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S3:E1 – Working Visually – Tom Russell

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[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. I'm your host and founder of Create Work Joy Beth Stallwood and in this episode, I'm joined by Tom Russell, Tom and I met many years ago when I hired him and his team from Inky Thinking to graphically record a big event for the launch of some values in an organization I was working with.

And I absolutely loved what they did. I loved how engaging it was. And since then we stayed in touch. I've done some training with him and I think this whole thing around using graphics and imagery and drawing to help engage ourselves and other people in meetings and events and workshops is really powerful.

And for me, it gives me loads of work joy. So I was so pleased that Tom agreed to come on and talk to me and talk to us a little bit more around this thing called graphic recording. Now you may be really into already, you may have never heard of it before, and I hope it gives you a bit of an overview. It also has some amazing practical tips in there. And I will pop on the end and share with you some of the things that I have really taken away from my conversation with Tom her it is.

Welcome to the Work Joy Jam today. I'm super excited to be joined by Tom Russell and to talk a little bit about some of the things that we can do to help, to bring some joy into our [00:02:00] lives, perhaps through things that are visual things that we draw, things that we look at and I am so keen to have this conversation.

It's an area I love to be in and I think it can really help us all. So rather than me introduce Tom, I'm going to hand over to Tom to say hi, to introduce yourself. And why don't you tell us a little bit about your story and how you got to where you are.

[00:02:23] **Tom Russell:** Thanks Beth. It's a, it's super exciting to be here. And, uh, I've been watching and listening to, to the work joy activities for a while and listen to the podcast. So it's, it's super exciting just to be sitting in the chair, talking to you. My story is that I'm the. And co-director of Inky Thinking, uh, often called inky fingers or lots of other different iterations, but Inky Thinking is the name.

We are visual communication specialists and we work with a variety of business. Typically B to B commercial organizations and the type of visual work we, uh, get involved in is graphic recording, both live graphic coding for face-to-face meetings and conferences and digital. We create explainer animations, create rich pictures for organizations, for culture and strategy programs, and customer experience maps, and a whole host of other things that we also train on this work as well. Of course you'll know that because you've been on one of our courses in the past, which we remember fondly. My story is that my background is in human resources. Uh, I was in human resources for about 15



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years before I went into the world of facilitation and then working in graphics and the point at which I got into this was that my boss at the time said, uh, why don't you hire a graphic recorder for this meeting that you're running? And it was in recruitment meeting. And I hadn't really heard of this Beth at the time. I was just thought, okay, [00:04:00] what's that all about? So she knew somebody who came in and that person graphically captured this meeting that we were in at the time and I can remember. Not really paying an awful lot of attention to what we were talking about. In fact, I don't really recall any of it, but I can remember this lady during this wonderful job I'm thinking, well, that is such a cool job. I would so love to do that. And it went from there. And maybe I'm a bit fortunate because my parents, although they're retired, retired now, were graphic designers and artists and they still are.

So even, and they used to be, self-employed working in an office at home and I used to go up and pinch the pens and the paper when I was younger, much to their displeasure. So maybe there's a bit of artistic in me through genes rather than training.

[00:04:50] **Beth Stallwood:** I love that. So maybe like by osmosis or this artistic and graphic talent has come through to you, even if he wasn't something you explored as a job to start with.

And yes, definitely want to, it was one of my favorite training days I've ever been on. And I say that absolutely genuinely, not just because you are on the podcast today. So number one, as, you know, and as many people who listen to the podcast and follow me and Create Work Joy on all the socials, I am obsessed with stationary.

So for me, the idea that you were going up to your parents study and finding pens and paper, that's exactly what I did as a child with my mum who worked from home. I used to get obsessed with like the stationary, catalogue that she had and totally. And I it's interesting. So we're going to go into some of these things, but I personally, for many years thought and said the words out loud and lots of myself as I'm sure many, many people do, I can't draw. I always thought I was bad at art. I thought it was something I wasn't good at. So I didn't really explore it very much. And when I hired, so when I worked in organization, the way I met Tom was to actually [00:06:00] through the Inky Thinking and hiring, um, and thinking to do some graphic recording of a big launch event that we did.

And from there, I was completely obsessed with the idea of it. And obviously again, went onto the training. And what I would say now is that I can use drawing and art and, you know, whatever you would call it to help with stuff. So I think it's brilliant and I want to explore it a bit more. And I do think that alot of our audience will never have heard of a graphic recorder or that kind of stuff. So can you dive in a little bit for us and explain what happens if you do graphic recorder a meeting? What's the process and why is it a really good thing to have.

[00:06:38] **Tom Russell:** Sure. Yeah. Okay. And you're in good company when it comes to stationery and pens here of course. So it's okay to be, to, to confess your stationary sins since on this podcast. The graphic recording technique is something that emerged during the, probably the late 1990s,



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predominantly from the west coast of the states. And, uh, essentially it's the, it's the synthesis of the conversation that occurs in a meeting or a conference or an event, uh, and that gets filtered and created graphically in words and icons and graphics onto typically a very large paper chart so that participants in that meeting can see it emerge during the course of the conversation. It's a great tool for facilitators because you can refer to it and you can orientate the group to that different points in the conversation. And it provides a really useful engaging visual record of the meeting, as opposed to, you know, sort of minutes that might be text-based and people might receive them, but not necessarily look at, so it's an artifact if you like.

