

What's in a name and why it matters with Maya Welford

The GoodWork Podcast | Season 1, Episode 7

Felicity Halstead: [00:00:00] Hello, and welcome back to The GoodWork Podcast. I'm Felicity Halstead your host and the founder of GoodWork. This week, my guest is Maya Welford. After graduating Maya started working in banking and soon got involved in DE&I initiatives. She launched a mentoring program that has now gone global and went on to start her own podcast, That's My Name, where she talks to guests about their names, naming histories and traditions, and the importance of getting names right.

Felicity Halstead: Maya, welcome to The GoodWork Podcast.

Maya Welford: Thank you Felicity. I'm really, really excited to be here. And thank you so much for reaching out and inviting me on.

Felicity Halstead: I wanted to reach out because I've seen a lot of your work around socioeconomic diversity and inclusion. You appear in my feed on LinkedIn fairly often, which is a good thing because of the really cool work that you do.

Felicity Halstead: [00:01:00] And so I'm kind of excited to get the chance to ask you a little bit more about it today. But what I'd like to start with doing is just asking a bit of background on you and your career journey so far, just so that listeners can get to know you a little bit more.

Maya Welford: So I have worked for about five years now, which has actually flown by.

Maya Welford: So yeah, I studied psychology at university, so I went to King's and what really motivated me to study psychology is I'm really interested in people and why they behave in the way that they do. I'm always kind of observing people when I'm like, why did you do that? Why did you say that? And I'm always trying to kind of like analyze.

Maya Welford: Sometimes I find myself kind of diagnosing people, but yeah, I'm just really, really interested in why people behave in the way that they do. But in addition to that, I'm also really, interested in and passionate about supporting people. So I guess what drove me to study psychology was this interest and passion and understanding people and why they behave in how in the way that they do.

Maya Welford: But then also thinking about [00:02:00] the mental health side of things and the wellbeing side of things. So that drove me to study psychology. I actually joined

psychology, wanting to go in and study clinical psychology and then be a clinical psychologist.

Maya Welford: I think if there's any kind of psychology grads listening, this is kind of the, the goal and the aspiration of like 90% of, yeah, people going into study psychology, but very, very quickly after I joined the degree, learn that psychology's so broad and there's so many different kind of elements and aspects to psychology and actually it's everywhere. So I thought, okay, let me explore what's out there, keep an open mind. And then that led me into the world of HR.

Maya Welford: So then I did a few internships within Human Resources during university, and then went on to join a Human Resources graduate program at a bank. And I've been there now for four years, I did the grad scheme. And then spent a year in wellbeing. So thinking about employee wellbeing, improving colleague wellbeing, and then [00:03:00] actually completely pivoted my career and now work within this weird and wonderful world called behavioral finance, but it still uses kind of my background in psychology.

Maya Welford: So I guess a theme that's gone through, a lot of my roles that I've had is psychology and this interest of humans and, and how they behave in the way that they do. Also during the graduate scheme that I was on, I did a part-time masters. So that was in corporate responsibility and sustainability. So again comes back to this passion and interest of mine, of supporting communities and having that positive impact.

Maya Welford: Actually, my dissertation perhaps links onto some of the themes of this podcast around like diversity, equity, inclusion, and so on. So my, my dissertation was on thinking about the gender and ethnicity pay gaps in relation to artificial intelligence and how artificial intelligence may help or hinder closing the gaps.

Maya Welford: So, yeah, another big interest. And I guess, theme that has come through throughout my career so far is also this piece around [00:04:00] diversity, equity and inclusion. I also have my podcast, which is all about names and also recently qualified to be a kind of transformational coach as well. So there's, there's lots going on.

Felicity Halstead: There's so much. I have to say it, it sounds like from, from what you've said, about how long you've been working, that we are probably almost exactly the same age, which, and I've been working for a similar amount of time. And I totally relate with what you said about it feels when you think about it like that, it feels really weird cuz sometimes I think I'm just out of uni, but it sounds like you've achieved an awful lot in that time.

Felicity Halstead: And I think the way that you talk about psychology and wellbeing and mental health, perhaps the organization you work for was ahead of the curve a bit on this, but actually it's something that I've noticed just explode in the last, just in that time, when I joined my graduate role, which was five years ago this September, we didn't really talk about mental health and it was within that first year that it really started to take off, which I

think always it's such a positive thing, but it always gives me [00:05:00] so much hope as well, that some of these other real kind of paradigm shifts in how we think and talk about work and how people behave and all of that stuff. I didn't study psychology, but I sometimes think I should have, cause I definitely armchair diagnose people with things all the time, which is terrible behavior.

