually is a Venn diagram and overlaps with success. And failure is everything that happens right before you succeed.

Annalies Corbin:

100%. And I love that, thank you.

Jeff Utecht:

There's nobody that just succeeds. That failure is everything that happens right before you become successful. And if you give up before you became successful, that's the failure. Failure is fear of not trying. The opposite of success is fear. And failure is everything that happens before you succeed.

Annalies Corbin:

And the greatest learning gains happen when we fail and we fail often and we fail over and over again on the path to success, to succeed, right?

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah.

Annalies Corbin:

Well, there's so much that happens in that space. And yet, oftentimes, we don't let students go back to that space. We don't let them mull in that space.

Jeff Utecht:

No, because we don't like to see them hurt. We don't like to see them not be successful. And so what do adults do? And this is all adults, right? We all jump in and help them. We all jump in and say, "Oh, I'll kick the ball for you," or "Let me go pick up the ball for you," or "Let me..." like whatever it happens to be.

In my classroom, I had a poster that said—and I got this from Amazon from a friend I knew at Amazon, because this is how Amazon work—"Fail fast, fail loud, fail forward." Fail fast, fail loud, fail forward, right? So, in my classroom, every time you failed, we would just go, "Yay!" And everybody raised their hands. And at any point you failed, any kid could holler, "Yay!" And we all, "Yay!" And like, "What'd you learn? What happened?" You fail fast. Let other people know that you failed. You're like, "I tried this and it didn't work, man. You should see how I crashed and burned. That was incredible."

You learn something from it, you pick yourself up and you move forward again. Fail fast, fail loud, fail forward.

Annalies Corbin:

I love that. But you know, like you said, not every educator is comfortable in that space. And unfortunately, we have an assessment system as it relates to educators and their jobs that do not honor or value our educators who embrace that.

Jeff Utecht:

Agreed.

Annalies Corbin:

I mean, you know, you're going to be penalized if the evaluator, the administrator walks into your classroom and it looks like absolute chaos is going on and kids are cheering because they just failed at something. In most schools, we're penalized for that.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah, it's so true.

Annalies Corbin:

And yet, that is the most authentic opportunity for kids to learn. But that is one of the

things. So, I just want to pull this back around as part of our generational conversation on this because some of the other things I think that are super interesting for educators right now, and I'm going to be super curious to see if this element of what I see with our Gen Z's also happens with our alphas.

Our Gen Z's don't like to be outside. I would argue this is a generation that very, very much wants to be in indoors environments. They they spend a lot of time on their devices, they like to do group work, to your point. One of the things about their group is they like to do group work. And even if they're sitting with each other, they want to text each other about the work they're doing as a group, right? It's really difficult sometimes to get the group of young people and certainly young professionals as they move into the workforce to embrace the group of young people and certainly young professionals as they move into the workforce to embrace the full extent of the world around them because they're fairly myopic. What do you think about that?

Jeff Utecht:

I think you are spot on. I think this is part of where we're seeing some real struggles. I think, especially in a system where, you know, still today and not all the time, but we're still very much in our educational system, we're expecting students to do more individual work than group work. Not all the time. Like that's changing, depending on your school district. You know, there's allowed to be more group work. But even, you know, to your point, we have a generation that spends a lot of time inside. But even, like people are saying, "Well, all they wanna do is play games." Yes, but in their games, very rarely are they playing a game by themselves.

Annalies Corbin:

Oh, a hundred percent.

Jeff Utecht:

Every video game that is played today is like three, four or five people like doing things together. And even Minecraft, like they're just building worlds together. Like it just doesn't... like they're so used to working together. But within those games, there's also a, "What is your unique role within the larger?" And I think that is something that we can get into as educators.

If we are educating this generation, if we are trying to figure out how we support them, I think we have to identify, what is your role within the larger group project? And there's going to be times that you need to work alone, but you're working alone for the greater good of the group. If you are only working alone for yourself, I find that they don't do a whole lot. But if they're working alone for the greater good, all of a sudden, I can get them engaged. Like there's a team effort versus, again, my generation, our generation, we hated working in groups because there was always one person that did all the work and nobody ever did anything else. Remember?

Annalies Corbin:

And no one cared about that.

Jeff Utecht:

And nobody cared.

Annalies Corbin:

And no one cared.

Jeff Utecht:

And again, that's those dynamics. I do think we need to force them to interact with their world more. I think every generation needs to be forced to do something, right? And that's coming from our own generational bias of like, "Well, that's what it was like when I was a kid and I want that for my child too." There's some of that. And I think that's good. That's also what allows us, what allows each generation to imprint those social norms on the generation that comes after them.

I think we are going to have to force them into the world a little bit, but I think we have to be very structured in the way that we expect individual work to lead to a better group project. And this is the work I'm doing in organizations right now too, it's the same thing, because our Gen Zers are everything from 14 to 28 right now, like that's the generation. So, they're still in our schools and they're in our workforce. But even in the workforce, we're saying, "You can go out and be yourself. Like I need you as an individual to do this, but by you doing this, this is what it does for the greater group."

This is your unique role in Minecraft. Like in Minecraft, your job is to build bricks, but when you get done building bricks, we have a tower. This is your brick. And if they don't know that brick, if they don't understand why that brick matters to the greater good, we see disengagement.

Annalies Corbin:

They'll tell you they're bored or they don't know what to do.

Jeff Utecht:

They'll tell you they're bored.

Annalies Corbin:

And they're not really. They're just trying to figure out what their role is, 100%. I agree with that.

Jeff Utecht:

That's right.