And of course, with COVID and people working at home that graphic recording workers been has moved to digital, uh, working virtually, uh, as, as the default way of doing it, certainly over the last year, year and a half.

[00:08:09] **Beth Stallwood:** Amazing. And having been there and experienced it and see it come to life, and I'm sure people who go and look at this kind of stuff on your website as well, to see, you know, examples and where it comes from is seeing that kind of thing come to life. I found it massively inspiring. I found it way more interesting. And especially in an important new thing, something that you really want to get people engaged with, you know, having that graphic, having it in a way that you can then use it and refer to it was a really incredible thing. And you're absolutely right so I'm going to do a massive confession now. I'm not a big fan of minutes. I'll say it out there. Rereading what people have said. And the action points and things like that are not on my list of favourite things to do that would not bring me personally some work joy. Yet if someone gave me something visual to look at something that I think I would want to look at it again, there's definitely something different in the way that that plays with my brain.

And can you tell us a little bit more about when you've, when you've been doing this work and obviously you've been doing it for many years now, what. Do you sync, is it that makes a difference for people? How does it engage people in a different way to more traditional notes and things.

[00:09:24] **Tom Russell:** Yeah. Okay. And just before I answer that question, I mean, you touched on this earlier and that, you know, we're, we are all visual people, everyone on the planet is wired to think visually to some extent, if we weren't visual people, we would find it very hard to navigate the world, you know, just driving for example and all the road signs that we see the majority of which are icons, essentially, you know, If we weren't visual people, we would find it very difficult to live. It wouldn't be a very pleasant experience, but of course, some people are more visual than others, you know, the same way as that. I'm [00:10:00] not particularly strong with numbers, but I'm more, I'm stronger with, uh, with visual creativity. We're all, we're all different. So in terms of the benefits of graphic recording, well, there are a number of things.

First of all it creates shared meaning and shared understanding. So if, if I'm in a, in a room and you're leading a meeting with, um, participants, they will be able to see the key points of that, conversation appear on the chart and they'll be able to make links between different points. So you're without



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sounding too cheesy you're literally seeing the bigger picture emerge on the chart. It does sound cheesy, but it's true and it helps getting the thinking out onto a chart or on a screen, whatever it might be. It helps people to process it because it's very difficult to process somebody else's thinking and that that thinking is, is out somewhere on post-its on a chart then that, that makes the job much easier to do, and it inspires commitment to action as well as making, uh, the likelihood of recall a lot stronger.

[00:11:14] **Beth Stallwood:** Love that I think this might be from the training now, but I actually have a tendency to do it. So I will tell you I'll do a little confession now is I have literally just drawn on a block of cheese on my notes that I make in here about the podcast and coloured in with the yellow highlighter.

And it's, it's one of those pieces of cheese with lots of holes in it. So I think it's probably an Emmental tile or something like that. It's not perfect. It's really messy, but it's making me remember, even just by doing that, I know that I'll remember that we talked about the cheesy bit of being about the bigger picture so I can, I can really feel it happening and I wonder. So obviously I am all for this. I'm a big fan of you and your work and Inky Thinking and how it all comes together. And one thing I haven't seen yet, [00:12:00] and I'm really excited to do it at some point, is this coming to life in the digital world? Because I think that's so important with things like Zoom fatigue, or I suppose you didn't say to him, shouldn't advertise should I. But with, with the fatigue of being online a lot, I imagine that suddenly coming into a session where you've got something being graphically recorded or graphically displayed in some way would feel really different to the very average meeting.

[00:12:26] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, I think, yes, you're right. It does. Although from a subject matter expertise, point of view, graphic recording digitally is a very different beast to doing it in person. So technically it requires a slightly different skill set because you know, when, when you and your participants are talking in that meeting, we mentioned earlier, it's going in my ear being processed in my brain that goes out, down my arm and it comes out through my hand and the pen onto a chart with digital graphic recording technology means there are different things. You have to bear in mind in terms of layers and choices of collars. And it's not as simple as just picking up one pen or swapping it over. So quite often that ignored and understandably so because quite often clients, uh, believe that if you can graphically record on a piece of paper, you can quite equally do it digitally. And it isn't always the case, but it's just, there are different considerations. I guess also because virtual meetings are very different things to face-to-face meetings in a face-to-face meeting participants often come up and engage with the graphic recorder, come and take photos of the image and it's a focus point of conversation that happens probably less so in a virtual meeting, because we're just not able to go up to it and interact with it as much. And of course the design of a virtual meeting comes first. So you can [00:14:00] still have a, what's the word adding graphic recording to a virtual meeting doesn't necessarily make it a automatically more enjoyable meeting.



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If you get the gist, it might make it more, more distracting, for example, outwards and additional. And, but, but it's not, it doesn't take a meeting conventional or maybe dull to being one that's interesting and engaging automatically.

[00:14:23] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. So that's, that's a really interesting point. And maybe we can dive into that a bit is that just having the recording? That isn't the thing that makes it necessarily more engaging, but it can be something that enhances an already engaging, interesting subject with whatever you're talking about. It's not a magic cure for a terrible meeting. Absolutely.