Felicity Halstead: And I should never do that, but because I find it really fascinating. So yeah, it's really interesting inside that. But obviously you mention your podcast. I love the concept of your podcast because as you say, it's all about names and how names intersect with different parts of our identity. What motivated you to start the podcast and to have that as your focus?

Maya Welford: I knew that I wanted to start a podcast. I think there was a stage during the coronavirus pandemic where everyone was starting a podcast. There's so many out there, which is great. And I was like, yeah, I wanna start podcast. But then I was like, okay, I don't wanna do one just for the sake of doing podcast, but I knew in the back of my head, okay, I want to start a podcast.

Maya Welford: So in a kind [00:06:00] of short space of time, this was around I think a year and a half ago. I had just randomly had conversations with completely different people, coincidentally, around names. So I remember sitting in London Fields in Hackney, uh, with a group of friends and one of my friends, Jamie was just randomly speaking about all the different names that he has.

Maya Welford: And I was like, that's really interesting. And then a few weeks later, I was speaking to someone else about naming traditions in Ghana. And then a few different kind of conversations. And then that really got me reflecting on my own name and the experiences that I've had with my name. So, my first name is often mispronounced, you know, just yesterday it was mispronounced, uh, persistently and I had to correct the person.

Maya Welford: So that's, that's a, a kind of common experience of mine and that's been kind of throughout my life from school. And then now into kind of the working world. Also, my full name is kind of weird. Uh, so it's Maya Mitsuko September Welford. [00:07:00] So Mitsuko is my Japanese grandma's name. September's the month that I was born in.

Maya Welford: So quite weird. I dunno why my parents did it, but they were like, yeah, it'll be fun to put, like the month that I was born in as my name and they've done the same kind of, same for my sister that doesn't necessarily come from like a country or a culture, but they've kind of made up their own tradition and I love that.

Maya Welford: Yeah. Maybe I'll do it when I have kids. So yeah, it was really kind of inspired by my own experiences. And, and also another one when I was, um, much younger. I actually wanted to change my name, to like this really like English name. I went through

this phase of being like, yeah, I I'm changing my name. I was probably like seven or eight or something.

Maya Welford: And I do think I look back and that's something I haven't shared actually openly before, but I do look back and I think that that's probably a reflection of like, me growing up in London and not really seeing, I mean, I do look like quite British, but actually my mum's Japanese and I didn't, there was a [00:08:00] handful of like half Japanese, half English, children.

Maya Welford: I was so privileged to like be around, but actually that was such a rarity. So like at school there was no one who was sort of a similar background to me and I think. I wanted to kind of, I, I did definitely kind of deny that Japanese side to me. And I was like, let me just like lean in. Like, I, I dunno whether it was conscious or subconscious, but something within, it was like, let me just lean into the English side.

Maya Welford: Mm-hmm I guess it comes down to like acceptance and feeling like I'd be more accepted if I was just English now obviously I love my name, embraced it. And I really embraced my Japanese culture and I'm like, why, why did I ever do that? I guess it's kind of a result of the environment that you are in that perhaps doesn't allow you to feel fully yourself or included.

Felicity Halstead: It's so fascinating. I mean, I don't, my background is very, like my family's like Celtic through and through, but I have a last name that people mispronounce or misspell constantly, and [00:09:00] I cannot explain why we pronounce it the way that we do. It's just the way we always have. So I can definitely, cuz I think it's like my automatic tick, whenever anyone asks me what my last name is, is to then spell it.

Felicity Halstead: Cause I refuse to pronounce it wrong. Yeah. So yeah, I can definitely relate to some of that. And I think that experience is a really interesting reflection of some of the other things that the young people go through about lots of different aspects of their identity and how as young people, we don't necessarily encourage people to embrace and flourish in anything that is different.

Felicity Halstead: So yeah. Huge respect for that. And so your podcast, obviously, you've, you've interviewed lots of different people with very different kind of naming stories. Is there anything that you've really learned through that process or any particularly kind of interesting snippets that, that you could share with us?

Maya Welford: Yeah, definitely. So I, I love being able to have all these amazing, meaningful conversations with people. So what I've really learned is that people [00:10:00] really tie their identity and sense of self to their name. And this is something that I don't think I really actually thought about or grasped until all of these conversations that I've been having.

Maya Welford: You know, your name is such an important thing. It's used, I don't know how many times, but like loads of times a day. And what's interesting is actually people, you as an individual, barely say it, but actually it's said by so many different people, which I think is why it's so important that, you know, we get names right. We get them pronounced right.

