

**EPISODE 75****[INTRODUCTION]**

**[0:00:06] ANNOUNCER:** You are listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world with Rick Torseth and guests.

**[0:00:19] RT:** Hi, everybody, this is Rick Torseth, and this is 10,000 Swamp Leaders. As you probably know from listening in the past, we're the podcast where we have conversations with individuals who've made decisions to use themselves to lead in the world, and most common to that decision is an effort to help people deal with some very difficult and complex issues either in their work, in their life.

**[INTERVIEW]**

**[0:00:42] RT:** Today is no exception. Today, my guest is Julie Drybrough, who lives in the UK and she is kind of a, I'm going to ask you this question, Julie, in a second about Bricoleurs because I think the people want to know what this is because you've claimed it and I think it's useful thing. So, first of all, welcome to the podcast. It's good to have you.

**[0:01:01] JD:** Thank you very much.

**[0:01:04] RT:** So, before we go anywhere, tell people a little bit about what you think is important for them to know about Julie before we get into the details.

**[0:01:13] JD:** So, I am a change practitioner who works with a lot of heart. I'm based in Edinburgh, so I have this kind of Scottish pragmatism that runs right through me. I am a lover of complexity and gnarly things, and I think of myself a little bit as a collector of stories as well.

**[0:01:37] RT:** Okay. So, on your website, as I was getting ready for this conversation, you have a line right on the head page of your website, "Helping people unlock transformational change." So, for listeners who may not be that familiar with the phrase transformational change, what does that mean?

**[0:01:57] JD:** So, for me, the difference between change and transformational change is the difference being rearranging the chairs on the deck versus swapping ships entirely. So, for me, transformational change is when you make a big move. Something moves almost in its essence. And change is a shift, and we all make changes, but every now and again, there's a requirement to actually transform, and that's something very, very different.

**[0:02:30] RT:** Can you give people an example of a transformational change that would help them sort of understand it in the concrete world?

**[0:02:37] JD:** Yes. So, for me, if we're looking at transformational change or in your own life, if you're trying to make a transformation, you don't just shift like a few things. You actually do some deep work, you do some reflection, you start to change the kind of core components of the way that you would approach a thing or think about a thing or work with a thing. So, it becomes something where you look back in five years' time and you realize that you have completely changed your mind or you've moved into a different energy space, you feel different, you're acting differently. It's a hard thing to explain. It's something which I feel is quite experiential and quite embodied.

**[0:03:23] RT:** So, when you're involved with somebody or a group where that's the work that they want to do, some kind of transformation from here to someplace else, how do you go about it?

**[0:03:35] JD:** With group work, it's about setting the container. So, you want to build a narrative of trust within the group. Everything becomes important from the moment that they arrive, they need to know why they're there, they need to be able to feel that they can speak, and if you're facilitating that or you're holding that space, there has to be a trust between you and the team, you and the group of people that you've gathered together, that there's going to be push and pull, they're going to be able to talk, they're going to be able to raise concerns, they're going to be able to push back against process, and that they will be heard. It can be a complicated thing.

Typically, what happens when people arrive, they arrive in their own bubble, they arrive in their own stuff. When you work with them, sometimes you have a short amount of time, maybe it'll be a half day or a day. You have to very quickly indicate to them that this is a good space to be in, that this is a place where they can participate, that they're not going to be closed down.

And then through a series of gestures and responses and interactions, the group itself begins to figure out a way of talking and figuring out a way of including voices. If you're facilitating it and you're holding it, you need to pay attention to that process all the way through. And then something happens. There's a sort of a third thing, like a sort of piece of magic that begins to happen. The dynamic in the group starts to shift and people will start opening up. You'll hear things that have maybe not been voiced before. You'll hear ideas that have seemed outlandish before. People start to shine that maybe hadn't before.

So, there's this kind of beautiful, odd magic that happens and it's often through things like storytelling. It's just through going slowly with the group until at a point where they trust you. I pretty much always trust them. I have a great deal of faith in people. So, I always believe that there's a place that we can get to where we can talk.

**[0:05:48] RT:** When you and I were talking in preparation for this podcast, you told me that you have an approach that you called head, heart, and hands. So, I'm wondering if the head, heart, and hands approach is a little bit of integrated what you've just said about what happens in the room when you begin to work with them. So, what do you mean about your approach head, heart, and hands? How does that show up in the work with the people you're with?