[00:14:41] **Tom Russell:** No, quite right. '

[00:14:45] **Beth Stallwood:** Because I imagine that some people on the line now going, oh, I have to sit through loads of terrible meetings.

Could I just do this and get, you know, get somebody in to make it, make it better just by recording it? Probably not going to be the thing, but I'm using it in an already interesting maybe tough, difficult subject or something you need to get out there, something you need people to engage with to help it, take it to the next level versus going from it being terrible to being okay.

[00:15:11] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, absolutely. And we were often asked to come in and graphic record meetings on complex subjects or subjects, which might seem a little on the dry side, and then you've got a, a very diverse audience. Some of whom are, you might be attracted by the emotional element of it. Others who may be more linear and interested in the process aspects and what graphic recording does and it uses words, text as well as graphics is, brings that all together so that it appeals to a diverse range of thinking and learning styles.

[00:15:42] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And I think that that's a really good point. And let's talk about that for a minute because when you have got diverse audiences when you have quite different people, which you always have in a room, right?

No one is ever exactly the same and how they think and how they learn. How does this really help from that aspect [00:16:00] to help people to understand if it is complex or if it is a subject they're not sure about, or any of those things, you, you, you know, you said there about text and images and stuff. How does it really help with those different learning and engaging styles?

[00:16:14] **Tom Russell:** Well, I guess at a very basic level, you've got some of us who are much more attracted to graphics and icons and graphic, visual stimulus. Others are more attracted to text and words. So for example, you said earlier that if you receive some meeting minutes, uh, after a meeting, you're less likely to want to read those, but others might be more inclined to read those.



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So you're appealing to a broad audience, um, by including texts and, and graphics in the, uh, in the final image. Also when we're graphically recording, we're not capturing everything. If we were to capture everything verbatim, one, it would be an extremely large graphic and you'd have a really tired of graphic recorder at the same time. But what we are doing is listening for cues. So in a conversation that might be something that gets particularly focused on by the group. It could be something that arouses particular conversation. It could even be something that's a bit controversial. Or for example, presenters are reinforcing particular points.

So what we're doing is capturing key parts of the conversation, but recall is such that if we capture, you know, say, for example, say 20 key elements of a, of a, of an important conversation that we do it in a, in a way that shows the flow, participants would be able to remember broadly what happened between those key points and around those.

So it's, it's, it's a prompt. If you like a memory prompt to, to help people understand the larger conversation. And we find a lot of clients, then take the graphic output and share it with [00:18:00] people who weren't in the session. Let's say you might do it in a, in a board meeting or in a senior leadership meeting.

And of course you can't get everybody in that conversation, but then it can be taken out by various participants and briefed to their teams and using the graphic as a way of doing that. So it helps them recall, uh, more than what simply on the chart.

[00:18:24] **Beth Stallwood:** I'm really loving that. I know I've kind of in my head and actually on my piece of paper, I've drawn like a big funnel thing, which for me all of this information, it's a lot. And you can't. I like, I imagine you can't record it all because it just would not be possible. So it's almost like the recorders, like the filter and the identifier of the key points. And then it's putting those key points in a way that as many people as possible in different ways can actually understand and engage with and take away and remember.

[00:18:54] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, listening is the number one skill. Um, you know, some, some people might suggest it's illustrative skill and that's important, but, uh, maybe as we'll touch on later, you know, you don't necessarily have to be a fine artist to be a graphic recorder, but listening is the primary skill that one needs in order to identify what's most important.

[00:19:17] **Beth Stallwood:** I have so many questions for you and I'm going to go down a few different routes of it's okay. The first route, I really want to go down because I, I was going to say earlier, but let me go into the conversation. But I think what really excited about it is from HR to graphic recording as a career move, and lots of the people who listen to podcasts, or I was really fascinated by people's career moves and what they do.



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It's not necessarily one I've ever heard of before, which is where it gets exciting. When you said, obviously you got inspired by seeing this happening, what was the route to actually doing it and running a business doing it?

[00:19:53] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, that's a great question. Um, well, I did some research after [00:20:00] I'd been in this meeting I referred to earlier and I just invested in some personal development and took myself off to San Francisco, which is not a, not a bad place to go when it comes to training.

[00:20:11] **Beth Stallwood:** I was going to say, that's pretty nice.

[00:20:14] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, absolutely. So I went off to San Francisco, I think around 2009 to the Grove, which some listeners may be aware of. It's a, uh, a place where, uh, there's lots of great thinking around graphic facilitation and using visual imagery and group process. And David Sibbet is the founder of The Grove. So I went there for a week. I did, uh, went through the graphic facilitation course, I guess I've got some artistic knowledge and tendency there from maybe just from the family. And so then I, I hadn't quite left my employer at the time, so I had to go in a couple of meetings, I put my hand up and said, look, you know, this, this is something I'm learning about.

And it was quite transparent and open about what I've wanted to do. And I'd been in HR for some time, and that change was, was due. And so they agreed for me to capture a couple of those meetings, just, just to give it a go and not, cause I've looked back at those now and think God that's absolutely horrendous graphically, but it proved to be one useful for them, and it was extremely useful for me. And then it kind of opened my eyes to what was possible. And then I went to a, worked in an organization that specializes in facilitation and graphics and so it just morphed and continued. And that's led to where I am now.