Maya Welford: If someone wants to change their name for whatever reason, then we respect that. So I've had, my first guest was a transgender woman called Joanne Monck. And she very openly shared kind of her naming story and how she chose her name. And then I've, I've kind of done a bit of research into kind of the trans community and, and the whole naming thing.

Maya Welford: And I think it's what is such a crucial part of, I guess, the transition and acceptance is yeah. Then by the name that, you know, they've chosen. So I think what I've really learned is, is that identity [00:11:00] piece and that it's such an easy way to, to allow someone to feel included, like just get their name right.

Maya Welford: Yeah, but also it's such an easy way to make someone feel excluded. If you're getting their name wrong. If you're mispronouncing it persistently,

Felicity Halstead: I think you are absolutely right. I mean, that piece around, you know, people have this problem with like allowing transgender people to choose their new name and will persistently use the wrong name and misgender them.

Felicity Halstead: And yet, if somebody, if a, if a woman gets married and changes her name to her husband's surname, nobody cares. You are so, so right about that. And it is such a basic thing that ability to like spell somebody's name right. And, and that respect. And I absolutely relate to so much of that.

Felicity Halstead: In terms of things like naming traditions, have you come across any particular naming traditions that you find really, really interesting through the work that you've done?

Maya Welford: Yeah. So there's a tribe community in [00:12:00] Ghana and they, part of their naming tradition is giving the child a name based on the day of the week that they're born. And I think it's also related to their gender. So there's like the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday for girls and then the same for boys.

Maya Welford: And I really, I thought that was so fascinating when I heard about that. Cause I was like, that's something that, well, I guess actually thinking about it, it kind of links with me. Like my parents decided to give me a name based on the month I was born. So I guess like, Those kind of things are quite significant.

Maya Welford: If we think about, you know, the significance of like times and days of the week that we are born and, and there's this, like, there's this like, rhyme that

like, my dad used to say when I was growing up, like Monday's child is. Sort of grace and yes.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. I do know that. I can't remember. I was born on a Sunday and I can't remember what Sunday's child was, but yeah, absolutely.

Felicity Halstead: I get that. Yeah. [00:13:00]

Maya Welford: Yeah. So I guess it is a bit of a thing, but yeah, I learned about that and I think it's, it is a really, really strong tradition that this particular tribe practices and I really, really love that. And I guess it all, it's also like, just from the name, you have a bit more information about that person.

Maya Welford: So like, You'd know, oh, this person was born on a Monday. And I think that that's also really, really interesting as well. You wouldn't necessarily information if, if they didn't have that name.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. It's not something you ask people. Right. Except for if maybe you are into horoscopes and star signs and, um, you know, you ask.

Felicity Halstead: People like when they were born, so you can figure out what their, what their star sign is and all of that, which I don't really believe in, but I find quite fun. So I tend to do that to people. Amazing. So I wanna talk a little bit about the other work that you do, because as you say, you know, you work in a bank, you worked in financial services.

Felicity Halstead: That's not the most typically inclusive or historically inclusive environment for, for [00:14:00] women, for people of color, for people from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. But it's, from what I know, you've done a lot of work in that space around your job. What's driven you to do that. And what have your experiences been?

Maya Welford: So. When I joined, uh, the company that I work for now, I learned about these networks. Well, now they're called kind of employee resource groups. So the way I like to think about them is they're kind of like an extension of like university societies, where employees come together, they think about particular issues.

Maya Welford: So they might be a, a kind of group dedicated to gender. There's a group dedicated to the multicultural agenda. There's one linked to the LGBTQ+ agenda and so on. So all the kind of diversity pillars have these groups dedicated to them and they're open for any employees to come along and join. So very, very early on, I joined the gender group.

Maya Welford: Mm-hmm, I'm a woman, and I recognize to your point that, there is a real [00:15:00] lack of gender diversity within the, uh, within organizations. You know, there are

significantly less women in not only the financial services industry, but you know, loads of different industries too. Yeah. And I kind of recognized that and I was like, okay, I wanna join this group.

Maya Welford: I also joined because I wanted to meet different people and, and kind of build my network as well. So it's a great way to kind of build your networking and meet people. So, I guess that motivated me to join that gender group and I've done a lot of work and continue to do a lot of, kind of work with them.