**[0:06:11] JD:** When I think about head, heart, and hands, the head part is always the kind of the rationale, the evidence, the logic that sits around the situation. So, I often have a philosophical or a sort of theoretical underpinning for what's going on and that's head stuff, that's theory. And I will pay attention to the group. I'll pay attention to who's talking, who's not talking. Loud voices, quiet voice, that's data. So, that's the head stuff. It's like the gathering of the data about what's going on.

The heart approach, for me, like the heart voice is that's the center of the emotion. That's where we tap into the feeling of the situation or we tap into the feeling of the group. A group sometimes can feel quite toxic or it can feel quite lonely, isolating. You can feel the sort of pockets within a group. But then you can also start to feel delight or possibility, that you can feel the kind of energetic shift that happens. I think I was also talking to you about horror, which is the kind of gut feel as well, the intuitive piece. And for me, that's the safety of the situation, that my gut feel about whether something feels like we're in safe territory and we're comfortable or whether

we're moving into slightly more edgy territory. Sometimes that's where you need to be. That's where the learning is. The transformation often happens in that edgy place where it feels a little dangerous because otherwise they would have done it before.

So, yes. There's the head, the heart. And then the hands is the practicalities that come out of it. How are we going to act with one another? How are we going to be beyond this conversation? What happens as a result of the time that we've spent together, the conclusions that we've drawn, the fact that we know each other better now, what are we going to do with that information?

**[0:08:06] RT:** It seems to me that the work that you do, it's not the kind of work that a group of people would do if everything is going swimmingly well, where they're achieving their goals, they're working together well, they're functioning, everything is pretty copacetic. So, what's the kind of conditions that are going on for groups of people who call for you to come and do the stuff that you're describing? It just seems like this would be a slightly more challenging environment that they're facing that calls with this kind of depth of insensitivity to the work into the people in the room and where they are trying to do the work.

**[0:08:43] JD:** Sometimes. I would say to you that as a practitioner, I bring that level of awareness and thoughtfulness, even if everyone's like getting on really well and it's a creative thing that we're trying to do. Actually, it's not. There's no particular drama. We're trying to create a new landscape or build a new narrative or think about a new future. I would still be paying attention to where everyone was at and who was excited and who wasn't and who was getting it and who wasn't.

So, I don't want to paint myself as someone who just sits in the kind of the crunchy stuff all the time. But the crunchy stuff is often specifically at the moment over the last 18 months, I've done a number of pieces of work where I spent with organizations that have restructured, and the teams that remain in the system after restructure sometimes have an awful lot of sense-making that they need to do. They may have lost a leader, they may have lost key people, they may have lost people that they wanted, they're glad to have gone, but often those are strong voices, and so there's a period of resettling, readjustment for any group, any team when there's been a restructure and I really love that work. I really value that work because we have to work with where people are at, you have to meet people where they're at, you can't say to them, "Well, the

restructures happen, now just strap in, we're going now." You've got to allow them to pace themselves through it and give themselves some time, but also not, again, not dwell in the past.

I often, you and I both know about Bridges transition, so I often use William Bridges' transition model because it helps you express what the old world has been and the things that I value and the things that have forged me and made me. Then it allows me to see the future, this new world, this possible. And then there's this kind of messy middle that sits there, which is where the emotion and the work and the retelling of stories happens. What I love about that model is you can be in all three places at once. You can feel the attachment to what was. You can feel the excitement of what could be and also feel the struggle in the middle there of I'm not quite there yet. I still haven't quite got there yet.

So, I feel like I'm often at my best. I've often brought in to do that kind of work and it might be with senior teams. It might be with more operational teams. The great joy of the work that I do is I kind of get to work across lots of different sectors with lots and lots of different people, which is brilliant.

**[0:11:25] RT:** Let's dig a little bit more because not everybody is familiar with this journey that you're talking about that William Bridges has described and others. This place in the middle, this transitional place where you're having to let go of things you're familiar with and comfortable with. You know how to do, you've been even probably rewarded and recognized for some of that stuff. Now, you're finding out that whatever this future is that I hope to play in, some of that isn't going to be needed. So, what have you learned about, because you coach as well. I imagine this model shows up in your coaching work as well as your group work. So, share with people what you've learned about effective ways in your own experience about navigating this journey from letting go of some of the stuff in the past, knowing that the future is not quite as defined as certain as I'd like it to be, and I'm going to be in this in-between place for a while. How do you support people and what do you know about what they can do to live there and keep moving forward to the new future?