[00:21:42] **Beth Stallwood:** It's amazing. And one thing I'm always talking about when it comes to careers is that we never know all of the jobs that are out there. And every day I speak to new people and gaps that you fascinated with what they do. And until that moment in time, you had no idea that this job was there, that there was something [00:22:00] called a graph recorder and you went and got inspired and now that's your career and your business.

And I find that amazing. And I just really encourage all of our listeners to keep your eyes out and be aware of stuff. And when you get excited about something, do that research, explore it, see where it might take. You put yourself on some personal development like you did. I mean, I now want to go to San Francisco and go and do that course.

So good sales pitch for you. Um, just because you know, San Francisco and learning and development, and getting to draw on stuff. I mean, how much fun would that be? What exactly what's not to like about that? I mean, some people would find that probably their own version of absolutely awful, but for me that would be a lot of work joy.



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So I think that is just a real key point is you do not know all the options that are out there. The careers advice we had at school did not tell us that there was a job as a graphic recorder. It didn't tell us that there were these things that were possible. So, uh, I just think, I love that and thank you so much for sharing it because it's lovely to hear how different careers happen? The next route, I want to go down. If you're happy to head down, it is so graphic recording, great thing. Really engaging, helps people to filter, it helps people to remember what's going on and appeals to lots of different learning styles. So that's great. And you know, people now know who to get in touch with you.

If they're looking for a graphic recorder for an event or a meeting or something, they want to work through. What I'd love to do now, if we can, is to take it from the organizational, let's make this happen to the individual side of things. So I might be out there as one of the listeners and I'm listening to this and going, oh, that sounds really interesting.

How does that relate to what I could do as an individual? Maybe I'm a leader of a meeting. Maybe I'm facilitating something. Maybe I'm a participant of a meeting. Is there anything that we can take from graphic recording that we could then use every day, rather than it being something that we have to always hire somebody in to do.

[00:23:56] **Tom Russell:** Absolutely. I mean, everybody can [00:24:00] take something from this way of working and apply it and in different aspects of their lives, it doesn't have to be work related. It can be personal for personal benefit as well. So for example, there's been a huge surge and interest in the visual note taking just on a personal basis.

So when people are in conferences or meetings, for example, um, rather than just taking, you know, straight text notes, um, there's been a trend towards people just trying something different, incorporating visual icons and images within the text, for example, to help make it more easy to remember and not just working with icons, but also structuring the notes differently.

So people find different ways of structuring their notes. But the most common is to create it like a narrative or list using a structure like a mind map or a spider gram, as it's often called, could be a different way of doing it. There are different ways of structuring your notes or adding additional value to your notes, which some people may think is just doodling, but it's actually serving a purpose. So Beth, I am sure that somewhere you have got posh notebooks that you've seen on your travels, you know, that shop beginning with them where they sell nice posh notes. But so though others that were available where I really, you want to use that to take notes and then what's happened, you've got at home you think I can't possibly. With my, my writing or my, my doodles. I'm going to put it in a cupboard somewhere. Cause I can't bring myself. And then the process repeats and you might find that you've got more than one and I've been there as well.

[00:25:41] **Beth Stallwood:** I am currently sat next to my note book stash and the top shelf is the two nice to use ones.



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The middle shelf has the nice for important things that you actually are going to use. And the bottom shelf is everyday for any old rubbish. That is actually how my notebook shelves are, it's a whole shelf. [00:26:00] It's an important thing. So I do have that. Yeah, I'm looking at them laughing at your comment here. So go down this route for me, because maybe I'll go. Maybe I'll grab one and start writing and one who knows.

[00:26:13] **Tom Russell:** Well, I mean, it's hats off to you because I've never heard of anybody who's actually got a set of shelves for these unused notebooks. Yeah, I think that that's almost bordering on, on a problem maybe, but anyway, so I'm sure that many of us have got one of these note books.

And so my challenge is just to grab it and start using it. And, you know, it's, it's almost like feeling the fear and try it anyway. And. If you, if you're used to taking notes in portrait, turn it landscape and try something, try a different perspective. Start from the middle and work outwards when you're taking notes.

For example, just add small and simple icons that help you capture quickly, or remember parts of the conversation you're having. Um, you know, it, it can be your own place to take notes. Other people don't have to see it. And, uh, if you have a posh notebook, you know, use a flash pen with it as well, you know, and treat yourself, this is something that needs to be enjoyable.

We wouldn't enjoy it if we were probably doing it on a rough, old note book with a cheapy biro, for example. Um, but you can do it however you like. So on a participant level, cause you talked about leaders, facilitators, and participants or individuals. That's a great way of starting. And if. If you don't necessarily get the chance to do it in a work meeting or those kinds of conversations, don't come across a lot, even just listening to the radio or watching telly is a good way of just sitting down with a piece of paper and just try and draw or note take what you are hearing.

The news is a great place because there are so many different stories and different subjects and, uh, [00:28:00] If you find a particular topic, interesting. Something say on a Ted talk, even, you think, do you know what I've been meaning to listen to that? Because that just has peaked my attention, then get the notebook out and see if you can capture it as well.

