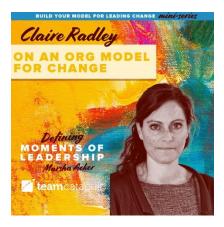**Defining Moments of Leadership with Marsha Acker
and Claire Radley on An Org Model for Change**

Marsha Acker:	Hi, everyone. I'm Marsha Acker, and this is Defining Moments of Leadership. In your model of leadership, are you a leader of people or for people? My guest today has a very clear, distinct answer to that question and it's part of her model for leadership.
	We're continuing our miniseries on model building and my guest today is Claire Radley and we dive right into exploring Claire's model for leadership and change. You'll also hear her share how she works with model clash and conflict to transform them in order to create new possibilities and how she works with leadership teams and organizations to help them build their model for change.
	So, let me introduce you to Claire. Claire is the Director for People and Organizational Development at a large NHS trust in the UK. She previously worked in policing where she started life as a social researcher. This created an interest for her about organizational culture, and so while working full-time for a police force, she undertook a quasi-ethnographic PhD part-time looking at how new police officers were socialized into the organization and its culture and how this impacted upon their response to domestic abuse. Of particular interest, there were parallels in the gender power dynamics in policing organizations and in incidents of domestic abuse.
	Since then, she has worked in a number of roles focused on culture and organizational and development, always achieving success and improving both employee and service user experience. She has performed national roles in both policing and the NHS. She's passionate about bringing the theory of life in a way that connects, excites, and enables everyone to see the path they can play in achieving change. Let's dive in.

Welcome to the podcast. I have with me today, Claire Radley. Claire, welcome. I am so excited to talk with you today.

Claire Radley: Thank you. And I'm excited to be here to talk to you, too.

Marsha Acker: Claire, you have a really deep background and expertise in both leadership and organizational change in large organization systems. I'm really looking forward to the conversation that we're going to dive in today. So, you're the director for people and organization development for the National Health Services Trust in England, is that right?

Claire Radley: I'm the director for people and organizational development, you are right, for one large, acute NHS trust. It's an organization of about 9,000 staff.

Marsha Acker: Before we started, you were telling me this real distinction that you changed your title. So, instead of director of people, it's director for people.

Claire Radley: Yes.

Marsha Acker: What's important about that to you?

Claire Radley: I think it's a really subtle but significant difference.

Marsha Acker: Yeah.

Claire Radley: I think it sets a completely different tone for the work that I set out to do in the organization. So, it is quite different, isn't it, being director of compared to being director for? There's some kind of servant leadership thing in there or something, which will probably tell you something about my model, but that feels really important and whenever I tell people about that, they appreciate it.

Marsha Acker: I think a lot about how words matter and I think that's one of those places that it matters a lot. Tell us a little bit about what you do on a day-to-day basis.

Claire Radley: So, as the director for people, I've got quite a big portfolio which covers the more traditional aspects of the people agenda, like HR or personnel, or whatever we choose to call it. But most of my time is dedicated to trying to make sense of and then help to shift the organizational culture. I'm doing that at the moment in the organization that I'm currently a part of, but it's pretty much been the thing that I've done in every organization that I've arrived in.

Marsha Acker: I bet. It's not an easy undertaking. What drew you into that field in the first place?

Claire Radley: So, I started life actually as a social researcher in policing and it didn't take long for me to work out that most of the experiences that people were describing as part of the research were actually rooted in organizational culture. And then, I

also got the opportunity through the organization that I was working in at the time to do a PhD, and that was very much rooted in organizational culture.

So, I was doing work in policing and there was a very clear sense of police officers being quite heavily criticized for the way in which they responded to domestic abuse incidents. There was also a lot of research that existed about occupational socialization. So, the way in which police officers took on the culture of their organizations, but nobody had ever put those two things together.

Marsha Acker: That's a pretty big subject matter to tackle in terms of change.

Claire Radley: It was huge and I don't know that I appreciated at the time that it was quite so huge, that notion that culture is everything, it influences everything. I'm not sure that when I was a fairly young, naive researcher, that I'd quite appreciated the extent to which that was the case. But without question, it is the biggest and the hardest work that we ever do, making sense of and then trying to work with organizational cultures.

Marsha Acker: We're doing a series in the podcast about this process of what David Kantor calls model building, and it's tied to the book that's just come out about Build Your Model for Leading Change and really steeped in the work of David Kantor in structural dynamics as well as the process of model building.

And so, I know you have done quite a fair bit of your own model building. So, just maybe for somebody who's dropping into this conversation and hearing the phrase model building, I'm wondering if you could maybe say a little bit about what model building means to you?