**[0:12:24] JD:** I'm going to bring in something a little bit personal if that's okay to start with. So, when I was in my early 30s, my mom was diagnosed with early onset dementia. She was 58 and I was still, I was quite young. And the thing about living with dementia and living with a parent who's still quite young who has dementia is that you are in a constant state of old world

versus new world. You are constantly living in that. Bridges talks about it as the neutral zone. I never found it particularly neutral. What I found was we were living in a series of holding patterns.

So, her illness would bite. There would be periods where she would very, very quickly get worse. Things would start to happen and then we would make adjustments and for a while there was a holding pattern. And during that period of my life, I learned that to stay in that place in the middle there is it can be really exhausting. You have to resource yourself if you're going to be in there for the long term. So, anyone who's been through like a long-term illness or a holding pattern that lasts for months or in our case, years, it requires connection. It requires letting go of some of your ego. Because you believe you can fix, right? You believe you can control. I was 30, I was convinced that if I just did all the right things, somehow, we could make this better.

I feel like that's a really kind of dramatic example, but it's such a core part of my story. It's such a core part of understanding. You talk about change or you talk about transition, that period of, I mean, it lasted for 20 years. There was a period where there was a lot of chaos. And then there was a period where there was not a lot of chaos. It was fairly kind of steady state for 10 years or whatever. But there was a 10-year period where the situation was very unstable. Your relationship to your old world and your relationship to the new world I think is key to how it feels to be in the middle. If you're deeply attached to the way things were, if you love how things were, and you long for the way things were, then that transition, that peace in the middle, the emotional demand that it takes to accept that things are different is much, much more – it's harder. There's a huge demand on you because you've got to let go of stuff.

Whereas if you're not attached to the old world, like if you're not that keen on it, then you can kind of swim across that middle part with much more ease and much more grace. And so yes, I feel like I am, I was forged in a fire in that middle. Part of me was forged in that messy middle and learned a lot that forging burned away a lot of what I was very, very attached to. So, having been through that experience, and I now know many people who have been through experience, whether that be illness or whether that be like a dramatic event that's happened in their life, you learn something about yourself in the middle.

**[0:15:50] RT:** What did you learn about yourself on that journey? That surprised you that it's like, here's what my assumption is and you can clean it up. My assumption is you learned some

things about yourself that surprised you that are gifts and talents and potential that you weren't using that you now knew you had and you were going to bring for it. That's my assumption. That could be completely wrong. So, I'm just curious, what did you learn?

**[0:16:13] JD:** That's pretty much on the knows. What did I learn? Gosh, that independence will only get you so far. That interdependence is often the way forward because I was hardwired, independent. I had two brothers, I have two brothers who I adore and we're all ferociously independent and they only ever really worked when we worked together. I learned how to live in holding patterns. That was a big thing. My realization that anything that any solution that we put in place was only ever going to be short-term. Sometimes it would last for six days, sometimes six weeks, sometimes six months, but it was only ever a holding pattern and I learned to live that way.

I'm not advocating it necessarily, but what it meant was that when it all started to disintegrate, it was like, "Okay, well, this is just another holding." We need to just reconfigure, reconfigure, reconfigure. Who do we need to talk to? Who do we need to bring in? What do we need to do? What's the nursing support or the social services support or the med support? Or like, okay, boom, new holding pattern. Okay, is it going to be robust? Is everybody bought into this? Are we cool for now?

And then when you knew that a pattern was holding, I learned to rest. I learned to kind of regenerate myself because the next thing would be coming around. So, the learning to live in the flux was a huge lesson, and a massive gift because the world come through all sorts of things at me now. I see it, I go, "Okay, this is what's going on. Fine. Let's take a breath, see what needs to be done around it all." Yes, so there was that.

And then the other bit that I learned is that there is sometimes a gendered part of all of this where the emotional labor around some of this, particularly in families, I definitely had to rely on many of my female relatives and friends in a very different way to how I would rely on some of, particularly my dad, who's a farmer, and kind of like the emotional bandwidth of a tree just didn't – it was like, "It's fine." Is it though? Okay, let's just –

**[0:18:41] RT:** So, just one last question in this example. It's really potent. For people listening that your story is going to resonate with people and may they not have so far the understanding

to travel this journey and understand this distinctions where you're describing here. What counsel do you have for people who are in this in-between place and it's turbulent and messy? And how to take care of themselves so they can stay in the game, so to speak, and find another place to get back to work? What do you learn for yourself, much less what you've learned from your clients?