[00:28:14] **Beth Stallwood:** Such a good idea. And I've written down these things because, and I've written it down with a picture of a book next to it. I've drawn a picture of book. I recognize it as a book, whether anyone else word and I'm going to come on to that point. So turn it landscape. So get, get your good book and start using it.

Okay, I'm going to do it. I'm going to grab that.

[00:28:32] **Tom Russell:** I use it in a way that's not typical to how you use a notebook. Can I just mention one more thing? I want to go back to your piece of cheese, Emmental cheese or whatever it



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was that you've, um, you've drawn and coloured in. And there are three, if you mentioned that piece of cheese in three, in three slices, three parts, the first one is, uh, we'll call it draw, so that's when you just scribble something down, you think, okay, I'm thinking of a notebook or I'm thinking of a piece of cheese or whatever it might be. And that's when you draw it. The second one is accept. So you accept that that is the little icon or graphic or the notebook or a piece of cheese that you've drawn on to you.

That's a piece of cheese or a notebook, and it may not be the most artistically outstanding version of a notebook or a piece of cheese, but you know what it serves the purpose. So the third part of that cheese is move on and that's something that graphic recorders and visual note takers need to work with is that you need to draw, accept and move on because if you get hung up on the quality of your, uh, your icons or your graphics, you'll just, you'll lose the train of the conversation. For example, that can be quite hard to do initially, but if you draw except to move on and keep working on that basis, it can really help with just, just tacitly, improving your visual practice. However you do it.

[00:29:59] **Beth Stallwood:** I love [00:30:00] that. I'm just like slightly blown away by the idea of it as well, because it's, my brain is firing in many different angles for that.

Just draw it. Don't think about it, draw it, accept it, and then move on to the next thing. Don't overthink it. And. I'm loving all the ideas of how you like turn it landscape, you know, start from the middle and use some nice pens. I mean, I don't need an excuse to buy new pens. Obviously I could go and knock the nice ones out, like the special ones and a special pencil case using those icons.

But one thing I'm just thinking about with what you said there about the drawn, accept, move on the damn method. You might call it a Dam method. There you go. Take that if you'd like it. Um, yeah. Oh, I'm going to go slightly out there beyond what we're talking about. And then I'll bring it back. Bear with me while I do this.

Many of the people who listened to this podcast and many of the people that I work with in groups or on one-to-one really struggle with things that aren't perfect with themselves, not being able to do everything in exactly the right way. And what I'm wondering here is whether there is a real connection and a practice that we could do using this kind of skill, using this method. It doesn't even need to be a skill. Does it? It's just doing it your way about being a real lesson and being okay with our own imperfection. Yeah.

[00:31:21] **Tom Russell:** Gosh, that's a good question.

[00:31:23] **Beth Stallwood:** I just go on, like I know I've gone completely like out that.

[00:31:30] **Tom Russell:** Okay. I'm not sure if this is entirely answering your question. So you talked about facilitators or, or being in a meeting context. Let's, let's say that somebody in the group and it



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could be somebody on this podcast or listening to this podcast agrees to take some visual notes. Now that might be visual notes just in a notepad, or it might even be on a flip chart, but that's quite an exposing [00:32:00] thing to do. And I think, uh, quite a lot of people are reluctant to be the person who stands at the flip chart, taking notes cause you're on show and it's, um, feels a bit lonely, but I think the big barrier the thought of what might people might say if they saw your notes? And if you're worried about your piece of cheese or your little note pad icons, that maybe there's a worry that others will look at them and think what's that, or, or laugh.

And actually it's really okay. Because I would guarantee you that if people started taking notes visually in sharing those outputs with others, they would find that people are really receptive to it, much more receptive to, to what people might imagine. Uh, and that's, that really is pushing the comfort zone out.

But you know, we don't learn unless we're right at our learning edge anyway. So it's a, it's a way of getting feedback and, and recognition for the work done. And also, you know, just a chance to hear what other people have to say about it.

[00:33:12] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And that thing about you might be worried about it, but everyone else just might be really interested in it or be really happy that you've done it in that way or really interested in it.

So we all, we always, we always think about the worst case scenario versus the best case scenario. And actually the best case scenario is that you've already helped somebody else, but with your drawing or with what you've done in terms of your notes and. Yeah. And you're so right. The edge of the comfort zone is where the growth happens and you have to get uncomfortable to start with.

And I love that. And I think maybe what I'll do is I, because I'm squiggling drawings as we're going through this, I might in a version of actually just get out there and see what happens. I'm going to take a picture of some of these drawings and put them on the Instagram and stuff. When we put this podcast out there because.

I, [00:34:00] I am happy to say that I have slightly got past, the it has to be perfect stuff when I am facilitating or doing stuff. And it just has to be there. Just get it done, get it out there. And also here's the other thing I've noticed. And I don't know if you've noticed this as well is sometimes a little bit of laugh about how my drawing is a real bonder, and something that just really helps people get engaged with it and realize that it's okay to say stuff that they might not have wanted to say before, because if my drawing isn't perfect, they can have an imperfect point or an imperfect question as well.

[00:34:37] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, well, like you said, we're full of imperfections and that's okay.