Maya Welford: And then more recently, actually we launched our socioeconomic inclusion group. It's a mouthful, but actually focus on raising awareness around social mobility and the social economic inclusion agenda. Which has been such a missing piece of the diversity equity and inclusion puzzle. Like it's like the forgotten piece.

Maya Welford: Yeah. But actually now within the past six months to a year, I've seen such an increase. It's similar to the point you raised about wellbeing earlier. [00:16:00] Mm-hmm, I've seen such. An increase in focus on this agenda, which is so great because it is, for me, it has felt like the missing piece of the puzzle. And I guess for me personally, why I was so motivated to drive forward this group and, and now lead on engagement for this group is I come from a lower socioeconomic background and.

Maya Welford: I think that it's, it's so important to be aware of and consider the barriers that someone from a low socioeconomic background might experience in the run up to starting their career, but then also in their career as well. Yeah. There's research that has found that. The, the barriers don't stop. When you get into the workplace, they just continue.

Maya Welford: So there was a piece of research that if there are two people who went to the same university, one from a lower socioeconomic background, one from a more privileged background, they went to the same university. Did the same degree, got the same result. The one from the lower [00:17:00] socioeconomic background is, is on average paid.

Maya Welford: In their career than the person from the more privileged background. So, yeah, I think it shows that there's such a, still such an issue within this country around. The fact that where you are born really can determine your future outcomes later on in life, which I think is it is just wrong. And I think we should all be doing more about it.

Maya Welford: So I I'm so passionate about companies playing their role because we do have a role to play as, as large corporates role to play and in shifting that kind of needle. But I, I honestly think we've got such a long way to go with the social ability agenda. Yeah. But yeah, for me, that's why I'm so passionate about it.

Maya Welford: So just this week, as part of that, I organized an insight day where we welcomed young people from across the country to get an insight into the world of financial services. Mm-hmm, , I'm still really, really tired from that, but it was such a good day and like just meeting the young people and, and hearing about their passions and their [00:18:00] enthusiasms and, and being able to play that really, really small role in raising their aspirations and, and supporting them with getting ahead.

Maya Welford: It is just, you know, makes me. Smile when I go to sleep. So yeah, honestly, it's, it's kind of all the, obviously I think my day role is great and I, I love all the kind of stuff that I'm doing in, in the work that I'm actually paid for actually, where I've met. A lot of my energy is from things like the podcast where I can speak to really, really interesting people and things like.

Maya Welford: Or the initiatives that I'm doing at work and also outside of work to really have that impact on people's lives, especially those who perhaps need it the most.

Felicity Halstead: It's so multifaceted. Right. And I mean, the, the work is really rewarding. And I think you say that. Absolutely. That's. I mean, I ended up leaving my corporate career to do this work full time because it was the most rewarding part of my job.

Felicity Halstead: And I, I saw so many gaps, but I think just, just touching on some of the things you've said there, like it's, [00:19:00] it is that helping people to understand that, you know, it's not just about making sure that you've got some more diverse representation in your workforce. It's every single aspect of. You know, from how people socialize to how people like socialize with their colleagues, to how people go into a conversation about their pay review, to every single aspect of it.

Felicity Halstead: And I think sometimes people think we're almost done with this sort of work and I'm like, we are just. Like scratching the surface. We're just beginning with it. And there is so, so much still to do. And it's really incredibly encouraging to see big established organizations really starting to invest in, and then also to give people like you who are within those organizations who want to do this, work, the space and the resources to do it, right?

Felicity Halstead: Like I always try not to give people too much credit cuz sometimes I'm like, maybe this is the bare minimum, but actually I think it's a really positive step forward. I also wanted to ask about the [00:20:00] mentorship program that you set up, cuz that was something that you did fairly early on in your career, which is kind of ballsy, right?

Felicity Halstead: To be like a new, I mean that with, absolute respect. Yeah. But like, to be a kind of, you know, fairly new graduate and be like, I'm gonna set up like a big mentoring scheme. Can you talk us through what, you know, where that came from and some of the impacts of it and, and what that's been like for you?

Maya Welford: Yeah. So that program is like my baby. Yeah. What I really love about that is that I've been able to carry that through with me. Regardless of what kind of role I've been in. That's been a constant throughout kind of the beginning. So yeah, as I mentioned, I was part of our gender group mm-hmm and we were coming towards the end of the year.

Maya Welford: So we were, I joined the company in, in September. I joined the, the group then, and then it came to December time and they were thinking about the strategy for the following year. So for 2019, and they're like, okay, come up with some ideas. And I was like, oh, how about like a mentoring program? We connect. [00:21:00]

Maya Welford: Employees within our company with employees within the charity sector, because I see so much mentoring and, and kind of development for beneficiaries of charities, which is absolutely the right thing to do. But then I was thinking, okay, what, what support is there for those actually supporting the beneficiaries mm-hmm so that employees of these, of these charities.