**[0:19:17] JD:** I feel like you're allowed to question the assumption about whether you want to stay in the game.

**[0:19:21] RT:** Fair enough, yes. Maybe not, maybe you got to get out.

**[0:19:24] JD:** Part of it is that that's okay. I think that experience has made me a much, much better coach because I am alongside clients that are going through whatever it is that they're going through, feeling what you feel being where you're at is really, really important and having some practices that support you in that place whether that's it's very rarely thinky, thinky stuff. So, physical practices, Tai Chi, walking, painting something creative, anything vaguely meditative, anything that just allows you to live in a very simple and routine way for a little while. Walk your dog, clean your teeth, have a rhythm, and a routine.

When we're under extreme duress or we're living in – when there's a lot going on, we can get very – I got very up in my head. The way that I describe all of this now, compared to how it was when I was in it, I was so angry, like so angry, so much of the time, because I was – why can't I control this? Why can't we fix it? Why can't it be better? Why is it not other? I wrote, so I quite often tell people, just write, if that's your thing, reflective rating, creative rating, it offers you a third space for places to go. I've always said that I feel like my rating can genuinely save my life a couple of times during that time. It definitely saved my sanity because I could write out my fury, my fear. I could write out the rough edges of everything that was going on, and then I could take a sort of distilled version of that, a quieter version of that, and talk to other people about it.

I think in my very raw state, it would have been too much for everybody, it would have been too much for me, it would have been too much to talk about, it was too much heat. So, I used writing in that time to express just to get it out, to get it out of my system, to get it out of my body, to get it away and it was in a third place. That rating from that time, I never looked back on. I've never gone back and looked at it. Maybe one day I will, but that's put away somewhere.



But again, in my practice, with clients, with friends, I will often say to them, “Sit, just write the damn thing, feel what you feel with it and just write it.” Because then it has at least expressed itself, it moved, it gives it an energy rather than just sitting deep within your body, deep within your soul, and you're just feeling like you can't do anything with it. At least you can create.

**[0:22:24] RT:** I'm thinking now based on what you've just said that when you work with a group, especially if it's in a professional context, I suppose, at least in my experience, people show up somewhat decapitated. Their head is the sole vessel of their professional identity, so to speak, and that's what they want to bring in the room, and they want Julie to fix it, or rewire it, or make it work. And I'm imagining you're sitting there saying, “We're going to work maybe a little bit with all of that, but we're going to work the whole thing in the work to do, mind, body, heart, soul, feet, body.” And in a group, the connective tissue of the human beings in the group in addition to the individual in the group.

So, first of all, is that safe assumption?

**[0:23:11] JD:** I have an image now of me just like with a massive needle, stitching people's heads back on. I don't think I'm that good. I'm not a surgeon. I like the notion because I have often said at work sometimes we feel like their heads on sticks. What's valued is there – I do think I that's changing a lot. I do work with some younger people and they are much more emotionally aware and they are much more willing to fight for their mental health, their well-being, their boundaries and stuff. So, I feel like in certain places, in certain sectors, that the whole is valued, but other sectors know.

But yes, I love the notion of, yes, it is the connective tissue that I'm going for. But not for me. I don't want them to do it for me. I want them to do it because when you're connected, and when you're feeling into or sensing into what's happening around you, it is an infinitely more pleasant place than overthinking and being expert and isolated and lonely. So, yes.

**[0:24:26] RT:** Okay. Let's work off of that and get a little bit of Julie, the craftsperson in here because you have another cool line on your website which I, by the way, sent to my daughter because I just thought she's a 31-year-old young woman living in New York and working and I thought, this is really cool. You have this line, it says, “I ask questions and listen a lot for a

living.” So, explain why that's important. I mean, I think most people are going to go, “Yes, of course.” But really, what do you know about why that is so important and why it matters as a way of functioning with to people you work with?

**[0:25:02] JD:** What came to mind when you said that, well, space is the final frontier. We don't give each other space often. We don't listen and it is so powerful to be heard. It's so powerful to have someone bear witness to what you think or what you feel. So, sometimes that is the job, and I love it. It's an immense privilege to ask someone something that they haven't thought about or felt into before. You can always see it when it happens. Because, hold on, there's like a little, and sometimes I'll say, “Well, that was a good question.” And you have to settle down your ego because you're like, “Oh, yes, look at me asking good questions.”