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Um, what we scribble and draw is just another element of that. Um, and you know, even if, for example, you're taking notes and you share those notes with others, then there's a bit of a chuckle around an element that you've drawn to, makes it more memorable. And it also breaks down barriers and creates more of a sense of trust and community.

[00:35:02] **Beth Stallwood:** Great. So talk to me a little bit more about, so we've talked about as an individual, you can like grab a notepad, start using it, turn it landscape, do some of these things for different things. Listen to the news, watch the telly and just start that practicing of it and see where it leads you. For those people who are listening, who are in a position of being the leader of meeting or the facilitator of a meeting, what are some of the things that people might want to think about to help them in their worlds.

[00:35:28] **Tom Russell:** Okay. So the first thing to say is that it doesn't necessarily follow that the leader or the facilitator of the meeting is the person who needs to graphically capture it. In many cases, it's, uh, recommended that somebody else does it. So there's a scribe or one of the meeting participants agrees to do that.

Or you even get a graphic recorder in to do that. Dare I say it, but the reason for saying that is when a facilitator is leading the group, really, they need to be focused on the group and how [00:36:00] the group are working towards the outcomes that have been achieved. And, uh, it can, it can form quite a juggling act to be able to lead, facilitate and serve the group and capture at the same time.

Having said that, however, if that's just not possible, then put in a bit of time before the meeting and create some templates. So if you're going to, for example, have a conversation about, um, the, the business plan for the next 12 months, for example, it's a little cliched, but you know, create a visual journey map, you know, from left to right on a big sheet of paper or put some flip charts together on a wall, then create, then you've got a big sheet and have a path from a to B you know, embellish it with things that are typical to your own organization, for example.

And you could capture on that as the conversation progresses, or as I said earlier, you get someone else or even the group to capture it. But you're putting in a bit of time and effort upfront, which makes capturing in the meeting a lot easier and more visibly, visibly eye catching and engaging.

[00:37:06] **Beth Stallwood:** I love the idea of the prep in advance and getting some templates or something up there that you can then work through using the right thing.

So is it a big, long map that you want to do or is it a flip chart of something? Um, and also then making your life easier by having them done in advance? So you're not trying to create the whilst. You're also trying to think, and you're trying to listen, because as you said, like I'm coming back to it, the most important thing.



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You'd be surprised. And I know you've listened to some of them, how much listening comes up as the most important thing around work and joy and things like that. Is that listening piece. If you are trying to concentrate on something else, I imagine could be really hard, especially when you first started doing this.

[00:37:47] **Tom Russell:** Absolutely. And there are lots of little hacks, you know, for example, um, I always, advise against using yellow on flip charts because it's preliminary hard to read, [00:38:00] but if you've got a pale yellow pen and you're the leader of the meeting, by and large, you could put something on a chart, maybe even be a little icon or a star or whatever.

Cause I am rubbish oric stars that just go, completely wrong. But if you draw it in a pale yellow pen on the. Yeah, participants generally, won't be able to see it, but then you can follow it, um, with your dark pen at the time. And Hey Presto, you've just driven a drawn, a magnificent star and you'll be, you know, you'll be re you know, what's the word respected for it, but it's just a little example of something you can do to make your life as a meeting facilitator, a bit easier, but really participants for participants, it adds real value.

[00:38:45] **Beth Stallwood:** I love that. So you're actually slightly cheating because you've done something in advance and you've made yourself look amazing in the session. When actually you could have looked awful because ou can't draw a star.

I'm I'm totally now thinking, Tom, just to set you up here the next time that you're graphically recording something for me, I'm totally going to make sure there's some kind of star in it just to see how good or bad the stars are.

[00:39:09] **Tom Russell:** Well, I'll be ready for that one.

[00:39:11] **Beth Stallwood:** You have to do some practice to get ready. And I also loved the advice they're and thinking around, just because you're the leader of the meeting doesn't mean you have to do the graphic work sometimes it's in fact, most of the time it might be better to have somebody else. And maybe that's something around getting somebody in a professional.

Maybe it's something about having. Uh, a little team of people in your workplace who you help each other out. So you say, do you want me to come and be your flip chart person to help you on that? If you'll come and help me for this and having that sort of reciprocal arrangement, because you are right, doing all of those things at the same time, facilitating, listening, drawing, et cetera. That's a lot for one brain to handle.

[00:39:52] **Tom Russell:** Yes, absolutely. Well, do you know, it's funny you say that, um, we have done quite a lot of work with a housing [00:40:00] association down in the Southwest, uh, and



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they're an absolutely super group of people, so passionate about what they do, and they have their own team of inky thinkers in, in the organization who do just that.

So we've, uh, taken them through, uh, a one day workshop on the basics of graphic recording. Uh, they've got some great practice got the pens, got used to the kit and equipment and so on, and now they do just that for each other's meetings. There are, there are a pool, like a central resource to be called upon for any kind of meeting and they love it. And it's just so wonderful to see. Them flourish and just use that technique internally.

[00:40:43] **Beth Stallwood:** I love that. And the fact that you're saying that I imagine some people think, oh, I don't have the resources to go to San Francisco for a week to learn this stuff and the time, but a one day course can enable people to take this into their organizations and do stuff with it.