Maya Welford: So I was like, okay, I, I can maybe do something with, with this I've personally really, really benefited from mentoring. And so I was really privileged to have a mentor when I was 17 as part of like a corporate responsibility program when I was in sixth school. So I've really benefited from mentoring. So I was like, okay, I want to do something with mentoring.

Maya Welford: So yeah, set that up at the end of 2018. So I was like only three months into. Corporate career and yeah, essentially it's a program which connects colleagues with employees within the charity sector. Mm-hmm six months through mentoring partnerships in addition to that. And, and this wasn't from the first year, but you know, every year we've kind of [00:22:00] iterated and improved, but now we are also, we've also introduced monthly skills development workshops for both mentors and mentee.

Maya Welford: Yeah. And this is for two reasons. One reason is I found that sometimes mentors and mentees have dropped out from the program. Mm-hmm. Life happens. They might leave. They might get sick. They might not want to be involved in the program anymore. That's fine. So I wanted to do something, so to make sure that regardless of it, if your mentee.

Maya Welford: Or a mentee or mentor kind of drops out. You've still got a bit of continuity throughout the program. So there's a skill development side of things. So yeah, that's kind of the program. We are now global. So we had last year, we had some mentors and mentees in India, which was super exciting. And we started off at the beginning with 43 mentor, mentee matches.

Maya Welford: So around 80 in total, Across seven charities. And these charities initially were aligned to charities working in the gender equity space. Mm-hmm cause it linked to the gender group that I was part of. But now actually we've really scaled up and [00:23:00]

we're collaborating with the different diversity equity inclusion groups across the company that I work for.

Maya Welford: So therefore we engaging with charities across the spectrum. So we've partnered with over 30 charities and over 500 people have benefited from the program. So, yeah, it's my baby and I love it. And I think that mentoring is such a powerful tool to support people, to develop and grow in, in whatever area that they want to.

Maya Welford: And what I think is so great about this program in particular is that it's, it's completely cross industry. And what I've always been really, really keen to emphasize is that this is not the bank going in and saving the charity sector. Like I don't like that mentality at all. It's, this is a two-way learning process and we have so much to learn from the charity sector and vice versa.

Maya Welford: So I really, really try and empower both mentors and mentees to see it as a two-way partnership. And, and that both sides really learn and grow from it.

Felicity Halstead: It's as I say, like, it's really cool, but it's also as someone who has worked in [00:24:00] both of a corporate and now in the third sector, that partnership aspect is so important.

Felicity Halstead: And as you say, like making sure that we're supporting the people working in the third sector, because it. Often, very under resourced, under invested in those are the people who are going to there, the brunt of lower salaries, lower investment in their own career development, et cetera, et cetera. So, yeah, it's hats off to you for, for recognizing that challenge and, and doing something about it.

Felicity Halstead: And the fact that it's gone global is just really cool to see. So we've talked a bit about socioeconomic inclusion. You mentioned that your own background has been one of had somewhat, I suppose, of a social mobility journey yourself. I'd just be really interested to know if it's something you are happy to talk about, how you think that has impacted and made your experience, different, harder, perhaps more challenging at times, because I think gathering evidence of those first person experiences is such a valuable [00:25:00] part of what we can do to help really make the case that this is an area that we still need so much more investment in.

Maya Welford: Yeah, definitely. So I think, I guess from the, the first thing that comes to mind, is this piece around role models? Yeah. So if you're from a lower socioeconomic background, so for example, my dad left school at like 12 or 13, he's got dyslexia and he's just not very academically oriented. He's very, very creative and focuses more on the creative side and, and more the manual he's in manual labor.

Maya Welford: So more of the kind of manual doing stuff. And then my mum is from Japan. So she moved to the UK in her early twenties. So her first language isn't English. So I

think it's also that intersectionality piece around yes. Yeah. Coming from like growing up poor. Right. But then also having. My dad who left sport an early age, which is as a result and, and very linked to coming from a low socioeconomic background [00:26:00] himself.

Maya Welford: Yeah. And then my mum not having English as her first language. I think it's one of the difficulties for me growing up is. I don't have someone there checking my homework when I'm submitting it. I don't have someone there able to help me at home with my university applications. Yeah. Whereas someone from perhaps a more privileged background with parents who have degrees, who, you know, have, who are working within the corporate environment or professional environment, are able to sit down and support.