Amazing. And then you're like, “Oh, I'm not listening right now.” Then you just let them, they'll do their work in front of you. If you're a really good coach or you're working in a group, whatever comes out is okay. Whatever comes out is the stuff that needs to be worked with. It's not like, “Oh, well, that was the wrong answer.” “Okay, so that's your answer.” How does that answer fit within the wider picture of what we're trying to do here? Or if you're coaching somebody and they have a particular goal, okay, so where does that fit with the goal? Does it fit with the goal? Is the goal still the goal? Did we set that up because somebody told you that that was a good thing? Like, where are we with this?

That's a cool job, right? To ask questions and listen for a living. That's a cool job. I love my job.

**[0:26:40] RT:** So, let's, let's give some people some help here then. You're a coach. Help people, listeners saying, okay, so what's the design of a small practice that I can start to implement around asking questions that will help me build my curiosity and my capacity to listen and also maybe build my repertoire of questions that may come as a result of doing the first two decently well. So, how do people actually take this wonderful concept into their work tomorrow if they were listening to this today? I'm going to do some of what Julie talked about. Where do I begin and what's the design of a small practice to get my capacity built a little bit?

**[0:27:25] JD:** Google a bunch of questions. The questions are everywhere.

**[0:27:28] RT:** The questions are everywhere.

**[0:27:30] JD:** The questions sort of matter. The answers are more important. I'm being slightly facetious. Open questions are always good. I was taught when I learned to coach, don't ask why questions, because you'll get a reason, rather than a focal justify why questions are retrieval questions. Why did you do that? Well, I did this. So, I feel like the questions are, it's that's either Rumi or Gibran, they sort of loved the questions. When I'm asking people stuff, it's because I'm really curious. They'll be sort of telling me something and I'll be going, I have this expression sometimes as well, like I have to tell people that I'll be frowning like this, it's not because I'm judging them, it's because like I'm listening really, really hard, and then there'll be something in there and you'll go, "So, how does that work?" And they'll go, well it's this, and you're okay. So, is that okay for you? And they'll go, "No." Okay, so we're in a different conversation then.

I feel like when I very first started coaching, I tried to ask good, clever questions, and I probably did ask some good, clever questions. I'd let go of that now. I ask questions now, like from a place of curiosity, from a place of, how are we going to do this together? Where's this taking us? I'm always trying to think about what the outcome is going to hopefully point them in the outcome. But as a practitioner, I don't have like a, here's the roadmap. I try really hard to kind of come and go with who I'm working with. It's always the curious question. In my head, I go fly fishing. I just tap the water, like tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, and just asking. Then every now and again, you've got a bite and you go, "Okay, that's the thing that we need to talk about." You can tell. You can tell when like you're asking somebody something and they're like, "They're kind of dialing it in from over here." Like, "No, we're in the wrong pool." "What about that one?" "Okay." And then, you're off.

**[0:29:37] RT:** I love the metaphor. Why fishing? I'm going to steal that from you, by the way.

**[0:29:42] JD:** Oh, steal it.

**[0:29:44] RT:** So, I asked this a little bit ago in the context of what you're talking about, but I want to be put to question to you to be specific. What are your greatest talents in what you do that you bring forward?

**[0:29:59] JD:** Really thoughtful. I know I'm thoughtful. I reflect a lot. I try to work with care with everybody, like I try to be careful with the folks I work with. That doesn't mean kid gloves. I can be very – I am often very direct and very pragmatic, but always in service of the person or the situation, never in service of ego or kind of be clever or any of that kind of stuff. Occasionally, I still get a little, I can get tangled up in my ego. That little kind of, "I know, I know, I know." I'm like, "Oh," comes in. Whenever that, I always end up just dumped on my ass whenever that part of me decides that it's going to take over for a minute. I'm like, "Oh, okay, that didn't work."

I feel like a good dose of humor and irreverence in my is also helps me. So, even in the depths of when things feel really, really awful, quite often people will bring a little lightness in themselves, or you can gently kind of say to folk, "All right, I hear you. I hear the fury." They're like, "Yes, okay, thank you." So, I think those are my gifts. I think I have been incredibly lucky over the years in that life has served me some interesting life lessons and also given me the fortitude and the resilience and the writing skills to be able to work through those and take them seriously. So yes, I reflect a lot. I take the lessons that the universe offers very seriously. I don't mess around with that shit. If it comes along, okay, I am listening.