Annalies Corbin:

So my youngest son is absolutely a Gen-Zer. He is a junior in college and he is doing his first really big industry hardcore internship this summer. Every day I ask him, "Well, what did you do today?" because I'm super curious. He's in an industry and a field that has nothing to do with anything that I know a thing about. It's really hard. It's very complex. It is really interesting because he's having a great time. He's learning a lot. He's really loving it. But with that said, he will still say from time to time, "Well, what'd you do today?" "Well, you know, I didn't have a lot of direction. So, I did this over here. It needs to be done," but you can see, he doesn't articulate it but I could see the wheels turning.

And your example about, like, my brick, he's like, "Well, I know what I'm supposed to do with my brick, but I'm not sure how my brick connects to the next brick yet because is there going to be a meeting or is my mentor going to help me with this?" You can watch this happening. And it's the naivety of using an experience, but it's also very much that generation.

Jeff Utecht:

Yeah, for sure. Because if you're a boomer or Gen-Xer, we didn't even ask. Like we don't ask questions. We're just like, "You told me to go build bricks, I go build bricks." You know, and five years later, you turn around like, "Oh, cool. Look, we built a tower." Like, we don't care. I was laying bricks because that's what I got paid to do.

And the older generations, it started with the millennials but Gen Z and Alpha, I think will be very much like, "If they do not know their purpose, they're gone." And when I'm working with organizations right now outside, so the kids that are now you know Gen-Zers in the workplace, the goal right now in the United States, if you can keep a Gen-Zer working for you for more than three years, you're beating the odds.

Annalies Corbin:

You know that's super fascinating to me because we used to say that about the Millennials.

Jeff Utecht:

Yes.

Annalies Corbin:

Right? And we haven't really talked about the Millennials in our conversation. That would be a whole nother podcast, I would argue, talking about Millennials. I have a lot of Millennials that work for me, So, I feel that one. But it is really, really interesting because early days in the sort of Gen Z as a generational conversation, I don't know if you recall this, but I remember those early days, a lot of the conversation was around,

are these Gen-Zers going to be the next group that chooses a career and stays? But it's not playing out that way-

Jeff Utecht:

No.

Annalies Corbin:

... which is super, super fascinating. And it would drive me from a wicked problem sort of standpoint to say, "Okay. Why? What does it take for a generation to make the shift back to, 'I'm gonna go someplace, and I'm gonna be a loyal employee, and I'm gonna be there for 10, 15, 20, 30 years,' and I'm not suggesting that that's actually what we need. I'm just curious about the paradigm that makes that shift happen.

Jeff Utecht:

And that is a wicked question that I think a lot of companies and organizations are struggling with right now. That is what I'm supporting. And I don't have the answers. It's a wicked question. I know that some organizations tried to do what worked before. So, what worked with the Boomers, because the Boomers are our most loyal, like Boomers are so loyal, right? Like we still have Boomers who are still teaching in the same classroom, like they're so loyal, they're not moving.

But what worked for them was 401k and a retirement plan. So, I have some organizations that say, "Well, that worked before to keep people around, so we'll just double down on a better retirement plan, a better pay package." And you have a generation that is not motivated by those things. And so, it's a failure within, right? But I like this because that was a strategy, that is a failure that we're leading to success. Like that didn't work. The kids aren't going to stick around for an extra \$3,000 bonus in their 401k. Like this generation just won't.

Annalies Corbin:

They're like, "That is way too far out. That has nothing to do with me."

Jeff Utecht:

Exactly. Yeah. And I mean, this is where like, talk a little bit about the Millennials. The Millennials, the biggest thing that Millennials gave us, biggest thing that's a pain in everybody's rear, is they're the ones that decided... and we can go into this in a different podcast if you want but they gave us work-life balance. Like their whole thing was work-life balance. Gen Z has taken that to the extreme, right? So, Gen Z believes work-life balance is, I should work like 3.5 days a week. Like that's really work-life balance, right?

And so, I think there's a big struggle here of this idea of Millennials pushed us and they're a massive generation, largest generation in US history. So, they've got a lot of

power. And Gen Z's are seeing that and they're pushing companies and organizations to think, "Okay, well, what does it look like?" And then on top of that, we have the work from home movement. We have this expecting people to be remote. Like there's all these other little nuanced things that are pushing these boundaries that I think everybody's still trying to figure out how do we keep somebody loyal within this new world of work that is still ever evolving?

And then, you dropped AI in the middle of it just to blow it up a little bit more. But man, I love this stuff. You know, I mean, this is what it means to live and I love it.

Annalies Corbin:

It is indeed. It is indeed. Jeff, I want to thank you very much. And you and I could probably continue having this conversation-

Jeff Utecht:

Oh, yeah.

Annalies Corbin:

... I suspect so many more questions that I have and in fact we might have to do part two because I do have so many more questions.

Jeff Utecht:

I love it.

Annalies Corbin:

But I want to thank you Jeff so much for joining us today, taking time out of your very busy schedule, sharing with us about the work with the Shifting Schools podcast, and and the work associated with generations and AI and just thank you so much for what you do. We are so appreciative of you.

Jeff Utecht:

Well, thank you and thank you for the work you do as well. It takes a village and the world is my village. So, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Annalies Corbin:

Absolutely. And we will make sure we have links, contact information, you know all of those pieces and parts. So, I hope that folks will reach out to Jeff Utecht and definitely listen to Shifting Schools podcast. It's a great one. And be in touch because I think Jeff can help. So again, thank you so much.

Jeff Utecht:

Thanks so much.

Annalies Corbin:

Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media, @AnnaliesCorbin. And join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to reimagine education.