Maya Welford: My parents couldn't give me that. So I think that's the key one. And that's from the very, very beginning, from a very, very early age, it's that your parental support, they're less able for my parents. They were less able to, as much as they might have wanted to. It's just that less able to give me that academic support and that's support and from a kind of career direction.

Maya Welford: Mm-hmm so that's the first one. And then I guess, coming into the workplace and, and I guess navigating the corporate environment for me. When I joined my, uh, internship and then [00:27:00] my grad scheme, this, this was one of the first times I've ever actually been into a corporate environment. Mm-hmm and that's really, really overwhelming.

Maya Welford: Yeah. Coming into this massive building, seeing people in suits, getting this like nice breakfast given to you all and these like nice cups of tea and biscuits, like that was really alien to me. Yeah. So I think. Element as well. I think people take for granted and people are like, oh, that's normal, but actually it's not.

Maya Welford: Especially when you come from that low a socioeconomic background. So I think it's that confidence piece. And that com that feeling comfortable within a corporate environment, doesn't come as naturally to someone from, from my kind of background. Also, if we think about work experience. So what I did work experience in year 10, my school's like go and find work experience.

Maya Welford: You need to do two weeks of it. And this is for everyone. And I think that this is like a nationwide thing. If we think about it, it, their school's like go and find your own work experience. It's like, okay. So for someone whose parents work at a corporate or work within kind of like professional [00:28:00] services and, and that's perhaps what someone wants to go into, they're more likely to get that experience because you're like, okay, I'm just gonna bring my son or daughter a child into.

Maya Welford: The my workplace. Yeah. I, I volunteered within a charity shop, so not even in like charity head office, but app just in a charity shop doing kind of retail, which was great. I developed a lot of different skills, but I didn't necessarily develop skills, which

perhaps would've helped me more when I came to apply for internships and graduate programs compared to if I'd.

Maya Welford: Experience within the corporate world at that earlier age, which some of my more privileged counterparts were able to get. Of course. So I think it's things like that, that people don't quite grasp and don't quite get it. Yeah. And, and that's like, that's that? I, I understand that because it's like, Things are just taking for granted taking for granted and, you know, your experience.

Maya Welford: You just see that as a normal, actual grant going through it. And it's also it's even things like how to put on a suit. Mm-hmm so [00:29:00] how does someone know how to tie a tie? So if we think about a boy from a low associate can drink background whose parents don't work and, and don't need to ever wear a suit, unless they're going to wedding or funeral, for example, how would that boy know how to tie a suit?

Maya Welford: How would that boy know how to look presentable? To an, uh, an interview at, in a corporate mm-hmm compared to someone whose parents can afford them a really, really top suit and, and help them with their type. It's really small things like that. Oh yeah. It makes such a difference because we, we, we, people are judged on their appearance and how they present themselves where that's right or wrong.

Maya Welford: That's, that's the kind of bias assumption that comes.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. It. That last bit, if you'll indulge me for a second, cuz it really brings to mind something. So at my last job I worked in a consultancy and we ran a work experience program in partnership with some social mobility charities. And I think it was in the second year that we ran it.

Felicity Halstead: We had this experience with this young man who, he seemed really, really miserable. It was like a week long [00:30:00] program and his, the person who was kind of looking after him, so one of my colleagues came to me and was like, really, really worried about him. He just seems really quiet and like, he's not enjoying it.

Felicity Halstead: And we're really struggling to kind of pull anything out of him. So we took this young man aside he's 17 years old and we had him said to him, you know, what's, what's up? Like, are you, are you kinda struggling to engage? Is there anything we can do to help? And he said, my feet hurt. And we were like, what do you mean your feet?

Felicity Halstead: And he said, well, I was so worried about looking smart, coming to this place. My mum bought me some new shoes. And, you know, you think as well, we'd always really tried to say like, don't go out and buy new clothes. So we weren't the smartest corporate anyway. So I was like, really don't buy new clothes.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. So I just think, oh gosh, like his mum spent money on new shoes and he took his shoes off and his feet are red raw, like covered in blisters. And we said to him, oh my goodness, like, please just wear comfortable [00:31:00] shoes to work, you can take your shoes off if you need to, like, you know, and it turned out that the reason he wasn't enjoying himself was because he'd never worn shoes like that before.