**[0:31:53] RT:** So, I ask this question not all the time, but I'm going to ask it here. I think it's accurate that we learn more from our leadership failures when we do our successes. So, do you mind sharing one or two learnings from a leadership failure and how the learning turned out for you and what you're able to do with it? And Julie, the reason I asked this question to you is I think we need a lot more voices of people who are willing to say, "Here's how I messed up and here's what I learned and here's what a big," because a lot of people hide that stuff and it slows them down in their ability to go forward or to have impact, because they spend so much time and energy holding on to the things that were mistakes. So, let's help some people. What did you learn from your leadership mistakes that you want to share? And how's it changed you for the better?

**[0:32:41] JD:** I was thinking about this the other day there because quite recently, one of the things that goes along with being able to go slowly and being deeply reflective is also an ability to work at pace. So, I can get quite excited on. I have a patterned thinking brain, so I make lots and lots of connections and I can get very excited. I know lots of things. This is kind of a mixture of kind of ego and over-enthusiasm and what tends to happen is I get very excited and I've built a story, or I had a realization, a light bulb moment, and I'll come in to the team, and this

happened just a couple of weeks ago where I've been messing around with some stuff, some AI stuff, and doing some thinking about what AI will mean to organizations and leadership and how do we hold that of the humanity and the ethical and the sustainable piece. How do we make sure that those conversations come in?

So, huge field, lots and lots of kind of new learning. I got really geeked, disappeared down a couple of AI rabbit holes with some AI. Chatting away to chatbots and doing all the things. When I pulled my head back out of the rabbit hole. I had a meeting with, I partnered with a couple of other businesses and I went and I was so excited about the things that I'd found. I talked to a million males in error, didn't ask any questions, didn't listen for living. Because I was really like, I was just full, I was full of like news and knowledge and "Oh, my goodness," I was full of the new world. I'm firmly sitting in the new world with like, "Oh, my God, I've got all these ideas about what the impact is going to be."

I completely left everybody behind. Folk hadn't even really, some folk who hadn't even started looking at AI and were in that, not in the old world, but we're just going, "What is she talking about?" And from that, lots and lots of confusion, some people quite angry because – and I'm like really excited. I'm like, "Oh, my God, this is amazing." So too fast, didn't pay attention to my team, didn't do my own work to take my own medicine, hadn't done my reflective stuff before I'd gone in. So, normally I would sit and write it all down and calm my system, come my head, here are my key points, and none of that, just went in and rift.

Now, I was having a lovely time. I'm not joking, right? I've done all this learning. I was having a party like this is me just like la, la, la, la, la, la, like full paced. And then I realized I was completely dancing alone. I was like, "Oh, not relational, not helpful." I had to do some reparation. I had to go back to everybody the next day and say, yes, so that was me. I was very excited. Borderline, I mean, I suspect I was being experienced as manic. I didn't experience myself as manic.

**[0:36:17] RT:** Charismatic.

**[0:36:19] JD:** By the way, to my knowing, I am not bipolar. I was just so excited. I was so enthused by, oh, my goodness, there's all these things to think about and I am a person who loves learning and I kind of love technology as well as loving humans and soul stuff.

**[0:36:40] RT:** So, let's give you a space now then. You've had chance to reflect on what you learned and also the way in which you delivered it and how that didn't work. So, give us two or three AI related learnings you have around the future of leading. It's called 10,000 Swamp Leaders. So, share a little bit about what you think might be ahead, please.

**[0:37:04] JD:** Am I allowed to geek out for five, well not even five minutes.

**[0:37:07] RT:** Geek out, go ahead, go.

**[0:37:08] JD:** Oh, man, I love you for this. Okay, so we're all very busy chatting to large language models. So, large language models have learned from things that have happened before, right? So, the AIs that are currently built mostly are predicting what we're going to ask and what the next thing is. If we do not prompt them well, if we do not learn how to prompt and work with the AI and teach the AI how to be responsible and how to answer in a constructive way, it won't do that. They are at the moment like enthusiastic interns. You ask it for something, it's going to run off, it's going to find it. It might even make stuff up. So, they're not terribly reliable.

