 

**Interview with Refinitiv Head of Talent, Leadership & Inclusion**

**Why did you start working with Educating Matters and what were your objectives or the main issues that you were trying to resolve?**

I am responsible globally for our engagement and what we call growth in other organisations, so what we call learning. And very quickly, in March 2020, we had to pivot from all of our planned programs and ways of working to, oh my goodness we're in lockdown in different places globally, and how do we support our community in this very new situation? So probably the first month we focused on how do you work virtually, how do you manage change?

And then what emerged was that there were some special needs, particularly for our working parents, which is almost 50% of our population. And so we started to look for a way to support those people probably around May time when we revamped our offering and enhanced it from those kinds of almost emergency measures to saying, "Okay, we're in this for the longer term. Globally, things are not looking like they're getting significantly better for everybody. So this is not a sprint. This is really a marathon and how do we support people?" And you were actually recommended by a parent who was in our communications team, who said, "I've been on these parenting courses and they were wonderful."

**What we were trying to solve was, at that point, very much how do we support parents and children in these really bizarre times** when parents are being asked to, in a lot of cases, homeschool, to juggle their work and their personal time. They're telling us that they're feeling already, even as early as June, they **were feeling burnt out, stressed, couldn't figure out how to crack this, feeling guilty about the fact that they weren't spending full time homeschooling their children.** Their children were there, but they weren't getting the attention they needed, but equally they couldn't figure out how to find that balance. So what we started with was really saying, "Okay, well, let's dip our toe in the water and pilot this approach globally."

**You've experimented with a few different mediums and ways of supporting people, what has been the most effective for Refinitiv?**

**We had fabulous feedback** from the first set of webinars. How to find balance and create the right environment at home for everybody to stay sane**. People loved it.** And so we also worked with you to create a series of **resources online**, so we have a number of pages that people can view as part of those resources. We used your videos, the **short bite-size videos**.

We wanted to do something a little bit more bespoke for different age groups, and local family groups. So we piloted in our three hubs, in **Bangalore, in Gdynia in Poland, and in New York where people were on stricter lockdown, and there were significant challenges for parents, more kind of a two-way conversational workshops for smaller groups of parents** for the early years, and then for the more teenage years, with questions being asked ahead of time. And all the parents that attended those found those hugely because they were very much tailored to their own needs.

**How did you go about communicating and raising awareness that this support was available. That's sometimes the reservation with some companies, are people really going to be able to give the time to engage?**

So I think this was a learning process for us, but we've never had significant issues with attendance. So in the first series, we had three webinars for three different time zones. So for **Asia colleagues early in the morning, middle of the day to cover most of our time zones, and end of the day in UK for the Americas and Europe.** And this is where the partnership with communications was really key because we built it into our chief people officer communications, we built it into our engagement communications. We even had our chief executive talk about it on global communications. And the profile that it got, because it was part of what we call the We Evolve Program of Activities, raised people's awareness. It didn't necessarily make people attend. What did make them attend was actually some tactical things we did.

After the first webinar series, we remembered, we listed the names that attended and we targeted those individuals with an email from me saying, "Hey, there's another installment of this. If you enjoyed the last one, do you want to come and tell others?" We also targeted our site leader network. I work with them very intensively anyway, because for engagement purposes. So every time we had a new webinar, I would contact the site lead and their comms lead and say, "Hey, can you advertise this locally?" And it was that local piece that made the biggest difference, and targeting people that were already interested. So we've been able to build up a really loyal following because it came from their local communities, it was discussed by their own sites, and they also had some two-way communication from us that was really inviting them more personally.

It's also about reinvigorating it. The webinar we have coming up in a couple of weeks, it's part of also a global initiative. So it's part of what we call a We Day, which is connecting with each others globally and also a day when we don't have any internal meetings, just learning events. So this is one of the signature events in the day that's being advertised as part of that program of events already. And we already have a very strong signup, even just from one communication.

**How well do you feel we cater for a global audience?**

I think the fact that we are in a virtual environment at the moment has actually made it really easy for us to go global. I think it would have been much more tricky if we were trying to do things face-to-face, but because everybody is now virtual and because we operate as a global company and are very clear about that, actually people have loved the fact that they are very international events. When we co-deliver webinars, one of the first questions we ask is where are you dialing in from?

**Literally, it's everywhere in the globe. We have everything from Buenos Aires to Dubai, to Australia, Singapore, London, wherever New York, St-Louis, Manila, Bangalore** always has a very strong attendance. They are one of our biggest attendees, largely because they're one of our biggest sites. Also, **I think when we've had those local sessions in Poland and in Bangalore, they have really appreciated the cultural sensitivity that you are able to show and I think that's about you as an individual as well, because you have that global experience, people feel like you understand their context.**

**How well do you feel we retain and make our offering to specifically suit your needs?**

I think **it's a real partnership**.

Our starting point has been the existing materials because that's helpful and it saves time. And then we say, okay, **so what's the local context? What's the global context? What's happening in your business. And I feel like we've been able to really make it our own for Refinitiv in that way**. And also the Q and A session at the end of each of our webinars, or whatever we're doing that allows people to feel like their personal questions are catered for.

I think the other interesting thing has been, of course, we've been listening to the feedback that we have. So each time we receive that feedback, we review that and talk about, "So what do we need to tweak? What do we need to change? How do we need to adjust our approach to meet people's needs?" I mean, usually it's just people saying, thank you. But occasionally there's a nugget in there that we think, "Ah, that's really helpful."

**If there was a company that's thinking, I want to support my employees, particularly those who are working parents and carers, but I'm not sure we have the time or the budget, what would you say are the main benefits, or the impact of working with Educating Matters?**

It's part of our wellbeing strategy. And it's a really, really important pillar of that. So **one of our key measures has been through our employee survey,** which we do three times a year. And we've seen that, and also analysing some of the sentiment and the comments that go alongside that, people feel like they're well supported. And **our engagement scores have not gone down, in fact they've gone up, during a period that could have been a disaster. And I would credit a big part of that to the support we are providing for parents, be that the webinars and events or the materials that they can draw on.**

Of course, it goes in conjunction with our employee assistance program, our policies and the messaging that goes out to leaders about being flexible. It's not just one intervention alone, but I think **this has been a signature set of interventions that have made a big difference to our parents. The feedback that we got in the comments is they feel supported despite how difficult it is.**

**Is there any way of really measuring the results of working with us?**

One is the feedback that you get at the time. And consistently **we've been above 9.5 out of 10 overall for each of the interventions**. That in itself says that the people that are attending... And now we've had over a thousand people attend... I feel really positive about that. However, that in itself is not an impact, that's an emotion.

It then translates into the follow-on measures which are okay, so what's the engagement? What's the performance like? How are people coping in the environment? And how have those measures been sustained. So although we can't pin it down to this single intervention, **I would say it's played a key role for a large part of our population and we've been able to demonstrate that through the analysis we've done.**

**How do you think our support still has a place within your business and for parents just living their normal life without being in a global pandemic?**

I remember when my children were younger, trying to navigate those toddler years and be a full-time working mom was really hard. Those questions around how you structure roles at home, how you listen to children, how you build those relationships are just as important when you're not in crisis mode, because children still have a lot of those challenges as they mature. I mean, I now have teenagers, how you navigate that relationship so that you can still help them through that rather than be adversaries is just as important when it's not crisis time.

At the moment, it's just much more at the top of our consciousness because it is crisis time and we're working often all in the same house and people's emotions are heightened, but it doesn't go away during normal times. I mean, we have a parenting network and that parenting network existed before any of this happened and people still needed support. They will continue to exist afterwards.