



60 Seconds with...

NICOLE HERCUS



Nicole kindly agreed to talk to me on a Saturday morning. She's sitting in her car at Manly, about to have a massage.

Thank you for talking this morning. Your bio tells me you have a broad experience within L&D, HR and Talent management. What have been the defining experiences for you over that time?

The first thing that comes to mind is having a senior HR role in a global company that was going through significant change, change that involved downsizing and redundancies. I had to let 300 people go, some of them on 457 visas, as there were simply no jobs. I knew many of them would have to go back to war-torn countries. This was traumatic for them, and also for people like me, as I knew their families and lives would be hugely impacted.

In this situation I had to balance my responsibility to the company with my ethical concern for them, and advocate for the best possible outcome for them in the circumstances. This experience enabled me to develop real resilience – nothing compared to their situation but a learning nevertheless. I have to say that this situation is on the horizon for many big corporates right now. In the next 3-5 years a lot of jobs will be shed. It takes very specific leadership skills in circumstances like these, where complexity and fear are writ large.

You have a Masters of International Development. How has that informed your corporate work?

While doing the Masters I was working in universities as a researcher, and was socially and politically active in human rights - refugee and women's rights in particular. My intention was to take this experience and qualification into a UN job. The process of applying to the UN is very long and complicated. I got to the final hurdle, with a prospect of going West Timor, and found out that I was pregnant! This was a very welcome surprise of course, but it did mean going in a rather different direction.

Being passionate about those social justice issues, and about being part of leadership development in that

sector, I went to work for Social Development Australia for five years. In that time I built most of the skillsets that I use today.

What industries or sectors do you like to work in?

It's more a matter of issues: I'm comfortable working across sectors and industries. Two issues that I'm really interested in are firstly building our capability to address complex social issues, and secondly building conscious leadership in the technology area. Technology has the potential to radically change our landscape and I think that leadership development is really important in this sector.

You're accredited in Deep Democracy Method. What is that?

I use this framework all the time! There are several meta-frames that I use constantly, and this is one of them. It's a facilitation and conflict resolution toolkit that is informed by a process-oriented psychology. It's very powerful work – you can take groups very deep. I use it both in individual coaching and group settings.

You are obviously very committed to your work. What do you do to relax, apart from grabbing a massage at Manly?

I'm a mum, with two wonderful children. I have a lovely family, terrific bunch of friends and a great community life. My dad is disabled and I help him whenever I can. I do go to the gym but honestly I'm not one of those people who can list lots of hobbies or sporting achievements!

Actually what I am is a lifelong learner. I am a 100% learning junkie. I'm an avid reader and I'm always updating my knowledge or doing courses. Right now I'm reading *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*.

Nicole, I have to ask, what makes you so passionate? Have you always been this way?

I have! I've felt like this from when I was a little girl. I've always felt that I was here for a purpose.