Claire Radley: Great question. For me, I think lots and lots of people can describe what they do, but it's quite rare for people to be able to describe why they do what they do. And being able to track back, particularly in terms of change about your own values, your own beliefs, your own experiences of change, and being able to articulate those in a way that means that it makes sense of why you do what you do and why you are driven to do what you do.

Marsha Acker: Kantor refers to that as the language of meaning. So, model building in of itself can be quite a heavy exercise in meaning or meaning making. What brought you to the whole process of model building in the first place?

Claire Radley: So, I needed something that helped to explain to me why there were some things that I liked doing in relation to change, and there were some things that I really struggled with. So, if I think back a long time ago when I was working in policing, there was a model created by what at the time was the National Policing Improvement Agency, and it was a peer support model.

So, I went through an assessment process. I was identified as a peer support to go into different policing organizations and to be able to help them with change. And for some reason, and I couldn't explain it, I felt so desperately uncomfortable with the things that I was being asked to do, I found myself resisting the commissions that were coming my way. And so, at the time, I had no way of articulating what that was apart from one day somebody saying to me, "Well that's because of the model. There is the go in and do too, model of change. There's the pair of hands model of change. And then there's the building capacity and capability model of change."

And in just the description of those three things, I thought, "That's it. That's exactly it." Because the model for that peer support process was the go in and do too model of change. And I just thought, "That's exactly what I needed. I'd never heard it described like that before. And then there was probably quite a big gap between that happening and me being introduced to David Kantor's model building work.

I'd been working with structural dynamics and dialogue for quite a long time before that, but the model building chapters of David's book, I hadn't really paid an enormous amounts of attention to. And I found the process to be really quite complicated. And you're right, it's very heavy in meaning in David's structural dynamic sense of the word meaning. And so, I struggled with it, but over time started to realize that there was a way in which I could describe it to other people that started to make sense to them. And it does come back to that point I made earlier about, people can often describe what they do, but when you help them to sit back and to say, "Why do you do what you do?"

Marsha Acker: I love the story. I certainly struggled early on with my own process of model building and trying to come to grips with that rub between what you're doing and why you're doing it.

I'm curious, when you think back on that process, if you could go back and do it again or maybe something that you'd tell someone who's just getting started in their model building, what advice would you give them or where would you point them?

Claire Radley: So, very often when I start talking to people about model building and about the value of model building, it's because they are in model clash, but they don't know that. It might be that there is a rub between individuals or there's some criticism about the way in which somebody's going about what they're trying to achieve, and what very often characterizes that is judgment.

So, in that moment, what I tend to do is to say, "Pause. Let's just stop and think about what might be happening here." I guess that's a really helpful rooting for people, because I might start off by saying, "I think you're in model clash. Let me help you to understand what I think that means." And I might have an attempt at explaining for them what I see their model as being, compared to the model of the person that they're describing. And it's a little bit like a light bulb moment

that seems to come on for people. So, I'm not sure that I would go quite back to the real meaning making piece in a complex way. But if you begin by rooting it in somebody's immediate experience, it brings it to life, I guess, and it helps people to understand that there might be something else that's worth exploring.

Marsha Acker: The very first time that I was introduced to the word model clash or models, different models, was my own experience in a previous episode with Sarah Hill, when I first met her. And I was explaining to her, "Hey, this is one way that I see about working in organizations and working with teams." It was really different than what she was describing as her way. And I almost wanted to engage in a debate with her about the two differences between those. And she just simply said to me, "Well, it's a different model." I remember thinking that just deflated all the energy right out of my balloon at that moment.

Claire Radley: Yeah. And I guess that, I mean, I always feel a bit of a responsibility, there's always an opportunity to do a bit of a teach, those sort of things. It's interesting that you make reference to conflict, because I had a bit of a moment when I'd been doing a little bit of work on my model and I remember sitting ... I can even remember exactly where I was sat when it happened. And I had this kind of epiphany almost, this moment where I suddenly thought, "I'm not sure I experience conflict anymore." And that's a big deal for me because conflict has always been quite a challenge. But there is something about in those moments where I see and experience conflict, of course I experience conflict, because you see it and you recognize it, and you have that immediate emotional reaction to it.

But I very quickly now come to the question, "What am I missing? What is it about this person's model that might mean that I'm missing something? What sits beneath the surface of why they might be responding to me in this way or behaving in this way?" I just think that's really powerful. But of course, it works at other levels too. So, that's what happens in your interactions with individuals, being able to articulate what a system or an organization's or a team's model might be, also becomes really important and enables, I think, organizations to be much more coherent in the way in which they go about change and the types of people that they might choose to work with.

And just, bringing all of that to the surface, creating a sense of awareness of the approach and why it might be the right approach and how it might fit, and that coherence piece, I suppose I'm describing, is also really helpful. I work in an executive team of eight people, we have eight different models of change and instead of clash, being able to say, "It would be really helpful to this organization if we were to be really clear about our model of change." Starts to create all sorts of different possibilities.