[00:40:59] **Tom Russell:** Yeah. Followed by a real commitment to practice.

[00:41:03] **Beth Stallwood:** But actually practice in real life is the best thing. Right? Get out there, do it, love it. Um, I am so excited by all of this. As many people can tell, I get lots of work joy from the things that you were talking about, about graphics and using imagery and getting people to get icons and a lot of my notes and actually where I'm sat here on one side, I've got my, um, my unused note pads.

So, you know, it may be a problem. On the other side of me, I have what's called Beth big plan for the next four years. What do I want to do? Personal goals, et cetera. And it is a combination I've just noticed this and I'm like laughing at it. Every single thing that has like a section or a note on it also has an image that goes with it.

And I, I didn't even consider that, that was how I was going to write it. It's just how I do things now. I've been on some training with you, with the inky jam, et cetera, and just really [00:42:00] loving the way I do it. So yeah, it's really interesting what it can do and how it can spark some stuff in your brain.

And that practice is just try it out, give it a go, you know, get one of those notebooks. And you know, for me, obviously, any excuse to go to a lovely stationary shop and buy a new notepad. I don't need to buy anymore, obviously to get some nice pens. Um, I like a combination of coloured and some nice black wording.

That's my personal preference, but I like a chunky pen, like a good chunky pen and some highlighters, all of that kind of stuff. So I think this has been amazing. And I could talk to you probably for the rest of the week, um, about all these different things. But what I'd love to do now, if it's okay with you is to move on to some quickfire questions as we finish up.



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So first one, um, let's bring it back to some work joy for a moment. And I would love to know from you as a person who is out there in the world of work, what is guaranteed to always bring you some work joy?

[00:43:00] **Tom Russell:** I love working with the Inky Thinking team we're, we're a virtual team but we're a close team. And, I get joy from having contact with the team every day and helping them to grow and learn, and also. You know, for it to be a very much, a two way learning process. So none of us have the monopoly on all the knowledge and skills, but if there is, if there's a day when I've helped somebody else to grow and they've helped me to grow as a person, then that's a good day.

So that brings me joy, that constant learning, but just learning from each other. Cause we all have such different experiences.

[00:43:42] **Beth Stallwood:** I love it. And that whole idea that it's, it's both ways. I love it. Getting to two way learning in. Next question. What book are you currently reading?

[00:43:53] **Tom Russell:** Well, do you know, I dug out one recently that's been around for a while and it's called The Trusted Advisor [00:44:00] by David Maister. And it has a bit of an old book, but do you know what I think it's actually quite, um, quite a classic in the sense that it's about how one develops a trusted peer to peer advisor, relationship with your clients and what that means in terms of the characteristics of that relationship, uh, and how it can grow and trust is such an important element of any relationship, whether it's a work relationship or a personal one. And I'm talking about this in the context of work, of course. But I, sometimes I find that books. In the past to really good to just get back in on and just ask myself the question. Am I still doing what I said I would do as a result of reading this book? So I'm revisiting that one right now. I'll probably go. Uh, something a little bit more recent after that, but that's my current read.

[00:44:53] **Beth Stallwood:** I love that actually. Sometimes I think revisiting things and I sometimes do it. I don't know if you do, where if I read something on a book, I then listened to it and I gather something different listening to it.

So sometimes just changing the format in which you do it can be really great. So the trusted advisor, we will pop that on to the show notes. Question three, this is an interesting one. What is the best or most useful bit of advice that you've had that you always find yourself coming back to?

[00:45:24] **Tom Russell:** Okay. Yeah, this is going to be easy. So somebody said to me, you can live with decision, but not within this. Oh, and I come back to that one so much both work and personal life as well. And it's great because, you know, sometimes we have to make some really important decisions in life. And other times we've made lots of small ones, but you know, if I find that if you go with a decision, the best decision you can possibly make at the time, that is action.



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That's, that's moving forward as a, somebody who I know very well, who always advises us on a business perspective, not to drift. [00:46:00] Um, and so if, you know, if you're, if you're working and making decisions, then you are moving on. Sometimes you may look back on that and think maybe that wasn't the best decision, but at least you made one and you took action to try something new or try something different or improve whatever you're doing.

[00:46:17] **Beth Stallwood:** That's an absolutely brilliant bit of advice. I love that I'm going to take that and consider it because so many of us, we do get stuck. Don't we, and that analysis paralysis situation, there are, there are so many different options in the world right now, things that we could do where we could go. And sometimes we just don't take action because it's too hard to think about what action to take.

So just take something, make a decision, go with it, do your best job with it and see where it goes. Lovely. Really great advice. Thank you for sharing that.

Next one, what's one super practical bit of advice and you've given loads already, but it's, you know, think about this one, that you could give to our listeners, which is something that they could go and do almost right now today, tomorrow that might help them engage with some visual stuff in a little bit more detail.

[00:47:03] **Tom Russell:** Okay. So, so I suggested the practice earlier on, so listening to something different or watching a program and taking notes. One thing that I find gives me work joy is to not only know change the perspective, stay on the page for example, and try and capturing something differently, but also doing it in a place that's different.