Felicity Halstead: And he said like, I can't, you know, I feel so embarrassed and like, we are gonna meet. You know, cuz we kind of made a whole big thing that our CEO was gonna come in the next day and meet all the students. He was like, I can't meet the CEO wearing trainers. Like he'll be, he'll think I'm totally a slob and all of that.

Felicity Halstead: And in the end, bless him. The colleague of mine who was kind of the supervisor for his group was like, well, I'm gonna wear my trainers tomorrow. So, you know, and basically all of the guys who were my colleagues all wore their trainers the next day to get this young man. Yeah. To wear his trainers and to be comfortable, but it was something that you just wouldn't have ever thought about, but, you know, it's things like that.

Felicity Halstead: And you just think that idea. And if we hadn't, I mean, it wasn't any credit to me, it was credit to my colleague who was trying to get this young man to engage and, and was worried about him, that we actually in, you know, managed to get [00:32:00] to the bottom of the issue. But it's just not something you. Ever think about, and it is such an important aspect of helping young people not just get through the door.

Felicity Halstead: Cause we'd got him through the door. Yeah. Yeah. But he was having a miserable time because I mean, you know, we all like life with blisters is not fun. Right. So all of what you've just said, there totally speaks to me. And I think something that really strikes me is. You're clearly very good at getting people to invest and engage in this space.

Felicity Halstead: You've obviously had some success within your role in your current working environment in doing that. What is, and I, I hate this because I often think, oh, I don't want that to be a business case for DE&I, but that has to be right. Especially in corporate environments. What. The case that, that you would make to any organization.

Felicity Halstead: That's thinking, I just dunno if this is worth us spending our money and our resources on what case and what argument would you make to them?

Maya Welford: So, number one, you know, we know it's the right thing to do, so that's kinda, [00:33:00] let's get out the way it, it is just fundamentally to do. But the second point is there has been research time and time.

Maya Welford: Again, that's shown that if you bring people from diverse backgrounds together, The output is better. Yes. And that's, if we all carbon copies of each other, and if we're all thinking in, in exactly the same way, we're just gonna come up with the same

solutions to the same problems. But actually if we're bringing people from different backgrounds, from different ethnicities, from different genders and so on into, into the space together, They're going to inevitably come up with unique solutions in, in solutions and be much more creative.

Maya Welford: Um, so actually, you know, for, for companies who are still like, oh, I dunno about diversity equity inclusion is, do you want to have better solutions? Do you want to be in? Yeah. do you want to be creative? Do you want to move forward with mm-hmm whatever product services that, that you are offering within your company?

Maya Welford: If yes, [00:34:00] then you have to invest in diversity equity inclusion and take it seriously. I also see a lot of companies, just either throwing money at it or paying lip service to this space. Yeah. I think people are able to now see through. And, and kind of realize when, so it's kind of greenwashing, but obviously not from an environmental perspective, but it's yeah, we can see when you're not being genuine and we can see when you're just tick a box.

Maya Welford: Right. And that's just not good enough. And I think ultimately if, if the company does want to progress and, and actually does want to number one, have a positive impact on society, which I believe all companies should be striving to do. But number two, actually, To the point that I just raised, like progressing your products, progressing your services and, and being a leader in your field, you have to be taking this space seriously.

Maya Welford: And also if you want to attract the upcoming generation, the upcoming generation. Care a lot [00:35:00] about corporate social responsibility, the environment and, and diversity equity, equity inclusion. If you are not focusing on it, they won't work for you. They'll go somewhere else. So if you want the future leaders, you need to be a leader in the space.

Felicity Halstead: And I mean, that is. What we're focused on at good work is, is about bringing in their next generation. And we're focused on the quote unquote diverse talent and supporting young people who have experienced marginalization to, to access workplaces. But more and more as we engage with that younger generation, you see that it's not just the people who don't.

Felicity Halstead: Aren't currently accessing those workplaces who care about this stuff. I think gen Z have a lot to teach all of us about inclusion and diversity, and nobody really wants to work for an organization in that generation that doesn't take this stuff seriously and people will leave and move on. I'm. So with you on that, it's so important.

Felicity Halstead: And again, I think it's also about, as you say, like lip service impact measuring too. It's always really inspiring to me to [00:36:00] see, you know, for example, with your mentorship scheme, how much focus you put on outputs and making sure it's a

tangibly useful experience, because you do see so many corporates who just kind of wack a label out there and say, we're gonna do mentoring.

Felicity Halstead: And then if you look at the impact monitoring of that program, for example, it's just something to post about on LinkedIn. And it's so frustrating. And I think as someone who works in the sector, yeah. That's something that is, is really crucial because sometimes you talk to organizations and they're like, oh, we do all this stuff already.