Marsha Acker: How do you sort that out in your leadership team?

Claire Radley: Oh, well, I'm not sure I have yet. I've started to. I've started to, I think. I've only been in my current role for a year, but there is something about the way in which we're now tackling the cultural work to do in the organization, that means that we are definitely doing that work. And I smile because I hear the phrase ... My own model, I have lots of phrases that I use and I'm starting to hear people play those back to me.

Marsha Acker: It seems like the work of individual and collective go hand in hand. What's been your experience?

Claire Radley: So, I think that you are right, it requires individual and collective work, but you need somebody who's able to start it because they've seen the value of it. And in being able to reveal my thinking, being able to articulate some of my model in a way that people find relatively straightforward, I think, actually. I talk a lot about, "You can't work with what you're not talking about. You have to be in it to feel it, to know it. Everything is data." I talk about the fact that everything is data and I talk about how I know that and why that feels really important to me.

It creates a bit of an interest and a curiosity, I suppose, in other people, in a way that means they think it might not be quite as complicated as it would otherwise be. And then you're into the territory of, "Okay, we can now do individual and collective work." But I think you have to have a starting point.

Marsha Acker: Something that's coming up for me as you and I talk about your model is that it has to start somewhere, like starting with a real live experience rather than talking about the theory, but to talk about it in some real, concrete experience.

Claire Radley: When I did my PhD, I often reflected back on it and thought, "How have I ever used it? What have I gained apart from really understanding a really interesting subject? What have I ever gained from it?" And then of course, what I came to realize is that my model, that's where it started. My PhD was quasi-ethnographic. So, I spent a lot of time working shifts with police officers. I had seven police officers that I worked with from the day they joined as a police probationer, and I worked with them until they'd done three years' service.

And I don't know that I'd ever really made a connection back to those points that I've just made, you have to be in it to know it, that I work on the basis that everything is data. And it was probably only a couple of years ago that I suddenly thought, "Well, that's why, because that was exactly how I came to learn and came to know and came to make sense of the world, was by placing myself in it."

Marsha Acker: I want to come back to your comment about your experience of conflict and really not experiencing conflict anymore, because I can imagine there might be many listeners to the podcast right now who might be rocking back in their chair a little bit going, "I don't know how that would be possible." For someone who might be listening going, "What, you don't experience conflict?" What can you

say to them? Maybe even a contrast for what it used to be for you and what it's like now.

Claire Radley: So, I remember, so when I first started doing really deep cultural work, you find yourself working in a way which is counterculture, I think, in organizations, which means that by very definition you find yourself in conflict. And I remember talking to somebody and saying that it was really ironic that I was finding myself in a role where this was the case, because conflict was something that I had always really struggled with. And they said, "This is telling you something, Claire. This is your moment to do this work on your ability to work with conflict."

It took a while, but they'd lodged a bit of a seed, I guess. And through doing the model building work combined with the structural dynamics, I think what I started to realize was that in those moments where I felt conflict, by taking a step backwards and asking myself, "Number one, what is it that I'm missing about what this individual is presenting with?" Alongside, "Forget the issue, it's never about the issue that's right in front of you. It's about the pattern. What's the pattern of the interaction? What's the pattern of the communication? What's the pattern that might be playing out here?" It strips away the judgment. It strips away the emotion. It enables you to take a slightly one step back view of what's happening.

So, working with patterns and asking, combined with asking that question, "What am I missing here?" I think it's really powerful. It does, it almost allows you to take one step back, take a breath, pause, and just give yourself a different possibility, because it stops it from being so personal.

Marsha Acker: What I hear is that you're just really clear about not only your model, but the lens or how you make sense of human interactions or sometimes feel. Culture feels like it has, I don't know, maybe a hundred thousand definitions about, what is culture, how do you define it?

Claire Radley: It's all about relationships. So, right at the very heart of my model is, cultural work is all about relationships. It's not linear, it's not simple. It's caught up in the knottiness of human behavior and relationships. But if you can start at that level of relationships, if relationships are good, pretty much everything else is easier or better. And so, having that kind of clarity about my own model, being able to share my model in a way that makes sense to people becomes really important. So, if I wasn't so clear about my model, I'm not sure I'd still be standing.

Marsha Acker: We've talked a little bit about your model and at the leadership level. Have you had an example of where you've done model building at an organization level or really helped an organization to identify a model?

Claire Radley: Yes, I have. And actually, it was a real joy to do. So, being part of the NHS in the UK, we now have what's called integrated care systems. This idea that

collaboration and integration is the best way of being able to achieve high quality patient experience and patient care. To be able to do that, it requires organizations to be working together in ways that they traditionally haven't had to do to the same degree. And that in itself brings model clash.