So I appreciate that. Not everyone listening to the podcast. For example, if they work in an office, uh, on a, on a daily basis, might, may have that choice, but if you can go somewhere different could be a coffee shop, could be a park, whatever the weather is doing, it it's somewhere where your perspective is and your environment is completely.

So the office or the desk. And so you're just completely refreshing your perspective and your environment in order to do something that should be refreshing and enjoyable as well. So just try doing it in different places.

[00:47:58] **Beth Stallwood:** Such great advice [00:48:00] and like just giving yourself that space. And I think we can all do that.

Even if it's, you know, even people are working in an office or not in an office, in a hospital or wherever else, people, you know, end up working in a shop, et cetera, is I talk about quite a lot about reclaim your lunch break is go and do something like that on your lunch break. You know, if you're, if it's the summer and you can go and sit outside and listen to a podcast and make some



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notes about it, if you can go and go for a walk while you're doing it, there are so many different things that you can do, but getting a bit of a change of perspective would be pretty great. They love that. Great. Thank you. And before we finish off, please do tell our audience where they can find out more about you and about Inky Thinking and about your world in graphic recording and all the other amazing things that you do.

[00:48:45] **Tom Russell:** Of course. Thank you. Yeah. So if our listeners are interested in finding out about me and the Inky Thinking team, then <http://www.inkythinking.com> is where we are. That's our website. You'll find lots of examples there of our work, whether it's graphic recording, as we've talked about, we've got some animations on there as well, customer experience mapping, or a nice big range of, uh, of the work that we've also got our blog, which is called inkblot. And there were not only to myself and members of the team contribute our thinking and insights there. We've got some practical stuff from some product reviews, some, uh, we've maybe we should do some reviews of some nice notepads as well. I hadn't thought about that

[00:49:27] **Beth Stallwood:** That's a great one. Do you want me to help with that?

[00:49:31] **Tom Russell:** Yeah, absolutely. I think you'd be first in the queue and we've also got some. The lockers on there as well. And you will know that yourself. Absolutely. So that's the place to go. We're on Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube for the animated elements as well. So we're on all the socials for most of them. And please do come to our website and you can contact us via the website.

[00:49:55] **Beth Stallwood:** Brilliant. Thank you, Tom. Thank you so much for being a guest for [00:50:00] sharing your amazing thinking around everything inky. I turned it the other way round on that level on that. It's been great to talk to you as I look forward to talking to you again soon,

[00:50:11] **Tom Russell:** It's been a pleasure, Beth. Thank you very much. Looking forward to speaking with you again and seeing your scribbles and your notebooks.

[00:50:17] **Beth Stallwood:** You'll definitely see them. I'll put them out there. A huge thank key to Tom for coming on the podcast and for talking us through everything to do with graphic recording, there are so many things that I am taking over and so many things that I've learned on this session, even though I knew some of it already, it's such a great thing to be reminded of how well it can help us to engage with people, to make sure we're meeting the needs of everyone in the room, different learning styles, different thinking styles. And I love it. I'm slightly obsessed with it. I love the thing that I just written down and I've kind of circled it. And I am also going to show you on the show notes, what I've actually drawn as we've gone through it is the DAM method as I'm now calling it the draw except a move on. And one of the things I'm really thinking about is not just around drawing and graphics, but how we can help ourselves to get out of the work gloom situation sometimes if we change that draw to speak or to listen and accept and to move on and to really use that method



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beyond drawing. So that's a thought that I'm going to take with me and explore a little bit more. I also love the idea that we can practice some of this stuff and do things differently.

Change our perspective, turn a note pad around, starting in the middle, do different things, to help our brain think in a different way, to give us more perspective and potentially that to give us more joy and that by practicing these things, we can really help ourselves to understand that it's not all about being perfect and that sometimes it is and find most of the time I find it, the bits of imperfection, where we really let our guard down where we're humble about things, but we're really vulnerable. It's where we really make amazing connections with other people where we break down some of those barriers where we get into it together. So, so many things to take away from here. Um, pushing yourself out of your comfort zone, giving it a go.

I encourage you all to try it. I, I personally really love it and I'm going to. I remember in my own head to do it more because it is a great tool to work with. I really hope you enjoyed this episode of the Work Joy Jam, do head over to our socials on Instagram, on LinkedIn, on Twitter and on Facebook?

We're @createworkjoy to follow us and find out more, see who else is coming on the podcast. There are many episodes, a series, one series two or three out there, and series three coming out, um, to you now as well. If you are interested in getting under the skin of some of your work joy and really creating and cultivating it for yourself.

Do you have a look at my Work Joy Way coaching program at 16 weeks, it's a combination of one-to-one with me group sessions and say two experiments that can really help you to transition in your career to know what it is you want to do to really harness and be great at work, whatever it is, wherever you all, where if you work, it could be the right program for you.

So do you go and have a look on the website, www.createworkjoy.com. We also have Club Work Joy, um, a group of amazing people who are all trying to create and cultivate more joy in their working life, where we collaborate there's events, there's networking. And again, you can find out more information on the website.

Thank you for listening today. I really hope you enjoyed it. Do you pop your thoughts, um, into some comments or some of the social. Or onto a review on the podcast. That would be great. And I hope that you'll listen again soon.[00:54:00] .