From a leadership perspective, that has a huge amount of consequence because unless we talk to our leaders, unless we make sure that our leaders are not so busy running the business that they're not paying attention to this technology and the potential impact of this technology, then we have potentially got senior people who are not very educated in this stuff and just think it's going to be okay and it's not. So, we need to learn how to work with it. It is not going away. It's here. Can't switch it off. Some of the people who are in charge of designing it are not necessarily working from an ego-less place. There is a rush with the technology, a rush to get out the newest and the best without necessarily thinking or without necessarily attending to some of the issues that sit around it. So, it is hugely resource-intensive. It takes a lot of water. It takes a lot of cooling just to run the servers and the capability.

There's a bunch of stuff that as leaders, if we want to continue staying on this planet that we really do need to create spaces for people to talk about. If we don't do that, if we don't create the spaces without being single-waggy and shaming about what's coming, I think there's a risk that

we're going to get swept up in a narrative that's not conducive to helping everybody figure out how to use this in the best possible way. That's not me at full geek, by the way.

**[0:39:35] RT:** That's okay. That's okay. It's a good start. So, we're kind of coming to the end here and I'll tell people that we'll put links in the show notes for your website and other links that you want to direct people to. You'll send them to me and we'll put them there, so people can get access to that. One of the things that they will find when they go to your website is that you're a writer and a blogger, and I think a pretty dang good writer. This is the published stuff, not the stuff that – so, what have you learned through writing that helps you in your work?

**[0:40:07] JD:** I have no idea who I would be if I didn't write. So, that's a really difficult question. I run a thing – during the winter, I run a thing called write nights. It runs on a Wednesday evening. I gather around about eight folks together on Zoom and they write together around a theme. Most of them have never written before. They can write creatively or memoir, we've had poetry, we've had sci-fi. You can write whatever you want. It's fine. We use Natalie Goldberg's Wild Mind writing technique and you learn, they write together for five weeks and the first week quite often – we've got folk who come back but like regular write night turns as well, but mostly it's new folk. You learn the inside of people's heads. You learn their creativity. It's a really, really beautiful, beautiful thing.

So, as a practitioner, people will constantly surprise you. They'll turn up and go, "I've never written before", and they'll just produce these things and you're just like, this is absolutely amazing. The premise of write nights is everybody has something to say. They're invited to read out their own stuff. They don't have to if they're feeling a little tender about it. But I always say, "Is there even a sentence in there that you like?" And usually someone will go, "Well, I've got a couple of sentences." "Okay, fine."

But it's such a privilege and it's such a beautiful, beautiful thing. So, my own writing is – well there's all the reflective stuff which is deeply personal, but the stuff that goes out there, I've learned to just try to put brain to page, brain to page, brain to page. I've learned to not edit too much or censor too much or worry too much about what I'm putting out there. Again, if it feels like I'm a bit geeky and ego-y, probably won't post it. If it feels like it's coming from a slightly more calm, centered, heartfelt place, yes, I'll probably put it out there.

**[0:42:26] RT:** Okay, cool. All right, so what's ahead for you? What do you want to do that is waiting for Julie to show up and take it on?

**[0:42:32] JD:** I have nothing imminently coming up this year, which is really unusual for me. I'm looking to continue those AI leadership conversations and convene more of that work in organizational life. I'm really kind of heavily looking, actively seeking to collaborate with people around those conversations, the improvement of understanding and good work within organizations. I feel like that stuff's really, really important. More imminently, next week, I'm going inter-railing for a week. So, I'm catching a train from, essentially from Edinburgh to Stockholm. I'm taking like five or six days and just doing a big old loop.

That's in the immediate future, but beyond that, there's kind of work, there's coaching, there's some stuff on the horizon. But I feel like I'm right on that cusp at the moment, which is really, really exciting. And conversations like this are lovely, because they allow me to explore that a little bit more.

**[0:43:33] RT:** Okay. All right. So, I'm going to give you the last word. Anything you want to say that we didn't discuss or something you'd like to put forward to be complete here before we bring the conversation to a close?

**[0:43:43] JD:** Sometimes you need to slow down to go fast. Sometimes going fast really, really does slow you down.

**[0:43:50] RT:** Brilliant. It's Julie Drybrough. Thank you so much for coming to the Swamp.

**[0:43:55] JD:** Thank you so much for having me. It's been an absolute joy.

**[0:43:59] RT:** Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

**[0:44:02] ANNOUNCER:** Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe to follow more leadership swamp conversations.



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