Felicity Halstead: And I'm like, do you, yeah. How is that going? Let's talk about that.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. So there's a couple of final things. I'd, I'd love to ask you. I would love to ask you about any books or podcasts that you are particularly into that. Tell people a bit more about this work and your areas of interest, but I'd like to add to that.

Felicity Halstead: If there's an episode or two of your podcasts that you'd say, like, start here, these are the, the, I know it's so difficult. We don't wanna choose favorites, but if there [00:37:00] is, I would love to hear.

Maya Welford: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. So I actually brought a book with me. Oh my gosh. It is invisible women.

Maya Welford: Yes. Do you know it?

Felicity Halstead: I do. In fact, somebody else recommended this. Oh. In an earlier episode. So it's like, oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Maya Welford: It's honestly my favorite book. It's so interesting. So eyeopening, each chapter is dedicated to like a different topic and area within society. So there's like a topic around. Transportation and kind of navigating around this one, like the medical field and it's all around how the world that we know it is designed for men.

Maya Welford: Mm-hmm, , it's super eye-opening. I love this book. In terms of podcasts. I'm gonna plug my own. So go, That's My Name. I think I'm obviously biased, but I think that it allows people to think about diversity equity inclusion from a very, different and unique angle. You know, we all have a name. This is [00:38:00] something that we can all kind of resonate with, but everyone has a different story.

Maya Welford: So I would say, go and listen to that in terms of episodes. I dunno when this, this episode's coming out, but I've got really, really interesting episode, which should be out by the time that this is released with someone could Greg Bunbury. So he works within design space and he shares about slave names.

Maya Welford: Wow. All kinda behind slave names. And he's got a really, really interesting. Story about his surname. Mm-hmm so I really enjoyed recording that and I'm, I'm looking

forward to releasing that one that also stuck with me is an episode with a guest called Yerin Yoon. So she grew up in South Korea. Mm-hmm age four in her English class.

Maya Welford: The teacher said, okay, line up, boys, girls. Here's like a hat, go, come and pick your English, name out the hat. And that name stuck with her for a few years. So she got the name, Claire and that name just stuck with her [00:39:00] for a few years.

Felicity Halstead: You know, it makes me think of like when particularly Chinese or other Asian young people come to the UK, like for boarding school and sit form or something and traditionally has to pick a name.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. And what always really sticks with me about that is that sometimes. They might pick something that as a kind of socialised, like someone who was brought up in the UK comes across as being like a bit of a weird name. And then that becomes a source of bullying. Like it's fascinating to me, cause I definitely kind of met people who that's been true for in the past, which is basically you get told to pick an English name, you pick one, and then you get told.

Felicity Halstead: The, the game that you've picked is like embarrassing or weird. Yeah. And then that's because it's an old lady game or it has a strange meaning in English when you don't take it kind of literally. So that, that's fascinating. I'll definitely look that up.

Maya Welford: Yeah. And then there's also the episode with Princess.

Maya Welford: So Princess who she shared a really interesting story and her about her experiences with applying for [00:40:00] jobs mm-hmm she was applying for jobs on her CV. It was her name, princess again. She wasn't getting any interviews. Then one day I think her brother was like, oh, why don't you just change her name on your CV?

Maya Welford: So she changed it to Prin Adu or Prin Adoo she was suddenly getting interviews and started getting job offers. Yeah. And there is research that again has been replicated time and time again, that has sound. If you have a more English sounding or Western sounding. You're more likely to get interview and you're more likely to be successful in that job application, which is ridiculous.

Maya Welford: Like, especially when you're CVS, when they've tested it with CVS that are identical. Yeah. It just really highlights the bias that humans possess.

Felicity Halstead: Yeah. Yeah. It's so interesting. Well, my, thank you so much for your time today. This has been such an interesting conversation. Thank you so much for sharing with us.

Maya Welford: Thank you for having me. I've really enjoyed it.

Felicity Halstead: If you enjoyed today's episode, make sure you [00:41:00] share it with friends and colleagues, leave us a review and check you're subscribed so you don't miss us next week. To keep up with all things. GoodWork follow us @goodworkuk on LinkedIn. The GoodWork Podcast is brought to you by GoodWork, a social impact business on a mission to make early careers fairer, more inclusive and more meaningful. We're working to remove barriers for young people from less privileged backgrounds and support businesses to reimagine their approach to entry level, talent and skills.

Felicity Halstead: Thank you for listening. We will see you next time.