And I was working in quite a complex system, because geographically it didn't quite make sense. And so, being able to bring people together ... There's some really key players in any system, those people, being able to bring them together and to say, "Let's try and articulate how we think change happens, and what this system needs to be able to make change happens." Was one of our starting points.

We ended up creating a model of change for this integrated care system. And what it meant was that we were able to be really coherent about the way in which we were going about the change. So, being able to articulate, "This is this system's theory of change." Meant that we were able to make some different choices. So, if that's your theory, that change happens by building capacity and capability, what you do is that you make sure that you bring in consultants who don't know the answer, but that they're willing to walk alongside you, to help you to come up with the answer for yourself.

So, I suppose that it was only because we'd done that work, the foundational work, about, "What's this system's theory of change?" That we were able to do that. That became really important. And I think that's quite unusual. I don't think many organizations do that.

Marsha Acker: I don't think many do either, and I really wish that were different, because I think there's something about what you're describing is it's a very productive, healthy, clarifying, relationship building conversation, as you describe it, for the organization to have. So, why would leaders engage in this process?

Claire Radley: Oh, great question. So, I think it almost takes me a little bit back to that point I made earlier about being able to reveal your thinking, because if you can reveal your thinking, I think it does two things. So, the first is that it builds confidence in what you are doing and why you are doing it, and the approach that you might be taking. And what comes with that, I think is a sense of authenticity. So, being able to explain why you do what you do.

In doing that, you almost make yourself a bit vulnerable because you're going, "This is what I believe. These are my values, these are my experiences." Yeah, I guess being a leader who can articulate their model, builds confidence and creates a sense of authenticity.

Marsha Acker: In a world where it's unpredictable, we really don't know what's happening or changing from moment to moment, it feels really important.

Claire Radley: Yes, it really does. It grounds you, it creates that sense of personal confidence, I guess, that when these challenges come, that you know, "It's all right, because I know what I'm doing."

Marsha Acker: Actually, there's a very grounding way that you say that. So, I'm finding myself sitting over here going ... We both, for those who can't see us, we're on video, but we've both leaned in and it's gotten a little bit ... Yeah, it's just a calmer energy.

Claire Radley: Yes. Yeah, it absolutely is.

Marsha Acker: Well, Claire, I have thoroughly enjoyed the conversation with you and just the exploration and the storytelling and how you're applying it inside your organization and other organizations. Before we end today, I have a couple of speed round questions to ask. Are you ready?

Claire Radley: Probably not, but go ahead.

Marsha Acker: Okay. So, just fill in the blank.

Claire Radley: Okay.

Marsha Acker: Leading change is...

Claire Radley: The hardest work we ever do.

Marsha Acker: One thing people get wrong about change?

Claire Radley: Is that they often see it as an adjunct to their day job and their way of being.

Marsha Acker: Wow, that one resonates really, really strong for me. One thing that you wish for leaders today?

Claire Radley: That they take the time to do this work for themselves.

Marsha Acker: A moment where having a model for change has helped you?

Claire Radley: Every moment of every day, at the moment. Really, seriously, every moment of every day, in a challenging environment.

Marsha Acker: I can actually very much see that. As you describe it today, it has a very grounding essence for you.

Claire Radley: Yes. Yeah.

Marsha Acker: Claire, thank you so much for coming on the show and being willing to tell your story and share your experience. If people want to get in touch with you, what's the best way for them to do that?

Claire Radley: So, I will give you my personal email, which is claireradley73@gmail.com.

Marsha Acker: Perfect. And we'll put that in the show notes if you want to reach out to Claire. Thank you so much. I really appreciate you being here today.

I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Claire. I really appreciate how she talks about getting clear for herself and her own model for leadership and change, and how it's helped her navigate conflict, build leadership teams, and help organizations define their own model for change. I hope you found it inspiring in your own model building work.

You can read more about building your model at buildyourmodel.com, where you can download an excerpt from the book, Build Your Model for Leading Change. If you're ready to become more skillful at reading the room and the use of structural dynamics to help navigate conversations, then come join us for one of our open programs. You can learn more at teamcatapult.com. And if you're interested in engaging in leadership development, reach out to us at info@teamcatapult.com and we would love to have a conversation with you.

This is our final episode on model building for now, and next time we're returning to our regular format for defining moments of leadership, and I'm so excited to share with you the next story that's coming up. I'd also love your feedback about the podcast. So, we are in the process of laying out what season three is going to look like. And if you're finding it useful or there's something that you'd like more of, I would love to hear that from you. So, you can reach out to me on LinkedIn and just message me directly. I really appreciate you being here. Keep growing your leadership range and defining your own model for leadership, living, and change, and I'll see you next time.